



# The Grumbler

The Official Newsletter of the Group North Historical Wargames Society



**Volume 17    Issue 5**

**December 2017**

# MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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*Cover image: 1<sup>er</sup> grenadiers à pied, tenue de campagne, 1814, by Eugène Bucquoy.*

## Editorial

Welcome to the Christmas edition of The Grumbler! Well, it was a busy year for the magazine. Many thanks to everyone who contributed their articles this year, in no particular order: Michael Colclough, Mike Allen, Ross and Ishtar Dawe, David Alva, Mark Cook, Steve Haller, Lance Holden, Tom Hilder, Paul Webb, Rowland Dickinson, and Sasha Pushkarov. Did you say you couldn't see your name here? In this case, it's time to make a New Year resolution! Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy the read.

Wishing everyone and their families a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

Sergiy, Editor

## Submission guidelines:

Items for "The Grumbler" can be e-mailed to: [TheGrumblerGNHWS@gmail.com](mailto:TheGrumblerGNHWS@gmail.com). Files could be of any format supported by the Open Office: plain text (.txt), .doc and .docx, .rtf, .pdf, etc. with embedded or attached pictures. Paper submissions ("hard copies") can be dropped into "The Grumbler" box in the Society's Library room. Please feel free to include pictures, maps, drawings, and photographs – these will be scanned and returned to the owner.

The next scheduled issue (volume 18 issue 1) is planned for March 2018, with the submission deadline on 28 February. Don't be stressed if you've missed the deadline – there will be more future issues with enough pages for your writing!

Club address: A. E. Martin Hall (building 36), Penfield Avenue, Edinburgh SA

Mail address: PO Box 1040, Salisbury, SA 5108

Web: <http://www.groupnorth.club/>

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*Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Society*



## Diary

### Gaming nights:

Regular: every Wednesday from 19:00:

January: 10, 17, 24 & 31

February: 7, 14, 21 & 28

March: 7, 14, 21 & 28

Subject to members' interest: Wednesdays 27 December and 3 January (these must be confirmed with a "key master" from the Club's Committee)

Wed 20/12/2017 and Fri 22/12/2017	Christmas Games (no door fee)
Sun 8/04/2018	Wings of Glory WWI mini-campaign (tentative, watch for announces)

### Other Clubs:

The Wargamers AU forum provides updates on the current and future wargaming events. Go to <http://www.wargamerau.com/forum> and scroll down to the Tournaments and Conventions sub-forum.

## General Notices and Announcements

### Sunday Gaming

I have started to work on some dates for Sunday gaming in 2018 and have come up with the following:

8 April

6 May

24 June

29 July

9 September

21 October

I'm doing my best to avoid obvious clashes with holidays, Mother's day etc.

There are some other possibilities so I am interested to see if people are OK with these dates and are in principle interested in attending.

Please reply to me on: [mike.allen.sa@outlook.com](mailto:mike.allen.sa@outlook.com)

Cheers,

Mike Allen

## Events

# Group North Historical Wargames Society Open Day 2017

*By Sasha Pushkarov*

Here ye, here ye, ya Ladies 'n Gents... Okay, maybe a bit over the top, but you get the idea. This year we had another Open Day of our club, and the event may have not been as grand as it was during the club's anniversary, but it still was a show of our various gaming interests and was a chance for people to leave their pennies behind in the coffers of independent store owners or in our club stash at the second hand stall. So, I'll proceed in a round-a-bout order of what happened on the day.

## Second Hand Stall

Ross already gave a very good account of what was achieved\*, so I'll just skim over the top, with a picture or two...

So below, is our constantly hard working bee Ishtar Dawe, always helping us out to find our stuff we didn't need a new and loving home (and taunting the buyers into buying at least something, I can speak, for I was lured into spending...)



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\* See The Grumbler vol. 17 № 4 (November 2017), p. 3

She could calmly smile for a bit of a break when I took this photo. However, the first hour of the Open Day was shopping frenzy madness – by jolly there was a crowd (me among them of course). It looked like someone was selling concert tickets – a big stampede it was, with someone picking up an item then putting it back to think, when the second just jumped at that item to buy it – first in, best dressed! A lot of interesting things there were, for those looking to add to their collections, for those looking to start into some game systems, the second hand stall very well catered for all projects people had in mind and was a great way to donate to our club of those things that we just could not find a use for all those years. Thank you to Ross and Ishtar Dawe for organising this and keeping it going, this is a great initiative.

Now, keeping on our little mini-tour...

### **The Zulu Table**

The report was already given by Paul Webb\*, however, just for completeness I'll include the skim over it as well.

Below we can see a photo of the magnificent table (and Marcus does put out every year a masterpiece of work, that's for sure).



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\* See The Grumbler vol. 17 № 4 (November 2017), p. 4.



Looks daunting for the British side, I wouldn't want to be on that little outpost, these Zulus don't look like very welcoming lads at all. Gee, very uncivilized warfare to my opinion... where is the break for afternoon tea, where are the tables with cloths and teapots on them!? Nay, these Zulus really don't know how to fight properly... The Zulu players even brought a little player with a loudspeaker (not in this photo unfortunately) and put on some Zulu music (or is it some other African music?), which I would imagine went very well for the Zulu side. Hmmm, maybe the British should have played on "God Save the Queen" or something?

Continuing on...

### **Kings of War Table**

Now, when Ross organises a game, you are sure to expect some humour and laughter, an attribute which never leaves his games and brilliant ideas. Just check a wonderful example below:



These dogs look very feral and dangerous – GROWL they say.

Look below at just another example of the greatness. Wouldn't want to meet up with them in the field...



If not for the Zulu table, this would be the table that I would vote for... (sigh)... I could only make one vote... anyway, moving along.

### **Warmachine/Hordes Table**

We had some guests at our Open Day from the Garrisons wargaming club. Now that is brilliant, we are starting to work with other clubs, hope this keeps on going. Some last minute army building I believe I can see down below in the bottom right corner...





## Wings of Glory WWI/ Aldershot Skirmish Table

Of course I couldn't miss my table, right? And of course anywhere I go, the game of Wings of Glory WWI is to follow in as well:



Can you see the planes?

Now, at the back you can see a hex map with some paper chits. This is the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) Aldershot Skirmish Exercise wargame, which you can download as a PDF file from the Internet, print on a few A4 pages, and – here's the trick – you have a full-blown modern tactical game for free.

This little game deserves much greater attention than just a small remark, and I will reserve a separate report on it in a future issue. I am going to write about it after I am back from the Connections Oz conference (11-13 December this year), as there I hope to give it a thought on how to present this game better.

But as for the Wings of Glory WWI, those who are very pedantic about maps will notice that the map we were playing on had nothing to do with WWI Eastern or Western Europe; in fact, it was not in Europe at all, but rather on some island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. Where exactly? I leave it a mystery quiz for the readers, if they dare...

I find that gaming on a map provides a better experience than just gaming on some flat green table – it gives a new dimension (the terrain height) and makes designating targets for bombing, artillery strike, photography, strafing etc. more



sensible. Besides we have no usual problems placing planes over features like houses etc.

Anyway, enough for me talking about my own stuff, how about I continue to look at other people's work?

### **BattleTech Table**

A fairly old game, I think dates back into the 80's, and it still retains this feel even with newer editions (at least the artwork does). Great to see people still play it:



Ah, good old walking robots, just like the look of it all. Nothing is better than big robots with big guns, eh?

### **Tanks! Table**

Tanks! This game has taken the wargaming world by storm it seems. Very popular, I think not the least of reasons is the success of the World of Tanks multiplayer online game. A good show of that we play the game here, and you don't need a computer for it.



Two British Comets against two StuGs and a PzKpfw IV Ausf. H (if I'm right). Interesting, who eventually got the upper hand?

### **Dystopian Wars Table**

Yet another game which is quite supported in our club with a group of dedicated players, and Adrian Cameron is faithfully putting on demonstrations year after year.

Those who think that naval games must be played on a dull blue-grey featureless table are definitely wrong, just look at these islands. It looks like the naval action is in full swing down there, perhaps somewhere in the icy waters around Antarctica or close to the North Pole. Pay attention to the flying paddle steamer on the left. Also hiding behind the closest island in the bottom left corner are two... um... well, Soviet tanks! Interesting, what are those two IS-2's doing there – is it a new invention? Mega floating tanks! Fear and behold!

(Recently I've come across a small note on a German WWII project codenamed *Seeteufel* – “Sea Devil” in German. It was a 30-tons armoured submarine with tracks – read on – which could swim as well as crawl. The apparatus was armed with a torpedo, as she was a U-boat, and a flamethrower and a machine gun, as it was a tank. Germans tested the beast in 1944 and ordered a series of them to be built on the Borgward automotive plant in Bremen, but the British army moved in before Germans had a chance to start the production).





### **X-Wing Table**

The X-wing table we see down below is another demonstration of a game that has taken the whole wargaming world by storm – again! – maybe in part due to the recent Star Wars movies...



We can see one of the wargamers very excitedly articulating with his arms the master battle-plan. All sides are arrayed for battle neatly and greatly, just waiting to be decimated by the uncertainties of war...

## Epilogue

I think I have covered all tables at our Open Day 2017. Now, if you are reading this and thinking “By Davy Jones, this scoundrel forgot my table! Have him walk the plank!”, please be assured that it was unintentional. So just kindly (we are all gentlemen of high repute, right?) let me know and I’ll put the correction in the next issue.

It was a great Open Day all in all, though a bit smaller than before, and I sincerely wish this event to grow.

All the best for now.

## Annual Tattoo Mystery Entry

*By Lance Holden*

The last year report on our Annual Tattoo\* featured a mysterious character who attracted lots of attention for... well, obvious reasons. Now it’s time to unveil the truth.



*An Unknown Heroine from an Unknown Painter. The painting and basing techniques are quite striking, and a huge adjustable spanner on the background is especially intriguing... should we make it a mystery contest?*

She is Master Sergeant Rosie Donovan and is one of the key players in managing to keep the Allies war effort alive in Dust 1947. She is a master mechanic and was able to reverse engineer the *Vrill-Kultur* technology of the Axis to allow the Allies to have matching walker technology. Despite commands intent to get her into longer term research programs she still insists on staying near the front repairing and improving the technology with direct feedback on the battlefield.

The miniature is typical cheesecake Dust female, though it's an early cast so the head and neck are a bit messed up. She's also 'flipping the bird' which I always find an immature on a miniature. I went with a simple working scheme of overall colours and the shirt and then smeared then with some Strong Tone wash to represent the fact she'll always be covered in grease and oils. The large toolkit were originally intended for an Ork Mek base but I never got to that and they look appropriate for a model that would often be seen working on a large walker in the battlefield.

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\* See The Grumbler vol. 17 № 3, pp. 10–20 (September 2017)



### Plasticine Soldiers

*By Sergiy Kravchuk*

The blog post I am presenting here was published by Sergey Muhamedov almost seven years ago. I don't know the author personally, and I don't know the people the post is about. The original post was in Russian, so not many people would find it through Google and like unless they put a Russian search phrase in. I came across the post accidentally, from a reference on some wargaming forum, and was amazed with what I saw. I think this is something worth sharing on pages of The Grumbler.

The blog post talks briefly about a lifelong hobby of Sergey Kiselev, who was sculpting 1:54 scale figures of soldiers (32 mm) out of kids plasticine (sold in Russia as *Plastiline* in office supply shops) since he was 15. Initially these figures were very simple, without faces, just toy soldiers for floor wars. To play a game, Sergey and his friends put dozens of plasticine figures on bases cut from discarded cardboard boxes. They moved the bases using some rules they invented for the game and shot the soldiers with toy guns. These battles would last for a whole day.

In time, sculpting plasticine soldiers became a hobby in its own right, with the collection now numbering thousands of figures from various armies. Sergey researched tons of military literature, including foreign language writings, and collected an impressive library of books, dictionaries, and folders with photocopies of rare sources. Most of the miniatures never were in a game; the sculptor dreamed of having a long, epic floor battle one day, but it never came.

It was hard to tell how long it took for the sculptor to make an individual figure, as he usually made a batch of blanks and then finished each figure individually.

Figures were mounted on cardboard bases marked with the country, period, regiment, and rank the figure represented. The level of details was absolutely astonishing: the soldiers were dressed exactly as they should in the real life, and everything up to the glove colour and horse breed was verified from historical sources. Even individual officers were dressed and decorated exactly as their historical prototypes.

The collection was sorted in a very orderly manner, with troops from the same regiment stored in a tray together.

Unfortunately, Sergey died of illness before he reached 50. At the time of writing the blog post, Sergey's daughter Kate was looking for a museum or a private gallery to house the collection. It is unclear was she successful and what is the fate of the collection.

The original post in Russian is available here:

<http://ottenki-serogo.livejournal.com/208662.html>

Images below were sourced from the blog.



*Parts of the collection: top, Russian troops of Napoleonic Wars;  
bottom, Red Army soldiers in 1941 uniforms*



*Russian gun crew, the campaign of 1812. The gun was also sculpted from plasticine.*





Russian Militia officers, the campaign of 1812. Left: Active Privy Councillor Nikita Demidov, Colonel-in-Chief, 1<sup>st</sup> Jäger Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Moscow Militia Division; centre: Kammerjunker Prince Nikita Gagarin, Colonel-in-Chief, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Moscow Militia Division; right: General Count Iraklii Markov (Morkov), Chief of the Militia.

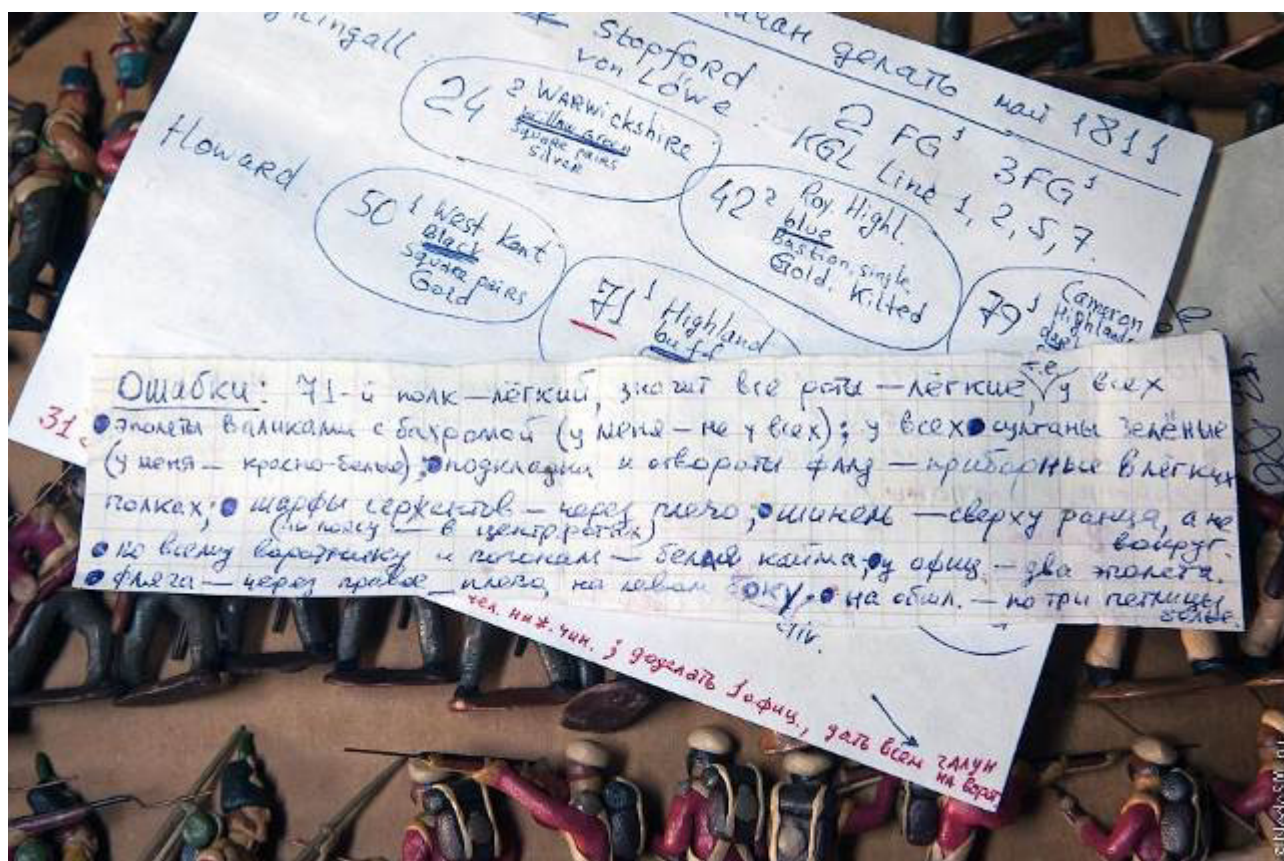


Bases with marking showing the Corps (left, in blue), division (left, in red), regiment (right, in green), position in the regiment (right, in blue), name and rank (right, in green)





Plasticine blanks. The sculptor didn't have time to finish his last projects.



Some of the unfinished projects still have "To Do" lists attached to them. This particular box houses British troops, the Peninsular campaign of 1811.





*Over years, Sergey accumulated an impressive reference library in many languages*



*Unpacked, even a small part of the collection takes almost the whole lounge room*





A box with Russian troops, the campaign of 1812. The notes say: left: 2nd Grenadier Division, Kiev regiment - 17, Moscow regiment – 16, Astrakhan regiment – 16; right: 2nd Grenadier Division, Fanagorian regiment – 16, Siberian regiment – 17, Malorossia regiment – 16. Some figures were taken out, perhaps for a display.



A Bashkir irregular of the Russian Army, 1812 campaign





*Figures from the collection showing the variety of uniforms and poses.  
Note a knee patch on the central figure in the bottom picture.*





*French troops in 1812 campaign dress*



*Horses were sculpted with astonishing detail. They are still waiting for their riders...*





*Russian Cavalry General and Don Cossacks Ataman Count Matvei Platov*

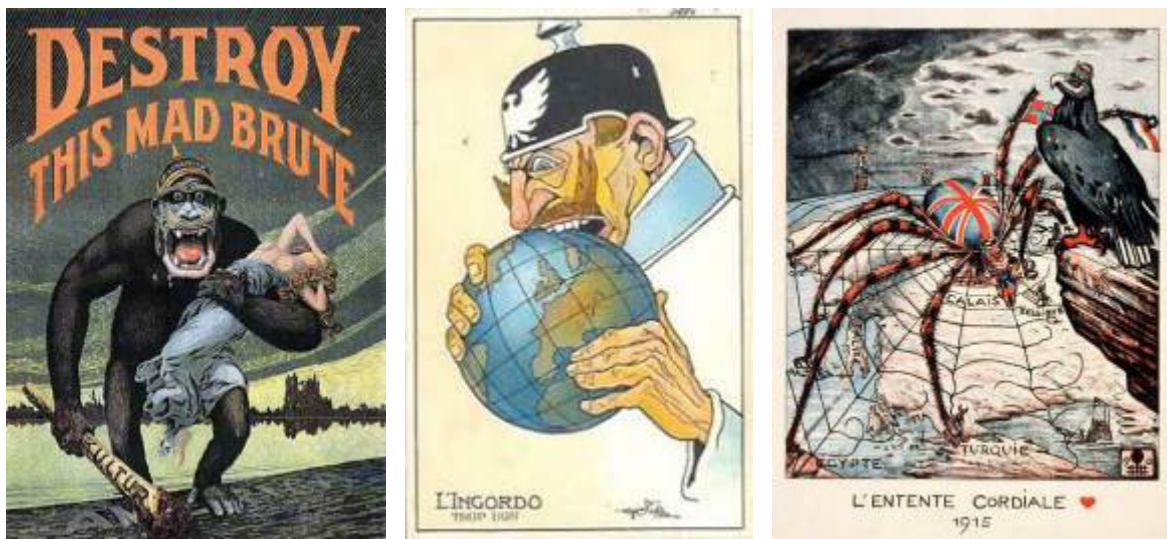
# Christmas Truce of 1914

*By Sasha Pushkarov*

One of the usual things that we always see attached to a modern war is constant propaganda. The enemy is de-humanised, as soldiers must have a clear picture drummed into their head that they fight barbarous monsters or something along those lines.

But sometimes people still resist it maintaining humanity even at the height of a bloody war.

The World War I gives a good example of both effective propaganda and resisting of it. For instance, the British propaganda posters portrayed Germans as monstrous ape-like beasts, the Germans in turn portrayed British as disgusting spiders, and the French drew Germans as greedy world-eaters, to name a few.\*



*Examples of WWI propaganda posters: British (left), French (centre), German (right).*

However, on the Western Front on Christmas Eve 24 December 1914, troops from both sides on some sections of the frontline found enough good will to step over the propaganda and extend their hands to human beings in the other side.

Somehow this episode is almost forgotten in historic literature on WWI, perhaps because it did not fit into a later image of “The Great War to end all wars”?

On the Ypres, this unofficial Christmas truce began with Germans decorating their trench-lines and nearby pine trees with candles. They then proceeded in singing German Christmas Carols. Once they finished, the British who opposed them followed with singing British Carols back at the Germans. Then the Germans shouted in broken English at the Brits: “A happy Christmas to you, Englishmen!”, and the reply from the British trenches was: “Same to you, Fritz, but don’t overeat yourself with the sausages!” Shortly after both sides went out of their trenches and met at no man’s land to celebrate the Christmas together and exchange souvenirs.

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\* An interesting note I must make though: all French posters I have seen seemed to be less aggressive on this matter when compared to the British – they all called to patriotism rather than something else. Perhaps, one could explain this that the French were fighting on their home ground so a patriotic appeal would go well.





*The unofficial Christmas truce of 1914 on the Western Front as pictured in The Illustrated London News. British and German soldiers are exchanging headgears and taking group photos (from English Wikipedia).*

Bruce Bairnsfather, then a second lieutenant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, later wrote in his book "Bullets & Billets" (now also available from Project Gutenberg):

*I spotted a German officer, some sort of lieutenant I should think, and being a bit of a collector, I intimated to him that I had taken a fancy to some of his buttons.*

*We both then said things to each other which neither understood, and agreed to do a swap. I brought out my wire clippers and, with a few deft snips, removed a couple of his buttons and put them in my pocket. I then gave him two of mine in exchange...*

*Suddenly, one of the Boches ran back to his trench and presently reappeared with a large camera. I posed in a mixed group for several photographs, and have ever since wished I had fixed up some arrangement for getting a copy. No doubt framed editions of this photograph are reposing on some Hun mantelpieces, showing clearly and unmistakably to admiring strafers how a group of perfidious English surrendered unconditionally on Christmas Day to the brave Deutschers.*

*Slowly the meeting began to disperse; a sort of feeling that the authorities on both sides were not very enthusiastic about this fraternizing seemed to creep across the gathering. We parted, but there was a distinct and friendly understanding that Christmas Day would be left to finish in tranquillity. The last I saw of this little affair was a vision of one of my machine gunners, who was a bit of*

*an amateur hairdresser in civil life, cutting the unnaturally long hair of a docile Boche, who was patiently kneeling on the ground whilst the automatic clippers crept up the back of his neck.*



*An actual photo of the Christmas truce (Weihnachtsfrieden) of 1914. Germans and British met at no man's land to celebrate Christmas. Note that officers took part in the celebrations as well (from German Wikipedia).*

Henry Williamson, then a 19 years old private in the London Rifle Brigade, wrote a letter from his front-line trench at Ploegsteert Wood in Flanders. A scan and transcript of the letter are available now from the Henry Williamson Society web-site:

*Dear Mother,*

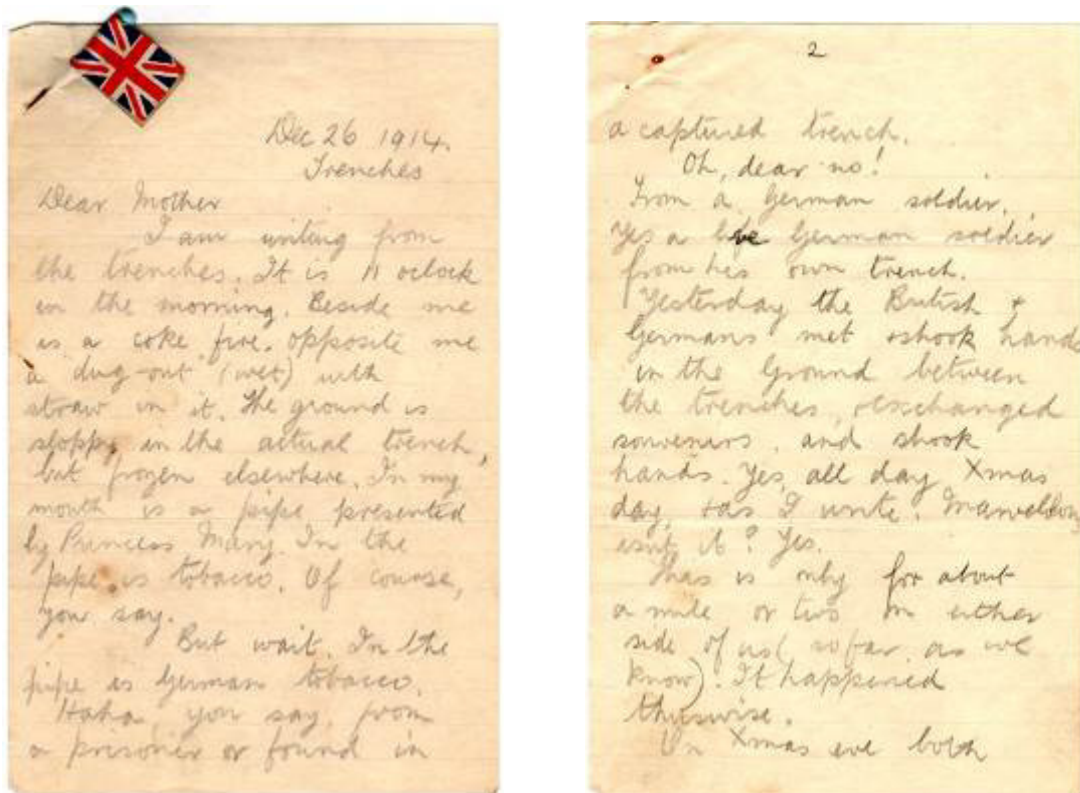
*I am writing from the trenches. It is 11 o'clock in the morning. Beside me is a coke fire, opposite me a 'dug-out' (wet) with straw in it. The ground is sloppy in the actual trench, but frozen elsewhere. In my mouth is a pipe presented by the Princess Mary. In the pipe is tobacco. Of course, you say.*

*But wait. In the pipe is German tobacco. Haha, you say, from a prisoner or found in a captured trench.*

*Oh dear, no!*

*From a German soldier. Yes a live German soldier from his own trench. Yesterday the British & Germans met & shook hands in the Ground between the trenches, & exchanged souvenirs, & shook hands. Yes, all day Xmas day, & as I write. Marvellous, isn't it? Yes.*





*A scan of first two pages of the Henry Williamson's letter.*

Along other sections, French and Germans met as well to do the same. They did it even despite the fact that the Headquarters gave strict orders prohibiting this. And of course, the "Brass Hats"\* were ignored outright: they could say and write anything they want, but when a few thousand troops went their way, commanders couldn't do much but turn a blind eye on the fact and curse from helpless fury.

At some sections fraternization with the enemy during this truce even went as far as playing football matches, one side against the other. This fact is quite categorically opposed by British historians claiming that this was a fairy tale. However, from personal experience I am always sceptical with British historians as their works are typically strongly biased. In this particular case, the war-time diary of Lieutenant Kurt Zehmisch of the 134 Saxon Infantry Regiment mentioned soldiers from both sides "kicking" a football during the Christmas truce. I leave it for the reader to judge would it amount to a "match" or just a "friendly game".

There is very scarce information about the Christmas truce on the Eastern Front. Most likely there was no such a large-scale event, perhaps because the Russian Orthodox Christmas was celebrated two weeks after the Lutheran (German) and Catholic (Austrian) festivities. There are reports in Russian military archives on spontaneous truces and fraternisations during Easter celebrations in 1915 and 1916; however, some writers of the time mentioned cases of fraternisation way before the Easter of 1915. So it is likely that such small events happened around Christmas 1914-15 at various spots on the Eastern front as well.

Christmas truce 1914 was a wonderful instance of a truly human behaviour in a time of inhumane turmoil. It would be great if we remembered that century-old story and – maybe – sometimes take it as an example worth to follow?

\* A British frontline slang for top-ranking officers.



*A cross was erected in 1999 in Saint-Yves, Belgium, to commemorate the Christmas truce of 1914 (From English and German Wikipedia).*

I would like to conclude this article with the best wishes of a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

### **Sources:**

*Bullets & Billets*, by Bruce Bairnsfather, on the Project Gutenberg,  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11232/11232-h/11232-h.htm>

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<https://www.henrywilliamson.co.uk/biography/firstworldwar/57-uncategorised/158-henry-williamson-and-the-christmas-truce>

“German soldiers began... to crawl over to the Russian “comrades” and fraternize with them”, by S. N. Bazanov, in War History Journal (Russian), 2002, № 6, pp. 43–50, <http://regiment.ru/Lib/C/26.htm>

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[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weihnachtsfrieden\\_\(Erster\\_Weltkrieg\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weihnachtsfrieden_(Erster_Weltkrieg))

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