



Life in the Trenches During World War One

KS4 HISTORY

WWI

MILITARY HISTORY

Ages 11-15 ⌚ 4 min read

What Were Trenches?

Trenches were long, deep ditches dug into the ground where soldiers lived and fought during **World War One (1914-1918)**. They stretched for hundreds of miles across **Europe**, especially in **France** and **Belgium**. Trenches protected soldiers from enemy gunfire and explosions, but life inside them was incredibly difficult and dangerous.

Think of it like a very long, muddy tunnel system under your house where you have to live for months at a time, with enemies on the other side trying to break in.

Daily Life in the Trenches

Soldiers called **trench warfare** one of the worst experiences imaginable. The trenches were freezing cold in winter and muddy year-round. Soldiers' feet would rot from standing in wet conditions for days. **Rats** the size of cats ran everywhere, eating food and spreading disease. **Lice** (tiny parasitic insects) covered soldiers' bodies, making them itch constantly.

Food was often hard biscuits, tinned meat, and tea. Drinking water sometimes got contaminated. Many soldiers died from illness like **trench foot** and **pneumonia** rather than from actual combat. The smell was awful – a mix of mud, waste, dead bodies, and gas.

The Horror of Attack

When officers ordered soldiers to attack, they had to climb out of their trenches and run towards enemy lines across open ground called **no man's land**. Enemy machine guns would cut them down by the thousands. On the first day of the **Battle of the Somme** in **1916**, the British suffered **57,000** casualties – more than any single day in British military history.

Think of it like running across a frozen pond while someone throws rocks at you from the other side – except the rocks are bullets, and there's nowhere to hide.

Why This Mattered

Trench warfare showed how modern weapons had changed battle forever. Soldiers were no longer able to charge at enemies on horseback. Instead, armies got stuck facing each other across muddy lines for years. This is why **World War One** lasted so long and killed so many people - over **20 million** soldiers and civilians died during the war.

Learning about trenches helps us understand why people today work hard to prevent wars and why we remember soldiers on **Remembrance Day** every **11th November**.