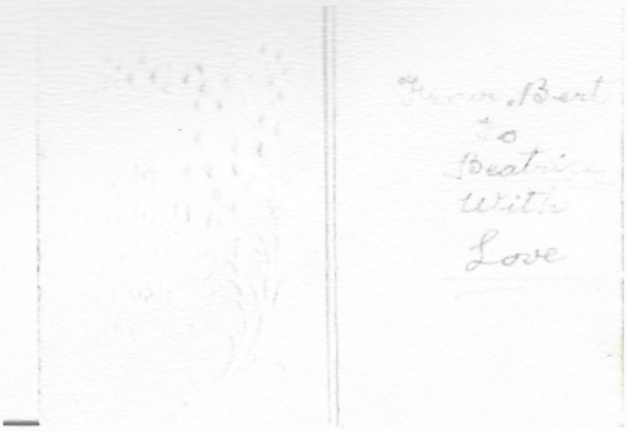
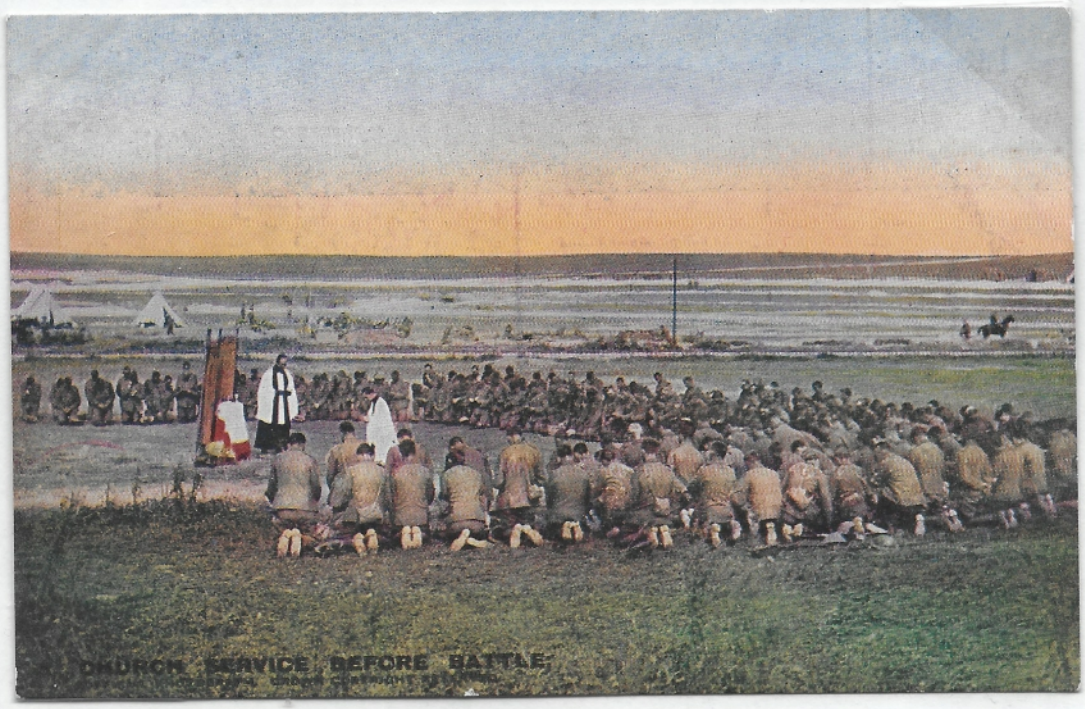


It has long been realised that the receipt of letters from home is a great morale booster for soldiers, making an efficient postal service essential to the war effort. What a comfort these short messages must have been, not only to the wounded but also to those waiting anxiously back home, Hundreds of thousands of cards and letters were distributed in this way.

Doris sent this postcard to Lt Keswick, RAMC, via the Deputy Director of Medical Services, Egypt. It was forwarded to 21 Stationary Hospital.

ARMY CHAPLAINS

From the very early days of English history the State, the Church and the Army have been closely related, one affecting the other to a greater or lesser degree as times and circumstances changed. From time immemorial it has been recognised that religion, and religious faith, was a powerful factor in helping men to fight nobly for their country; it was important that they should believe in the justice of their cause and that they should feel that God therefore was on their side. In early times God's blessing was sought before military plans were embarked upon and troops would kneel in prayer before battle.



Up to the year 1300, no war was embarked upon, nor was any army raised in England, which had not amongst its leaders many of the foremost ecclesiasticals in the land. In the days of William the Conqueror many of the clergy were leading statesmen of the realm and some of its most important landlords. As such they were compelled to raise forces for the King and many of them considered it to be their duty to lead these forces in battle. The beginning of the end of the fighting clerics came in the reign of Edward 1 with the appearance on the pay roll of the army chaplain. By Henry VIII's reign the establishment of chaplains became more fixed as, in 1621, definite mention is made of regimental chaplains in Standing Orders. In 1645, under Oliver Cromwell, the New Model Army regularised their official status and most of the regiments had their own chaplains. Cromwell's chaplains were the first war correspondents. It was their duty to write up the movements and the battles of the armies to which they were attached, for publication in the Press.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

Since the restoration in 1660, up to 1796, a chaplain had formed part of every regiment, as a field officer. Parliament, in their Articles of War 1662-63, prescribed the duty of every chaplain. He was to read the prayers of the Church of England every day and to preach as often as he thought fit. Every officer or soldier absent from prayers was to lose a day's pay. The selection of regimental chaplains was the prerequisite of the colonel. He sold it and the priest who bought it received the pay, but he did not necessarily do the work, which was usually performed by a deputy whose stipend was fixed by mutual agreement. This neglect of attendance was so universal that, in 1796 regimental chaplains were abolished and the Army Chaplains' Department came into being following a Royal Warrant, issued on 23 September 1796.

The qualifications laid down at this time for the appointment of chaplains were: zeal in his profession and good sense; gentle manners; a distinctive and impressive manner of reading Divine Service; a firm constitution of body as well as of mind. These would appear to be still appropriate for the present day.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

The immediate effect of the Royal Warrant of 1796 was to dry up completely the recruitment of army chaplains for the Forces in the field. For example, in 1811 Wellington was reduced to one chaplain in his whole army. By 1824, the total establishment of army chaplains was fourteen, of whom eleven were overseas in Corfu, France, Cape of Good Hope, Malta, Gibraltar, Quebec, Canada, Montreal, Ceylon (2) and Trinidad. The home chaplains were stationed in London, Plymouth and Chatham.

In April 1844 the Reverend Prebendary George Robert Gleig was appointed to the post of Principal Chaplain with a remit to overhaul the department. He began by issuing most detailed *'Hints and Instructions to Military Chaplains,'* which covered every possible aspect of their work. In it he demanded the very highest standards of behaviour and dedication. He stressed particularly that the wives and families of the soldiers, equally with the soldiers themselves, had a right to look to the chaplain as their clergyman and friend.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

In 1854, after nearly forty years of peace, Great Britain, Turkey and France became involved against Russia in the Crimean War – remembered for the gallant Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava and for the inauguration of the Victoria Cross. At this time, there were only seven chaplains in the department with only one capable of being moved at short notice. Four new chaplains were gazetted and sent to join the Army overseas. Before the winter set in two were dead and one invalided. Urgent appeals were made and a total of twenty-four assistant chaplains were sent out in two separate parties to the war zone.

The chaplains did valiant work in the camps and the war correspondent for the *Morning Post* commented: 'How these clergymen stand the work I cannot imagine; they are morning to night in hospitals, or on horseback, or burying the dead.' In no other campaign in our history had the chaplain had to be so ubiquitous in their services to the troops. During the Battle of the Alma on 20 September 1854 the chaplain waded the river and, for many hours, helped to tend the wounded. On the following day he conducted the burial service over the 200 dead of the Light and Guards Divisions.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

On 26 September the little band of chaplains suffered their first loss in the death from cholera of the Reverend George Mockler. As the bitter weather took hold and continued the self-sacrificing work of the chaplains took its toll – of the number of all denominations who served during that winter eight eventually died and eight were invalided. New volunteers were soon forthcoming to replace the losses. There were also chaplains of all denominations who did not hold commissions and whose names therefore do not appear in the Army Lists.

The Crimean chaplains, from small and unprepared beginnings, had written a glorious page in the history of their department. The twelve that died had their names carved in the oak choir stalls in the Garrison Church of the Domus Dei at Portsmouth.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

It was accepted in 1858 that the relative rank of chaplains would be as follows:

Chaplain-General to the Forces as Major-General

Chaplains of the 1st Class as Colonels

Chaplains of the 2nd Class as Lieutenant-Colonels

Chaplains of the 3rd Class as Majors

Chaplains of the 4th Class as Captains

The Secretary of State for War wished it to be distinctly understood that, while selection of chaplains would be left to their own spiritual superiors, the right of rejection any of them was reserved to the Secretary of State for War, who alone could recommend them for a military field appointment under the Crown.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

The Army Chaplains Act of 1868 gave legal sanction to the work of the Department. Gleig retired from the post of Chaplain-General on 6 April 1875 and was succeeded by The Rt. Rev. Piers Calveley Claughton, D.D., Archdeacon of London and Canon of St Paul's and held office until his death on 11 August 1884. The Army List of 1884 showed a total of 82 chaplains, including the Chaplain-General and the Padre at Sandhurst.

In 1885, J. C. Edghill was appointed Chaplain-General at a time when, rrespective of denomination, the Department was fundamentally geared towards its peacetime garrison work and it was hard pressed to cope with the demands of far-flung colonial campaigns.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

During the Boer War there was a discernible tendency for chaplains to become heavily identified with their soldiers. In his address to the Church Congress of 1900, Colonel Jelf had drawn attention to the energetic, zealous and self-denying young clergymen who comprised the present set of Army Chaplains in South Africa.

By dint of their example and through the familiar and invigorating style of their services, Jelf insisted that soldiers were at last learning to value their chaplain as their friend, and his ministrations as their blessings.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

J. C. Edghill retired from the Army Chaplains' Department in 1901. The vacancy was filled in November, 1901, by Bishop John Taylor Smith, a fervent evangelical and a veteran C.M.S. missionary to West Africa. He had served as an acting chaplain to British forces in the Ashanti campaign of 1895-6.

In August 1914, and besides the Chaplain-General, the Army Chaplains' Department comprised 117 commissioned chaplains plus 37 acting chaplains, their principal charges being the 247,000 soldiers of the regular army and their dependants, a third of whom were routinely stationed in India and were thus the responsibility of the Indian Ecclesiastical Establishment.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

This modest total was insufficient to meet the needs created by the huge expansion of the British army in 1914-15. Given that around 70% of the 5.7 million soldiers who served in the First World War gave their religion as C of E, the demand for Anglican chaplains was particularly acute.

Two years later, there were 1,270 Anglican chaplains serving under regular, temporary and Territorial commissions. While some Anglican clergymen were recalled to the colours as reservists, a much larger number volunteered to serve in the combatant arms of the army and, less controversially, as non-combatants in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

One of the most striking aspects of chaplaincy work at this time was its ill-defined nature. The Reverend E. C. Crosse ruefully remembered his experiences in 1915:

> The chaplain received no sort of preliminary training to equip him for his new life. He went straight from his parish to his unit, and was left almost entirely to gain his experience for himself.

While chaplains had difficulty in finding their feet in France, as new divisions were raised in Britain in 1914-15 it appears to have been the accepted practice to allow chaplains to adjust themselves to their work by simply sharing the training of the units to which they were attached.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

One of the few specific duties of the chaplain was the burial of the dead. Burials in or near the front line were as unpleasant as they were dangerous, a task made worse by the fact that chaplains were not only responsible for burial services but were also involved in the collection and identification of human remains.

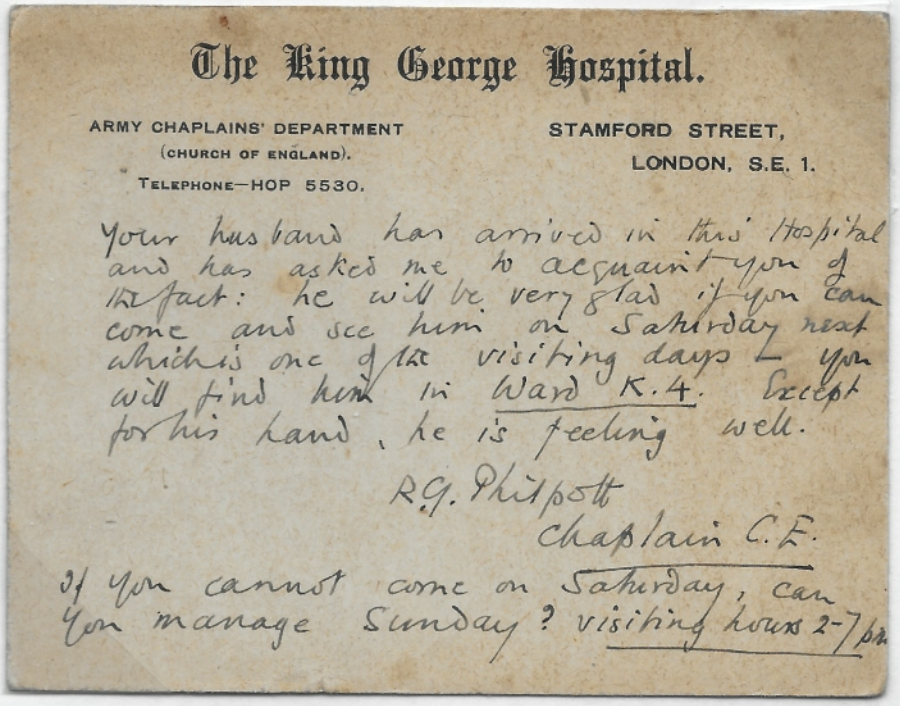
More harrowing still was the task of 'clearing the battlefield', sometimes through the burial of corpses that had been decomposing for weeks, months or even years. In January 1918, E. F. Campbell, a regular army chaplain and Irish rugby international, was awarded the D.S.O. for just this kind of work. In his recommendation for the award, he was praised for his grim achievements, particularly:

> Devotion and perseverance in the burial of numerous dead in the Serre-Beaumont Hamel area. A most arduous duty, the majority of the bodies being in an advanced state of putrefaction. Between 5000 and 6000 bodies were buried during about 15 weeks. Only Mr Campbell's determination enabled him to perform the work; his assistants and working parties had frequently to be changed.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

Besides conducting burials and tending graves, chaplains usually wrote to the relatives of killed and wounded soldiers under their care. Hence during the 3rd Battle of Ypres, the Anglican chaplains of the 56th (London) Division wrote between three and four thousand letters to next of kin.



The King George Hospital.

ARMY CHAPLAINS' DEPARTMENT
(CHURCH OF ENGLAND).
TELEPHONE—HOP 5530.

STAMFORD STREET,
LONDON, S.E. 1.

Your husband has arrived in this Hospital and has asked me to acquaint you of the fact: he will be very glad if you can come and see him on Saturday next which is one of the visiting days. You will find him in Ward K.4. Except for his hand, he is feeling well.

R.G. Philpott
Chaplain C.E.

If you cannot come on Saturday, can you manage Sunday? visiting hours 2-7 pm

In 1917 the Deputy Chaplain-General prevailed upon the War Office to authorise a central school of instruction for chaplains at St Omer, situated fairly conveniently between the armies in the field and the large bases on the coast. The chaplains' school was relocated to Blendecques but had to close between April and November 1918 due to the critical situation at the front.

MOTTO: IN THIS SIGN CONQUER

ARMY CHAPLAINS

By 1918 3,475 chaplains were recorded as serving in the Army Chaplains' Department - 60% of these were demobilised by August 1919. Seemingly assured of the affections of the wartime generation, many former chaplains went on to play a major role in ex-servicemen's associations in the inter-war period.

Former chaplains also played a prominent part in the commemoration of the war, being responsible for a plethora of unit histories and memorials. David Railton, formerly a brigade chaplain with the 34th and 47th Divisions on the Western Front, was the moving force behind the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, a national memorial that commemorated 'the average of the men who died' and which was consecrated amidst much pomp and ceremony in Westminster Abbey on Armistice Day 1920.

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