



# Billets and Barracks

During both World Wars, soldiers were billeted at various locations whilst they took part in training. When on duty, they took part in service rotation so that they could balance their work with rest. Their time off duty was commonly known as 'Rest and Recuperation' or R&R, and offered the soldiers a chance to maintain both their physical and mental health. During this time, some soldiers had limited freedom and leisure time to enjoy different hobbies and pursuits.

Despite the small salary paid to soldiers, gambling was a popular form of entertainment in both the First and Second World Wars. Gambling games were widely played in military camps as they were easy to arrange and little equipment was needed. Despite its popularity, gambling was not permitted in the army and soldiers often had to watch out for the military police and suspicious commanding officers during their games.

Another form of popular entertainment for off-duty soldiers was playing sports, especially football and cricket. Encouraging sports competitions in the Army helped keep soldiers fit and perhaps most importantly, encouraged troops to build a mutual trust and team spirit which would help them to work together on the battlefield. Sporting activities also helped to relieve boredom and provide a distraction for soldiers who needed to escape from their memories of war. Competitions were held between regiments, companies and battalions and could be fiercely contested.

Cricket was a popular sport amongst soldiers, and was said to represent the virtues of England - strength, persistence, courage, leadership, camaraderie and sportsmanship. These characteristics were seen to be so essential to the British Army that in 1841, Commander in Chief General Sir Rowland Hill ordered that every military barracks in the country should be built with a cricket ground.



Three sportsmen from the 43rd Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. On the table are the winner's cups and medals.



The Signallers' football team of the 52nd Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in 1913.

