

The Eleventh of the Eleventh on the Eleventh

Along the Front this morning, the guns did not fire;
all was oddly quiet, strange despite us expecting it.
No need to climb the ridge or fight the wire,
no need to wonder if you might get hit.

They said eleven ack emma was the time
when none would shoot, or toss grenade;
but we were ready, at the line
poised to fight, and ever afraid.

We heard the chimes to mark the hour
of Peace, and the end of War.
What event could hold such sudden power
unknown to us before?

We heard no birds sing, they had gone
long since, expelled by explosions' blast,
to places where they could belong
and make their song in peace at last.

Still came the awful smell of death
across the trenches' stark divide;
the wind blew yet its sordid breath
and could no pleasant breeze provide.

But as the clock crawled slowly round
and still no shells or bullets fell,
silence was the only sound
apart from millions' final knell.

For those of us who saw that day
none forgot the sudden cease
of whizz-bang, or the sniper's fray
so this, at last, we hoped, was Peace.

At Cenotaph and village cross
are friends and comrades listed;
a litany of four years' loss,
whose eyes cannot be misted?

"Grandad, did you fight the Hun?"
Aye I did, and saw the pain,
lives ended short. when scarce begun.
Grandson, come it not again.