

**OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS
GCSE**

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HISTORY B (MODERN WORLD)

British Depth Study, 1890–1918

SOURCE BOOKLET

FRIDAY 23 MAY 2014: Morning

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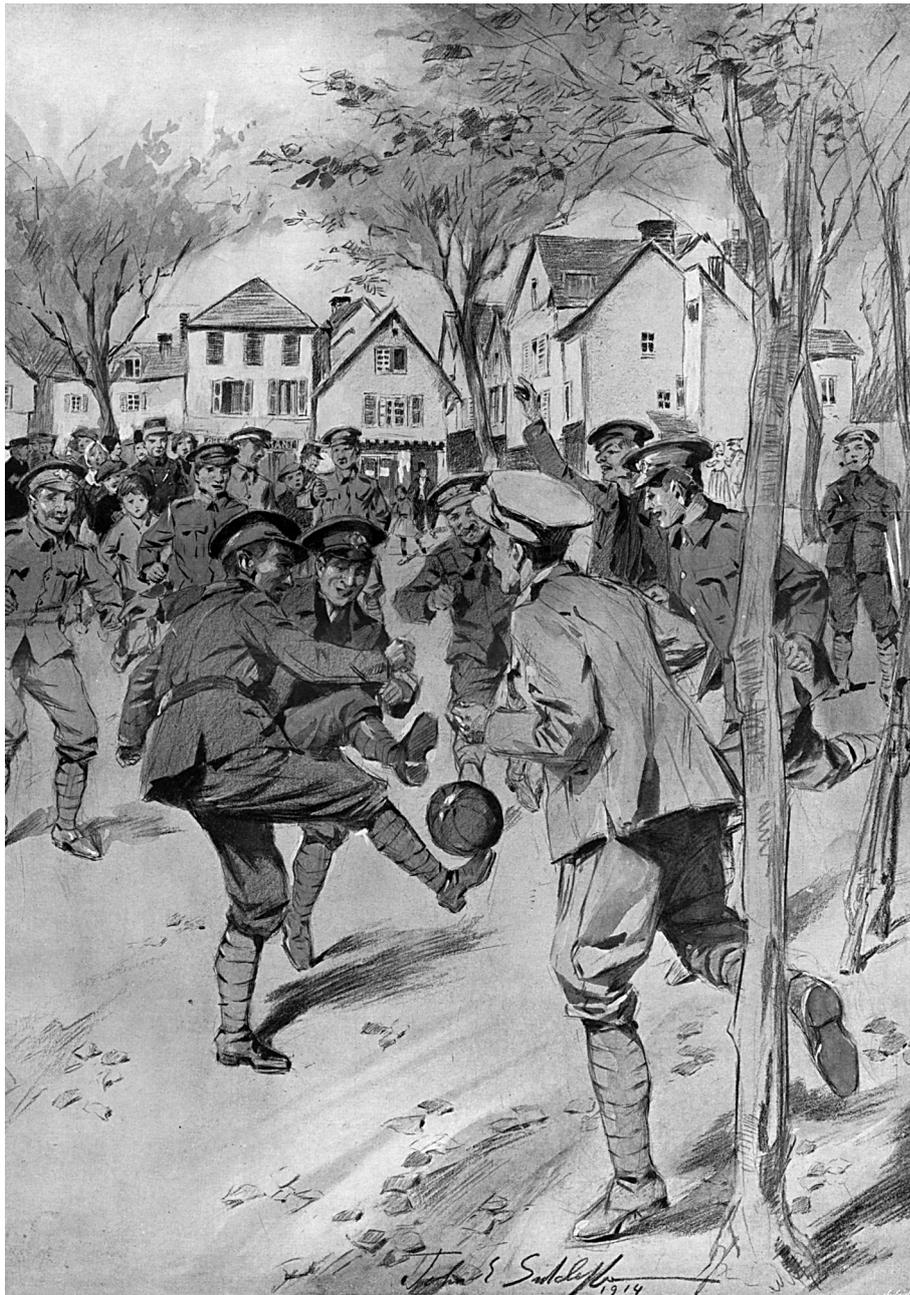
HOW WAS BRITISH SOCIETY CHANGED, 1890–1918?

Propaganda and censorship during the First World War

Background Information

In 1914 the First World War broke out. In the years that followed, millions of men fought and died in terrible conditions in the trenches on the Western Front. People at home supported the war at first, and thousands of young men volunteered to join the army. Their families were proud of them but also anxious. They were eager to know what was happening on the front line. However, the government was worried that if people knew too much they might give away information to the enemy, or they might stop supporting the war effort. So did people know what was really happening in the war?

SOURCE A



OUR HAPPY TOMMIES IN FRANCE

A picture from a British newspaper published in October 1914. It has the title 'Our happy Tommies in France'. Tommies was a nickname for British soldiers. Soldiers in uniform as shown relaxing on the edge of a peaceful and pretty French village. They are playing a game of football between some leafy trees.

SOURCE B

Our readers continually write to us and ask for more information about what is happening in the war in France and Belgium. We invite our readers who have friends and relatives serving as soldiers with the British Expeditionary Force to send to The Formby Times any letters they may receive from the front. The letters, which will afterwards be returned, should be accompanied by the envelope in which they are received, together with the name, rank and regiment of the writer, and the name and address in full of the person to whom they have been written. No reference to the regiment or their location will, of course, be published.

From an article in The Formby Times, a local newspaper, 1914.

SOURCE C

Tuesday, 15 September	Stayed in bed all day. Dead to the world. Not worth even half a German.
Tuesday, 22 September	Agnes doing some baking at night. Disaster in North Sea. Three British cruisers sunk by German submarines.
Wednesday, 23 September	About 200 wounded British soldiers arrived at Stobhill Hospital last Monday. Some British aviators flew over Cologne and bombed a Zeppelin shed.
Sunday, 27 September	Very windy day. Typhus broken out among the Germans at Brussels.
Wednesday, 30 September	Much better weather, fine and sunny. Allies pressing the Germans stiffly in the Big Battle.
Saturday, 3 October	Big Battle still raging. German attacks shattered the London Scottish at the front. The Belgian city of Antwerp besieged. All of us in town this afternoon. This is Belgian Flag Day, so we put on our flags.

**From the diary of an office worker in Britain,
September – October 1914.**

SOURCE D



**How the German Gas Devil
Comes – Thick Green Mist Rolling
Towards The Trench**

A picture published in a British newspaper in May 1915 showing a gas attack. This was the first time gas was used in the war. Underneath the picture it says, ‘How the German Gas Devil Comes – Thick Green Mist Rolling Towards The Trench’. The picture shows British soldiers affected by clouds of smoke coming over their trench. One soldier has tied a handkerchief over his nose and mouth and is standing with his rifle ready to fire. Other soldiers are in pain and have put their hands over their mouths and eyes. One man is coughing, while another has bent forward with his hands to his face.

SOURCE E

Dear Sir

I know you will be very interested in the doings of the Durham Light Infantry Regiment at the Battle of the Somme. On July 7th one of our companies went into action against a German position. Most of the company reached the first line of German defences and a good part of them reached as far as the third line. They all gave a very good account of themselves, and the men kept going even after all of their officers and sergeants were killed. Nothing could equal the extraordinary bravery of our men. On the same day the other two companies of our regiment attacked German positions and suffered very heavy losses. In spite of this they were as cheery and full of fight as they were at the beginning of the attack.

From a letter by a soldier about the Battle of the Somme. The letter was published in July 1916 in one of Durham's local newspapers.

SOURCE F

GREAT BRITISH VICTORY VIGOROUS ONSLAUGHT ON THE GERMAN LINE 5000 PRISONERS CAPTURED

One of the most decisive battles on the Somme was fought by the British Army on Friday and Saturday, when another great movement was made in ‘the big push’ with disastrous results for the enemy. The following detailed report was issued by the Government Press Bureau:

‘Exactly on time and with perfect discipline our infantry, supported by armoured cars, moved forward to the assault, under cover from accurate fire from our artillery. The German front line was taken everywhere except at two minor points. British forces did suffer some losses, which are still being assessed. However, enemy losses were believed to be much higher and about 5000 prisoners have been taken.’

From an article published in a national newspaper in September 1916.

SOURCE G

Studies of propaganda and censorship have concentrated almost exclusively on the national press, ignoring the supreme importance of the local press during this period. Local papers like The Kentish Mercury, covering just a corner of south east London, had over 25 000 readers, which was impressive compared to The Times' national figure of 150 000.

Contrary to the traditional view, these local papers, along with letters between soldiers on active service and their relatives, show that a great deal of information was available back in Britain. The openness of the local press increased dramatically. People read the local papers to find out how the local regiment was getting on, and the boys told them through their letters to the local paper.

An extract from an article by an historian, published in 2002.

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