

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



In the Trenches

Two members of the French-speaking 22nd Battalion stand in a trench while a third soldier reads a book in a funk hole constructed into the side of the trench wall. Not all trenches were muddy or constantly under fire. On warm, sunny days, life in the trenches could almost be pleasant.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-242

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



A Haircut

A soldier receives a haircut in the trenches. Living in a trench system for about two weeks at a time meant that many normal activities happened here: eating, sleeping, even grooming.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-061

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



Lunch in the Trenches

Two soldiers eat slices of bread while propped up against sandbags. Bread rations usually arrived in three-pound loaves that were shared among several soldiers. Food was bland and monotonous, but no one ever starved.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-058

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



A Letter from Home

A soldier at the 2nd Canadian Field Ambulance reads a letter. Mail served as a lifeline between soldiers and the home front.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19920044-070

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



Help from a Comrade

A fellow soldier and medical personnel tend to a badly wounded Canadian. While one bandages his wound, the other lights his cigarette. Strong relationships forged in the trenches, and loyalty to one's chums, were among the primary factors in supporting morale.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-664

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



Tending to a Grave

Two Canadian soldiers care for the grave of a fallen comrade. White stones, a wooden cross, and the deceased's helmet act as grave markers.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-824

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



Entertaining Comrades

A Canadian soldier entertains comrades with a homemade instrument. Music and singing were popular pastimes.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-548

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



Getting into Character

A member of the Maple Leaf Concert Party in France applies lipstick and gets set to perform. Without women at the front, men took on the role of female characters. These cross-dressing performers were extremely popular with the soldiers.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-864

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



Man's Best Friend

A wounded Canadian soldier holds his puppy. Animals of all kinds lived in the trenches alongside soldiers.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19920044-805

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



YMCA Hut

An eager but patient line-up of soldiers waits at a Canadian YMCA. During the First World War, the YMCA attempted to address both the material and the spiritual needs of the soldiers. The sandbags around the hut suggest that it is close to the front.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-639

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



Taking a Break

Two Canadian soldiers socialize with two French women in a farmer's field in this clearly posed photo. Despite the brutal nature of the Western Front, there were civilians and villages only ten kilometres or so behind the lines, and soldiers during their leisure time often sought out the company of local civilians.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920085-736

A Soldier's Life
Resources: Photographs



Funk Hole

Two Canadian soldiers in a front line trench in the Hill 60 sector. One infantryman can be seen reclining in a funk hole carved into the trench wall.

George Metcalf Archival Collection

CWM 19920044-608