

FIRST WORLD WAR TERMS

The First World War gave rise to a whole new vocabulary, as soldiers and civilians found ways to describe what had become a part of their daily lives.

TERMS FOR BOMBS

People needed names for the bombs when they were ‘being shelled’(being bombed)....

Hairbrush

Lemon bomb

Cricket ball

Policeman's truncheon

Toffee Apple (a British mortar shell)

Flying Pig (a German mortar bomb. So-called because it looked like a sausage!)

Dud

A shell which didn't explode

Crump

The sound a shell made when it landed

Snapshot

A speedily aimed rifle shot at a target which was likely to disappear very quickly

Funk and Windy

Ways of avoiding saying afraid or frightening

AT HOME

The war didn't just affect those at the front...

Conchie

A conscientious objector – someone who objected to military service for religious or moral reasons

DORA

Defence of the Realm Act – a law about how civilians had to behave, including restrictions on lighting and a ban on communicating with the enemy

Tank Bank

A way of promoting war savings to raise money – boroughs which had raised the most money at the end of the war were given a full-sized tank to display locally

No Man's Land

Piece of land between two territories which is a no-go area

TERMS FOR DYING

Watching your friends die was hard, and often saying they ‘had died’ felt too harsh or final. As a result, a whole host of phrases for saying that someone had died were used:

Buzzed

Get done in

Knocked out

Number's up

Snuff it

Topped off

Written off

Pushing up daisies

Finished

Napoo (from French *il n'y a plus*)

Copping it

Hop it

Loaf o'bread

Scuppered

Stonkered

Wiped out

Gone West

Empty

None left

ILLNESS

Body snatcher

Trench Fever

Trench Foot

Blighty

Trenchitis

A stretcher bearer

High fever and body pains

Rotting feet, contracted from the cold and wet in the trenches – often so bad you had to be sent back home

Slang for England – from bilati, meaning ‘foreign’ in Hindi

A combination of being fed-up and homesickness

Somewhere in France

Soldiers' letters were censored, so they had to be secretive about where they were fighting

MIA

Missing in Action. This was the official term for men who couldn't be accounted for (might be dead, taken prisoner, separated from the regiment etc.)

HINDI WORDS FROM THE INDIAN ARMY ADOPTED BY THE BRITISH

Bondook, bandook, budook
Chokey (chauki)
Dixie (degchi)
Boberje, bomerjee (bawarchi)
Khaki (khak)
Puttee (patti)

A rifle
A lock-up, prison, watch-house
Huge ration cookpot
Cook
Dust (the colour of the kit!)
Bandage – coverings that wound around a soldier's calf for protection and support. If they were too tight, they could cause Trench Foot by cutting off circulation to the feet!

Hun or Jerry

Names for the Germans

IN THE TRENCHES

Going over the top

Parapet

Sap

Dug – Out

Cubby hole or funk hole

Soldier's best friend

Four by Two

Up the Line

Going over the parapet to fight

Mound of earth in front of the trench on the enemy side

Small ditch or trench dug from the front line leading into No-Man's Land

Shelter or underground dwelling associated with the trenches

Alternative names for dug-out

Rifle

2 portions of 4 inch wide flannel strips for cleaning your rifle

When soldiers were moved from the rear to the frontline

LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE TRENCHES

Fags

Cigarettes

A duck's breakfast

A face wash and drink of water

Bully Beef

Corned beef in tins

Chats

Body Lice and the way they were removed by running a candle flame along the seams of clothes

SLANG FOR DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THE ARMY

White Feather

Given by ladies to men who hadn't signed up as a symbol of cowardice

The Captain, or how a batsman would refer to his officer

Sapper

A military engineer, or someone who dug trenches

Tommy Atkins

An affectionate name for a man in the trenches

Brass hats/Red tabs

Staff officers – a satirical name, referring to their focus on their uniform rather than the fighting!

Wash out

Aspiring officers who failed their commissions - could also be used for a failed raid

The Kings Shilling

Issued to a recruit when they enlisted