



## How did 12 million letters reach WW1 soldiers each week?

### Video transcript - What was sent

Alan Johnson: So how valued was the postal service to a homesick soldier?

Chris Taft, Royal Mail Archive: It was really important. It was a vital service, the ability to communicate with home, and it was an important morale booster.

AJ: What things did families send out to soldiers?

CT: Families were sending gifts, toiletry products, lice powder was obviously important. So practical items that soldiers would have needed on the front. Sweets and tobacco products were very popular at the time of course.

AJ: What sort of things did soldiers send back?

CT: People were sending cards and souvenir items. There's an example here of some souvenir items that were sent back. It's rather macabre in many ways. This letter was sent back to the brother and sister of this gentleman, William Cox, and he mentions how he's sending back these items as a relic to his family. A piece of shrapnel he sends back from a shell that exploded just over his position, and also this tunic button. In the letter he explains how this button was actually on the tunic of a fallen comrade who was killed just near him from a shell burst.

AJ: So for something like a tin of Oxo cubes, this would come out as a gift for the soldiers, and then they'd use that tin as a receptacle to send various items, various mementos.

CT: Yes, they would have been using that to send back. And these very items were sent in that tin. Being able to get some communication from home, being able to get news from local to home, the items as well, it was really important for soldiers, for morale, to support them through the war.