



Moving the Mail



Images for classroom use



The
Postal
Museum



The Postal Museum Learning resource

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*"Gommies" getting
their letters*

DELIVERY OF LETTERS AT THE FRONT.

©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, St Martin's Le Grand, 1915, POST 92

Letters from home were a great source of comfort to the troops. By December 1914 an efficient service was up and running and letters could take as little as two days to reach the Front Line from the Home Depot in Regent's Park, London. This illustration from St Martin's Le Grand magazine shows letters being delivered to the front.



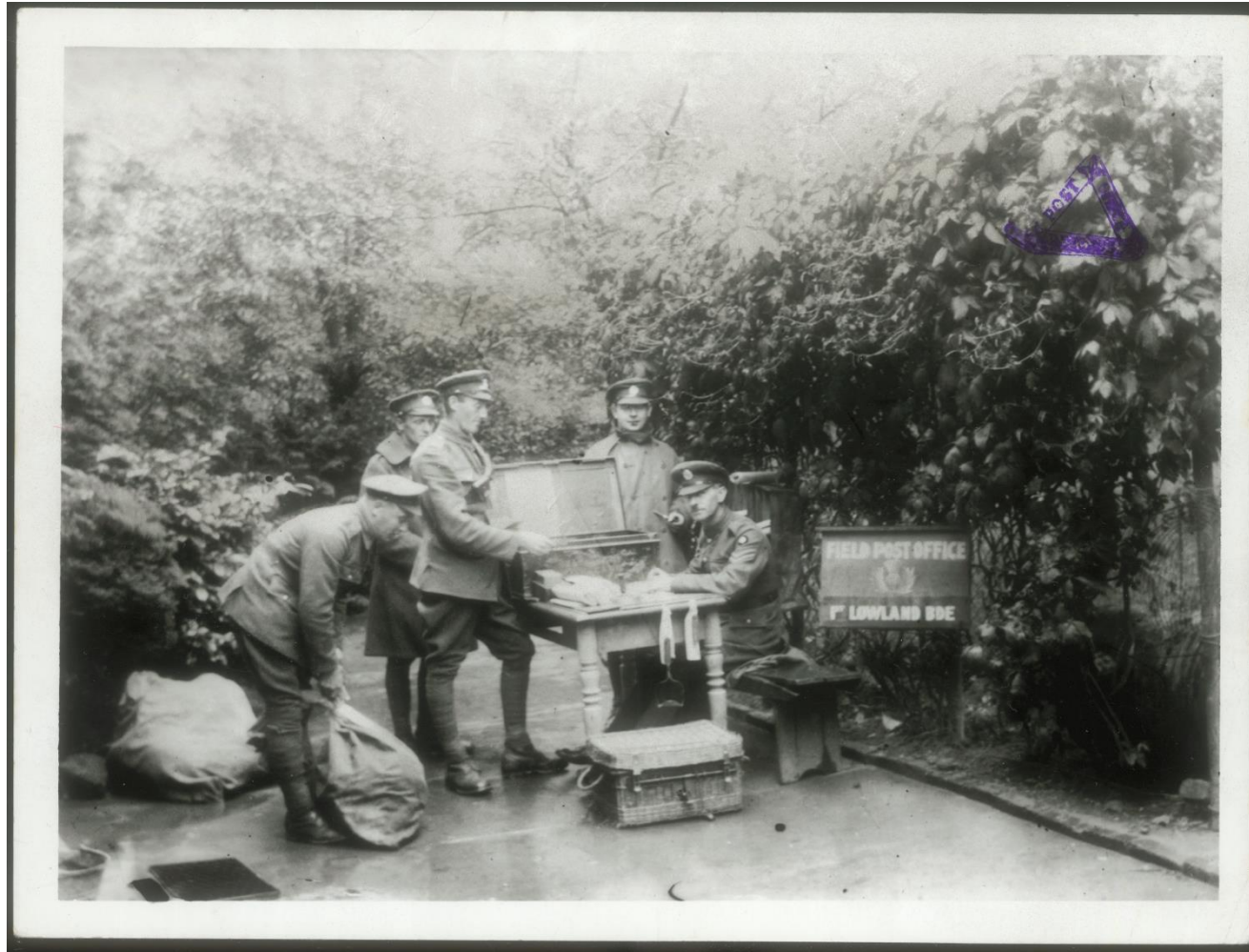
©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 56/6

The Home Depot build in Regent's Park was the largest temporary wooden structure in the world at the time. It employed 2,500 staff, mostly female. This photograph was taken on Armistice Day in 1918.



©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 56/6

Mail destined for the Front left the Home Depot in Regent's Park for London's railway stations in lorries, destined for the 'boat train' to Folkestone or Southampton. At the docks, mail bags were loaded onto 'mail packet ships' bound for Boulogne, Calais or Le Havre.



©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, post 56/6

Soldiers at the Front posted and collected mail from Field Post Offices. This could be in a tent or was sometimes no more than a table.



©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 56/6
Soldiers sorting mail at the Front Line.



SOME DESPATCH RIDERS.

©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, St Martin's Le Grand, 1915, POST 92

This photo from St Martin's Le Grand magazine shows despatch riders on motorbikes and armed with pistols. Despatch riders delivered secret and important messages to the trenches. The men had to be quick map readers. If the roads passed through bombed out areas, alternative routes had to be quickly chosen. They also had to possess a wide knowledge of the army organisation since delivering despatches to an army on the move was not easy.



NOTHING is to be written on this except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

I am quite well.

I have been admitted into hospital

*{ sick } and am going on well.
{ wounded } and hope to be discharged soon.*

I am being sent down to the base.

*I have received your { letter.
telegram.
parcel.*

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you

*{ lately.
for a long time.*

**Signature
only.**

Ernie. XXX

Date

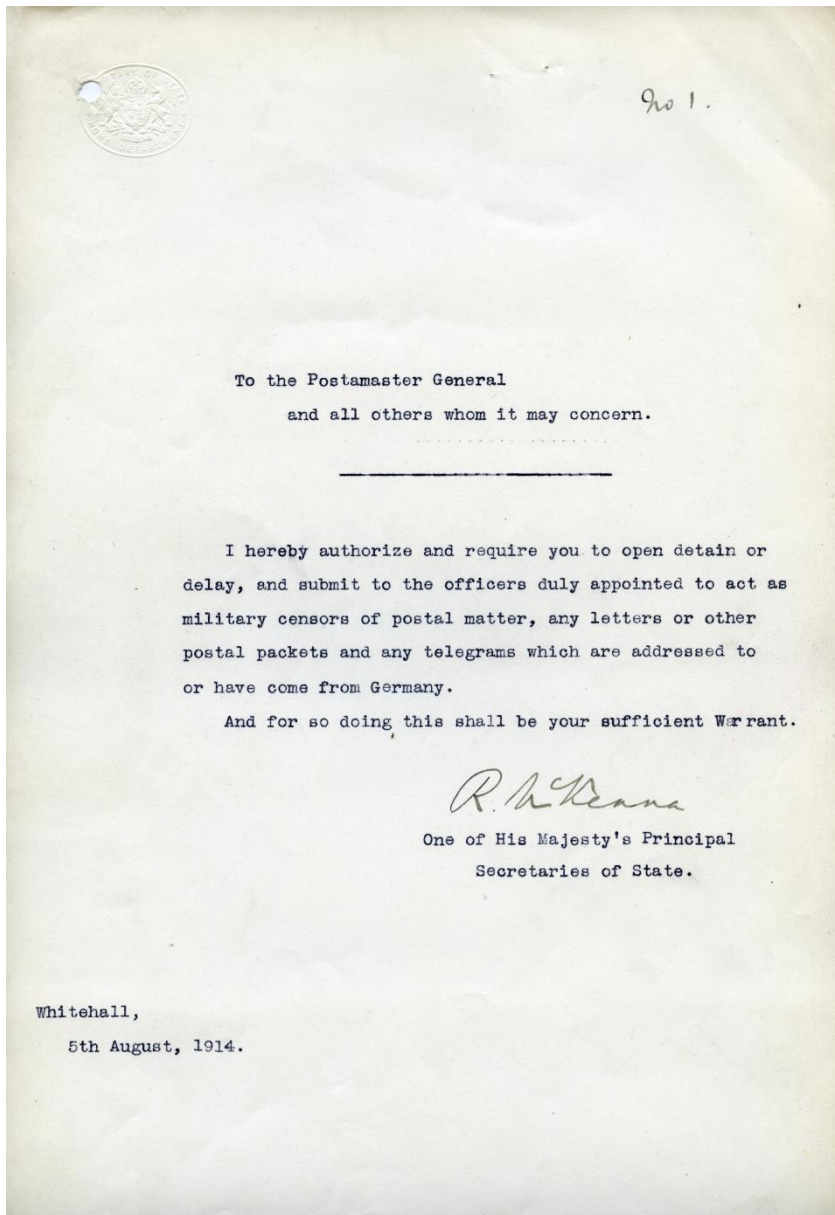
Jan 20th 1915.

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or postcard addressed to the sender of this card].



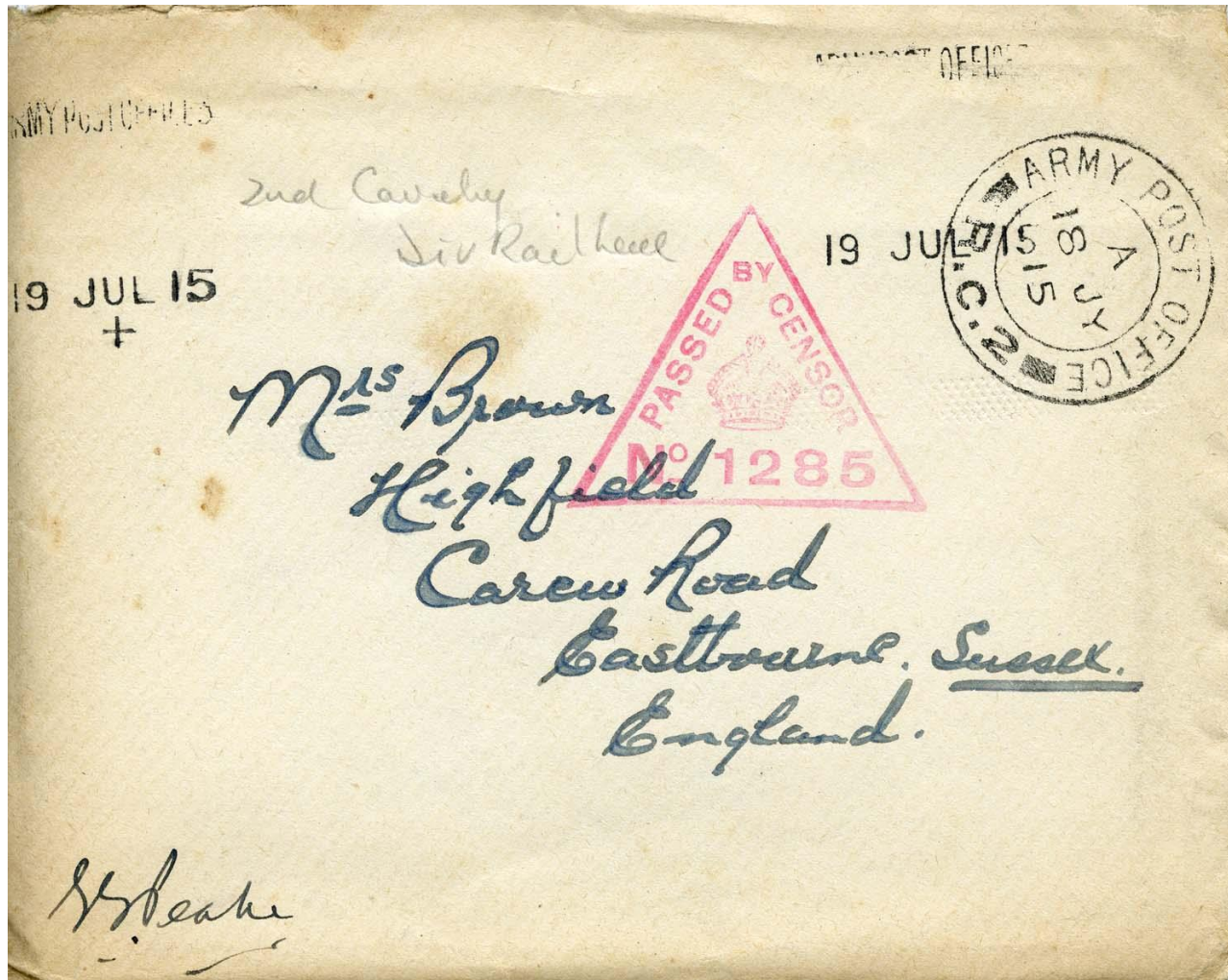
Field Service Card ©The Postal Museum, POST 56/6 Honour Envelope ©The Postal Museum, PH32/27

Soldiers filled out Field Service Cards with simple pre-printed messages that could be crossed out as appropriate and sent from free. Ordinary letters could be sent in special Honour Envelopes. Soldiers signed the envelope to show they hadn't written any sensitive information. These letters took longer and might still be examined by the censor.



©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 56/55

This letter dated 5th August 1914 is from one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State to the Postmaster-General authorising censorship of letters.



©The Postal Museum, PH12-05

This letter dated 19 July 1915 has a PASSED BY CENSOR stamp on the envelope. It was likely to have been censored at the Front at the nearest Army Post Office as indicated by the postmark.



A section of the P/W Branch of the Postal Censorship, on the top floor of Strand House, Carey Street, London.

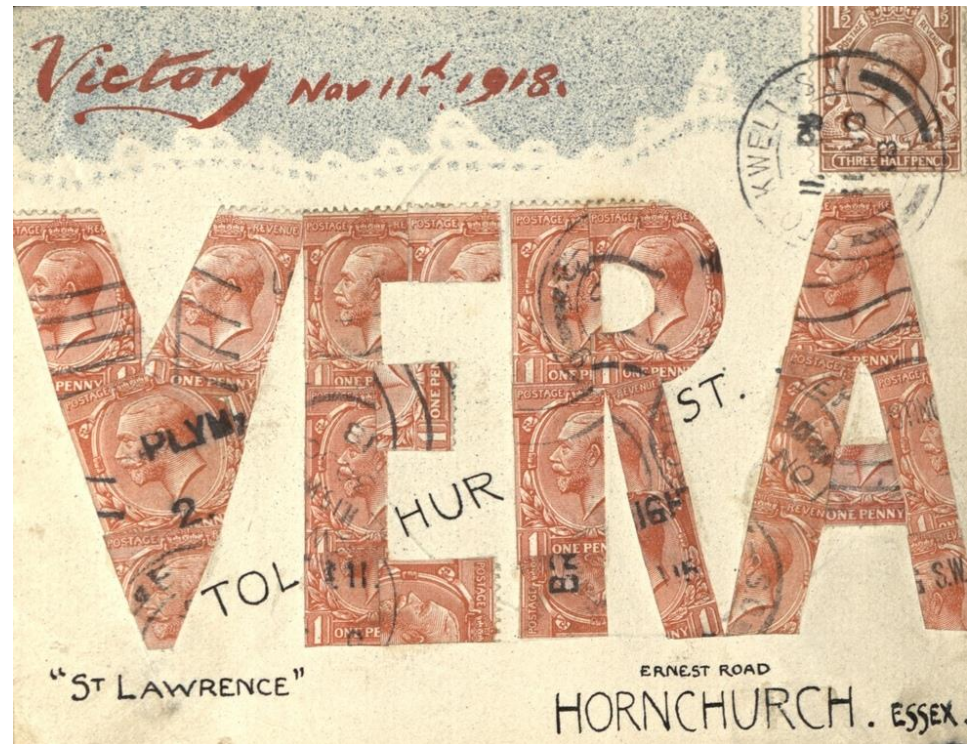
©Reproduced with permission. Graham Mark, **British censorship of civil mails during World War I, 1914-1919**

Censorship of letters on the Home Front was often undertaken by women. This photograph shows female censors working at Strand House in London.



©The Postal Museum, PH46-10

This envelope has a PASSED NAVAL CENSOR stamp. This indicates that it was censored aboard a ship.



©The Postal Museum, E1184

Some soldiers illustrated envelopes to express personal feelings. These letters were sent to the Tolhurst family and show a change in attitude to the war. The top left envelope uses flags to express unity. The bottom left envelope dates from December 1914 and has a more threatening image. The bottom letter was sent to Vera Tolhurst on 11 November 1914.



"Spose fald ooman
expects me to
walk home in
these"



©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, St Martin's Le Grand, 1915, POST 92

This illustration from St Martin's Le Grand, General Post Office staff magazine illustrates a soldier who had been granted leave and wrote to his wife for the railway fare home but got socks instead.



SORTING AT THE INDIAN BASE P.O. IN FRANCE.

©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, St Martin's Le Grand, 1915, POST 92

This illustration from St Martin's Le Grand, General Post Office staff magazine shows letters being sorted at the Indian Base Post Office in France.



©The Postal Museum, 2011-0502-16

In this hand-coloured lantern slide a tent acts as a Post Office at a military camp in India. The First World War was a truly global conflict. The work of the General Post Office extended as far as Egypt, East Africa, Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), India, France, Holland, Italy, Salonika (modern Thessaloniki), South Africa, West Indies, Central America, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA.





©The Postal Museum, 2012-0030-19

This hand-coloured lantern slide is of the British Post Office in Madras, India. Britain's empire was mobilised like never before in the First World War and many Indian troops travelled to France to fight for the British army.



©The Postal Museum, 2012-0126/06

This black and white non-photographic lantern slide shows the wreck of the RMS Lusitania. The ship is shown leaning to one side with two lifeboats in the background. The RMS Lusitania was torpedoed in 1915. Over 1,000 people were killed and 147,000 letters were lost. The mail included secret letters from the Governor of Bermuda to the Colonial Office in London that had been stored in a weighted bag to ensure it would sink and not be captured in the event of the ship sinking.





CHRISTMAS MAILES

FOR THE

EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

AND THE

SALONIKA FORCE.

Letters and parcels intended for delivery to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and the Salonika Force by Christmas should be posted so as to reach London well in advance of the final dates given below.

	PARCELS.	LETTERS.
Egyptian Expeditionary Force = = =	5th Nov.	12th Nov.
Salonika Force = =	21st Nov.	28th Nov.

Christmas puddings should not be sent. Arrangements have been made for the supply of puddings to troops overseas in all theatres of war for the coming Christmas.

By Command of the Postmaster General.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
LONDON, E.C. 1.
15th October, 1918.

Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by SIR JOSEPH CAUSTON & SONS, LTD., 9, Eastcheap, London E.C. 3.

(23510) Wt. —G.S.P.140. 26025. 9/15. Qp. 153. F2268.



©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2014, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 107/866

Christmas was a peak time for letters and parcels. This notice from October 1918 outlines the deadline dates for post for the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and the Salonika Force to arrive in time for Christmas. It expressly states that Christmas puddings should not be sent.



© The Postal Museum, 2012-0149/01

This hand-coloured lantern slide shows the delivery of Christmas mail. Three soldiers pull a horse drawn wagon through the snow.