



Battle of the Somme

- Resources and Answer Sheet

Year 7 and Below

Discussion

1) What do you think soldiers were given to eat?

Answer: Soldiers were well fed – below is a typical weekly menu for soldiers taken from pre-war recruiting literature. The food looks quite boring – lots of bread and potatoes. But for many recruits this was much more food than they might have had at home, particularly if they were in low-paid jobs. You can see that they also got curry once a week.

The meat may not have been the best cuts of meat. Once on campaign it was difficult to get fresh food, particularly for really large armies. Therefore the soldiers were given tinned food such as corned beef (like Fray Bentos imported from Argentina), and tinned stew – although there was often more fat than meat in the stew, and the vegetables were boiled to mush. There always seems to have been plenty of tinned jam (mainly plum and apple) and also condensed milk, as fresh milk would go off too quickly.

However, many soldiers were lucky enough to have family and friends at home who would post them food parcels. So many received parcels with fruitcake, sweets and chocolate in for example. Some of the wealthier families sent out hampers of food from shops like Fortnum and Mason and Harrods. The officers and soldiers would usually share the food from home with their friends.

ACTUAL EXAMPLE OF MEALS PROVIDED AT AN ORDINARY REGIMENTAL DEPOT.

Meals.	Sunday.	Monday.	Tuesday.	Wednesday.	Thursday.	Friday.	Saturday.
Breakfast	Tea, Bread, Butter and Haddocks.	Tea, Bread, Butter, Porridge and Milk.	Tea, Bread, Liver and Onions.	Tea, Bread, Bacon and Tomatoes.	Tea, Bread, Butter, Porridge and Milk.	Tea, Bread, Sausage and Onions.	Tea, Bread and Butter.
Dinner	Roast, Potatoes, Turnips, Tapioca.	Tomato stew Potatoes, Beans.	Meat pie, Potatoes, Turnips.	Curry stew, Potatoes, Beans.	Roast, Potatoes, Cabbage, Suet pudding	Brown stew, Potatoes, Peas.	Tomato stew Potatoes, Beans.
Tea	Tea, Bread and Butter.	Tea, Bread and Jam.	Tea, Bread and Butter.	Tea, Bread and Dripping.	Tea, Bread, Jam.	Tea, Bread and Syrup.	Tea, Bread and Dripping.
Supper	—	Pea soup.	Lentil soup.	Barley soup.	Pea soup.	Lentil soup.	—



2) What do you think soldiers with special diets ate?

Answer: The Army did not cater for people who chose to be vegetarians. Nor were people with particular allergies given special food (for example Coeliac disease - an allergy to gluten in wheat, barley and rye - was not understood as a condition at the time). However, soldiers who had special religious diets were looked after. So Hindu troops would not be fed beef, and Jewish and Muslim troops were given kosher and halal products respectively. The soldiers of the Indian Army would have their own butchers and cooks responsible for preparing fresh meat and food.

3) How was food cooked?

Answer: Every unit had its own cooks who prepared food on field kitchens. Field kitchens were essentially cookers on wheels that were pulled by horses. One field kitchen could feed a company of 120 men. The cooks could prepare hot drinks like tea and coffee, stews, steam puddings and even bake bread.

Photographic and Other Resources

Imperial War Museum. The Imperial War Museum was established in 1917 for the purpose of recording and preserving material linked to British and the Empire's experience of the Great War. The collections website can be found at www.iwm.org.uk/collections and the main site has a wealth of resources on multiple aspects of the war at the front and back at home.

The collections site search engine is straightforward. Enter a simple search term such as 'Medical'. Once the search results have been returned, it is possible for students and teachers to filter the results:

Select 'Filter Your Results' (below the search term box).

Select media to choose 'Images', 'Audio' or 'Video'.

Select 'Filter Your Results' again.

Select 'Subject Period' and then 'First World War'.

It is then possible to trawl through the material to select items of interest. It is often possible to listen to veteran's recordings or watch contemporary film on the site. Many pictures are available to download for non-commercial use.

Other Sites

First class sites for students conducting research are The Western Front Association www.westernfrontassociation.com the 'Long, Long Trail' www.longlongtrail.co.uk and 'Scarlet Finders' www.scarletfinders.co.uk

Students looking for details of relatives killed in the First World War should start with the Commonwealth War Grave Commission site www.cwgc.org The site also has school resources for Primary and Secondary aged children.



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