

Did you know... the City of York sent a chocolate gift to York soldiers during the First World War?

The first thing you should know... The gift was a tin of chocolate designed and made at the Rowntree's factory which was sent by the Lord Mayor, John Bowes Morrell (right) and his Sheriff, Oscar F. Rowntree, to all York men serving at the front during the Christmas of 1914. The chocolate industry in York was very important then too.



What does it look like? It is a pressed steel tin and has a hinged lid printed with a design incorporating the allied nation's flags. The message reads 'The Lord Mayor of York, John Bowes Morrell and the Sheriff, Oscar F. Rowntree, send best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a bright New Year to all York men who are serving their King and Country. Christmas 1914'.



Is there still chocolate in the tin? Yes! Some tins were actually sent home back to loved ones in England so that the chocolate was preserved.



Did the soldiers like receiving the tins? Around 250 soldiers or sailors from York wrote letters of thanks in the first few months of 1915 after receiving their Christmas gift, which are held in the city archives.

Ideas to think about for your chocolate box:

- How do you think soldiers felt when the tin arrived?
- What do you think it was like for the soldiers and their families to be apart at Christmas?
- Was a chocolate tin a good present for soldiers?
- Why do you think the tin is decorated with flags?
- Why do you think the list of names of important people was used on the tin?
- If your box could be sent to someone who is doing something kind or helpful – who would you send it to?