

Journal #16



Why would soldiers in World War One start questioning why they were fighting? Remember these were often the same men who were excited to go to war three years earlier. What had changed?

Letter

In his autobiography, *Father Figures*, Kingsley Martin wrote about how soldiers reacted when they had been wounded.

A common dodge was to shoot your foot through a sandbag so that the powder did not show. A guard was put to watch anyone who damaged himself. What I recall most from that time is the total loss of belief that the war had any object; it was just an incredible calamity that had to be endured. They were men without faith or hope. They were bitterly critical about people at home. They never grudged your comparatively cushy job. They would give you a dig in the ribs, "Oh, you're a Quaker, are you? Good luck to you. I wish I'd thought of that dodge myself." You'd been smarter than they had. A disconcerting view as long as you remained any kind of idealist.

1. How did some soldiers get out of the fighting?
2. How did these men feel about their role in the war?
- 3.. How did the men regard those at home?

Vocabulary

Cold Meat Ticket: Identity disc. Men were issued with metal or, more usually, red and green composite material identity discs. These gave the name, number, unit and religion of the holder. One disc remained with the body (the *cold meat*) in the event of death.

Cushy: (1) Easy, pleasant. (2) A minor wound necessitating some time away from the front line; perhaps a *Blighty one*. From Hindustani *khush*, pleasant.

Nob: Officers in general. Short for nobility, because the British Army had a tradition of recruiting its officers from the nobility. Most European countries followed a similar practice.

Red Tab: Staff officer. From the red gorget patches on the collar.