

TECHNOLOGY, TIME AND PLACE

A FAITHFUL RESPONSE

An appropriate and practical response to casualties of the First World War as a result of technology, time and place was needed. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission established methods and practices for coping with the scale and nature of death on the battlefields that would last into the future, including references to faith.

Casualties of Technology

Machine Guns

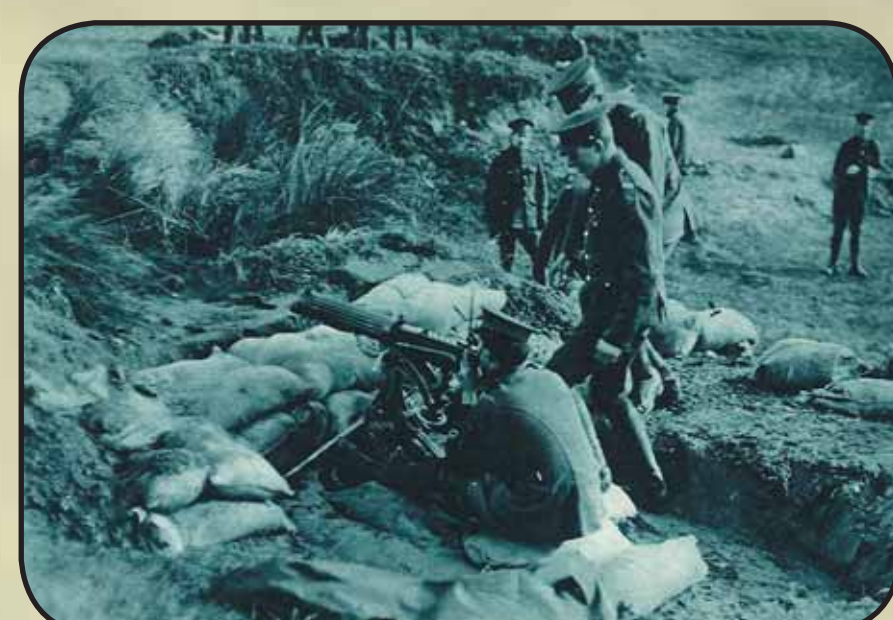
Such a phenomenon as that here illustrated is a sufficient reminder that man's handicap has come to be a matter of no vital importance.

The Illustrated War News, 1 March 1916

The First World War brought with it new and brutally effective technologies, including machine guns.



In the late 1880s Hiram Maxim invented the 7.69mm Maxim, a belt-fed, water-cooled, semi automatic gun that fired 500 rounds a minute and weighed 70kg. This machine gun was a breakthrough.



In 1915 the Vickers Company significantly modified the 7.69mm Maxim. However, by the end of the war the British army preferred the 7.69 mm Lewis. The Lewis was magazine-fed and gas operated, weighed only 7kg and could be carried and fired by one man.

It continued to be used in the Second World War, however the Czech-designed Bren superseded it by the end of the war.

Grenades

British grenades presented new threats - 'jam pots' and 'hair brushes' - named for their shapes and lit by matches. In 1915 a Belgian company developed a new version containing a striker. This design was further developed by a British foundry owner to improve the No. 36, as it became known. 75 million of these were produced in the First World War and are still in use today.

Casualties of Time

As the war dragged on British and Commonwealth Forces mobilised nearly nine million men. Of those more than one million died in the fighting or of wounds sustained during the four years long years.

At Messines in Flanders between 1 - 12 June 1917 Allied casualties were 24,562 with over half from the second ANZAC Corps.

Casualties of Place

Trenches

The Western Front was the name the Germans gave to a series of trenches that ran 700 kilometres from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border. To imagine this, think of a ditch, deep enough to stand in zigzagging its way from Christchurch to Balclutha.



Trenches were dug in terrain that was quite literally a 'quagmire' of freezing water and mud.

Both sides had dug trenches, sometimes only metres apart, as their only protection from the murderous gun fire. They were never safe from the explosive artillery shells that rained down on the front line soldiers.

A Faithful Response

A series of responses were needed. One of the most important of these was the inclusion of Christian approaches to symbolism and community of faith.

In time the Imperial War Graves Commission established a 'philosophy and practice of commemoration' for the casualties of war that included religious elements.

Anyone entering a Commission cemetery will encounter Christian elements. Makeshift wooden crosses which previously marked an individual's sacrifice (top) were replaced with Commission headstones. Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries gave families in perpetuity a place to seek peace and to say farewell surrounded by familiar aspects of the Christian faith (centre). The Cross of Sacrifice (bottom) given a prominent position – the war dead are now gathered together in a community of sacrifice.



ATI War History Collection WH-0253-F



**Missing
Scattered
Nameless**

Necessity meant that soldiers were buried where they fell – often in unmarked graves.

NOT MISS

-THEY ARE HERE