

uncommon. During the British Somme offensive, for instance, the shortage of infantry became so acute that men were being forwarded to the front with only two or three weeks' battle training and at Cambrai in 1917 companies were committed direct from a Field Recruit depot as an emergency measure. However, the most famous of these occurrences went into German military history as an unequalled example of patriotism when, at Langemarck in late 1914, infantry advanced in mass formation, singing as they marched, to attack the British lines. The truth behind this exploit was that the soldiers involved were part of the massive rush of untrained volunteers that flocked to the colours in August 1914, and their training was so incomplete that they did not even know how to deploy. Although these examples can be cited, the German Army was unaccustomed to such occurrences. Despite an undoubted decline in the quality of the Army, beginning in late 1916, as a result of the heavy losses suffered in the Battles of Verdun and the Somme, at no time until the final weeks of the war could it be considered unequal to the task that it faced.

300dpi color scan

*Below: Trench life. A front line trench on Hill 60, June 1916. This is typical of much of the maze that extended from the Belgian coast to the Swiss Frontier. / IWM*

