

Visits to the Great War trenches of France and Belgium have always been a popular destination for school visits. Under the current circumstances these visits are no longer possible. However, at the Centre for Experimental Military Archaeology (CEMA) we are able to offer a set of First World War replica trenches, dug out and very soon a pill box. We are at the Kent Show Ground on the A249 and just off the M2 and M20. These are a perfect open-air hands-on experience for school groups from KS2 upwards. Based on Railway Wood, Ypres, the historically accurate site offers an excellent setting to inspire students of History or English.

Guiding, parking, toilets and a picnic areas are available and included in the per student price.

The academic lead for the project is Andy Robertshaw, BA, FSA. He is a teacher and was previously Head of Education at the National Army Museum in addition to being military advisor to Stephen Spielberg's 'War Horse' and Sam Mendes '1917'. Many of the artefacts in use come from this film.

A visit is based on a half day of two to three hours. Only one school is on site at any time. The students are divided into small groups to study in rotation a combination of;

### **Core Presentations**

#### **1. Trench tour**

An expert guides small groups through the trenches dressed with appropriate ammunition boxes, gas gongs, etc. Where did they eat? Sleep? Work? Go to the toilets? Write letters home? Was it really 'Eye Deep in Hell?' (The perfect photo opportunity!). Wheel chair users can observe from vantage points above the trench system

#### **2. Dressing Tommy**

What did the British soldier need to serve in the trenches? An interactive exploration of the uniform and equipment of the soldier in the trenches. Here, the students will see all the physical components of the British uniform and kit, and - COVID dependent - there may even be an unlucky volunteer mannequin!

This presentation can be extended to a hands-on experience as Covid restrictions allow.

### **3. Explore an officer's dugout**

Where did officer's and signallers work. Where did they sleep and eat? How did they communicate with Head Quarters? Why would four officers have two bunk beds? *Purposefully built above ground with two exits to provide a safe environment. Two entrances one designed for wheel chair access.*

### **4. A presentation by a teacher from the school**

The History of the Great War. The Western Front or other to suit your staff.

### ***Additions or alternative presentations***

### **5. Medicine in the Trenches**

How were countless lives saved during the Great War? An entertaining discussion led by our uniformed medical officer of the RAMC reveals the miracle of triage, scary but fascinating medical instruments, and the chain of evacuation that saw a wounded soldier back from no man's land to relative safety. Perfect for *particularly KS4 students studying "Medicine Through Time"*.

### **6. Weapons of Trench Warfare**

A demonstration of the weapons used from the bayonet to machine gun and trench mortar using inert weapons and projectiles. Also included will be gas warfare and protection against gas.

### **7. Rations and cooking**

What did soldier eat in the trenches and how did they cook in the front line. Was it really the 'Rat O Van'?

### **8. Life on the Home front in WW2**

Based on our reconstructed Anderson shelter and lead by a member of the Home Guard this session explores the experience of civilians during the Blitz.

A Key Stage two presentation

Each presentation is timed to thirty minutes with time for a hand over. Breaks can be built and a visit with a small group will include three/four of these presentations. A larger group can request more to reduce group size

CEMA did an excellent job in putting on a range of activities and presentations for 100 of our Year 9 pupils. All the presenters were excellent, had a very good rapport with the pupils, and covered a wide range of Great War topics including food and medicine. The reconstructed trench was a real highlight, and more authentic looking in fact, than anything you'll see in Flanders. Having taken pupils on various History trips for over 30 years, this was right up there amongst the best of them. If you can't get to France or Belgium and/or want a UK based alternative, then this is very much the best thing.'

Simon Lemieux, Head of History and Politics, The Portsmouth Grammar School

For your initial enquiry, please email [info@cemahistory.org](mailto:info@cemahistory.org) and the team will get back to you as soon as possible.

***Off to the battlefields of Europe? We are en route and less than an hour's drive from Dover.***

***A part day can be combined with a visit to the Royal Engineers Museum in Chatham or for remembrance a visit to Shornecliffe Cemetery at the Hythe that contains Great War and Second World War burials, including the Chinese Labour Corps, Canadians and German Prisoners of War***