

Meanings of Military Service

Front Line: Were the trenches 'all Mud and Murder?'

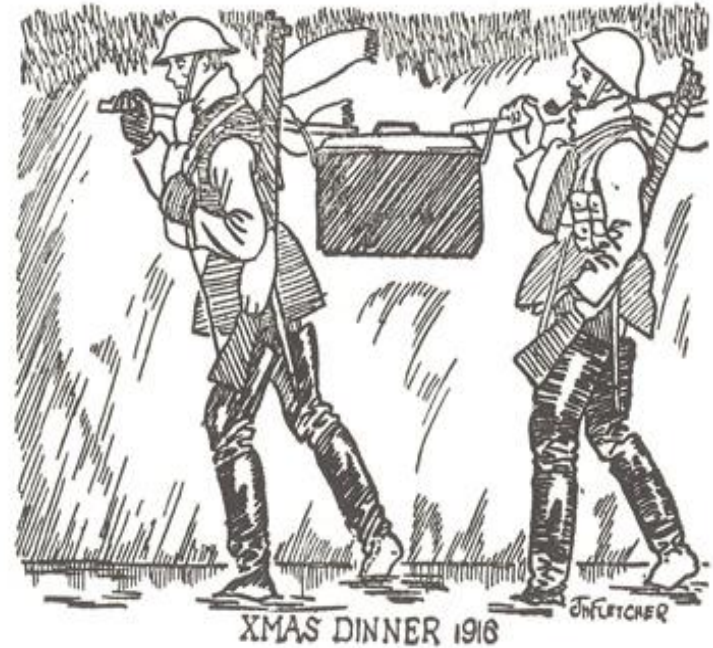
Learning Resources KS3

Wishing you a Happy Christmas.

From George Webb

.....

“ And my heart goes back to Erin’s Isle
And the.....I left behind me.”



Christmas Card

This image shows a Christmas card sent by George Webb who was serving in France on Christmas day in 1916. The sketch on the printed card shows two soldiers carrying the food for Christmas dinner.

Image Courtesy of Queen Mary University of London Archives.



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"A PRESENT FOR THE KAISER"

"Daily Mail"
Official Photographer

Postcard of a Soldier Holding a Shell.

The picture shows a British soldier with a shell addressed 'To Willie with compliments' 'A present for the Kaiser'. 'Willie' refers to the German Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Eine Liebesgabe von unseren Feinden vor Ypern



Postcard of a Soldier Holding a Shell

In contrast to the previous postcard this one shows a German soldier with a shell inscribed with 'zahmer Engländer.'

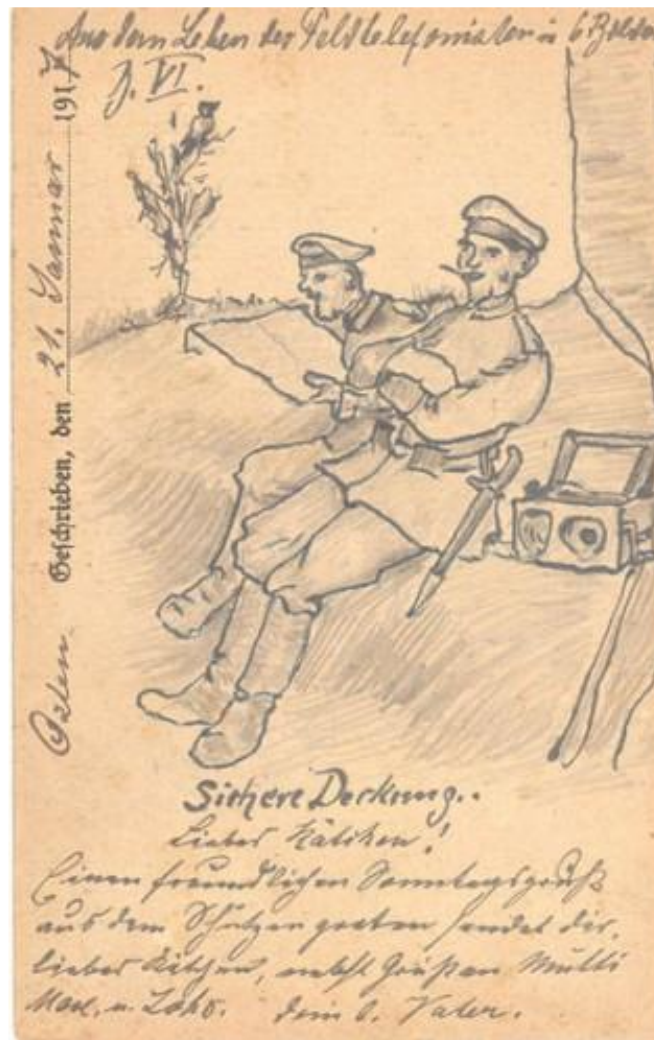
Image Courtesy of Queen Mary University of London Archives.



Princess Mary's Gift Fund Box, 1914.

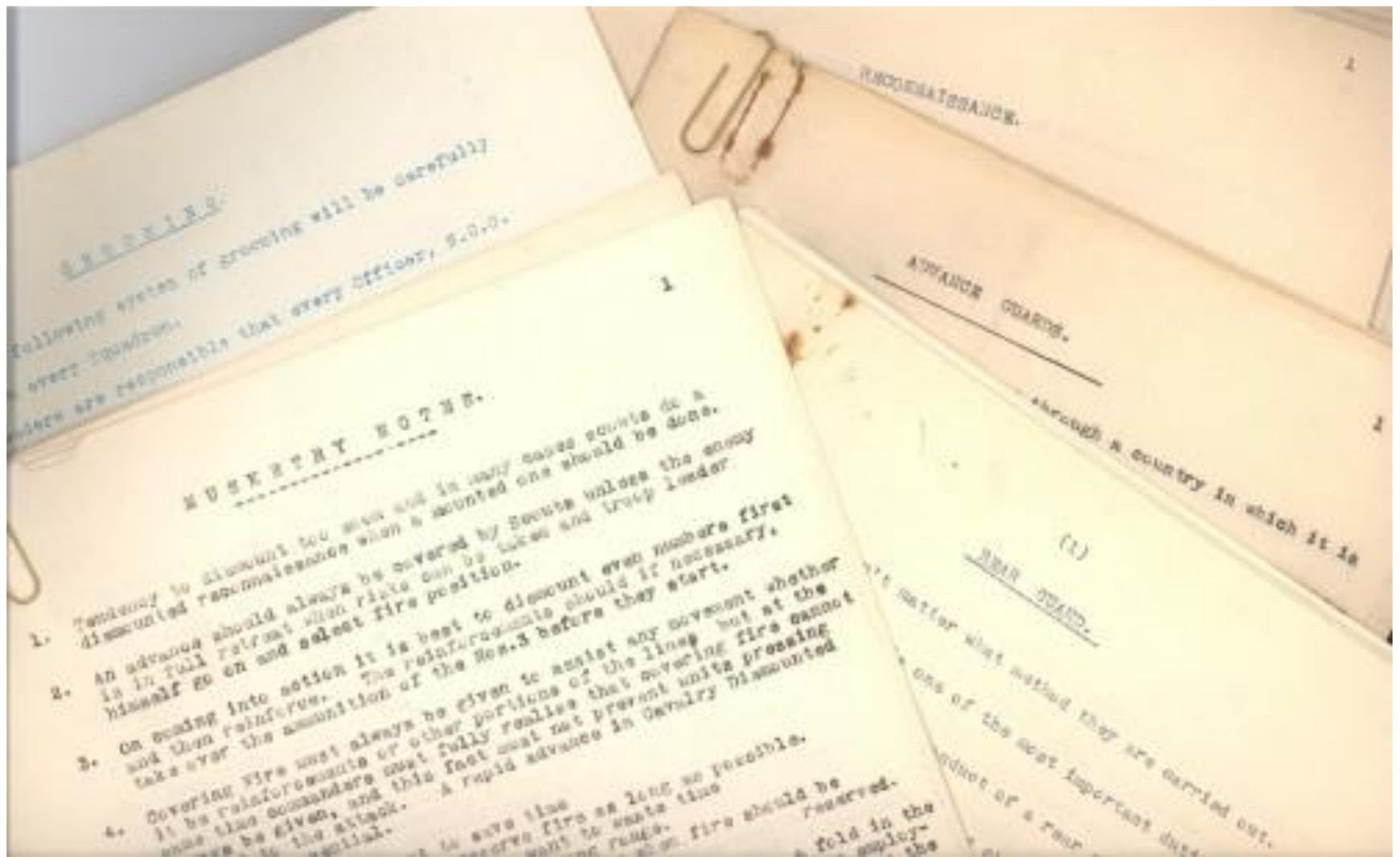
The Gift Fund was inaugurated by Princess Mary in October 1914 to provide a gift for every serviceman at the front or at sea ('Class A') for the first Christmas of the War. The majority of gifts were for smokers and contained tobacco, cigarettes, a pipe and lighter. For non-smokers writing paper and a pencil were provided. For Indian troops candy and spices were given instead of, or in combination with, cigarettes. After Christmas 1914 the scheme was extended. A more simple gift was given out to all other servicemen ('Classes B & C') which consisted of a bullet pencil and a New Year card.

Image Courtesy of Queen Mary University of London Archives.



'A Safe Place' German postcard from Fritz Lindshoefft to his daughter, 1917.

The text below the image reads: *'Dear Katchen (Katie), Your father sends you a loving 'hallo' from the trenches on this Saturday. And to Mummy and your brother and sister.'* The sketch depicts Fritz taking a break from duty as a field telephonist in 1917. Entitled *'a safe place'*, Fritz attempts to reassure his young daughter about his well-being on the front line. Field telephones operated over wire lines, often using wires strung in combat conditions. Equipment for laying the wire ranged from reels on backpacks to trucks equipped with ploughs to bury lines.



Collection of 'How To' letters, c.1918.

Typed letters belonging to A.M. Grenfell giving explanatory notes about the advance guard, rear guard, reconnaissance, musketry and horse grooming. Extracts include: reconnaissance notes that *'information regarding the enemy's dispositions and the features of the country is absolutely essential for success in war'*. Rear Guard notes that *'the conduct of a rear guard depends for its success almost entirely on the character, determination, skill, and energy displayed by its commander'*.

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From Francis dated 2 Nov. Boulogne
allied Base Hospital

My dear Family
Got it again! but
am not much the worse. I arrived here
yesterday & missed last night's boat
by one. I've had a nasty fight on the 31st
when the Germans attacked our trenches
~~the~~ native troops on both sides fled and
the Germans got all round, I found myself
shot at front flank & rear, then the
Coalboxes began & played hell, my Squadron
suffered very severely so did all the Cavalry
my regiment lost 8 officers, 4 in my Squadron
Payne Gallwey killed. I don't know how
many men but a lot. I have been hit
by a fragment of a Coalbox & have 2 holes
w^h hurt a good deal but only because
the pieces are still inside, in my thigh
high up & in my riding muscle, I cannot
walk & had to be carried out. I spent one
night in a very comfortable train & am
now here - have 2 small holes I am very fit
hale & hearty. I am worse hit than last
time but feel better - We have had a

A letter from Francis Grenfell addressed to his family, 1914.

Written whilst in hospital, the letter describes recent military engagements and his injuries. Francis Grenfell wrote numerous letters and kept accounts of the military engagements he was involved in and his day-to-day life whilst serving in the First World War, until his death in 1915.

The following is a short account of the experiences of Sp. 417 L/Cpl. Loman, "A" Squadron 9th Lancers, who, after having been wounded on August 14th, 1914, in the retreat from Mons, was captured by Germans, but made good his escape from a German Hospital in Belgium, and eventually succeeded in reaching England.

"Subsequent to the charge by the Regiment on the 16th of August, at MARRAS, whilst on the retreat I was hit in the back by a shell, and taken prisoner by Germans belonging to the 20th Foot Regiment. Owing to my wound I was put into a German Hospital at FIEFEL, where like myself there were about forty other British soldiers, including a Colonel of the Cheshire Regiment.

I was in this Hospital four weeks and a few days during which time a plan of escape had been thought out by the Colonel of the Cheshires. Whilst the gentry was having his breakfast on the morning of the 12th of September, twelve of us including the Colonel escaped over the walls of the Hospital. We immediately broke up into parties of two and three, the one in which I was being composed of Sgt. Rothwell and Cpl. Chapman of the Cheshires, and myself. One of those who escaped, Bombardier (Lieut. R.A.) 117th Battery, was unable to continue the flight on account of his wound, and sought refuge in the house of a civilian in the village, and he was still there a month ago, being tended by a Belgian Doctor. Amongst those who remained in the Hospital were, Sgt. Barnard, 9th Lancers, wounded in left foot, Cpl. Gatten, 9th Lancers, wounded in the chest, Pte. Ashburn, 9th Lancers, wounded in the left foot, with two toes missing, Pte. Barlow, 9th Lancers, taken off the field sick, and Pte. Dodd Cheshire Regiment, unscathed. There were also two men from the Norfolk Regiment.

Whilst in Hospital, Belgian Civilians having heard that it was our intention to try to escape had contrived to smuggle in civilian clothes for us to put on, and it was thus dressed that we escaped. Having got clear of the Hospital our party made headway for a large forest about a mile distant, where we hid for about five to six weeks, being fed by Belgian Civilians, who brought food to us at night. Having learnt of our escape, the Germans made search for us, and stated that if our attempt was made by the inhabitants to assist us they would kill them and burn the village. In spite of these threats, however, the Belgians still brought us food, but we heard from some of them that three of their number had been killed whilst attempting to succour us.

On one occasion the Germans sent a party of men about a hundred strong to search the forest, but notwithstanding this did not succeed in capturing us, although once whilst I was separated from my companions, and surveying the situation from a tree-top, a party of six Germans passed underneath.

The next morning I came across Cpl. Chapman, who had in turn become separated from Sgt. Rothwell, and we decided to try to get through the German lines back to our own. Accordingly the next day we set out and crossed the French frontier, but found it was impossible to break through the German lines, although we were then only about 1000 yards distant from our own. We therefore had to return, and duly

Account of L/Cpl. Loman's Escape from German Hospital in Belgium.

After his injury and capture as a prisoner in 1914, Lance Corporal Loman escaped from the Belgian hospital with 11 other men. The account explains how the men split into smaller groups and were aided by Belgian civilians.



The Long and Winding Way, by Percy Smith from the Drypoints of War series, 1916-1919.

Percy Smith served until 1919 in France and Belgium as a gunner and experienced trench warfare. He was not an official war artist, so he had copperplates sent to him, concealed in magazines. He used them to make etchings from sketches made on the front line.

Image Courtesy of Percy Smith Foundation



Death Marches, by Percy Smith from the Dance of Death series, 1916-1919.

Percy Smith served in France and Belgium until 1919. During his time in the trenches Percy Smith produced sketches of the war-ravaged countryside, death and destruction. His most memorable series is The Dance of Death which shows death waiting for the soldiers.

Image Courtesy of Percy Smith Foundation.



Dugout Fires, by Percy Smith, 1916-1919.

Percy Smith's picture shows the smoke billowing from a number of dugout fires across the frontline.

Image Courtesy of Percy Smith Foundation.



Moonrise on the Somme, by Percy Smith from the Drypoints of War series, 1916-1919.

Taking place between July and November 1916, the Battle of the Somme was one of the largest of the First World War with more than 1 million men wounded or killed.

Image Courtesy of Percy Smith Foundation

Enquiry: World War One:

'... For the majority of soldiers actual living conditions in and behind the lines on quiet sectors were little if any worse than in peacetime. Certainly many British soldiers enjoyed a better diet, better medical care and better welfare than they had as civilians.'

*Correlli Barnett, 'The Great War,'
BBC Books, 2003.*