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Opening extract from
**War Game (Special 100th
Anniversary of WW1 Edition)**

Written & Illustrated by
Michael Foreman

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IN MEMORY OF MY UNCLAS, WHO DIED IN THE GREAT WAR.

WILLIAM JAMES FOREMAN, KILLED AGED 18
FREDERICK BENJAMIN FOREMAN, KILLED AGED 20
WILLIAM HENRY GODDARD, KILLED AGED 20

LACY CHRISTMAS GODDARD, DIED OF WOUNDS CHRISTMAS DAY 1918 AGED 24

FOUR AMID A MULTITUDE

Two brothers walked out of my Grandfather's little Suffolk cottage amongst the hollyhocks and went to War. Their names are on the village War Memorial. A third brother, my father, was too young to go with them.

Two other young men, my mother's brothers, left Granny's Norfolk village pub and went to war. Their names are on another War Memorial.

There are no photographs of these young men. They didn't live long enough to have children. They left just four names amid a multitude.

My father died one month before I was born ... but, back then, all my friends were growing up without their fathers. They were all away in World War II. The only local men around were too old for this new War, but were still haunted by the ghosts of World War I. Soon, however, our village became full of men. Fathers and brothers from other lands, all on their way to war. They trained on our cliffs and beaches, camped in our woods and fields. They made a fuss of us – the last children they would see before hitting the beaches of occupied Europe. And so another multitude went off to war.

As I write this, sitting in our London garden, there are hollyhocks standing to attention in the shade like the hollyhocks around Grandfather's cottage.

There are four of them.

MICHAEL FOREMAN



The day after the football match was a Sunday, and the vicar boomed out the same message from his pulpit. The local squire, in the front pew, wore all the medals he could get his hands on, and his son wore a brand-new, tailor-made officer's uniform. After the service, Will, Freddie, Billy and Lacey sat by the signpost under the oak and elm at the corner of the green. Here they had sat almost every day of their lives, after church, after school and after work.

"I think we should join," said Freddie. "None of us has ever been outside the county. It's time we saw something of the world."

"Yes! An adventure – and home by Christmas," said Billy.

Will wasn't so sure. After all, he thought, a lot of people can get killed in a war. But they agreed that next day after work, they would go into town and see what was happening at the Town Hall, the local army recruiting office.



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THE ADVENTURE

They had never seen such a crowd. There was a great feeling of excitement and even of fun as the flags waved and the band played. Every time a lad went to join up, the crowd gave him a hearty cheer.

Before anyone could stop him, Billy was up the steps and the crowd was cheering him. Then Freddie followed. Lacey had to go to look after Billy. Will knew he couldn't let his friends go off to war without him, so to wild cheers all four joined the army. They were given railway warrants and told to report to barracks in four days' time.

They had a lot of explaining to do when they got home that evening.




However, after a few weeks they were all kitted out and the 'adventure' had really started. They boarded a P&O ship in Southampton and prepared to set sail at six o'clock in a great convoy.

The whole of Southampton turned out to see them off. Thousands of sailors cheered and waved their caps from destroyers in Southampton Water.

At last the marching came to an end, and Will, Freddie, Lacey and Billy and the rest of the brigade were ordered on to a fleet of London General omnibuses that were to rush them up to the Front to fill a gap in the 'Line'. They drove through the ruins of a devastated town. The lads had never been to London, yet here they were riding on a London bus in the middle of France. The conductor's bell was still working, and one of the men kept ringing it and shouting 'Next stop Piccadilly Circus!' The glassless windows were covered with boards, but there were plenty of holes to peep through. Will's first reaction was: 'Doesn't it look pretty? Just like fireworks.'





At dawn, when the British were all 'Stood To' on the fire-step, they saw a world white with frost. The few shattered trees that remained were white. Lines of wire glistened like tinsel. The humps of dead in No Man's Land were like toppled snowmen.

After the singing of the night, the Christmas dawn was strangely quiet. The clock of death had stopped ticking.

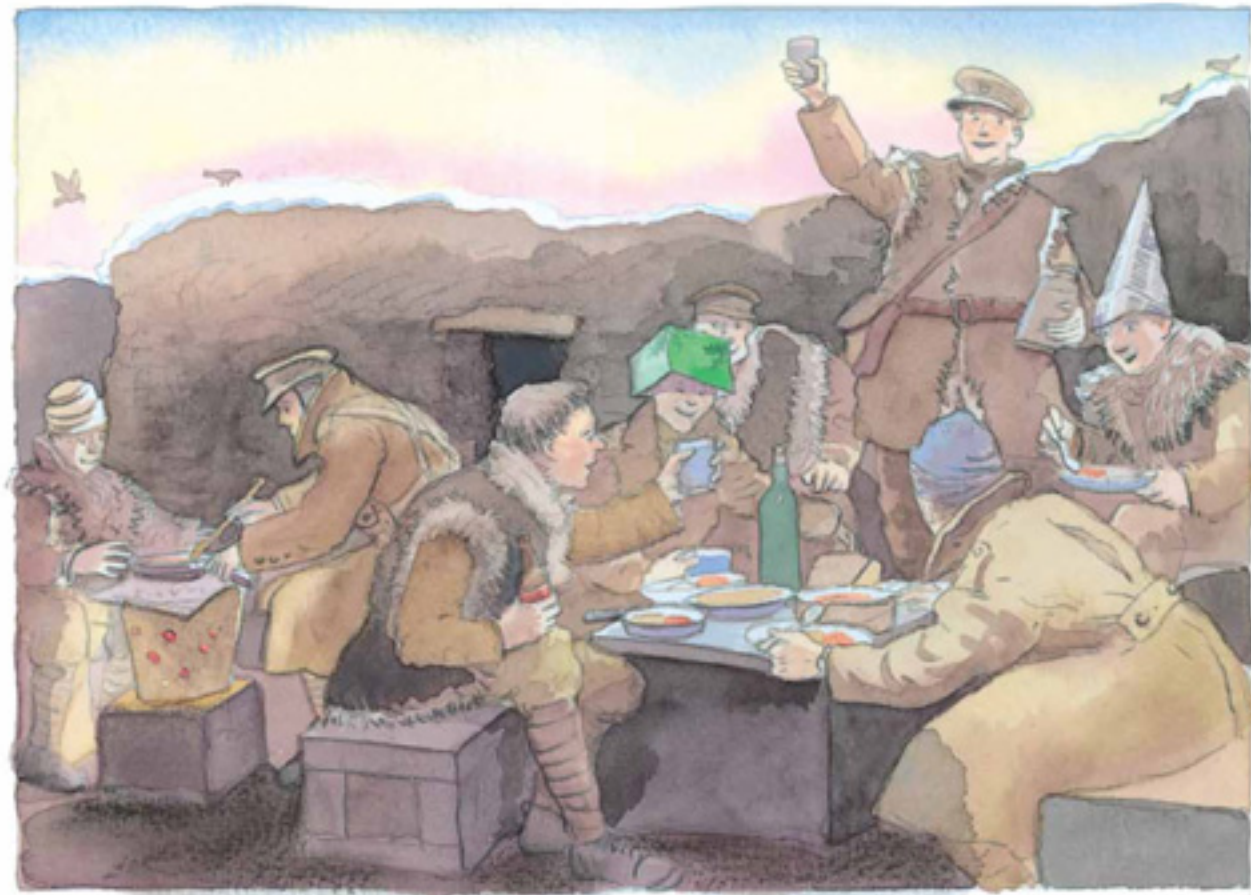
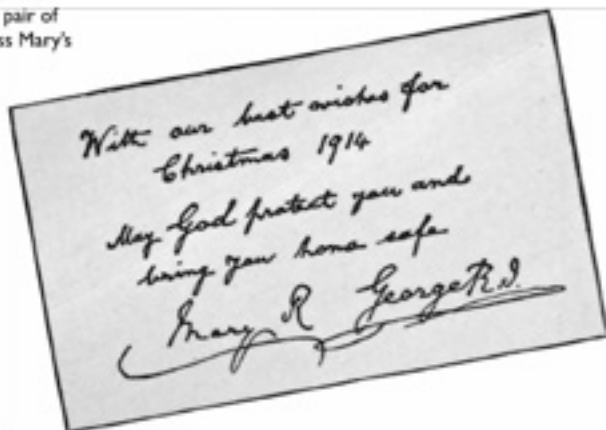
Then a German climbed from his trench and planted a Christmas tree in No Man's Land. Freddie, being a goalkeeper and therefore a bit daft, walked out and shook hands with him. Both sides applauded.



Both sides then returned to their trenches for breakfast. Will and the lads were cheered by the wonderful smell of bacon, and they had a hot breakfast for a change.

One by one, birds began to arrive from all sides. The soldiers hardly ever saw a bird normally, but Will counted at least fifty sparrows hopping around their trench.

Christmas presents for the men consisted of a packet of chocolate, Oxo cubes, a khaki handkerchief, peppermints, camp cocoa, writing paper and a pencil. After breakfast a pair of horses and a wagon arrived with Princess Mary's Christmas gifts – a pipe and tobacco and a Christmas card from the King and Queen.



It was just terrific to be no longer an army of moles, but up and running on top of the ground that had threatened to entomb them for so long. And this time Will really could hear a big crowd – and he was playing for England!

He was playing in his usual centre forward position with Lacey to his left and little Billy on the wing. The game surged back and forth across No Man's Land. The goalposts grew larger as greatcoats and tunics were discarded as the players warmed to the sport. Khaki and grey mixed together. Steam rose from their backs, and their faces were wreathed in smiles and clouds of breath in the clear frosty air.





They were on the attack. Running in a line, Will in a centre forward position, Lacey to his left, young Billy on the wing.

From the corner of his eye Will saw Freddie dive full-length, then curl up as if clutching a ball in the best goalkeeping tradition.

'Daft as a brush,' Will thought.

Suddenly they all seemed to be tackled at once. The whole line went down. Earth and sky turned over, and Will found himself in a shell hole staring at the sky. Then everything went black.



He closed his eyes.

28 June
Assassination of Archduke
Franz Ferdinand of Austria

4 August
The 5 Great Powers are
at war: Russia, France and
Britain against Germany
and Austria-Hungary

11 August
A Call to Arms!
Lord Kitchener sets out to raise a
new volunteer army of 100,000 men.
Newspapers and posters called on
every man to do his duty 'for King
and Country'.

Pal's Battalions

It was thought that men would be
more willing to join up if they could
serve with people they already
knew. The first 'Pal's Battalion' was
formed in Liverpool. Other towns
and cities soon followed. Just like
Will and his pals – brothers, cousins,
friends, workmates and teammates all
enlisted together spurred on by a
spirit of patriotism and promises
of adventure.

22 November
Trenches are formed along the
entire Western Front. Reality
of life in the trenches was far
from the glorious adventure
that the enthusiastic young
recruits had expected.

THE CONTENTS
OF THE PRINCESS
MARY GIFT BOXES
WERE EXCHANGED
WITH GERMAN
SOLDIERS



25 September
The Battle of Loos
The British use gas for
the first time but the wind
blows it back over their
own troops.

1 July-mid November
**The Battle of the
Somme**
By the end of the first day
nearly 60,000 are dead,
wounded or missing.
The struggle continued for
many long and bitter
months, resulting in more
than a million casualties
and no real winner.

6 April
America formally enters
the war

31 July-10 November
**The Battle of
Passchendaele**
One of the most costly
campaigns of the war. Both
sides suffered huge losses
for no strategic gain.

11 November
The Armistice is signed and
at 11 am the fighting ends.

Millions of men from
both sides had been
killed or wounded
including many of those
men who celebrated
Christmas 1914 together.
For those who survived,
the truce was a memory
that would stay with
them forever.

Remembering the fallen
Once the war was over, scarlet
corn poppies were one of the few
plants to grow on
the devastated
battlefields of
France and
Belgium.
The vivid
red of the
delicate flower
came to represent
the blood of the fallen
soldiers. Today the poppy
remains a lasting symbol of
remembrance for those
who died.



1914

WWI AND THE CHRISTMAS DAY TRUCE

1915

1916

1917

1918



GERMAN CELEBRATIONS IN THE TRENCHES

CHRISTMAS 1914

Hopes that the war would be
over in a few months seemed to be
dashed, but then, on Christmas Eve,
something remarkable happened.
The German and British armies
stopped fighting . . .

Rifleman Leslie Walkington
described the moment he saw the
candles from the German Christmas
trees lighting up the night sky.

'One of them shouted "A Merry
Christmas English, we're not shooting
tonight." . . . [then] they stuck up a
light. Not to be out-done, so did we.
Then up went another. So we shined
up another. Soon the lines looked like
an illuminated feet.'

The sound of rifle shots and
exploding shells stopped, and the
two sides serenaded each other
with Christmas songs. The German
'Silent Night' was met with a
British chorus of 'Auld Lang Syne'.

'On Christmas Eve I went to the
trenches and the Germans were singing
carols to our men and we singing to
them. Then they shouted to us,
"A Merry Christmas, British comrades.
You English are fine singers."
RIFLEMAN E. E. BRADLEY,
QUEEN'S WESTMINSTER RIFLES



A GERMAN
POSTCARD
FROM 1914



A FRIENDLY
CHAT WITH
THE ENEMY'

Then men from both sides began to emerge
slowly from their trenches and met in no-man's-
land. The men shook hands and exchanged food
and souvenirs. Both sides saw the lull in fighting
as a chance to bury the bodies of their comrades.
In some parts of the front the men even staged
a football game, kicking around empty bully-beef
cans and using their helmets as goalposts.

'Timidly they approached each other – unarmed,
of course – until finally a German and an Englishman
met and shook hands to the sound of a happy burst
of cheering. Within seconds hundreds of people were
shaking hands, laughing, exchanging drinks of rum
and cognac, cigars and cigarettes, chocolate, sausage
and so on.'

RIFLEMAN M. L. WALKINGTON,
QUEEN'S WESTMINSTER RIFLES



SOME OF THE SOUVENIRS EXCHANGED BY TROOPS. CAMPAIGN
BADGES, UNIFORM BUTTONS AND A GERMAN BELT BUCKLE
WITH THE INSCRIPTION 'GOTT MIT UNS' ('GOD WITH US')

Rifleman George Eade of the 3rd
London Rifles became friendly with
a German soldier. As they parted,
the German said to him 'Today we
have peace. Tomorrow, you fight for
your country, I fight for mine. Good luck.'

The end of the truce

Sadly, the story did not end there.
In some parts of the front the truce
lasted a few hours, in others it
carried on until the New Year.
But everywhere, sooner or later,
the fighting resumed.

THE GREATER GAME

FOOTBALL IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

There was a time for all things in the world. There was a time for games, there was a time for business, and there was a time for domestic life . . . but there is only time for one thing now, and that thing is war. If the cricketer had a straight eye let him look along the barrel of a rifle. If a footballer had strength of limb let them serve and march in the field of battle.
DR. ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

As strange as it may seem today, football played an important part in the First World War. It was used to help recruit volunteers and to drive men on as they went 'over the top' into no-man's-land, and it famously brought together the warring armies during the historic Christmas Day truce of 1914.

The Football Battalion

At the start of the war the football league continued to play but the pressure was soon on for it to be abandoned so that the players and their fans could 'play the greater game'. Footballers began to enlist en masse in Pals Battalions and in December 1914, the 17th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, known as 'The Footballers' Battalion' was formed.

One of the first to join was the England centre half Frank Buckley and Clapton Orient (now Leyton Orient FC) were the first English Football League club to enlist together. Many other recruits were club supporters wanting to fight alongside their sporting heroes.



MEMBERS OF THE 17TH BATTALION IN PLAYING KIT

The Fate of the Battalion

On 15 January 1916 the Football Battalion went to the front line. The battalion fought bravely but at great cost. By the end of the war they had lost more than a thousand men, including 462 in one battle alone at the Battle of Arras, 1917.

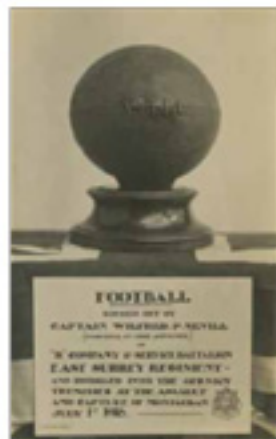
The Final Whistle

On Christmas Day 1914 football had brought men from both sides together in friendship. Throughout the war football was a popular form of recreation for troops on both sides. Later it would be used to spur those same men on to play a more deadly game.



ALLIED TROOPS PLAYING FOOTBALL

On 1 July 1916, the first day of the Somme, Captain Wilfred 'Billie' Nevill encouraged his men to go over the top by kicking two footballs into no-man's-land as they began their charge. Their goal was the German line. Nevill was killed within a few steps of leaving the trenches. It was the final game he and many of his men would play.



ONE OF THE FOOTBALLS USED DURING THE FAMOUS FOOTBALL 'CHARGE TOWARDS THE GERMAN TRENCHES



THIS BRITISH ARMY WHISTLE WAS ISSUED IN 1914, THE YEAR OF THE SOMME. THE WHISTLE WAS BLOWN - JUST LIKE AT THE START OF A FOOTBALL MATCH - TO SIGNAL THE START OF WHAT WOULD BE ONE OF THE BLOODIEST BATTLES OF THE WAR.

FAMOUS FOOTBALLING SOLDIERS



Walter Tull

One of the most celebrated and popular members of the Football Battalion was the ex-Spurs player, Walter Tull. He was one of Britain's first black professional footballers and became the first ever black infantry officer in the British Army. His leadership and courage won him a recommendation for the Military Cross but he never received his medal. He was killed at the Somme in 1918 soon after entering no-man's-land. His body was never found.



Vivian Woodward, the England centre forward and Chelsea icon, helped to persuade many a Blues supporter to head for the front by parading around Stamford Bridge perimeter fence with a marching band and calling for new recruits to join up. He survived the war and went on to coach the British Army football team in the Second World War.

Pom Pom Whiting

The goalkeeping star Robert 'Pom Pom' Whiting was another hero of the Football Battalion. He was one of 34,795 killed and missing in action who are commemorated on the Arras Memorial in France.

Frank Edwards, also known as 'The Footballer of Loos', was a rifleman with London Irish Rifles during the Battle of Loos. He led his battalion across no-man's-land by first kicking a football ahead of the troops.



RECRUITMENT POSTERS DELIBERATELY TARGETED FOOTBALL FANS BY COMPARING WAR TO FOOTBALL.