

WW1 Script



Script to accompany WW1 Food in the Trenches film (as spoken by Andy Robertshaw)

It is 1917 on the Somme and Private Smith of the King's Liverpool Regiment has just been told he has one hour to make a meal.

He cuts a slot in the base of his trench where he will get his fire going and he will cook his meal (Corned Beef Hash). Normally he would have dry vegetables supplied by the Army but today he has fresh vegetables thanks to a French farmer (who didn't know he was helping!). Using his jackknife, the soldier prepares carrots, an onion and a couple of potatoes. Like most days in the trenches he will make an all in one stew. He is going to be here for five days so he is careful not to waste anything. The meal is for him and his mate. Sharing is important in the trenches and tomorrow it will be his friend's turn to cook.

He puts everything into the mess tin adding a bit of fat from the tin of corned beef. Everything is cut as small as possible so that it cooks quickly to allow enough time to eat and enjoy the meal without hurrying or worse, seeing the meal chucked away. On duty he shares the half - pound (250 gram approx.) tin of corned beef with his mate. The contents of the tin are cubed to help cook it thoroughly. He doesn't want to overcook the stew, which would result in a disgusting pink mess! He wants to just cook it through. Now he adds smashed up biscuit (like a large dog biscuit) to thicken the stew.

He cuts out a piece of his sandbag soaked in candle wax to help the fire along. He fries the vegetables and meat and adds water to make a thick and, hopefully, tasty stew. He stirs constantly so that it doesn't stick or melt the tin off the outside of his mess tin. The last of the corned beef goes in. His last job before settling down to enjoy his meal is to put his spoon in his putty and get something from his canteen: HP Sauce. He and a mate bought a bottle of HP Sauce, because it is not part of Army Rations but it improves the taste. All the lads do this.

With 20 minutes still to go before he is back on duty, he can sit back and enjoy his meal. This is pleasant in summer; it is a life saver in winter when a hot meal is what a soldier needs. Without food a soldier can't fight.



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