

Marching Off to War

December 1914



I've joined up. I am now Private Walter Tull of the 17th Middlesex Regiment – the Footballers Battalion – ready to fight for King and Country. Everyone in the Football Battalion is either a player, a supporter or has worked for a club. We are training and parading and marching. I have a very different sort of kit now – in khaki. All the soldiers in my unit are good men and I'm sure we will do well.

My uniform

Heavy khaki jacket with room for a shirt and a sweater – or several – underneath

Plenty of pockets and webbing cloth belts

We also carry a huge, heavy coat called a "great coat"

Putties – to stop your trouser-legs getting caught on wire

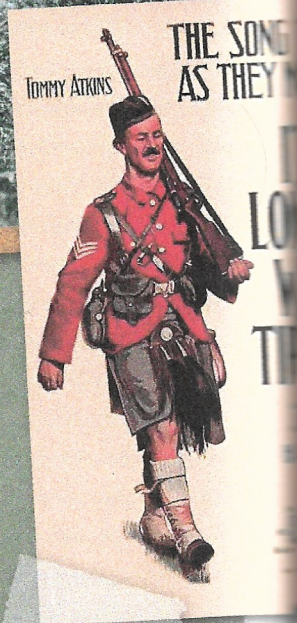
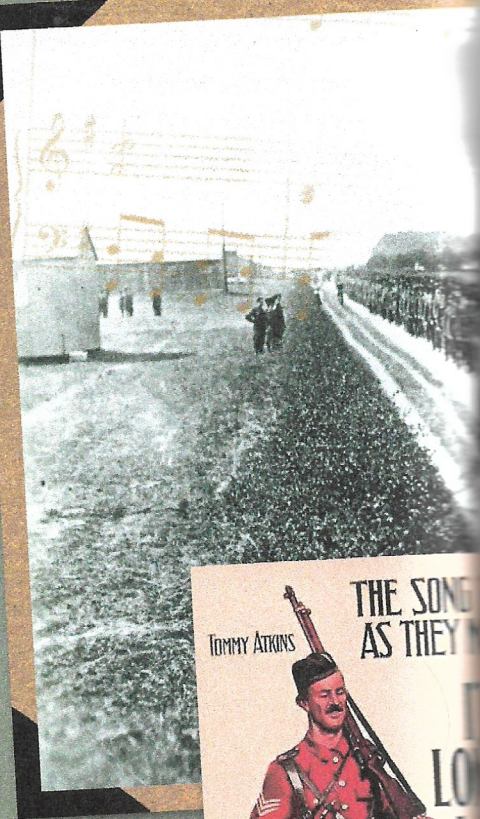
Boots – Very strong, very heavy, very uncomfortable

Peaked cap

Canvas bag with gasmask

Plus kit bag
containing ground sheet and blanket, rifle with canvas cover to keep out mud, mess tin (that's what we eat our food in) and tool for digging

All this stuff is so heavy that when we tried the full kit on Skinny Albert, he just fell over backwards and lay there waving his legs in the air like a helpless beetle!





My battalion marching

At last we are off to France. After months of training and marching and polishing we are going to the front. We should be in the trenches by Christmas.

We keep our courage high by singing as we march.

There is lots to learn. It's a whole new world in the front line - with its own new words.



Pack Up
Your Troubles
In Your Kit Bag

Smile!

Battle phrase book

Whizz-bang - Enemy cannon. It's named after the sound it makes. If you hear a WHIZZ, it will be followed by a BANG, and you'll have copped it.

Copped it - Been killed.

Jack Johnson - A shot from a heavy cannon, (named after a heavyweight boxer, because it packs a very big punch!)

No Man's Land - The area between your trenches and the enemy's. A very, very dangerous place.

Over the top - Leaving your trenches to attack the enemy. Maybe the last time you see your friends alive.

Shrapnel - The jagged bits of cannon shell that come flying at you. Very sharp and very nasty.

Sniper - A soldier who shoots at anything sticking out of a trench. It is a very good idea to keep your head down!

Stand to - Standing in your trenches, waiting for an enemy attack. There's a stand-to twice every day, at first light and at dusk.

When the whistle blows - Not like a referee's whistle! This is the officer's signal to leave the trenches and attack.

It's got your name on it - The bullet or cannon shell that's coming to get you.

Trench Foot - Horrible foot-rot that you get from standing in mud and water for weeks and never drying out.