

☒ Trench Warfare ☒

These accounts by two British soldiers during the Somme campaign convey both the consuming horror of the trenches and the stunned disbelief of those exposed to it for the first time.

There was a terrific smell. It was so awful it nearly poisoned you. A smell of rotten flesh. The old German front line was covered with bodies—they were seven and eight deep and they had all gone black. The smell! These people had been laying since the first of July. Wicked it was! Colonel Pinney got hold of some stretchers and our job was to put the bodies on them and, with a man at each end, we *threw* them into that crater. There must have been over a thousand bodies there. I don't know how many we buried. I'll never forget that sight. Bodies all over the place. I'll never forget it. I was only eighteen, but I thought, "There's something wrong here!"

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As far as you could see there were all these bodies lying there—literally thousands of them. . . . Some without legs, some were legs without bodies, arms without bodies. A terrible sight. . . . It didn't seem possible. It didn't get inside me or scare me, but it just made me wonder that these could have been men. It made me wonder what it was all about. And far away in the distance we could see nothing but a line of bursting shells. It was continuous. You wouldn't have thought that anybody could have existed in it, it was so terrific. And yet we knew we were going up into it, without an earthly chance.