

Tin Hats & Telegrams - Cast

Soldiers

Jack Webster Our hero. Sings some important solos. Needs to be an excellent actor.

Reg Jack's best mate; a cheery, comic character with lots of lines. Needs to be a confident and outgoing performer. Sings solo in *'There's a Poem in a Biscuit'*.

Eddie The youngest of the battalion. Plays a key role in the story.

Jim
Frank
George
John
The Sergeant The rest of Jack's pals are all good parts too.

Ambulance girls

Alice Chapman Jack's sweetheart. A feisty and determined character.

Peggy

Doris The other ambulance girls are all lively and interesting roles

with plenty of scope for drama.

Maud

Elsie

Village mums (and one dad)

Mrs Chapman Alice's mum. A reliable and confident performer, this important role provides transitions and links between scenes. Sings solo in *'If the Men Were Here'*.

Mrs Webster Jack's mum. Must be able to act with emotion. Like Mrs Chapman, she has lots of lines that introduce and link the scenes. Sings solo in *'If the Men Were Here.'*

Mr Webster Jack's dad.

Mrs Briggs These are all rewarding roles with plenty to do.

Mrs Pearce

Mrs Kendal

Mrs Brodie

Village Kids

Arthur Webster Jack's younger brother and his gang of friends are a lively and fun group to play. Ideal if you have some younger but very confident cast members.

Jean
Alec
Lillian
Betsy

Hospital crew

Matron Try to cast someone very tiny (but loud) as the Matron - especially effective if you have much taller/older Nurses to be terrified of her! She has very few lines.

Nurse 1
Nurse 2
Nurse 3
Nurse 4

Soldier 1
Soldier 2
Soldier 3
Soldier 4
Soldier 5

These all have lots to do in the Hospital scenes.

As many **extra Village residents**, adults and children, as possible.
Tom - one of the village characters - has one line in Scene 5

Extra soldiers can also be accommodated with Jack and his pals.

Note: As the Wounded soldiers and Nurses don't appear until Scene 6, it's important to include them in the 'mixture of characters' who are onstage to perform Eleven Eleven (see the stage direction on p7).

It's a good idea for offstage cast to remain in the hall or performing area, joining in all the songs from the sides.

Tin Hats and Telegrams

Scene 1: Have you heard?

(Kids run on from opposite sides as they say their first lines, shouting with energy and excitement)

Arthur: Have you heard?

Lilian: Is it true?

Alec: Is the war over?

Jean: I don't believe it!

Arthur: There was a message from the King -

Betsy: *(Looking round and into audience)* The King? Is he here?

Alec: I saw someone sticking a poster up on the High Street -

Jean: Saying what?

Lilian: *(Heading offstage, and pulling Betsy with her)* Let's go and look!

Betsy: I want to see the King!

SFX: CHURCH BELLS RING CD 15

(The children stop in their tracks. Enter Mrs Pearce, Mrs Brodie, Mrs Chapman, and other adults. They rush onstage, all talking at once, and quickly gather round Mrs Pearce, who is clutching a paper.)

Mrs Chapman: It says: 'The armistice was signed at five o'clock this morning, and hostilities are to cease on all fronts at 11 am today.'

(All cheer; some embrace each other, shake hands or slap each other on the back. More villagers, and a mixture of other characters enter as the song begins - soldiers, nurses, etc)

Song 1: Eleven Eleven

All

CD: 1/16

Eleven eleven, eleven eleven
Eleven eleven, eleven eleven
November 1918
November 1918

Have you heard it? Have you heard the news?
War is over! Peace has been declared
We are thankful! We are overjoyed
Make it happen - bring our soldiers home!

Bring our soldiers home, now, we wanna see them
Bring our soldiers home!
Bring our soldiers home, now, we wanna see them
Bring our soldiers home!

Four long years of fighting
Is over we can
Bring our soldiers home

Eleven eleven, eleven eleven
Eleven eleven, eleven eleven
November 1918
November 1918

No more bombing, no more sleepless nights
Hoping praying, let my boy survive
Every husband, every mother's son
Brought us victory - bring our soldiers home

Bring our soldiers home, now, we wanna see them
Bring our soldiers home!
Bring our soldiers home, now, we wanna see them
Bring our soldiers home!

Four long years of fighting
Is over we can
Bring our soldiers home

Eleven eleven 1918
Time to bring them home

(Exit all except Mrs Pearce, Mrs Brodie, Mrs Briggs, Mrs Chapman, Mrs Kendal, Mrs Webster)

Mrs Pearce: What a wonderful day!

Mrs Brodie: I wonder if they're celebrating at the Front?

Mrs Kendal: Oh, they will be!

Mrs Brodie: They'll be turning cartwheels in No Man's Land!

Mrs Briggs: Some of them.

(There is an awkward silence. Mrs Briggs gets a hanky out)

Mrs Briggs: *(wiping her eyes)* It's all right. My Fred would be cheering the loudest of all, if he could.

Mrs Brodie: Oh, Mary! *(hugs her)*

Mrs Briggs: It's too late, isn't it? Too late for so many...

Mrs Pearce: My brother-in-law...

Mrs Brodie: My dear nephew Harry ...

Mrs Chapman: Both my cousins...

Mrs Briggs: Fred would tell me off for making everyone sad!

Mrs Webster: It doesn't seem five minutes since Jack left. I was so worried about him.

Mrs Kendal: Everyone worried, Vera.

Mrs Webster: But Jack was different. Don't you remember? Such a gentle soul.

Mrs Chapman: He used to write poetry, didn't he? Bless him.

Mrs Brodie: He was always in a dream world, your Jack.

Mrs Webster: I know!

(Exit all except Mrs Webster. Enter Jack, carrying a haversack and writing in a notebook)

Mrs Webster: *(To audience)* My clever, shy boy. How would they make a soldier of him?

(Exit Mrs Webster)

Scene 2: Goodbye-ee

(Jack puts down his haversack and walks up and down the stage with his notebook, trying to write. He completely ignores the following interruptions, until Alice turns up.)

Jack: Under the grey and smoky sky... no...

Arthur: *(entering)* Jack! What time's your train?

Jack: Under the cloudy, smoke-filled sky...

Mr Webster: *(entering)* Now then, son. Where's your pack?

Jack: Where heroes march and bullets fly...

Mrs Webster: *(entering)* I've made you some sandwiches for the journey, Jack.

(Mr and Mrs Webster pack the sandwiches into his haversack, shaking their heads and occasionally trying to get his attention)

Jack: Hang on... Every soldier, proud to serve...

Arthur: Jack! *(He waves his hands in front of Jack's face)*

Jack: Eh? Proud to fight...

(Mrs Chapman enters with a group of other neighbours, who form a group at the back of the stage)

Mrs Chapman: Is he all ready to go?

Mr Webster: He's in a daydream, as usual. Jack!

Jack: Fight... right... sight....light...

Alice: *(Entering)* Hello, Jack.

Jack: Oh! *(Drops notebook in confusion - a big reaction)*
Hello, Alice! How are you?

Alice: I've come to say goodbye.

(Alice picks up Jack's notebook and holds it so their faces are hidden. They talk together, privately)

Mrs Chapman: Everyone's coming. We'll see him off in style!

Mrs Kendal: I don't like it. We've waved goodbye to too many lads from this village.

Mrs Pearce: I know. I hear the conditions are terrible now.

Mrs Brodie: My brother said there are rats in the trenches.

All: RATS?!!

Mrs Kendal: And they all come back with lice!

All: LICE?!!

Mrs Pearce: That's if they come back at all, poor lads.

All: *(Tragically)* POOR LADS...

Mrs Brodie: One of Frank's friends had his leg blown off -

Mrs Chapman: *(just as the group breathe in for another horrified reaction)* Stop it!!

(They all hastily hush each other. Alice and Jack come forward)

Alice: I've been learning to drive!

Jack: Drive a motor car?

Alice: Lady Herbert's motor car! Her chauffeur has signed up, you see.

Mrs Pearce: I'm not sure it's very ladylike to be driving a motor car, dear.

Jack: You will be careful, won't you?

Alice: Me be careful?!

Mr Webster: Girls driving? I don't know what the world's coming to.

Alice: I wish I could do more! In fact -

Mrs Webster: *(Giving Jack his haversack)* Come on, son. It's time you got going.

Arthur: I'll come to the station with you!

Jack: No need for that. I'd rather say goodbye here.
Anyway, I'm walking down with Reg.

Reg: *(Entering)* I'll keep an eye on him! Are you ready,
Jack?

Jack: I think so!

Reg: *(To Mrs Webster)* Don't you worry! We'll have this
war finished in no time.

Jack: *(to Arthur)* Look after Alice for me.

Alice: I heard that!! I can look after myself!

Mr Webster: Goodbye, son! God bless!

Song 2: Goodbye-ee

All

CD 2/17

**Goodbye-ee, goodbye-ee
Wipe the tear, baby dear, from your eye-ee
Though it's hard to part I know
I'll be tickled to death to go
Don't cry-ee, don't sigh-ee
There's a silver lining in the sky-ee
Bonsoir old thing, cheerio chin chin
Napoo, toodle oo goodbye-ee!**

**Goodbye, goodbyeee
Wipe the tear, baby dear, from your eye-ee
Though it's hard to part I know
I'll be tickled to death to go
Don't cry-ee, don't sigh-ee
There's a silver lining in the sky-ee
Bonsoir old thing, cheerio chin chin
Napoo, toodle-oo, goodbye-ee**

(As the song ends, Jack and Reg leave the stage - perhaps into the audience - with everyone waving and shouting out their goodbyes. Exit all except Alice and Mrs Chapman)