

POISON GAS

On 22 April 1915 a nasty new weapon, poisoned gas, is first used against soldiers in the trenches. About a million men die from gas attacks during the war.

GRUESOME GASES

All gases are nasty but they do different things to the enemy:

THE LACRYMATORS A type of tear gas that makes you go blind for a while. Even a tiny amount makes your eyes sting

THE STERNUTATORS gives you a headache and sickness. It arrives suddenly in a high-explosive shell before the enemy can put on gas masks

THE SUFFOCATING GASES are used to kill. Breathe in these gases and your lungs fill up with liquid. You drown in your own body fluids.

PHOSGENE smells like rotten hay but doesn't make your nose or your eyes itch so you don't know you've breathed it in – till you start to choke to death

THE VESICANT TYPE of gas. The British call it 'mustard gas'. It has no smell so the enemy don't know they've been gassed until it's too late.

Of course the British soon have a song about gas shells too:

*Gassed last night, and gassed the night before
Going to get gassed tonight if we never
Get gassed anymore
When we're gassed, we're as sick as we can be
For phosgene and mustard gas is much too much for me.*