



## Trench Fighting Weapons

Young British officers might have come from polite society, but the trenches of World War I were far from a posh environment. In this video, Andrew Wallis, of the Guards Museum in London, demonstrates the “streetwise” weapons that British officers used in close-quarters combat.



**00:01**

*"In February 2020, history teacher and OER Project board member Nick Dennis interviewed Andrew Wallis, director of the Guards Museum in London.*

*Wallis shared a number of objects that represented the Guardsmens' experience in the First World War."*

*Video footage of trench warfare in WWI*

**01:13**

*The knuckle duster is held in ones' fist, with four sharp points where the knuckles are, and two sharp ends on either side.*

*The cosh is a small, narrow lead piece in a braided leather case*

NICK: Can you explain this interesting object?

ANDREW: These two objects, together, make up what we would call trench fighting tools. When the young guards officers were told that they were going into the frontline, they would soon realize that they would eventually come down to hand-to-hand combat. And whilst they had their pistol, and perhaps a sword, they wanted something a little more, streetwise, should we say, in terms of how they would defend themselves. So they would go to the tailors who made all their military uniforms, and they would have a quiet word in the ear of their tailor, to say, can you get me some hand-to-hand combat weapons? So the tailors would go to where their sweatshops were, in the east end of London, the rougher part of town, if you like, and they would have these tools made.

This is a knuckle duster, it can be held that way around—if you get hit with that, you know you're going to feel it in the morning. It could be held that way around, and that slicing motion would take out possibly two assailants at the one time.

And over here, we have a beautiful lead cosh. Look at the leather work on that. It's covered in leather. And that would be in your trouser pocket. You could whip it out at no notice, and if you get a tap on the head from that, you're not going to come back from it. So uh, this was how the young officers would protect themselves.