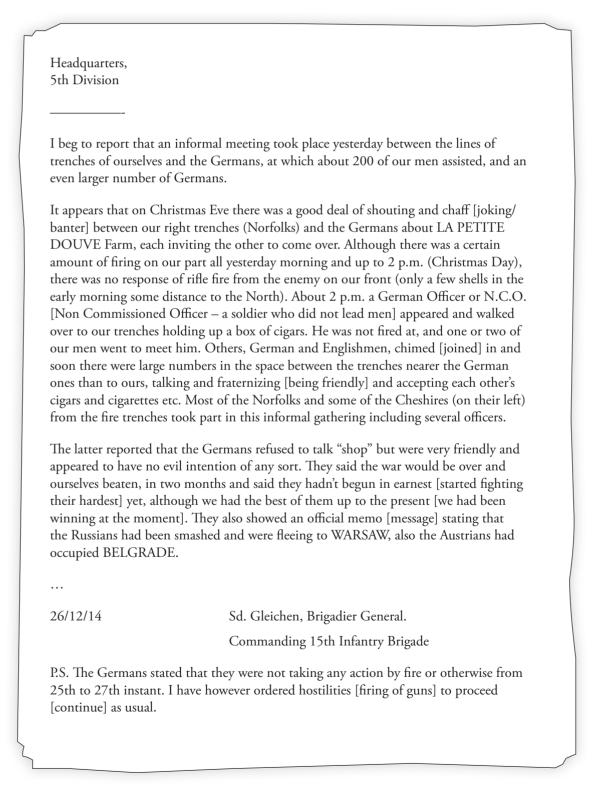
Transcript

Extract from a report in war diary of 15th Infantry Brigade to Headquarters describing events of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, 1914

Note: 'Norfolks' and 'Cheshires' were the names of particular regiments linked to particular counties in the UK. The infantry is the branch of an army that carries out military combat on foot, unlike cavalry or tank forces.

Some words defined in [square brackets].



Lesson 23 | Christmas in the First World War

Transcript

Letter from A. Maggs, B.E.F. 20th December 1915

B.E.F.	
France	
December	20/15

Dear Mr. Clarke,

The parcel has arrived in good condition and its contents quite intact [not damaged], and I hasten to write back to thank you and all those kind friends who have so generously contributed towards making our Christmas as happy as possible. I have divided the parcel and handed to Corporal Woodhams his 'moiety' [share]. Opportunities this year are much more numerous than last for celebrating the great festival and I feel confident that our Xmas day menu will include a little more in addition to army biscuits and corned beef, which then was our ration day after day.

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Thanking you and all the old friends at the office for your kind wishes and gifts and trusting that they will enjoy a happy Xmas,

I remain yours sincerely,

A. Maggs

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Lesson 23 | Christmas in the First World War



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Letter extract from Arthur Smith, Royal Engineers, III Corps Railhead, B.E.F. January 1916

Note: The following letter extract is from a soldier based at a railhead. This is a point behind the frontline trenches where railways, used to transport men, supplies and ammunition, met. As it was behind the line, men stationed there would sometimes go to nearby villages to get other food supplies. This soldier would have split his time between the railhead station and the frontline trenches. Working at the railhead he would have been involved in laying and fixing tracks and cables, loading and unloading supplies, transporting supplies to the frontline and so on.

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Six of us spent Christmas Day together in this truck and on the whole we had a jolly time. We were not free from work on Christmas Day but the work was not extra hard. For Xmas dinner we had two roasted stuffed chickens, roast potatoes, lime juice and Perrier water [fizzy water], Xmas pudding, nuts and last of all a bowl of champagne. Of course, we had to buy these extra things, but that was of our own free will as a good dinner would have been prepared for us in any case. The Xmas pudding we had for Xmas dinner was the gift of one of the Daily papers. Our Officer the R.T.O. [Railway Transport Officer] gave us cigarettes and bought, or helped to buy, a pig and some beer for consumption on the Railhead. We six in our turn contributed and presented him with two boxes of Marcella cigars with which he seemed to be pleased. Temperance [not too much drinking alcohol] was our motto all through Xmas and so things ended happily. The weather here lately has been generally wet

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