

# The Write Place

by Samuel D. Goodliffe

Age 10

---

As dawn broke on the morning of December 25<sup>th</sup> 1914, Allied troops realised that the Germans now climbing out of their trenches were not carrying guns or daggers. This was no attack, but an unofficial truce.

Instead they were holding beer and Christmas pudding, and full of goodwill. Allied troops clambered out to return the favour, and the soldiers met up in No Man's Land. This unexpected Christmas truce gave both sides a chance to bury their dead, and hold a service of prayers. They showed each other photographs of wives and children back home, and had a game of football. The Germans won 3-2.

Both sides sang Christmas carols, the British responding to *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* from the Germans with *Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly*. A Scottish piper stepped forward to play a few stirring melodies.

On that day the Allies made good friends with the enemy, but their commanding officers were disgusted with them. The fighting men were told to stop all this nonsense and get back to war. The German High Command replaced some high-ranking soldiers with tough hard-core Prussians, and the truce was at an end.

Those who experienced the truce found it difficult to hate the enemy as much as before. The Allies had learned that the Germans were not brutal bullies, but just soldiers like themselves.

This truce was special because it just happened, but sometimes Santa has been officially enlisted within the ranks. In the American Civil War he was portrayed as a Union soldier to demoralise the Confederate Army. During the Afghan Wars old Saint Nicholas was depicted as a British Tommy charging the enemy with rifle and bayonet. In the snow in front of him these words were written: 'Peace and Goodwill to All'.

All except the enemy, of course.

Santa does wear a uniform, after all. The one we know so well comes from an old advertisement for Coca Cola, though originally he used to be shown in his bishop's dress. Difficult to climb down the chimney dressed like a girl.

It's true that war and Christmas don't always mix that well. In 1914 a vicar in Dover was surprised by a bright light flashing in the night sky. No, it wasn't the Christmas star, but a German airship dropping the first ever bomb on British soil.

And Christmas isn't always merry. At the very first Christmas, Herod made sure of that when he ordered a massacre in and around Bethlehem of all boy children under two to get rid of the newborn king.

Jesus escaped with his Mum and Dad to die 33 years later in another battle he was fighting, to save our souls.