The extraordinary story of Walter Tull, who overcame prejudice to become the first Black British Army officer and a professional footballer, will be told to schoolchildren in four London boroughs, thanks to a grant of £19,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Monday 2 November, 2015

Media:



The Walter Tull Heritage and Legacy project aims to explore and commemorate Tull's life during the First World War centenary through heritage, drama and art workshops with years 5-11 pupils. Sessions will be facilitated by Phil Vasili, Tull's biographer, illustrator and artist Elaine Taylor and filmmaker Rory Gault between November 2015 and April 2016 at schools and learning centres in Camden, Newham, Brent and Lambeth.

In 2014, one hundred and six years after 2nd Lieutenant Walter Tull's death at the Second Battle of the Somme, aged only twenty nine, the Royal Mint cast a new £5 coin with Walter Tull's head on one side. For decades his story remained forgotten but now his achievements are, at last, being nationally acknowledged and celebrated.

Tull was born in Folkestone in 1888 into a loving, working-class family. Tragically, ten years later, he found himself in a Methodist orphanage in Bethnal Green, east London. Conditions were tough, opinions prejudiced. Yet, by the age of twenty, he completed his apprenticeship as a printer and was playing first team football for Spurs, making his first team debut in Argentina.

In December 1914 Tull enlisted in the Football Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, ignoring the army's unofficial colour bar. Within three years he had become the first British-born Black infantry officer, an achievement that, according to the Manual of Military Law, was in violation of army regulations.

On New Year's Day eve, 1918, at the Italian Front, Tull's courage in leading White troops on a dangerous mission led to a nomination for the Military Cross, a medal eventually denied.

2nd Lieutenant Tull's momentous life was cut tragically short soon after. On 25th March, 1918, he was killed in action during the last German offensive on the Western Front.

Key activities of the project

- Engage with schools, learning centres and volunteers to deliver heritage, art, creative writing, factual writing, filmmaking and drama workshops.
- To create an exhibition, film and website pages detailing the life and outputs of the project.
- To make the outputs available to the public at the schools and learning centres and via an exhibition at a Lambeth Library.
- Compile an online archive from the Phil Vasili Tull research archive as a resource for the general public available on www.vasili.co.uk

The project team begin work week commencing November 2015 at the Action for Children Headlands School, Penarth, Wales and eadlands HeadSunnyhill Primary School, Lambeth. They will also work at West Ham Learning Centre, Newham and Oakington Manor Primary School, Brent.

Commenting on the award, Phil Vasili said: 'We are really pleased that we have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund in assisting young people to explore and creatively interpret the life of one of Britain's forgotten working class heroes'

Stuart Hobley, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: 'Walter Tull fought prejudice to serve his country on both the battlefield and the sports field. His achievements are inspiring and we are delighted that National Lottery players' money means we can help more young people appreciate him as a role model.'

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Additional Assets:

http://www.vasili.co.uk/history-of-black-footballers.html
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