

Remembrance and a link with Balerno



Part of the Garden of Remembrance at Balerno Parish Church where there is a week of reflection. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

One winter night during the First World War, August von Hagen, a young Artillery officer, climbed out of his trench near Verdun.

Clutching a bottle of schnapps, he walked into No Man's Land. From the French trenches a short distance away, Emile Barbier, a young Artillery officer, climbed out of his trench and walked towards August. They met in the middle. It was Christmas.

They talked about the war and they drank the schnapps. Then they exchanged addresses and agreed that whoever won the war would go to meet with the other after it was all over.

And, after it was over, in late 1918 Emile went to meet with August. They were friends for the rest of their lives. Their

story lives on.

Improbable? Undoubtedly. Enriching? Undoubtedly. But this tale of hope and humanity is true, and it is connected with Balerno.

This story and many other stories can be read and talked about in the Stories and Memories Exhibition at Balerno Parish Church on 7, 8 and 9 November and you can come and tell your own stories too.