



Bully Beef and Biscuits - Food in the Great War

John Hartley

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Napoleon Bonaparte is often credited with saying that 'an army marches on its stomach'. A hundred years after his time, the soldiers of the Great War would do little marching. Instead, they would fight their battles from cold, muddy trenches, looking out across No Man's Land towards another set of trenches that housed the enemy. It is one of the remarkable successes of the war that they rarely went hungry.

During the war, the army grew from its peacetime numbers of 250,000 to well over 3 million. They needed three meals a day and, using the men's own letters and diaries, John Hartley tells the story of the food they ate, how it got to them in those trenches and what they thought of it. It's the story of eating bully beef and army 'dog biscuits' under fire and it's the story of the enjoyment of food parcels from home or eating egg and chips in a café on a rare off-duty evening. It's also the story of the lives of loved ones at home – how they coped with rationing and how women changed their place in society, taking on jobs previously held by men, many working as farm laborers in the Women's Land Army. This is a book which will appeal to food lovers as well as those with an interest in military and social history.

REVIEWS

John Hartley's book is well-researched, well-written, humorous and engaging...The book is beautifully presented and bound, with some very witty captions for the photographs...A book that deserves a wide audience.

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