



## KS3 First World War: Virtual trail

Welcome to the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum at Norwich Castle. Each item tells a story and gives some insight into the experiences of those soldiers. Answers to questions can be found at the end of this document.

The Norfolk Regiment was an infantry regiment of the British Army formed in 1685. Between 1914 and 1918 Norfolk Regiment soldiers served on the Western Front (France and Belgium) and in Gallipoli, Egypt, Palestine and the Balkans. 16,285 of them did not return.

You can [explore all of the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum](#), but for finding information and items about the First World War to help you with this trail, there are three key displays. [Move and zoom in to find the following display cases](#):

- The tall and wide display case on the left is the **main display case** for the First World War. This will be where the majority of objects can be found.
- The long and thin display case directly in front shows a uniform and equipment from the Western Front.
- The wide and short display case on the right shows letters, diaries and medals

This trail is divided into the following sections:

- Uniform
- The Western Front
- Weapons
- Casualties
- Gas
- Living on the Western Front
- Medals and remembrance

# Uniform

[Compare the uniform directly ahead of you at this link](#) with [today's uniforms](#).

**Q1:** In what ways has the uniform changed since the First World War?

Puttees were long narrow strips of cloth, usually of khaki wool, which would be wound tightly round the leg from boots to below the knee.

**Activity:** [Looking at the uniform and equipment display directly ahead at this link](#), can you find the puttees?

**Q2:** Why do you think they were worn?

# The Western Front

After a short period of rapid attacks and advances by the German Army, by the end of October 1914 the whole of the Western Front was lined with defensive inter-connecting ditches called trenches, which were very difficult to break through. A great maze of front-line, second-line and communication trenches grew. They remained in roughly the same positions until the last weeks of the four-year war.

**Activity:** [Study Lieutenant Cecil Upcher's sketches](#) of dug-outs for officers in trenches and back from the front line from 1916. Cecil was an architect before and after the war and was interested in recording his surroundings. Write down three words to describe these dug-outs.

# Weapons

The image below shows a piece of shell fragment brought back from the Western Front. The jagged piece of iron weighs 1.5 kilograms (3lbs 5oz) and has many razor-sharp edges. Though often called shrapnel, jagged pieces like this came from bursting high-explosive shells. Throughout the war on the Western Front, most casualties were caused by these high explosive artillery shells.



[Have a good look for weapons in the main display case.](#)

**Q3:** What different types of weapons can you see?

## Casualties



The steel mirror in the image above saved Corporal JC Woodhouse of the Norfolk Regiment by deflecting bits of a shell from entering his heart.

**Activity:** In [this Mural of Western Front Casualties](#), can you spot:

1. Stretchers to the Front, caring for wounded, bringing people back
2. Dressing stations and triage (where injuries were assessed)
3. Truck or ambulance to hospital
4. Hospital train, barge, boat and treatment in UK
5. Long-term health issues or returning to Front or returning to civilian life

## Gas

Gas, such as chlorine and mustard, was first used as a weapon during the First World War. Because these gases were released into the wind, soldiers were sometimes gassed by their own side if the wind changed direction. Mustard gas was the deadliest weapon used. It was fired into the trenches in shells, was colourless, and took 12 hours to take effect. Its effects included blistering skin, vomiting, sore eyes, and internal and external bleeding. Death could take up to five weeks.

[Look at this picture of objects relating to the First World War.](#)

**Activity:** Can you spot the gas hoods in the picture?

**Q4:** Do you know why soldiers would soak the hoods with urine before putting them on?

**Activity:** Can you also spot the following in the picture?

- Gas rattle (replica). When swung around, this made a loud noise to warn soldiers to put on gas helmets as one or two minutes of breathing gas could be fatal.
- Gas mask (replica). The box respirator haversack was worn at the ready position, hoisted on the upper chest by strings. As gas attacks were so deadly, all soldiers were eventually given gas masks.
- Bullets (replicas). Five Enfield 303 deactivated rifle rounds on an original unissued charger clip for fast loading as a soldier might have to carry 100 or more. Lee Enfield rifles could shoot 20-30 aimed bullets per minute.
- First Field dressings (real and replica) – their job was to stop soldiers bleeding to death so proper medical treatment could follow. They were carried by all soldiers.

## Living on the Western Front

The soldiers ate their food in mess tins rather than using plates. The image below is of a mess tin.



**Activity:** Can you [spot a mess tin in the main display case?](#)

Everyone serving overseas during Christmas 1914 also received a tin gift box in the post from Princess Mary. She was the 17-year-old daughter of King George V and Queen Mary. The box, which contained tobacco or sweets, shows her face side-on.

**Activity:** Can you [find one of these boxes in the main display case?](#)

Below is an image of the world-famous whistle which was played on Christmas Day 1914 when the fighting stopped for a while on both sides.



**Q5.** What types of songs do you think were played on this whistle?

**Activity:** Can you [see this whistle in the main display case?](#)

[Study the short and wide display case](#) on the right.

**Q6.** How did soldiers keep in touch with loved ones during the war?

**Q7.** How might soldiers today do this?

## Medals and remembrance

Countless acts of bravery were shown by soldiers of the Norfolk Regiment, risking their own lives for the sake of others. Many gallantry medals were awarded in recognition of courage. Campaign medals were also awarded to those who were fighting in a specific military operation or particular place.

**Activity:** [Study the short and wide display case](#) on the right (same as above) and design your own gallantry or campaign medal.

**Q8.** In what ways do we still remember the soldiers who fought in this war?

**Q9.** Do you think it is important to remember these soldiers who fought in the First World War? Why?

## Answers to questions

1. Today's uniforms are camouflaged and look comfortable whereas uniforms from the First World War were plain-coloured and look difficult to wear and move around in. Their khaki colour first used in conflict just 15 years before during Boer War. Previously, soldiers had worn scarlet.
2. Puttees were worn to protect the lower legs from mud, insects and probably even rats!
3. Weapons that can easily be seen include shells (projectiles that contained explosives), grenade, bayonet, cudgel, machine gun, pistols, revolver, rifles and bayonets.
4. Ammonia in urine gave some protection from the gas.
5. Types of songs may have been hymns, Christmas carols, popular songs of that time or war songs, famously the German carol Stille Nacht.
6. Soldiers wrote letters and pre-printed service postcards.
7. Today's soldiers can still write letters but may also be able to email, text message, use social media, video chat, etc.
8. We remember the soldiers of this war by wearing poppies and holding ceremonies on November 11 (the anniversary of the end of the War in 1918) and by having war memorials dedicated to them.
9. Your own opinion.

Norfolk Museums Service is a partnership between Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's District Councils, funded through council tax, earned income and grants.

