



Officers & men

Many people believe that the officers in the Great War treated the ordinary soldiers badly. They believe that the soldiers fought while the officers sheltered safely behind the lines. In this case study you can see whether the original sources from the time support this view.

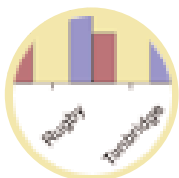
You will probably find it helpful to study the [Background](#) before you start looking at the sources.

Use the [Worksheet](#) as you look through the sources. This will help you plan your research and think about how to present your findings.

Sources



Photo of officers in their dugout, 1918



Graph of public school pupils killed



Recorded memories of life in the trenches



Orders sent out to troops, 1916



Time spent in the front line at the Somme, 1916



A poem by Private G Getley, 1917



Source 1

Photo of the 12th East Yorkshires washing and shaving in their dugout near Roclincourt, January 1918

(Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, Q10623)

How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. It contains information that could be useful in your presentation. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- What does this source tell you about conditions in the trenches?
- Does this source suggest officers enjoyed better conditions than ordinary soldiers?
- Will you use this source in your presentation?



Source 1





Source 2

Graph showing numbers of public school pupils killed in the Great War

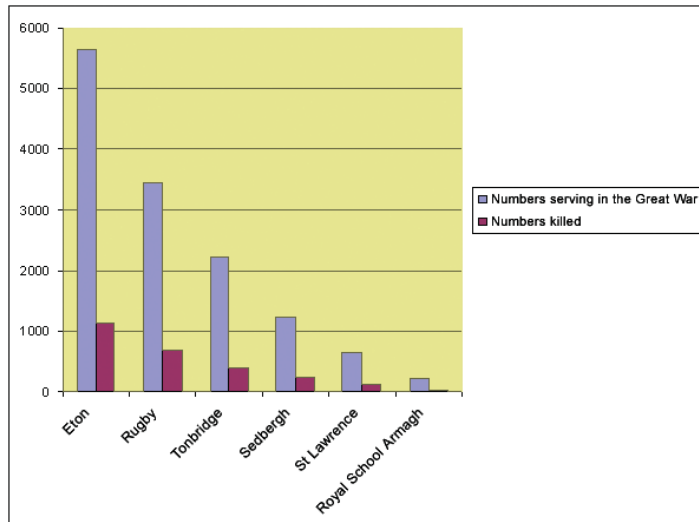
How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. It contains information that could be useful in your presentation. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- What does this source tell you about the casualty rates for pupils from the schools shown?
- These were schools for the wealthy and privileged. Do you think these pupils are more likely to have served as officers or ordinary soldiers?
- Will you use this source in your presentation?



Source 2





Source 3

Memories of Lieutenant-Colonel M E Hancock on life in the trenches

(Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, 007396/14/4)

How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. It contains information that could be useful in your presentation. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- According to this interview, what was Hancock's commanding officer doing?
- What is Hancock's attitude towards his commander?
- What impression do you get of Hancock's commander from this source?
- Will you use this source in your presentation?



Source 3

... any kind of dugout or rest place had to be dug out of the back of the trench. That's in the front line. In the communication trenches it wasn't too bad. But it meant that you'd got to hack it out with a pickaxe and get some sort of shelter to get out of the trench. You couldn't lie down and go to sleep because people were walking over you. And you had to get yourself over the back somewhere, which most people did. ...

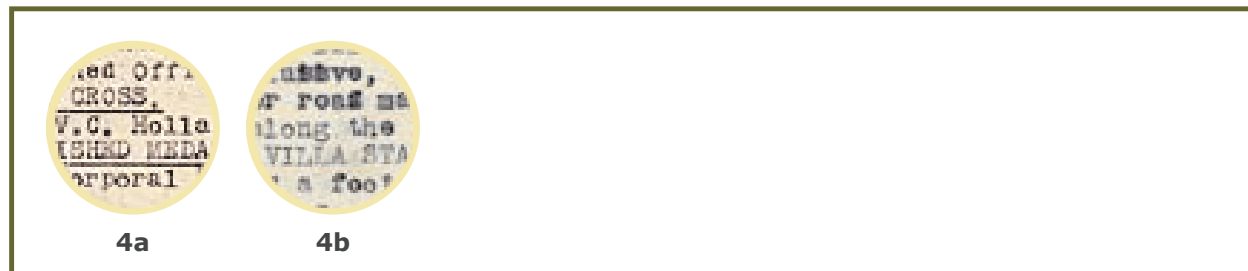
... the commanding officer had a pretty good dugout there. Yes, he did. He and his servant I remember seeing them both hacking away at this underground shelter with a will. And he constructed quite a good place. ...

... it was a sort of a square. It could have been six foot square I suppose, that kind of thing, pretty well down underground so you've probably got two or three feet of earth above and unlikely that a shell would crash



Source 4

Orders sent out to troops of the Warwickshire Regiment, September - November 1916
(Catalogue ref: WO 95/2756)



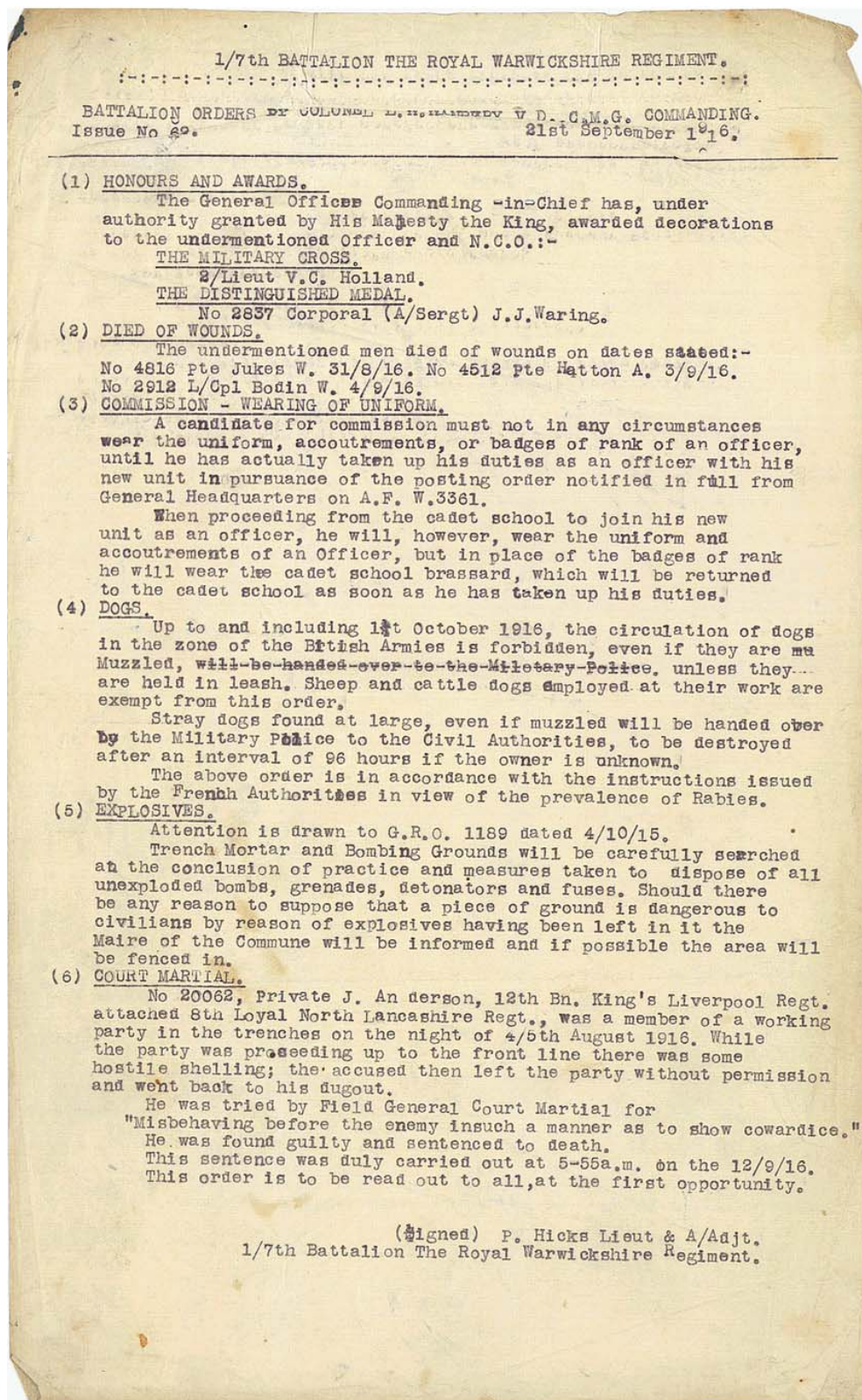
How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. It contains information that could be useful in your presentation. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- Study source 4a. What events are described in sections 1-2?
- Look at source 4a, section 4. Why do you think soldiers kept dogs and why is this being banned?
- What does section 6 of source 4a suggest about relations between officers and men?
- Look at source 4b. Do orders 1-4 seem reasonable or unreasonable? Do you think the soldiers would accept them?
- Would they feel the same way about orders 5-6?
- Study source 4b, order 8. What does this suggest about relations between officers and men?
- Will you use one of these sources in your presentation?



Source 4a





Source 5

Time spent in the front line at the Battle of the Somme, July – November 1916

(Catalogue ref: WO 153/1258)

How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. It contains information that could be useful in your presentation. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- What is the longest amount of time a division spent in the front line during the battle?
- Why do you think some units spent longer than others?
- In the second phase of the battle, what happened to a unit that had spent a lot of time in the front line during the first phase?
- Will you use this source in your presentation?



Source 5



SECRET. NOT TO BE COPIED.

STATEMENT SHOWING NUMBER OF DAYS EACH DIVISION HAS BEEN IN FRONT LINE IN SOMME BATTLE.

From 1st July to 23rd Nov, 1916.

Divisions.	FIRST TIME IN THE BATTLE.								SECOND TIME IN THE BATTLE.					Grand Total of No. of days in Somme Battle up to Nov. 23rd, '16.	
	First Time in Front Line.	No. of Days.	Second Time in Front Line.	No. of Days.	Third Time in Front Line.	No. of Days.	Fourth Time in Front Line.	No. of Days.	Total Number of days for First Period.	First Time in Front Line.	No. of Days.	Second Time in Front Line.	No. of Days.		Total Number of days for Second Period.
1	11-7 ... 25-7	15	16-8 ... 11-9	27	21-9 ... 28-9	8			50					50	
2	26-7 ... 9-8	15	22-8 ... 20-9	30 ^v	2-10 ... 7-10	6 ^s	18-10 ... 15-11	29 ^v	80					80	
3	8-7 ... 25-7	18	15-8 ... 19-8	5					23	8-10 ... 19-10 12-10 ... 23-11 33 ^v	45 ^v		45 ^v	68	
4	1-7 ... 21-7	21 ^e							21 ^s	10-10 ... 24-10	15		15	36	
5	20-7 ... 1-8	13	27-8 ... 6-9	11	11-9 and 13-9 19-9 to 26-9 8 =	10			34					34	
6	8-8 ... 27-8	20 ^v	12-9 ... 18-9	7	22-9 ... 30-9	9	9-10 ... 19-10	11	47					47	
7	1-7 ... 5-7	5	12-7 ... 20-7	9	27-8 ... 7-9	12			26					26	
8	1-7 ... 1-7	1							1	20-10 ... 30-10	11	8-11 ... 16-11	9	20	
9	8-7 ... 19-7	17							17	10-10 ... 24-10	15			32	
11	8-9 ... 1-10	24	22-11 ... 23-11	2					26					26	
12	2-7 ... 8-7	7	16-7 ... 22-7	5	29-7 ... 18-8	16			28	2-10 ... 19-10	18		18	46	
14	13-8 ... 30-8	18	13-9 ... 16-9	4					22					22	
15	8-8 ... 18-9	42	9-10 ... 2-11	25					67					67	
16	1-9 ... 9-9	9							9					9	
17	1-7 ... 10-7	10	2-8 ... 12-8	11					21	31-10 ... 13-11	13		13	34	
18	1-7 ... 7-7	7	13-7 ... 17-7	5					12	26-9 ... 5-10	10	16-10 ... 21-11	27	47	
19	2-7 ... 9-7	8	20-7 ... 31-7	12					20	9-10 ... 16-10	8	22-10 ... 22-11	32	40	
20	30-7 ... 17-8	19 ^v	23-8 ... 4-9	13	17-9 ... 26-9 4 and 27-9 1 =	5	30-9 ... 8-10	9	46					46	
21	1-7 ... 8-7	3	11-7 ... 17-7	7					10	17-9 ... 1-10	15			25	
23	4-7 ... 11-7	8	17-7 ... 19-7	3	26-7 ... 8-8	14			25	19-9 ... 8-10	20		20	45	
24	10-8 ... 22-8	13	31-8 ... 4-9	5					18					18	
25	4-7 ... 16-7	13	25-7 ... 10-8	17	19-8 ... 7-9	20	2-10 ... 21-10	20	70					70	
29	1-7 ... 24-7	24 ^v							24 ^v	11-10 ... 29-10	19	17-11 ... 23-11	7	50	
30	1-7 ... 5-7	5	8-7 ... 11-7	4	24-7 and 30-7	2			11	11-10 ... 22-10	12		12	23	
31	1-7 ... 4-7	4							4	17-10 ... 23-11	38 ^v		38 ^v	42	
32	1-7 ... 3-7	3	9-7 ... 15-7	7					10	16-11 ... 23-11	8		8	18	
33	15-7 ... 21-7	7	7-8 ... 30-8	24					31	25-10 ... 7-11	14		14	45	
34	1-7 ... 3-7	3	10-7 ... 19-7	10	31-7 ... 15-8	16			29					29	
35	18-7 ... 31-7	14	20-8 ... 26-8	7					21					21	
36	1-7 ... 2-7	2							2					2	
37	Split up between 21st and 34th Divisions.														
38	6-7 ... 11-7	6	15-7 ... 29-7	15					21					21	
39 ^v	28-8 ... 17-10	51 ^e	18-10 ... 15-11	29					80					80	
40	15-11 ... 22-11	8							8					8	
41	11-9 ... 17-9	7	29-9 ... 1-10	3	4-10 ... 10-10	7			17					17	
46	1-7	1 ^v							1 ^v					1 ^v	
47	12-9 ... 20-9	9	29-9 ... 9-10	11					20					20	
48	1-7 ... 14-7	14 ^v	15-7 ... 28-7	14	14-8 ... 29-8	16			44	3-11 ... 23-11	21		21	65	
49	2-7 ... 18-8	48 ^v	28-8 ... 25-9	29 ^v					77 ^v					77 ^v	
50	10-9 ... 3-10	24	25-10 ... 18-11	25					49					49	
51	22-7 ... 6-8	16							16	5-10 ... 17-11	44 ^v		44 ^v	60	
55	31-7 ... 14-8	15	5-9 ... 12-9	8	18-9 ... 28-9	11			34					34	
56	1-7	1 ^v							1 ^v	4-9 ... 12-9 6-14-9 ... 27-9 14 ^v	20	1-10 ... 9-10	9	30	
60															
61	22-11 ... 23-11	2							2					2	
63	8-10 ... 15-11	39 ^v							39 ^v					39 ^v	
Guards	11-8 ... 21-8	11 ^v	10-9 ... 16-9	7	21-9 ... 30-9	10	14-11 ... 21-11	8	36					36	
1 A.	20-7 ... 27-7	8	17-8 ... 22-8	6					14	30-10 ... 13-11	15		15	29	
2 A.	28-7 ... 6-8	10	28-8 ... 28-8	6					16	5-11 ... 21-11	17		17	33	
4 A.	7-8 ... 16-8	10	29-8 ... 4-9	7					17	14-11 ... 23-11	10		10	27	
5 A.	22-10 ... 4-11	14	22-11 ... 23-11	2					16					16	
N.Z.	11-9 ... 3-10	23							23					23	
1 Can.	5-9 ... 11-9	7	18-9 ... 28-9	11	7-10 ... 15-10	9			27					27	
2 Can.	12-9 ... 17-9	6	26-9 ... 5-10	10					16					16	
3 Can.	14-9 ... 22-9	9	29-9 ... 15-10	17					26					26	
4 Can.	12-10 ... 23-11	43							43					43	

NOTE.—^v In line North of the Ancre. † Chiefly on Defensive Front. ‡ Gommecourt Attack.

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Source 6

'Gommecourt Wood', a poem by Private G Getley, 1917
(Catalogue ref: WO 95/2686)

How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. It contains information that could be useful in your presentation. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- How do you know this poem was about the attack on the Somme?
- According to the poem, what was the mood of this soldier and his mates?
- What happened to Bagley and how did it affect the writer?
- What was Private Getley's job?
- What is the general attitude in this poem towards the war?
- Will you use this source in your presentation?



Source 6

Gommecourt Wood.

On July the 1st the attack was made
On Gommecourt Wood by the Staffs Brigade
We did not care, nor did we fear
For we were as happy as men when they're full of beer.

Up "Derby Dyke" we went
Whizz-bangs and bullets the Germans sent
But on we went as brave could be
Certainly thinking it would be a victory.

On my way to my surprise I did see
A fellow with a "bleat" whose name was Bagley
Although he seemed cheerful and wished me good luck
I replied I can't come with you till that wood we have took.

The company runner I professed to be
Taking messages was then my duty
A message was given me so to Headquarters I ran
It is always my motto to do the best I can.

So back to the boys I quickly made my way
Thinking every moment I should fall on the way
But as luck would have it I reached them alright
If I could only catch the Kaiser I'd burst his "bloomin' kite"

W^o. Wachin got wounded the platoon officer was he
He led us into action as calm as could be
Sergeant Spinks was then left in charge of the platoon
Although not fond of bacon, he could always "scoff" pontoon.

Many a brave hero fell
We did our duty though it was like being in hell
Good luck to the Staffords I wish them success
God bless them and grant them happiness.