

Christmas Eve 1914



We estimate that this sketch will take five minutes to perform. You will need two groups of any number of actors. To denote different sides, they could wear different colours, eg green for British, grey for Germans. In addition there will need to be a small group kneeling stage right (SR) with six to eight dowels.

The narration can be read by one voice or several. If the actors are at a distance from the audience, the actions will need to be slightly exaggerated.

(Stage-left (SL) from the actors' perspective - the two groups of soldiers are positioned at an angle opposite each other with dowels over shoulders like rifles. One soldier on the British side steps forward and mimes writing, using dowel as pen.)

Narrator: Dear Mother, Christmas in the trenches! What a time! Peace on earth, good will towards men. It is hardly to be believed, but nevertheless it is quite true that such was the case this Christmas. Who can realise it? It will astound everyone who hears about it. Your loving son, William.

(Soldier steps back, dowel back to rifle)

Christmas 1914. The first Christmas since the war began. German and British soldiers stood ready to fight for their countries.

(SR group with dowels march on spot, shouting: left, right x 2 (links, rechts x 2)

(Dowels held end to end in a line to indicate trenches)

But this war wasn't like previous wars. The new trench warfare meant that the soldiers on both sides had to fester in muddy dugouts for days on end, often waist-deep in water, separated from the enemy only by a desolate stretch of no man's land. They were so close they could smell each other's food.

(One soldier on each side could stand and mime stirring something)

Germans: Mmmm, porridge!

British: Mmmm, beef stew!

Narrator: Between meals they tried to kill each other.

(Take turns using dowels as rifles and shouting Feuer! / Fire! while the other side duck)

But as night fell that Christmas Eve, suddenly the darkness was broken by flickering lights. The Germans had put up Christmas trees along their trench, adorned with candles.

(On German side, 6 x dowels form Christmas trees)



The British soldiers could hardly believe their ears when they heard the lilting notes of a familiar carol:

Stille nacht, heilige nacht... (silent night, holy night).

'Happy Christmas!' called the Germans. 'Happy Christmas!' the British soldiers called back, tentatively creeping out of the trenches. The men chatted and exchanged gifts and took photos (**Mime this**) and later sang carols together.

All together: O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem... (**Freeze**)

Narrator: Bethlehem... long, long ago. (**The group SR use dowels to form stable roof and star above it...**)

That Christmas Eve, the darkness was broken by a guiding light.

In a humble stable a baby was born, (**Stable dowels become manger shape**)

uniting shepherds and kings, people from every tribe and tongue, a child.

A child who the angels proclaimed would bring: (**Two or more soldiers step forward, using dowels to extend their arms**)

Angels/Narrator: Peace on earth and goodwill to all men! (**Soldiers unfreeze**)

All together: O come, let us adore him, x3, Christ the Lord! (**Soldier steps to front, using dowel as pen - German side**)

Narrator: Dear Diary,

It was amazing: the English brought a football from the trenches and pretty soon a lively game ensued, (**Choreograph three or four/slow-motion/frozen scenes with accompanying sound effects: Yes! Oh! etc**)

which we won 3-2.

Germans: Hurrah!

Narrator: And so Christmas, the celebration of love, managed to bring mortal enemies together as friends for a time. (**Groups reform with dowels as rifles**)

Narrator: In the midst of darkness, light. In the midst of despair, the hope of peace. (**Pointing SL**)

One peace would prove to be fragile, (**Soldiers bow heads and hold up dowels in pairs as crosses**)

and one would prove to be everlasting. (**Manger becomes cross**)

But both cost the shedding of precious blood.

Written by Sue Langwade

