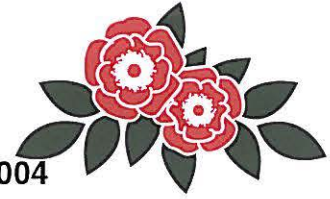


NEWS RELEASE

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England V Germany: War Games of Christmas 1914 Fact or Fiction?

A football match like no other, said to have occurred on the bloody battlefields of Flanders during WW1, is the subject of a new research project by Iain Adams, Principal Lecturer in Outdoor Education at the University of Central Lancashire.

Little is known about the game(s) which took place between the British and German troops during the 'Christmas Truce' of 1914, when soldiers from both sides stopped fighting to join each other in No Man's Land; burying their dead, sharing short church services, singing carols, exchanging gifts and gaining some brief respite from the horrors of war.

"Some historians dispute the validity of the match but I believe that small games occurred on an ad-hoc basis all the way down the front line," said Iain. "There was no authorised truce between the two armies but we know from historical records that two thirds of the British/German front line took part in localised ceasefires on December 25 1914. However, this is probably the first time that a detailed study on the subject of the football match(s) has taken place."

Iain has already undertaken secondary research on the Christmas Truce and is about to delve deeper into the subject of the football game(s) using sources from regimental museums and the letters pages of local and national newspapers of the day.

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“There is a feeling that the whole subject is a romantic notion, dreamed up by soldiers who would have liked it to happen. However, much of the research in this area has failed to investigate the evidence available within war diaries and private letters. I’m planning to examine regimental war diaries and combatant’s personal correspondence to build up a picture of what actually happened.”

Already Iain has uncovered evidence of the British and German regiments who took part in the truce which include the Lancashire Fusiliers, the Welch Fusiliers, the Seaforth Highlanders and, on the German side, the 133rd and 134th Saxons. In a wartime letter, Leutnant Johannes Niemann, of the the 133rd Saxons, describes the Scottish players as not wearing underpants beneath their kilts and recalls that the Germans won the match 3-2.

The ground breaking research is to be completed by Easter 2004 and will be published in the International Journal of the History of Sport. Iain also plans to write a primary school Christmas play on the subject, ready for Christmas 2004 – the ninetieth anniversary of the famous war game.

Iain would be delighted to hear from anyone owning WW1 letters which describe the activities that took place during the Christmas Truce of 1914. He can be contacted on 01772 894915 or emailed at: icadams@uclan.ac.uk.

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