How Did It Start?

At Christmas 1914, there took place in some parts of the British line what is still regarded by many as the most remarkable incident of WW1 an unofficial truce. On Christmas morning, when our men were at breakfast, a cry was raised that the Germans had left their trenches. Springing to arms, they could scarcely believe their eyes when they looked over the parapet and saw a number of the enemy standing in the open in front of their trenches, all unarmed. Some of the enemy shouted "No shoot!" and a little number of our men also got out of their trenches.

What Happened?

A number of Germans fluently spoke English so conversation was always possible. All kinds of "souvenirs" were exchanged - coins, buttons and pipes; while quite a busy trade went on in barter. Bully beef and jam were in great demand, and were exchanged for sausage and chocolate and, to all appearance the War was at an end. The soldiers sang Christmas carols before leaving their trenches to play a match in sub-zero temperatures in no-man's land at Armentieres. From this the Germans won 3-2, according to some soldiers.

Why Did It End?

The truce lasted from Christmas, 1914, to the 3rd of January 1915. On the afternoon of 3rd January a German officer approached our lines, accompanied by an orderly who acted as interpreter. They asked for an officer. Capt. Dawson of "D" Company left the British trench and advanced over the open to meet them. The two officers gravely saluted, the German officer informing Capt. Dawson that instructions had been received that the ordinary conditions of warfare must be resumed. After some discussion it was then agreed that the truce would lapse after the expiry of an hour. That day only a few shots were fired, but on the following day, in obedience of orders, volleys were fired all along the line.