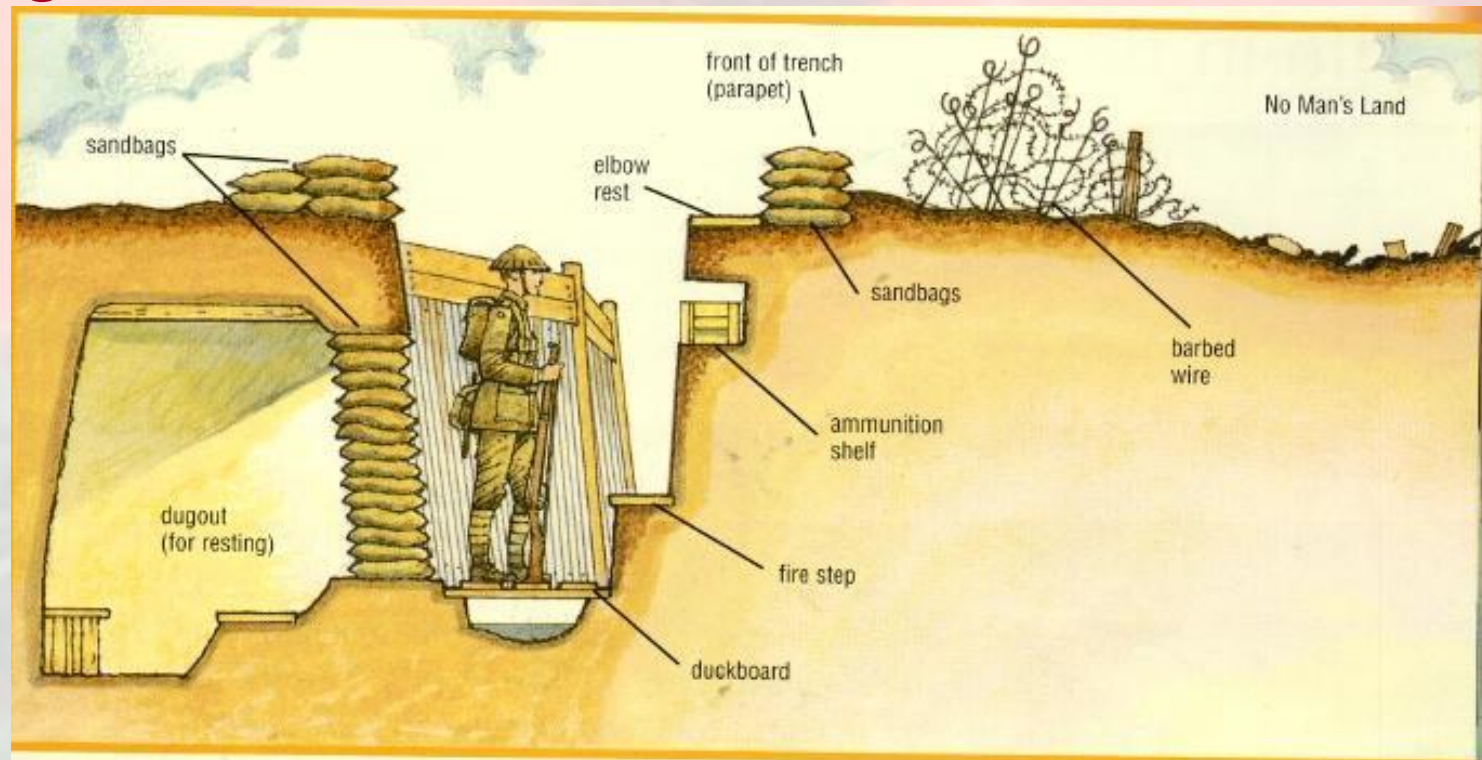


There were dugouts for resting but they didn't provide much comfort. You also used them for protection during a shell attack. British dugouts were basic because they were designed to be temporary – unlike the better designed and fortified German trenches

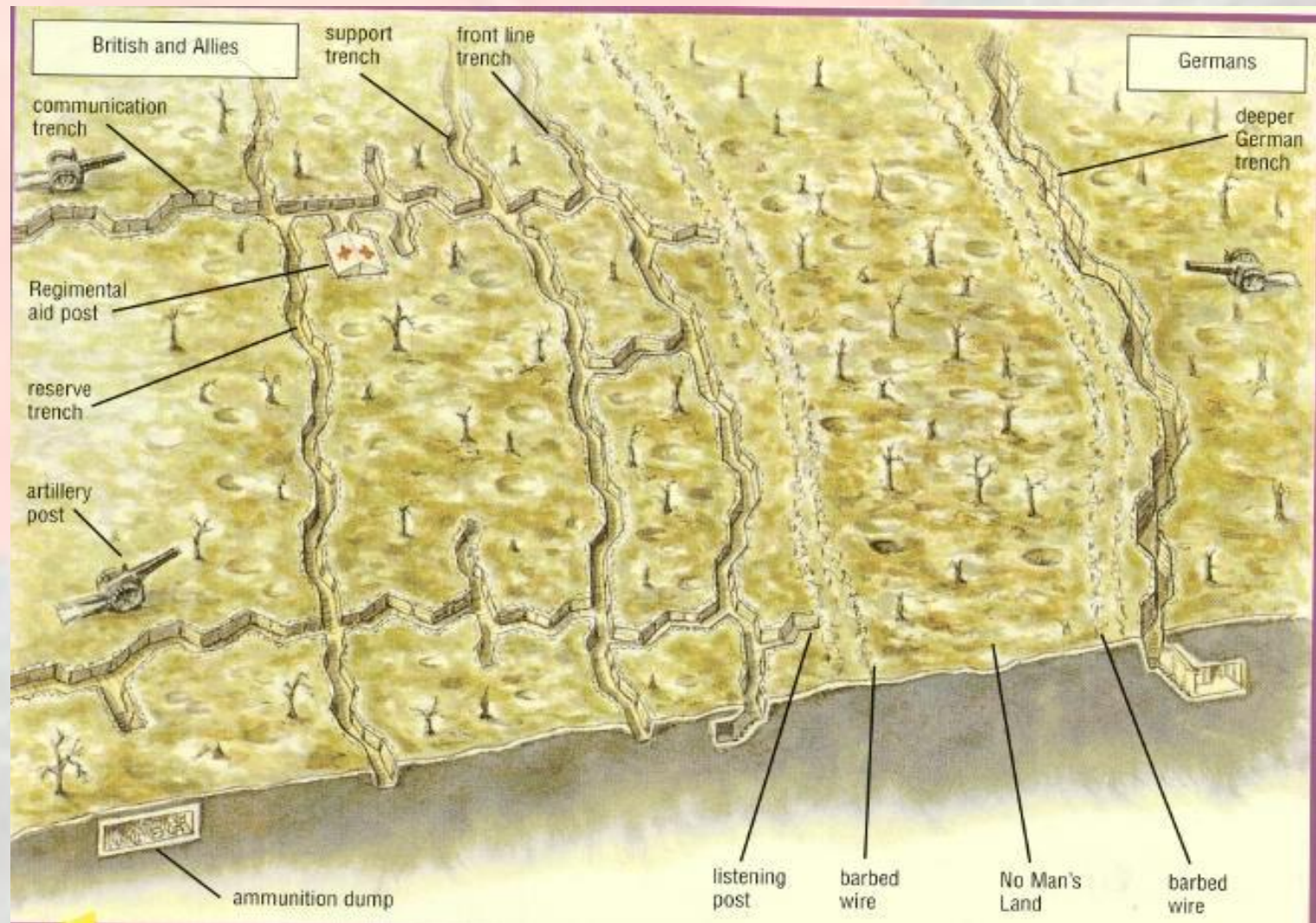


# This is one soldier's first impression of the war...

This is how I first saw the war. Enormous noise. Continuous explosion. Complete stillness. Men were eating, smoking, doing odd jobs, but no one was fighting. A few were peering in periscopes. I could see nothing but upturned empty fields. Then, suddenly, there was a tremendous crash which flung me yards. Nearby, a man lay with a tiny hole in his head and another limped with blood pumping from his leg. They were both carried away. I thought the bombardment would be temporary and expected to see men going over the top to put the guns out of action. But nothing happened.



The land in between the 2 frontlines was called 'No Mans land'. Sometimes this was so small soldiers could hear their enemies talking.



A whistle went and men climbed out the trench and went 'over the top'. They were often told to walk in a line which meant the enemy could mow them down with machine guns.



There was little protection as soldiers crossed 'no mans land' and the barbed wire slowed them down even more.





Britain fired over 200 million shells in the war, often before sending men 'over the top', but many were off target or didn't explode. Also German soldiers went into dugouts where they were often safe. So when the soldiers attacked the enemy simply came out again and all they had done was make huge shell holes which slowed the troops down.



This is British Private Harry Farr. In 1916 he was executed by firing squad at the age of 25 after he refused to return to the frontlines in WW1. Hundreds of other men were suffering the same fate. They were all suffering from 'shellshock'.



Every soldier was issued with a rifle with a bayonet (blade) that fixed to the end. Siegfried Sassoon, who later became famous for his war poetry, remembered some advice given to him by a major on how to use a bayonet...

- ⊕ 'If you don't kill him, he'll kill you.'
- ⊕ 'Stick him between the eyes, in the throat, in the chest, or round the thighs.'
- ⊕ 'If he's on the run, get your bayonet into his kidneys; it'll go in as easy as butter.'
- ⊕ 'Kill them, kill them; there's only one good Bosch and that's a dead one!'



There were so many corpses about the trench rats grew as big as small dogs and bit the living men as they rested. Lice spread trench fever.



## This was a journalist's view of trenches during the Battle of Somme ...

“The water in the trenches through which we waded was alive with a multitude of swimming frogs. Red slugs crawled up the side of the trenches and strange beetles with dangerous looking horns wriggled along dry ledges and invaded the dugouts, in search of the lice which infested them.”

Soldiers feet could be permanently wet leading to 'trench foot' ...



# Sergeant Harry Roberts, lived in a flooded trench for six days ...

“If you have never had trench feet described to you, I will explain. Your feet swell to two or three times their normal size and go completely dead. You could stick a bayonet into them and not feel a thing.

If you are lucky enough not to lose your feet and the swelling begins to go down, it is then that the indescribable agony begins. I have heard men cry and scream in pain and many have had their feet and legs amputated.

I was one of the lucky ones, but one more day in that trench and it may have been too late.”



Soldiers tried using whale oil to keep their feet dry, or changing their socks 3 times a day but nothing worked ...



Sometimes the trenches were not dug quickly and not deep enough, and if you ever stood up straight you ran the risk of a bullet through the head from a sniper.



# A British soldier made this list of daily rations in his notebook ...

- Bully (corned) beef 1lb. [454g]
- Bread or biscuits 1 ¼ lbs [567g]
- Bacon ¼ lb. [113g]
- Tea ½ oz. [14g]
- Sugar 2oz. [56g]
- Jam 2oz. [56g]
- Cheese 1oz. [28g]
- Butter ¾ oz. [21g]
- Potatoes ¾ lb. [340g]
- Also: small amounts of salt, pepper and mustard.

Conditions with often unimaginably bad. Soldiers' clothes became infested with lice. Even when they got clean clothes as soon as they were back in the front lines they became infested again. The huge washers didn't kill the eggs so soldiers popped them with their fingers or cigarettes in their spare time.





Dealing with boredom was a big problem; soldiers often went days on the frontline without fighting. They played cards, read/wrote letters, chatted, smoked and sang.



# Another soldier R.L. Venables remembers the nights ...

“Whilst asleep during the night, we were frequently awakened by rats running over us. When this happened too often for my liking, I would lie on my back and wait for a rat to linger on my legs; then violently heave my legs upward, throwing the rat into the air. Occasionally, I would hear a grunt when the rat landed on a fellow victim.”



Fighting went back and forth over the  
same land for four years leaving  
nothing ...





Later in the war gas was used. This could burn your eyes and blind you...





Some of the gas was designed to burn as soldiers breathed it. It could cause big blisters to form in their lungs and men died as their lungs filled with liquid.



Later in the war gas masks were developed, but at first soldiers had to urinate on a hanky or piece of cloth and put it over their mouths/noses. If they couldn't they had to ask someone to 'wet it' for them or dip it in one of the buckets ...



The soldier here is in agony after encountering phosgene gas ...





Flamethrowers were used later in the war ...





The British were the first to introduce tanks but they didn't help much – many broke down before they got to the battlefield and they often got stuck in the horrendous conditions.



The mud got so deep in Paschendale in Belgium that men and even horses drowned in shell holes ...



Will R. Bird collection,  
PA-40139

Passchendaele, now a field of mud. November, 1917. (The Battle of Ypres).

Over 2 million British soldiers were injured in WW1 and a total of over 21 million soldiers wounded.





Many men fought alongside in Pals' battalions and lost family and close friends ...





Britain got soldiers from all over her Empire, even as far as Australia ...



National Library of Australia

nla.pic-vn3316490-v

Over 900,000 British soldiers died fighting in World War One.



In total nearly **TEN MILLION** men died on the battlefields in Europe.





The following spring after the War ended, poppies started growing in the battlefields. Their bright red colour came to symbolise all the lives that had been lost.





This is why we wear poppies on Remembrance Day. The War ended on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month 1918, and from 1919 to the present day this anniversary has been used to remember the millions who died fighting in war.

