

James Mann

Issue of Uniform and Equipment

Well, we went down to quartermaster's stores, and then as you went in they said "Right, number?" As for myself I couldn't remember me Army number. So he took me name, of course, as he did with some of the others as well. And from what I remember there was a longish counter and the racks were up and the quartermaster was stood there and he would look at you and say "Battledress blouse, 40", size 40. "Hat, seven, six and seven eights", or whatever size it might be he would call them out. So you'd get your uniform, and it was covered in this white DDT and white powder stuff. Oh it stunk something rotten. So that was your uniform. Your vest, long john pants, short pants, khaki shirts. The shirts, you got three if I remember right with your pants and the vest as well I think it were three of each. And a towel, which, dear me, more like tissue paper than a towel. If you had a bath with it, it was like a wet mop by the time you dried yourself. You were issued with equipment as well, your webbing. The first webbing that was issued was First World War, and that consisted of the five pouches for your rifle ammunition. Three pouches and then two pouches on top of them. And broad webbing, water bottle. The large pack for your back and the small pack which was at the side. Your gas cape, respirator, gas mask, your rifle, bayonet, groundsheet. Blankets we already had, of course, because they were on the bed. Boots. Some nice thick socks, grey socks. And you got a housewife issued, which consisted of a bit of almost like calico, and in that there used to be razor, comb, lather brush, button stick, toothbrush, knife, fork, spoon, and the housewife, of course, which was a thimble with an open end on it. Both ends were open. And a needle, bits of wool and a bit of cotton. Some people would use them some couldn't. But if you'd seen the state of some lads, how they used to try and darn their socks up at times it would make anybody weep. Mess tins.