

What really happened in the Christmas truce of 1914?

Presents, kick-about and funerals

It was rather foggy actually at first that morning but when the fog cleared we began to climb out of the trench and wave and then quickly jump in again in case they shot at us. But nobody did shoot and eventually several people got out and some of us went forward beyond our barbed wire.

Anyway eventually a couple of chaps met in no man's land and shook hands and turned round and waved and we all cheered and then we flocked out like a football crowd. Sort of running as fast as we could – it was very broken ground and people fell into shell holes and things - but still we all got into the middle eventually and we began to all shake hands and then we began to swap things like cigarettes and cigars and chocolate and cognac and we gave them a bit of rum and so on and everything got very friendly and happy and we stayed out there the whole of the day.

I have a letter here I wrote on Boxing Day 1914: 'It was a beautiful day – the ground was white with frost. Some of them were trying to arrange a football match but it didn't come off. Talk about peace and goodwill – I never saw a friendlier sight. We tried to explain to each other that we bore no malice.'