

The Night Before Christmas 2014

By Richard Davis

T'was the night before Christmas and across every trench, Not a soldier felt festive, neither British nor French.

Whilst some of them whispered their solitary prayer, Others just hoped for an end to despair. Back home their young children were tucked up in bed, Praying that Pa was alive and not dead.

With little for warmth just their coat and their cap, The troops settled down for a cold restless nap.

The moon cast its glow over fields of mud, With hundreds of corpses, the letting of blood.

Destruction and death of an unthinkable scale, Never again, peaceful air they'd inhale.

When across No Man's Land there arose a disturbance, The British looked over to make cautious observance.

On the German trench tops appeared several small trees, With candles that flickered upon the cold breeze.

The Fritz started singing with much festive cheer, On the Eve of the most Christian day of the year.

O Tannenbaum and Silent Night, No longer black, the war was white.

So Tommy sang back, a bloody great din, Heard across Ypres, and very nearly Berlin!

From the officer's bunker to the barbed wire wall, Now sing away! Sing away! Sing away all! With the night nearly over and spirits quite high, They bid warm farewell to their adversaries nearby.

For the first time in ages no bullets or bombs, Just the sadness of knowing, it wouldn't last long.

The morning it came just like all others, Except for a sign, scribed by soon to be brothers.

"Happy Christmas" it read, quickly followed by gifts, Thrown by the Germans to reconcile rifts.

White flag aloft, a German officer appeared, With offerings of chocolate, tobacco and beer.

His counterpart met him in No Man's Land, And greeted him with a shake of the hand.

The Germans suggested a truce for one day, The Englishmen agreed, there was little delay.

The ranks from the trenches then joined them there too, Respite from the fighting was long overdue.

It was agreed it was chance to bury their dead, Foes dug graves together, bible verses were read.

It was a moment in time like never before, And highlighted the utter futility of war.

Men from both sides smoked and talked like old friends, In a way hardly possible, to now comprehend.

They passed around photos of children and wives, To see them again, gave the will to survive.

Then from out of nowhere football turned up, A hundred men playing, a united Europe.

3-2 to the Germans, it was not Tommy's day, The result mattered not, it was a thrill just to play.

All the men wanted the truce not to end, So agreed not to fire at their newly found friends.

Guns angled upwards, now aimed at the sky, So innocent men wouldn't needlessly die.

With the day finally over, they returned to their lines, Their lives changed forever, humanity shines.

Writing home to loved ones, they told what they'd seen, Of that day on the front line, Christmas Nineteen Fourteen.