The First World War, Female Telegraphists and the General Post Office’s Employment Priorities

Joanna Espin
Curator, The Postal Museum, London
Communication during the First World War

Interior of a cable ship, 2010-0422/5, c.1890 – 1910, The Postal Museum

Telecommunication cables suspended over spades, POST 56/6, The Postal Museum
Telegraphists of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) in the Signals Office, Boulogne, 1919, Q 7971, Imperial War Museum
ALTERATIONS IN HOURS OF PUBLIC TELEGRAPH BUSINESS.

NOTICE is hereby given that on account of the depletion of the Post Office staff by the withdrawal of men for service with the Colours, the hours of public telegraph business at many Post Offices have been curtailed.

Some of the larger Telegraph Offices, and a number of the smaller offices, both in town and country, now open at 9 a.m. and close at 7 p.m. for the collection and delivery of telegrams; and senders are warned that telegrams handed in after 6 p.m. may not reach their destination until the following morning.

By Command of the Postmaster General.
Wireless communications

‘Wireless Telegraph Station’ Lantern Slide, c.1890, 2010-0418/2, The Postal Museum

‘Wireless cabin’ Lantern Slide, post-1913, 2010-0418/1, The Postal Museum
Male employment

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**C. R.**

**POST OFFICE RIFLES.**

**8TH BATTALION CITY OF LONDON REGIMENT**

Are In Urgent Need ofRecruits to complete Establishment of the 3rd Battalion, and an earnest appeal is therefore made to all Officers of Military age who are desirous of assisting their colleagues now fighting in Flanders.

The Object of the 3rd Battalion is to supply drafts, after having received the necessary training.

1. **HOW TO ENLIST.**

   (1) See your Postmaster and obtain official permission.
   (2) Having obtained permission write to Officer Commanding POST OFFICE RIFLES, 130, Bunhill Row, London, E.C.
   (3) You should not be less than 5ft. 2in. in height with an expanded chest measurement of 34in.
   (4) Age limits - 19 to 40. 19 to 45 ex Soldiers.

2. **TERMS OF SERVICE.**

   (1) Four years or duration of the War.
   (2) Foreign Service Only.
   (3) Free Discharge on termination of War or engagement.

3. **Civil Posts will be kept open until return from Military Service, and such service will count for Civil Pension and for Increment of Civil Salary.**

4. **THE PAY OF A RIFLEMAN** is equal to full Civil Pay in the case of all Established Officers, plus Free Kit, Rations and Quarters.

   N.C.O.'s receive Extra Pay of their Rank supplemental to Civil Pay.

   Un-established Officers receive Full Army Pay and Allowances, Free Kit, Rations and Quarters.

**APPROVED BY THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL.**

(Signed) A.M.O.

37/5/18

J. HARVEY

Lient.-Col. 18th Battalion City of London Regiment.

(British Expeditionary Force)

F. A. LABOUCHERE

Lient.-Col. 23rd City of London Regiment.

F. OWEN

Major 5th City of London Regiment.

**GOD SAVE THE KING.**

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Post Office Rifles marching in column,
POST 163 PRD/v/0005, 1914-1918, The Postal Museum
(i) ‘Applicants with previous experience of Post Office work and others specifically recommended by the Postmaster

(ii) Ex-Army and ex-Navy men. (The Labour Exchanges will put forward the cases of any disabled soldiers who apply and appear suitable for Post Office work such cases should be treated sympathetically)

(iii) Men who have applied specifically for Post Office work

(iv) Other candidates’.
Demobilisation

Photograph of four soldiers waiting for post, 1914 - 1918, POST 118/5427, The Postal Museum
### Second World War Recruitment Plan

#### POST OFFICE STAFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telegraphists</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorters</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmen</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering workmen</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total released</strong></td>
<td><strong>82,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Casualties including men discharged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telegraphists</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorters</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmen</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Workmen</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total casualties</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract from ‘Recruitment of Skilled Personnel from P.O. Staff in case of War’, 1927, Post 47/378, The Postal Museum