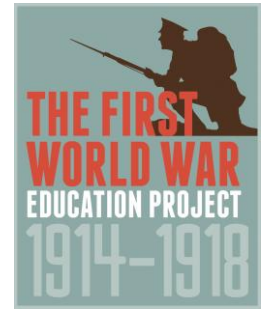


A letter from the trenches

The task: Write a letter home describing what life is like in the trenches during the First World War.



You can write about:

- friends that have been wounded
- friends that were killed
- barbed wire
- the mud
- machine guns
- rats
- trench foot
- the smell
- your location
- soldiers
- your superiors
- the food
- the bombing
- your feelings

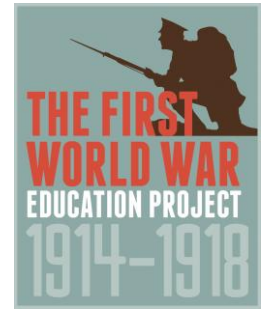


Abergavenny Chronicle, 28th
May 1915,
A Letter Home

British soldiers in the trenches waiting for the order to advance. One of them is making use of the opportunity to write a letter to the old folks at home.

More useful information about this theme can be found in the [Life on the Western Front](#) pack available from Hwb.

Sending letters home



Life on the fighting fronts could be both tough and boring, and one way of battling the boredom was to communicate consistently with friends and family by sending and receiving letters and parcels from loved ones.

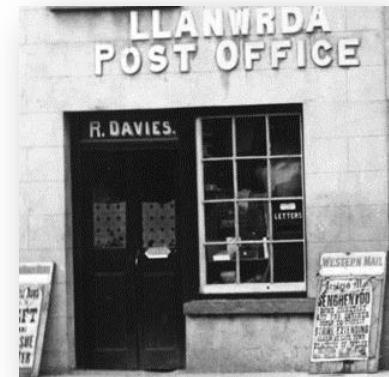
1. Soldier or sailor sends a letter home.



2. The letter is read and amended by a censorship officer.

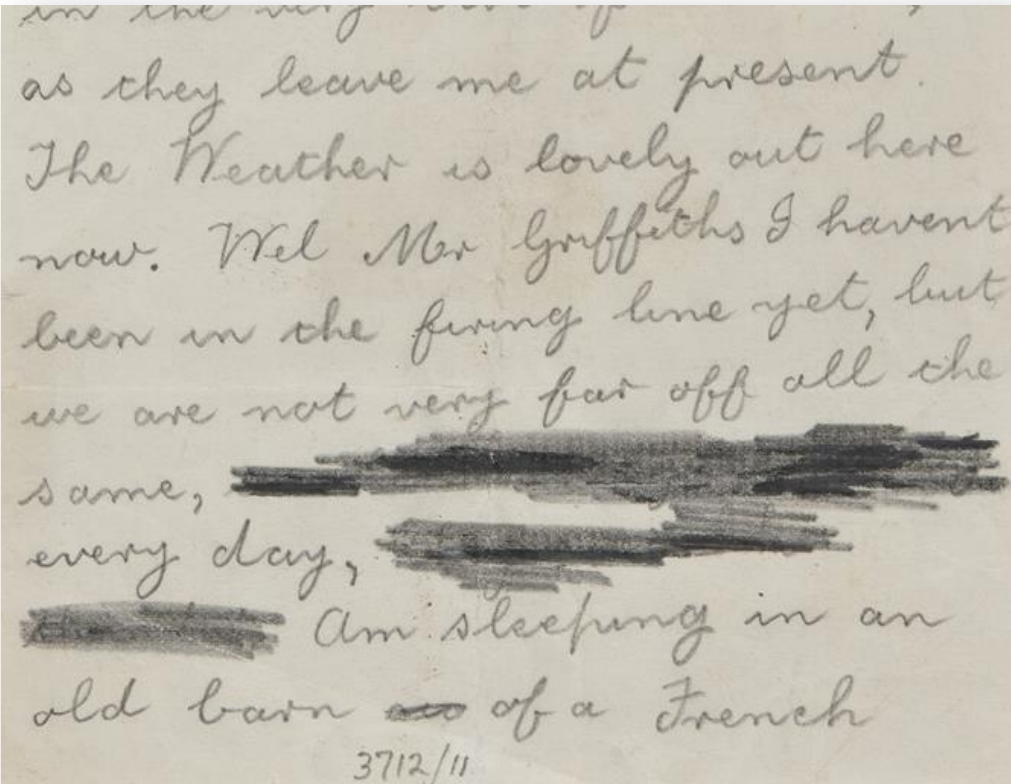
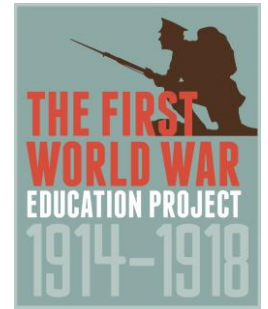
as they leave me at present.
The weather is lovely out here
now. Well Mrs Griffiths I havent
been in the firing line yet, but
we are not very far off all the
same, every day,
Am sleeping in an
old barn of a French
3712/11

3. Family or friends receive the letter back home in Wales.



What is censorship?

Censorship is when something that is produced is seen by someone else and that person deletes any part that they want to prevent from being revealed.

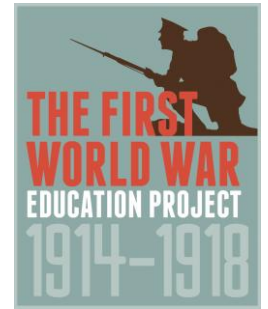


Censorship officers read every letter that was sent home during the war and deleted or ripped parts out of letters to keep secrets.

A censored letter from France written by David Davies to Mr. Griffiths, 29 May 1916.



Why were letters censored?



The British forces did not want the enemy to discover any information that they could find valuable such as:

- Locations
- Tactics
- How the soldiers felt

A stamp to show that the censor has passed this postcard.



The censors ensured that any information that could be useful to the enemy was removed from communications in case the enemy did manage to intercept messages.

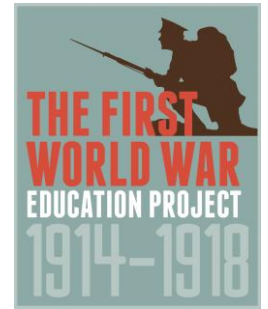


Why were letters censored?

Another reason to censor letters was to conceal the truth about the horrors of war from people in Britain.



The government believed that the number of men joining the armed forces would decrease if letters home described exactly what was happening on the front line.



NOTHING is to be written on this side 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 dated _____
telegram „ _____
parcel „ _____

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you
{ lately.
{ for a long time.

Signature }
only. }

Date *11/15*

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

(92688) Wt. W2497-293 2,000m. 11/15 J. J. K. & Co., Ltd.

D/D - CES 1/2.

©Glamorgan Archives

Some soldiers sent these cards home. They did not have to write anything and only needed to cross out the sentences that they did not want to use.

What would be censored?

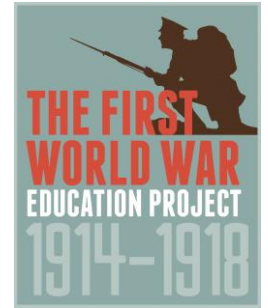
- Complaining about officers or generals
- Complaining about the weather
- Location of soldiers
- Information about the number of soldiers in their trench
- Information about how many guns and weapons they had
- Battle plans
- The names of soldiers that were wounded or had died
- Descriptions of how soldiers were killed

Puddles of rain on the battlefield, 1918



©Encyclopedia Britannica

Censoring a fake letter



Underline anything that should be censored in this letter in red and anything that is fine in green

26 May 1916,

Somewhere in France

Dear Mam,

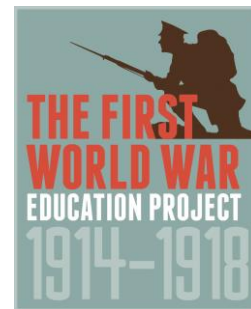
I hope everyone is fine at home. The weather in Albert, France is nice at the moment, but there are a lot of muddy puddles that have been here for months and some of the boys are suffering badly from trench foot. There are a lot of rats around the trenches which makes it difficult to sleep.

I haven't seen any fighting yet, but I'm sure I will soon. 500 of us are going into battle for the first time next week. We have got a tank for our next attack and William Jones is very excited! We are quite happy at the moment. I'll write again soon.

Bye for now,
Owen Morgan



Censoring a fake letter



Underline anything that should be censored in this letter in red and anything that is fine in green

26 May 1916,

Somewhere in France

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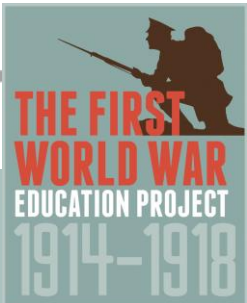
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Bye for now,
Owen Morgan



Your turn!

- Write a letter home describing what life is like in the trenches during The First World War
- Exchange your letter with someone in the classroom
- Imagine that you are a censorship officer during the First World War.
- Underline anything that would be censored in red and anything that would be passed in green.
- Explain your reasons for your choices in censoring.



Censorship and the press

Newspapers

The British government realised how important it was to control the flow of information from the front line after war had been declared and introduced The Defence of The Realm Act (DORA) in August 1914. This act granted powers for the War Office to censor the press.

Many newspapers had opposed the war at first, but as the war progressed they became more willing to publish propaganda as fact and accept censorship, and in effect the press began to censor itself.

Newspapers were used to demonise the German enemy. They published fabricated stories of German barbarism which were accepted as fact.

Report of the Battle of the Somme
Herald of Wales, July 1, 1916

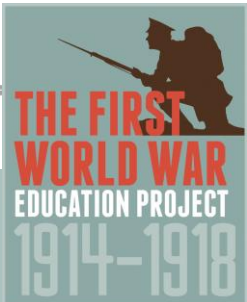
SATURDAY.

To-day's news from the British Headquarters is of a most encouraging nature.

An offensive has been launched on a front of 20 miles. The German front line of trenches have been captured, together with many prisoners.

A message received at 11.55 a.m. on Saturday speaks of attacks by French and English troops, acting in conjunction, along the north of the Somme. Fighting continues, and the outlook is very satisfactory.

A positive report in a newspaper despite the fact that more than 50,000 British soldiers were injured, and nearly 20,000 killed on that day.



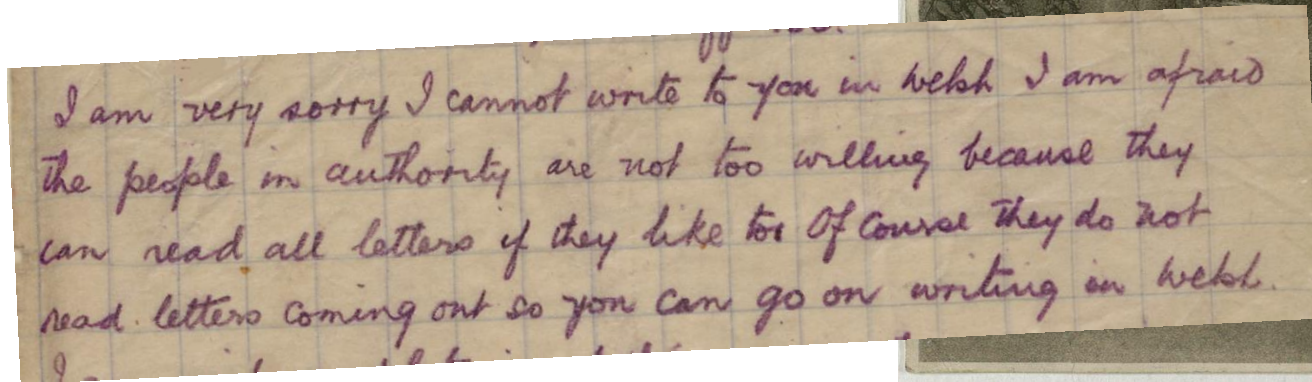
Censorship and the press

Letters and diaries

Many soldiers who fought in the war kept a diary and included in some of those diaries are more honest descriptions of war and living conditions on the battlefield.

Letters written home by members of the armed forces were censored. Many soldiers who spoke Welsh as their first language were forced to write letters and postcards in English so that the censoring officer could understand them.

Part of a letter written by Captain David Jones who was killed in an attack on Mametz Wood in July 1916. He wrote this letter to his mother in Llanio, Ceredigion while he was in France preparing for the battle.



I am very sorry I cannot write to you in Welsh I am afraid the people in authority are not too willing because they can read all letters if they like too. Of course they do not read letters coming out so you can go on writing in Welsh.



Censorship and the press

Journalists

The life of a newspaper journalist who sent reports from the trenches could be hazardous.

Soon after war began in 1914 the Government introduced a ban preventing journalists from going to the fighting front. There was a risk of arrest, imprisonment or even a death sentence for breaking this ban.

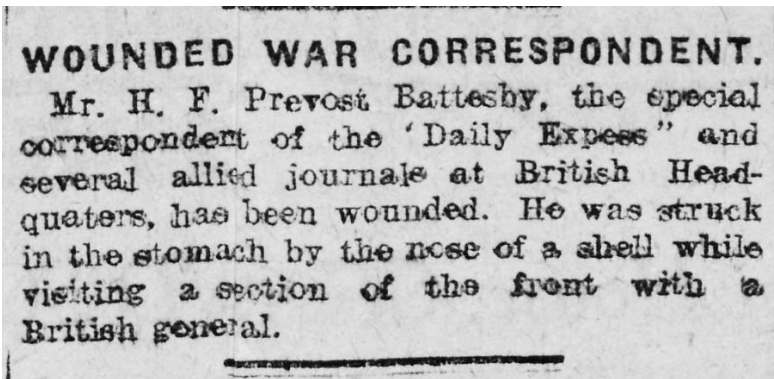
Later in 1915 Kitchener gave special permissions to some journalists to report from the trenches.

They would still, however, be heavily censored by Government agencies.

OFFICIAL NEWS.

For the first time in history the Government, in this present war, has become its own news agency, appointing the army and naval officers amateur war correspondents. It has even supplied photographs to the Press. These pictures were supplied by the Press Bureau, which also supplies the newspapers with news from the front in the form of bulletins, and signifies its approval or disapproval of the news which has been supplied by the agencies and the special correspondents.

Photographs were also censored by the Government as is mentioned in this article about the press in the *North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser*, May 21, 1915



Cambrian Daily Leader, May 3, 1916

Censorship and the press The Ministry of Information

In 1914 the Government established the **War Propaganda Bureau** which later became known as the **Ministry of Information**. Part of the Ministry's role was to control how much information was communicated to the public about the atrocities of the First World War.

A department within the Ministry known as **MI 7b** ensured that propaganda material was included in newspapers so that it could be read by the public in Britain and across the Empire.

The Government was concerned during this period that support for the war was diminishing and years of hardship were creating worrying levels of unrest in Britain.

Lieutenant J.P Lloyd

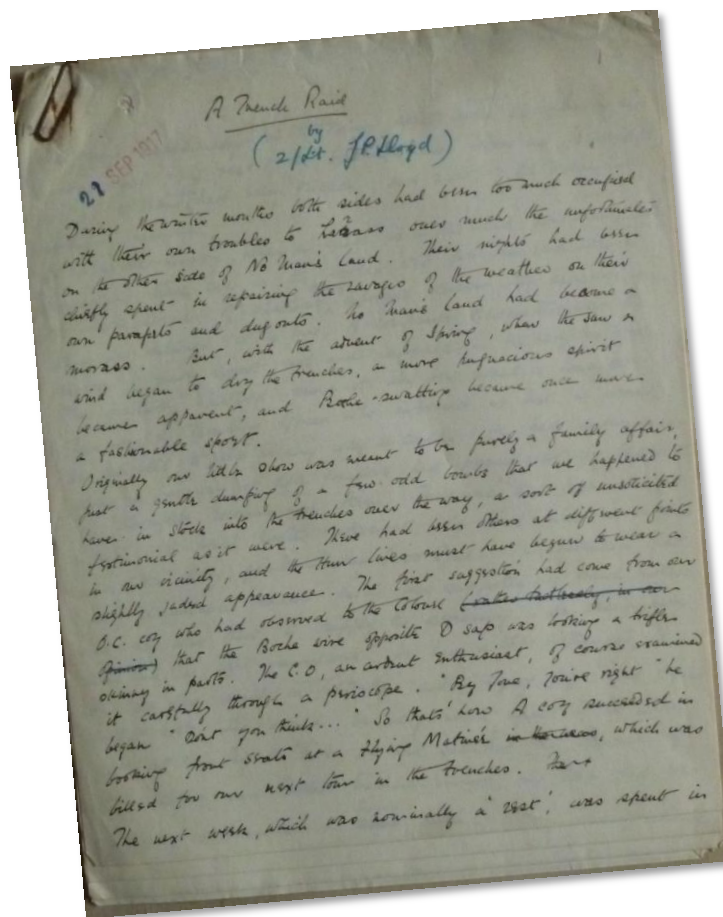
MI 7b recruited soldiers such as Lieutenant James Price Lloyd to write propaganda articles for the Ministry of Information.

Lieutenant Lloyd and his colleagues were occasionally sent to the fighting front, not to fight, but rather to observe the fighting to ensure that their propaganda reports were realistic.



A photograph of Lieutenant James Price Lloyd from the Welsh Regiment who was injured at Mametz on the Somme

Censorship and the press The Ministry of Information



The original article written by J.P Lloyd

Thanks to Jeremy Arter for the article and description

An extract from one of the propaganda articles written by Lieutenant J.P Lloyd in September 1917.

A Trench Raid

At last, after what seemed years of waiting, the long-expected signal came, and we filed into the sap, and then crawled cautiously across No Man's Land to the shelter of some friendly shell-craters about forty yards from the Boche (German) wire. The signal for the final rush was to be an intensive bombardment on the flanks of the position we were to attack.

We did not have to wait long. Punctual to the second, the artillery strafe commenced and simultaneously a blinding sheet of flame and an earth-shaking roar told us that H.E. had completed the work of our wire cutters in blasting a gap in the entanglements. The whole party made a dash for the opening in the wire, scrambled over the parapet, and, as had been arranged, divided their forces, and bombed their way, right and left, down the trench. A sentry, who had been posted quite close to the point of entry, had been blown backwards off his perch by the force of the explosion. As we picked our way through the shell-holes on our way home, our machine-guns were sweeping the Boche parapet on our right and left to restrain any vulgar curiosity on their part...