

Hutton Herald

Thursday 8th January 1914

Truce in the Trenches!

Christmas has brought peace to Europe, if only for a day.

There was peace across the battlefields of Europe last week, if only for a day. Letters returning from our brave boys on the continent have shown that a remarkable, unofficial ceasefire happened on Christmas day, it is already being dubbed the "Christmas Truce". The truce may have taken place, in part, because of a plea from Pope Benedict XV earlier this month.

Letters home have revealed that Christmas trees were spotted above German parapets across the front line on Christmas Eve. One such letter reported that it was a, "fine night, crisp and cold with a bright half-moon" when our soldiers heard the unmistakable tune of "Silent Night" from the enemy trench. "We joined in and not a shot was fired that night" reports an anonymous letter.

There were still no shots fired on Christmas morning. In Fromelles, France, a scout was sent out to meet a German patrol and returned with whiskey and cigars. This story is repeated up and down the front line. From there, foes became friends as British and German troops met and shook hands in no mans land. The events started with solemnity as the dead lying between trenches were buried, but the enemy proved themselves to be fairly amiable as more gifts were exchanged.

Letters from the front report war weary soldiers on both sides, stating that the enemy "appeared generally tired of fighting and wanted to get back to their previous employments". Some had even lived

in England, one man claimed to have a girl who lived in Suffolk.

The German soldiers expressed admiration for British equipment, and offered to swap jack knives and other articles. Naturally, our boys were sure to keep a wary eye on the enemy and ensure their weaponry was not taken.

Remarkably, a games of football broke out along the front line between British and German soldiers. It is no doubt that our lads proved to be the finer soccer players, as they prove to be superior fighters.

Not all of our soldiers participated in this truce without trepidation, however. Many letters have reported that they found the truce to be disturbing, even nauseating. "I would give them a taste of the delights of machine gun bullets" one disgruntled soldier remarked to his family before asking "But what can you do?" The same angry soldier muses that the gifts the Germans threw to our boys were likely stolen from the British in the first place!

It is a sentiment that seems to have been shared with the top brass, who sent communications to the front line on Boxing Day that all fraternising and communication with the the enemy must cease. Despite this, no bullets were fired on Boxing Day either. This is war, however, and fighting has begun again. There are men who have been taken away from the front line as they refuse to fight the men they met at Christmas. Their fate is not yet known.



Explain:

1. Why is the text arranged in this way?
2. What is the purpose of this newspaper article?
3. Does the author give his point of view? What do you think it is?
4. What affect does the final paragraph have on the reader?
5. Which words and phrases will have made the reader feel sad / emotional? Why?
6. Which section was the most interesting? Why?

Retrieve

1. Find and copy words that mean 'better'.
2. Find and copy a sentence that shows not all soldiers agreed with the truce.
3. Find and copy a sentence that suggests that the soldiers disagreeing with the truce were in the minority.
4. What happened to the people who did not start fighting again once the truce was over?
5. Give one example of the article guessing.