Draining Trenches
In rain-soaked northern France and Belgium, trenches during much of the year degenerated into muddy ditches. This added to the misery of trench life, and could also result in the collapse of trench walls and parapets.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19920044-256
Funk Hole
Two Canadian soldiers in a front line trench in the Hill 60 sector. One soldier is reclining in a dugout entrance or funk hole, a depression carved into the trench wall.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19920044-608
A Dry Trench
This trench, named Netley, is a good example of a dry trench with well-maintained duckboards. Trenches in poor drainage areas like Flanders could be filled with water for weeks on end despite the best efforts of soldiers to drain them.
George Metcalf Archival Collection        CWM 19920044-963
Demolished German Trench
The body of a dead German soldier lies near the entrance to his dugout. While the entrance is intact, the sides of the trench have collapsed. Common items such as an entrenching tool, a water bottle, and ammunition pouches lie scattered on the ground. The numbers on the dugout frame may refer to the unit designation or to the dugout's number in relation to a trench map.

George Metcalf Archival Collection  CWM 19920044-195
Festubert Landscape
This photograph of the ruined battlefield near Festubert was taken in the spring of 1919. The Canadians fought at Festubert in May 1915, but no official photographers accompanied them to the front. The ground still shows the scars from the heavy fighting, four years after the battle.

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Photographs as History
Resources: Official First World War Photographs

German Prisoners as Stretcher Bearers
Prisoners were often pressed into carrying the wounded off the battlefield, as shown by this photograph taken during the 1916 Battle of the Somme.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19920085-147
Canadians Advance
Canadians of the 29th Infantry Battalion advance across No Man's Land through the German barbed wire during the battle of Vimy Ridge, April 1917. Most soldiers are armed with their Lee Enfield rifles, but the soldier in the middle carries a Lewis machine-gun on his shoulder.

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Photographs as History
Resources: Official First World War Photographs

Vimy Fortifications
A German machine-gun emplacement of reinforced concrete on the crest of Vimy Ridge, and the Canadians who seized it.
George Metcalf Archival Collection    CWM 19920085-917
Passchendaele Mud
Mud, water, and barbed wire illustrate the horrible terrain through which the Canadians advanced at Passchendaele in late 1917.

George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19930013-511
The Injured and the Dead
A wounded Canadian soldier being carried from the front past several grave markers.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19930013-477
Photographs as History
Resources: Official First World War Photographs

In the Mud
Troops of the Canadian 16th Machine Gun Company hold the line in atrocious conditions on the Passchendaele front in late October or early November, 1917.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19930013-509
Repairing Guns
Members of the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade clean and repair an assortment of machine-guns: a captured Maxim MG-08 (centre); Vickers Mk 1 (left); Lewis Mk 2 aircraft machine-gun (right). Machine-gun crews were equipped with a cleaning kit, tool kit, and spare parts wallet for each machine-gun that they were issued, and it was the crew that was responsible for minor repairs to worn or broken parts and the daily cleaning of the gun. Despite this cleaning and repair, the average lifespan of a water-cooled barrel in a Vickers machine-gun was between 15,000 and 20,000 rounds. If more rounds were fired than this, the gun would steadily lose accuracy and effectiveness.

George Metcalf Archival Collection      CWM 19930013-847
Resting in a Shell Hole
Exhausted Canadians rest in a shell hole during the Battle of Amiens in 1918. These six infantry soldiers must be far from the front lines as several soldiers are sitting dangerously exposed.
George Metcalf Archival Collection  CWM 19930012-407
Resting in Mons
Members of the 42nd Battalion take a rest in the Grand Place, Mons, on the morning of 11 November 1918. Belgian civilians welcomed the Canadians as liberators. The flags of the Allied nations are in the background, including those of Japan and the United States.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19930065-429
Mustard Gas Victims
The extensive bandages on these wounded Canadian soldiers may indicate that they have suffered the effects of flame or mustard gas. Mustard gas burned the lungs, but also caused serious external blisters and disfigurement.
George Metcalf Archival Collection  CWM 19920085-540
Returning on a Tank
Members of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles return from combat piled on a tank in this posed August 1918 photograph. At the Battle of Amiens, where this photograph was taken, Canadians experimented with transporting infantry to the front inside the tanks, but carbon monoxide exhaust and the crippling heat left most of them vomiting and unable to fight.
After a Trench Raid
This photograph, probably taken at dawn, shows three Canadian soldiers with camouflaged faces coming out of the line following a night trench raid at Avion in July 1917. The soldiers have camouflaged their faces, most likely with pieces of burnt cork. From late 1915, Canadians participated in hit-and-run assaults on German trenches, known as trench raids, to gather intelligence, capture prisoners, and kill the enemy.
Pigeon Message
These two soldiers are sending a message by pigeon, which was an effective means to communicate from front to rear, and back again. However, pigeons could become confused in heavy artillery shelling and succumbed easily to lethal poison gas.
Unloading Heavy Shells
Soldiers unload howitzer shells from a truck. A horse team appears to be waiting in the background to pull the shells closer to the front, probably along roads impassable to trucks.
Pack Horses
Members of the 20th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery, stand beside their pack horses, loaded with 18-pounder shells. This photograph was taken before the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917. At Vimy, the Canadian gunners had an estimated 1.6 million shells and every one had to be carried forward to the guns.
Washing Day
Two soldiers work on their laundry. Approximately 1,000 black soldiers served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War, most of them in Nova Scotia's No. 2 Labour Battalion. Labour battalions worked behind the lines, carrying out essential support and supply roles.
Kite Balloons
Helium-filled kite balloons offered important intelligence for forces on the ground. They were tethered to a spot behind the lines and winched up and down. An observer stood in a wicker basket below the balloon to study and photograph the front from hundreds of metres in the air. The ropes hanging from the balloon were used by ground crew to secure the balloon when it was winched down.
George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19920085-117
Returning from the Front
A war-weary and muddied Canadian returns alone from the front. Cigarette in mouth, the soldier glares in the direction of the photographer.

George Metcalf Archival Collection    CWM 19920085-028
A Canadian soldier sits with his dog, reading the day's paper. The packed equipment suggests that he is waiting to move up the line and to the trenches.

George Metcalf Archival Collection      CWM 19920085-430
Photographs as History
Resources: Official First World War 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
Photographs as History
Resources: Official First World War Photographs

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
Photographs as History
Resources: Official First World War Photographs

An officer urges on soldiers of the 72nd Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada in the tug of war finals at the Canadian Championship Athletic Meet in France in 1917.

George Metcalf Archival Collection CWM 19920085-860