

Conditions requiring medical treatment

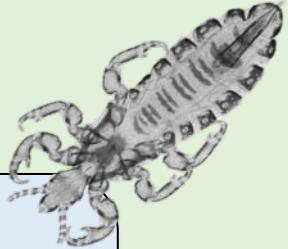


What kinds of conditions needed treatment on the Western Front?



Conditions in the trenches:

Conditions in the trenches were very unpleasant. Sanitary or hygienic, conditions for such large numbers of people posed a problem



Summer:

Sewage, dead bodies & heat
led to horrific smell & disease
everywhere

Winter:

Bad weather led to flooding,
frostbite (6000 cases in December
1914) and Trench foot



Trench Foot

During the winter of 1914-15 over 20,000 men in the British Army were treated for trench foot

This was an infection of the feet **caused by cold, wet and filthy conditions**. In the trenches men **stood for hours** on end in **waterlogged trenches** without being able to remove wet socks or boots. The feet would gradually go numb and the skin would turn red or blue. If untreated, trench foot could **turn gangrenous** and result in **amputation**.

The only remedy for trench foot was for the soldiers to dry their feet and change their socks several times a day, also rubbing whale oil into their feet. Soldiers in the trenches **had to have three pairs of socks** with them.

Once gangrene set in, **amputation** was the only solution!



Sergeant Harry Roberts, Lancashire Fusiliers, interviewed after the war.

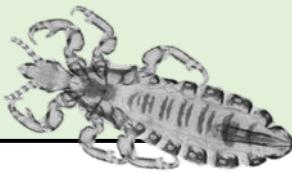
Audio in folder

“If you have never had trench feet described to you. I will tell you. 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 fortunate enough not to lose your feet and the swelling begins to go down. It is then that the intolerable, indescribable agony begins. I have heard men cry and even scream with the pain and many had to have their feet and legs amputated”.



If you were lucky enough to avoid trench foot...

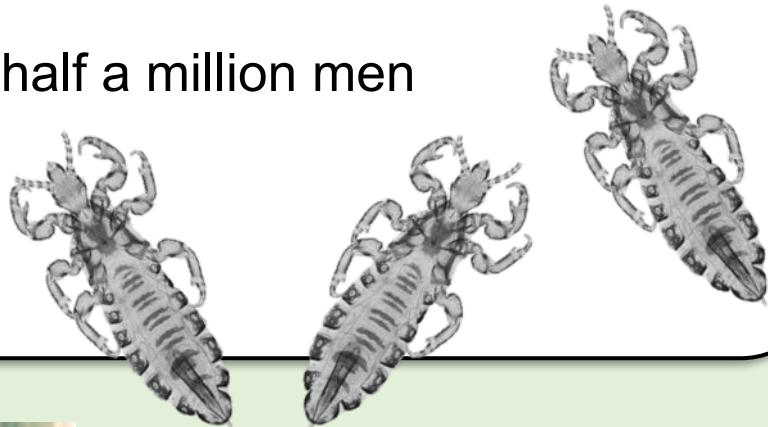
Trench Fever



- Flu like symptoms with high temperature, headaches and aching muscles
- This was a major problem as it affected half a million men

Solutions:

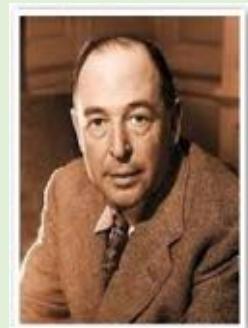
- They worked out it was caused by lice
- Delousing stations were set up



J.R.R.
Tolkien



A.A.
Milne



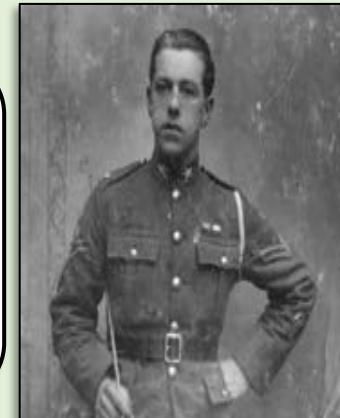
C.S. Lewis

What have these
3 got in common?

Trench Fever

"The things lay in the seams of trousers. A lighted candle applied where they were thickest made them pop like Chinese crackers. After a session of this, my face would be covered with small blood spots from extra big fellows which had popped too vigorously."

George Coppard



One night, as we lay in bed my friend Jock said 'damn this, I cannot stand it any longer!' He took off his tunic - we slept in these - then he took off his jersey, then his shirt. He put his shirt in the middle of the dug-out floor and put his jersey and tunic on again. As we sat up in bed watching the shirt he had taken off and put it on the floor it actually lifted; it was swarming with lice.



Henry Gregory of 119th Machine Gun company was interviewed after the war about life in the trenches.

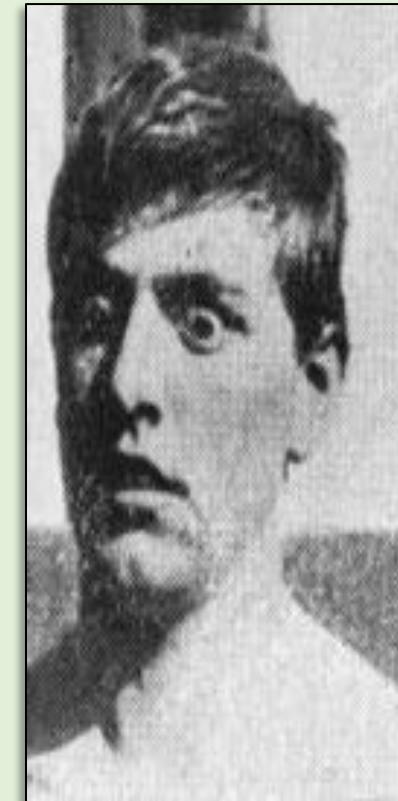




Shellshock

Tiredness, headaches, nightmares, loss of speech,
shaking and complete mental breakdown

80,000 troops
got shellshock



What are your thoughts on the following images?

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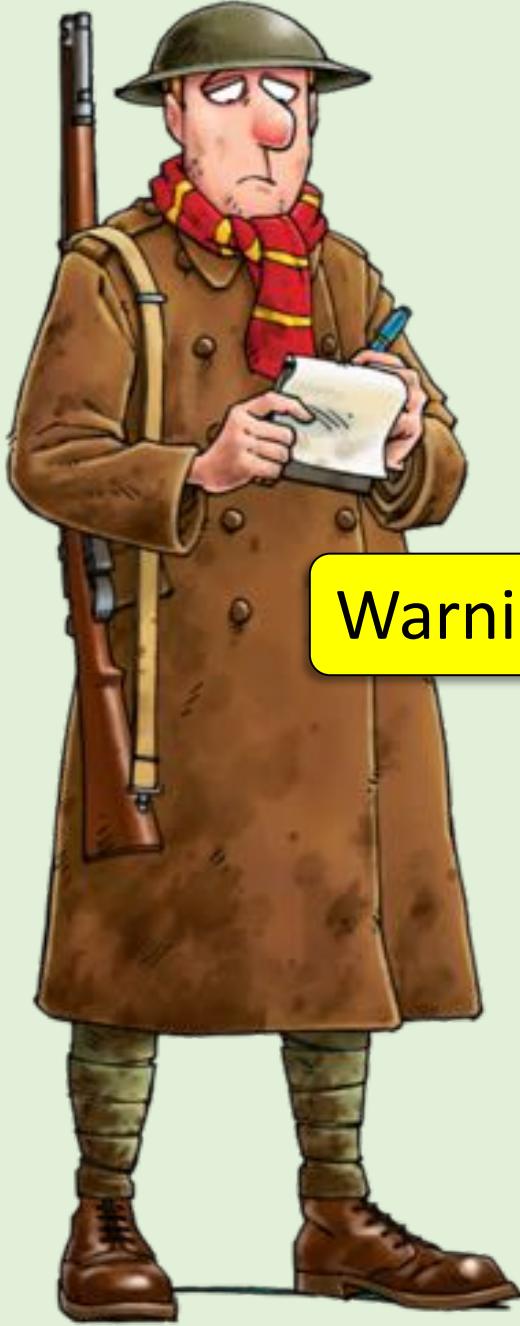
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What are your thoughts on this image?



Wounds:

Warning, the following images are graphic

Rifles & explosives:

- High explosive shells and shrapnel were responsible for 58% of wounds
- 60% of injuries were to arms and legs



- Bullets were responsible for 39% of wounds
- Machine guns could fire 450 rounds a minute
- Rifles could fire accurately up to 500 m

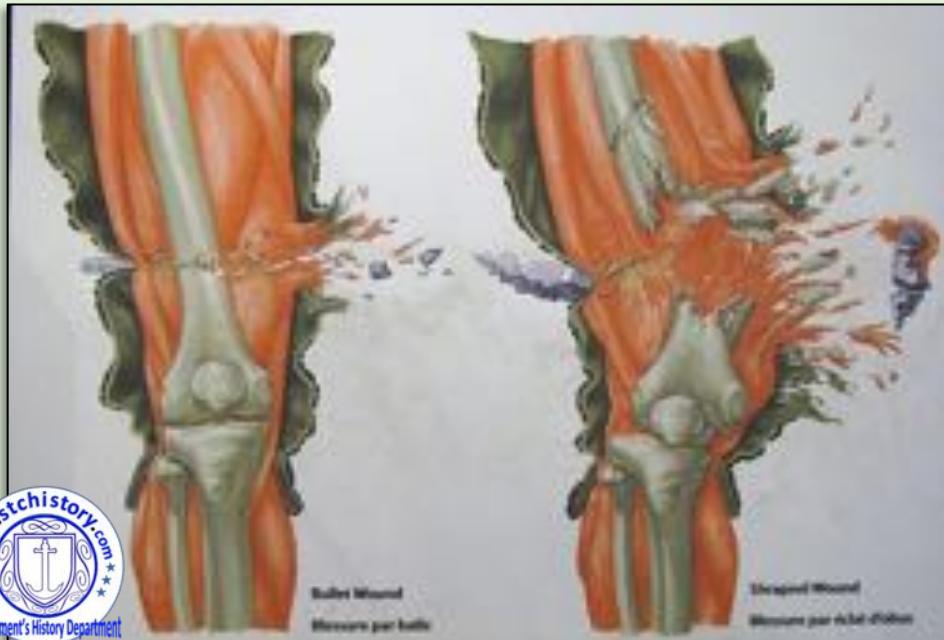




How does this help medicine / surgery improve during WWI?

Shrapnel, infection & head injuries:

- When men were injured, either by shrapnel or bullets, the metal would enter their body taking with it the fabric of the uniform.
- The dirt alone would have caused infection, but remember the soil here had bacteria from the fertiliser used on the land before the war
- Gas gangrene is an infection that produces gas in the gangrenous wound – it could spread and kill within 1 day!



Brodie Helmet

This was a steel helmet with a strap that prevented it being thrown off in an explosion. It reduced fatal wounds by 80%

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Source A

From an interview with Captain Maberly Esler in 1974. He was a medical officer. Here he is recalling events at Hooge, in the **Ypres salient, in June 1915.**

We'd never attempt any major surgery or anything like that in the trenches – one couldn't do it. The only thing you could do was to cover a wound to keep it from getting infected, or stop a haemorrhage by compression if they were bleeding to death. Several people got tetanus afterwards from an infection in the ground which was carried in shelled areas. The ground had been shelled for such a long time it was in rather a septic sort of condition.

What is the CONTENT and CONTEXT if this source?

How were soldiers injured in WW1?

The high number of head wounds early in the war led to the Brodie Helmet being introduced as standard kit in 1915.

Just 12% of wounds recorded were to the torso. Many soldiers hit here never made it to a hospital, so their injuries were never recorded.

Leg wounds were the most commonly recorded area of injury; amputation was often necessary.

Create an infographic for this detail
(in your own words)



Arm injuries were often caused by high explosive artillery shells.

The mud on the Western Front led one British surgeon to remark, "every gunshot wound... is more or less infected at the moment of its infliction".

Standing in water for long periods in the trenches caused trench foot, where infection leads the flesh of the foot to decay and die.

Gas attacks:

- Gas attack caused great panic and fear
- Only 6,000 British soldiers died from gas but it was still greatly feared
- Gas masks were provided in **1915**



Listen to this famous poem by Wilfred Owen in 1917, as you're listening, try to make notes or drawings about what he's describing... **(Dulce in folder)**

Chlorine

First used by the Germans in 1915 at the second battle of Ypres.

It led to death by suffocation.

The medical services had no experience in dealing with gas attacks, and so had to experiment with treatments.

Gas masks were given to all British troops in July 1915.

Before this, soldiers developed their own system of gas masks. They soaked cotton pads with urine and pressed them to their faces to help stop the gas entering their lungs.

The British retaliated with their own chlorine attack later in 1915 at the Battle of Loos, but the wind changed direction and the gas blew back on the British lines.

Phosgene

First used at the end of 1915 near Ypres.

Its effects were similar to those of chlorine but it was faster acting, killing an exposed person within two days.



Gas attack caused great panic and fear

Only 6,000 British soldiers died from gas but it was still greatly feared

Gas masks were provided in 1915

Mustard

First used in 1917 by the Germans.

It was an odourless gas that worked within 12 hours, causing both internal and external blisters and could pass through clothing to burn the skin.

Design an infographic for Gas attacks – it should be short and informative

Source B

From 'Dulce et Decorum Est', a poem written by Wilfred Owen in 1917 whilst he was being treated for shellshock. He served on the Western Front in 1916-17 and returned in 1918, where he was killed in action shortly before the end of the war. The text in the title and the end of the poem is in Latin and means 'it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country'.

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of
fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and
stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green
light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.
If in some smothering dreams you too could
pace

Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,

My friend, you would not tell with such high
zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Source D

From a 1919 painting by John Singer Sargent. Sargent was commissioned by the British War Memorials Committee to paint this in 1918 and researched the painting by visiting both Arras and Ypres before the end of the war. These soldiers have experienced a mustard gas attack.



Source C

From the notebook of Lance Sergeant Elmer Cotton, who served in the 5th Northumberland Fusiliers in 1915. He is describing the effects of a chlorine gas attack.

It produces a flooding of the lungs. It is the equivalent to drowning, only on dry land. The effects are these - a splitting headache and a terrific thirst (but to drink water is instant death), a knife-edge pain in the lungs and the coughing up of a greenish froth off the stomach and the lungs, finally resulting in death. It is a fiendish death to die.

Stick each source on its own page...

- 1) Which of these sources is the most useful for an enquiry into Gas attacks? **You'll need to NOPCAT each of them with strengths and weaknesses...**
- 2) What are the similarities and differences in the sources?

Asking Questions: Exam skills

Source E

Photograph of a man wearing a cotton wool pad respirator, April 1915. This was a simple form of gas mask. The Second Battle of Ypres also began in April 1915.



Content Question:

What can you learn from the content?

Provenance questions:

Nature: It is a photograph

Origin: Taken in same month as 2nd Battle of Ypres, April 1915

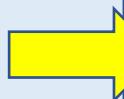
Purpose: Purpose can be difficult for a photograph, might it have been;

- Propaganda?
- Was it set up? Why might it be?
- Perhaps it was to inform soldiers about the best way to protect themselves against gas attack?

Context Question:

You know 2 things that are relevant to Source E:

- 1) The first use of chlorine gas was by the Germans in April 1915 and the 2nd Battle of Ypres
- 2) The British were not prepared for gas attacks and so they had to experiment to find ways to protect the soldiers



So, if you were asked how useful Source E is, you could say something like this [key: content, provenance, context]:

'Source E is useful because it shows the first attempts to make a gas mask. Although we don't know why the photo was taken, it might have been set up so that soldiers could learn how best to protect themselves. We know that proper gas masks were not provided at the time because the gas attacks were unexpected.'

Summary

- Common medical problems that faced men fighting on the Western Front faced were trench foot, trench fever and shellshock.
- The introduction of the Brodie helmet saved many lives by protecting the head against shrapnel injuries.
- Gas attacks caused burning skin and suffocation.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

S1 Explain all the medical problems and possible injuries that soldiers faced in the trenches that are referred to in this section. Then note down all the solutions to the problems.