



Life on the Front Line: Diaries, News, and Letters from the First World War, 1914–1919

Collection Summary

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LIFE ON THE FRONT LINE: DIARIES, NEWS, AND LETTERS FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914–1919

Life on the Front Line is composed predominantly of diaries and letters written by British military personnel who served during the First World War (1914–1918). **Consisting of nearly 15,000 images**, it provides a fascinating, albeit poignant, survey of what everyday life was like for soldiers, supplying compelling insights into the realities of warfare. The personal accounts in this collection offer sustained — and often profound — reflections on the morality of war, and on the harsh military discipline demanded of combatants. They likewise illustrate the disturbing effects that warfare had upon mental health.

Additionally, *Life on the Front Line* contains a complete run of the *Westminster Training College Monthly War Bulletin* from November 1914 to June 1919. A Methodist institution, Westminster College was established in 1851. Its *War Bulletin* printed numerous letters written by former pupils and staff — “OldWs” as they were known — who served. This valuable source also supplies **accounts of military life while stationed in British territories, including India, South Africa, and Malta.**

Alongside these resources, the collection contains the diaries of British combatants who were captured by the Central Powers. These sources provide detailed insights into the experiences of those who were held as **Prisoners of War (POWs)** in Germany, and even as far afield as East Africa. The collection also sheds light on the **experiences of non-combatants**. The diary of the Reverend Ernest C. Crosse, chaplain to the 8th and 9th Battalions Devonshire Regiment, details his care of the wounded during the Battle of the Somme (1916). The translated diary of N. Hersent, a French civilian, likewise captures his experiences of living near the German front line during the early stages of the Somme offensive.

***Life on the Front Line* provides a wealth of vibrant, firsthand accounts of one of the most consequential conflicts in world history.** Naturally, it will appeal to students and researchers who are keen to examine the history of the First World War. Yet it will also be of interest to those wishing to explore associated themes and topics, such as military history, experiences of imprisonment, and the social influence of Anglicanism and Methodism.

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