

Box 2. Silence of Mourning



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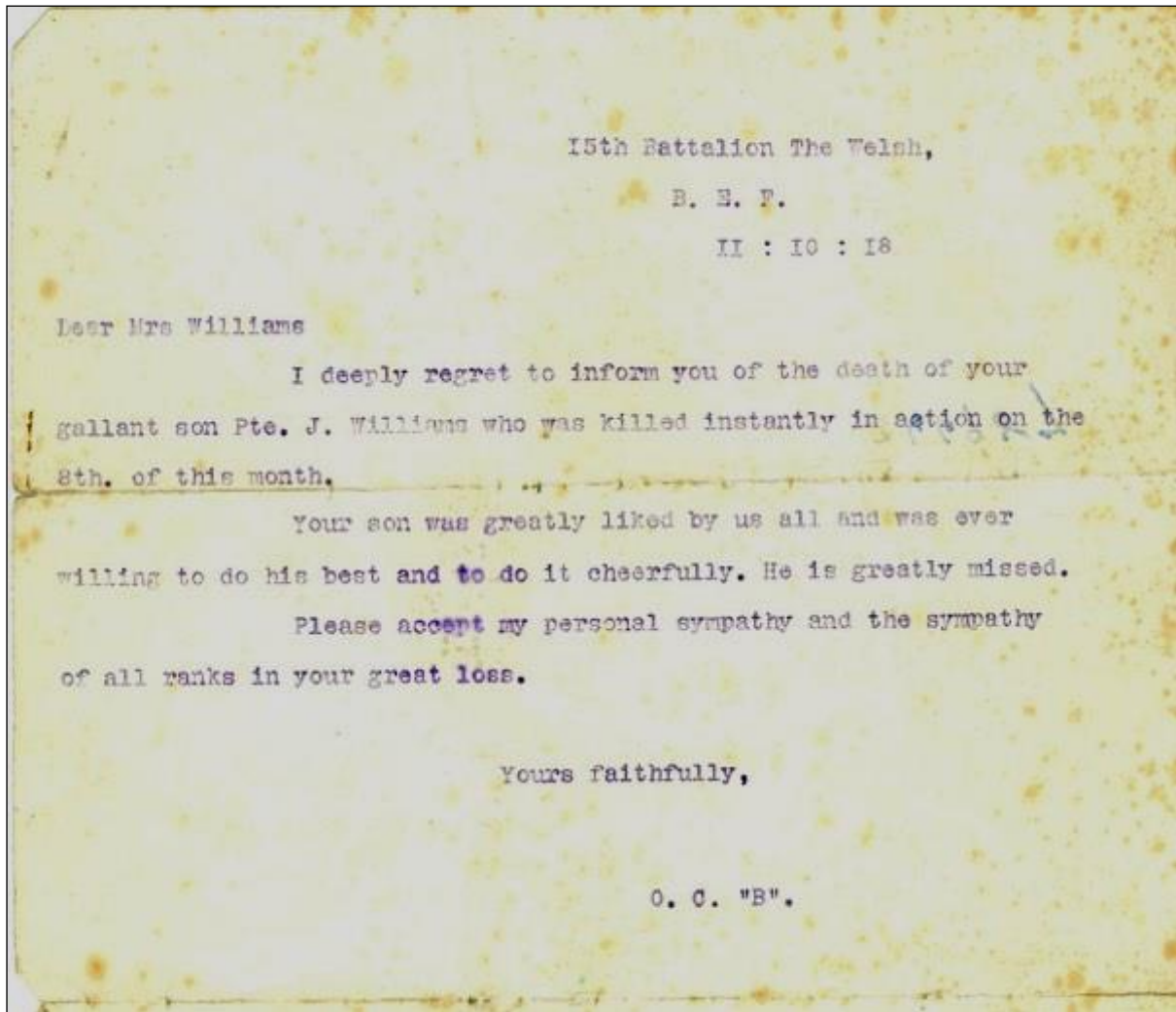
1. The photograph in the inside lid of a soldier is of Private Johnny Williams of the Welch Regiment (*Tŷ Weindio / Winding House Museum*). He was killed when a bullet went through a bible he was carrying in his chest pocket. The image of the bible is used in **Box 13 Silence of Religion, Tea and Sympathy**.
2. Death Penny in memorial of Sidney Burchett of East Sussex Regiment. It is in a dark brown card envelope.
3. Letter to Mrs Williams informing her of the death of Private Johnny Williams (*Tŷ Weindio / Winding House Museum*)
4. Front cover of a mourning card used in WW1 (*Archifau Morgannwg / Glamorgan Archives*)

Key information

Memorial Plaques

- **A Medallion:** also known as a 'Death Penny' and a 'Widow's Penny', was presented to the next-of-kin of service people who lost their lives in WW1.
- **Design:** An open competition was held to find a suitable design for the memorial. Artists were required to submit their work to the National Gallery under a pseudonym to avoid bias. There were in excess of 800 submissions and the competition was won by a Liverpool artist, Edward Carter Preston. His initials E Cr P are visible near the Lion's front paw. He was paid £250 for this design and another submission. This is equivalent to around £14,000 now.
- **Symbolism on the plaque:**
 - Dolphins** – represent Britain's sea power.
 - The female** - is Britannia, her head bowed to honour the fallen soldier.
 - Trident** – held in Britannia's right hand, symbolising Britain's imperial power and unity.
 - Wreath** – this is held in Britannia's outstretched left hand, although there is some discussion as to whether this is an olive or laurel wreath. A wreath is circular in shape which represents eternity, with no beginning and no end; it is made out of an evergreen symbolising everlasting life. At the base of the wreath you can just see the bronze worn, as if someone has held it and rubbed this section. Both the laurel and olive wreath represented victory and presented to the victor. If this is an olive wreath it has the additional symbolism of peace.
 - Lions** – Two Lions, one next to Britannia and a smaller one at the base of the plaque. The Lion is a symbol of Britain and the Empire and is on the coat of arms for England. The smaller lion at the bottom of the plaque is tearing into an eagle wing – a symbol of Britain crushing German power. It is reported that Bristol Zoo complained that the lion looked too feeble.
 - Oak:** An oak spray curves around the plaque and is a symbol of strength and endurance.
- **Text:** 'He died for freedom and honour' was the compulsory text to be included in the design. Here it curves around the plaque with a little space before the 'H' to insert an 'S' and change the statement to: 'She died for freedom and honour', 600 were created for women
- Over 1.3 million memorial plaques were produced, using 450 tonnes of bronze.
- **Number:** displayed by lion's tail, is the workers number. Here it is 34.
- **Rank:** No rank is visible as there is no distinction of sacrifice in death.
- **Executed:** The next of kin for soldiers that were executed (shot at dawn), did not receive one.
- **Controversy:** Some people felt insulted by the reference to 'penny' as they thought it devalued life, as if it was only worth a penny.

Documents included



(Tŷ Weindio / Winding House Museum)

Zappar code:

Download the Zappar app on a smart phone or iPad. Hover over the code below to hear a South Wales woman describe and see extracts from the treasured letter written to inform her grandmother of the death of her collier brother in January 1916.



2. Silence of Mourning: questions



1. Does this box feel like a happy or sad box?
2. Do you think it is heavy or light?
3. What do you think is inside the box?

4. How does the box feel to hold? What is on the surface?
5. What is inside?
6. Hand out the envelopes from the box. Select a person to read the letter and another to activate the zappar code. What is the lady on the film talking about?
7. How would Mrs Williams feel reading this letter?



8. Open the memorial plaque: Describe what can you see on it?
9. What is it made out of?
10. What animals are on it?
11. Who do you think the female is?
12. What do you think it means?

Box 2. Silence of Mourning



13. Can you find a bird? What's happening to it?

14. Can you find the initials E. Cr. P?

15. Can you find a number?

16. Why is there no rank listed for the fallen soldier?

Suggested box combinations

- 1a Silence of Armistice
- 1b Scroll
- Box 7, Silence of Waiting
- Box 6 Silence of the Aftermath of War

Box 2 Silence of Mourning works well as part of an introductory sequence to the concept of silence.

Suggested activities

- Design a memorial plaque:

Start with thinking of the things you would like to say, and research the symbols you would need to use to convey this. Consider any animals or people you would want on it. Think of the size, shape and materials you would want it made out of. How would you display your initials? How would you display the compulsory text?

'He Died for Freedom and Honour'

- If combining boxes, such as **Box 2**, **Box 6 Silence of Waiting** and **Box 7 Silence of the Aftermath of War**, create a link looking at when someone was told the distressing news and the impact that news had on their well-being. Create a story, which starts with **Box 6**, then **Box 2 Silence of Mourning** after the sad news has been received and then **Box 7**, how this news impacts the life of the next of kin. Consider where Mrs Williams was when she received the letter and how she reacted. Also consider how she reacted when, years later, she received the memorial plaque. What do you think she would have done with it?

Caring for the box after use

- Please place contents carefully back in the box
- If there is a problem with the zappar code please let H4A know
- Please place the written passages in the envelope, returning it to the box
- Report any damage straight away