**Christmas in the Trenches**

**John McCutcheon, 1984**

"Christmas in the Trenches" is a ballad from John McCutcheon's 1984 album *Winter Solstice*. It tells the story of the 1914 Christmas Truce between the British and German lines on the Western Front during the Great War from the perspective of a fictional British soldier. Although Francis Tolliver is a fictional character, the event depicted in the ballad is true. McCutcheon met some of the German soldiers involved in this Christmas story when he toured in Denmark.

Source: [Christmas in the Trenches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_in_the_Trenches), Wikipedia

**Christmas in the Trenches**

C66 C

**(John McCutcheon, 1984) –** [**Christmas in the Trenches**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIxqJlnH2m8) **by John McCutcheon**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| C Am F Dm  My name is Francis Toliver, I come from Liverpool.  G7 F C  Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school.  C Am F Dm  To Belgium and to Flanders, Germany to here.  G7 C  I fought for King and country I love dear.  G7 F C  ‘Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost so bitter hung.  Am F G7  The frozen fields of France were still, no Christmas song was sung.  C Am F Dm  Our families back in England were toasting us that day,  G7 C  Their brave and glorious lads so far away.  C Am F Dm  I was lying with my mess mates on the cold and rocky ground.  G7 F C  When across the lines of battle came a most peculiar sound.  C Am F Dm  Says I, "now listen up me boys." Each soldier strained to hear  G7 C  As one young German voice sang out so clear.  G7 F C  "He's singing bloody well y'know," my partner says to me.  Am F G7  Soon one by one each German voice joined in in harmony.  C Am F Dm  The cannons rested silent, and the gas clouds rolled no more.  G7 C  As Christmas brought us respite from the war.  C Am F Dm  As soon as they were finished, and a reverent pause was spent,  G7 F C  "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" struck up some lads from Kent.  C Am F Dm  Oh the next they sang was "Stille Nacht", 'tis Silent Night says I.  G7 C  And in two tongues one song filled up that sky. |  |  |
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|  |  |
| **Baritone** |  |
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Christmas In The Trenches (C) – Page 2

G7 F C

"There's someone coming towards us", the front line sentry cried.

Am F G7

All sights were fixed on one lone figure trudging from their side.

C Am F Dm

His truce flag like a Christmas star shone on that plain so bright

G7 C

As he bravely strolled unarmed into the night.

C Am F Dm

Then one by one on either side walked into No-Man's Land.

G7 F C

With neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand.

C Am F Dm

We shared some secret brandy and we wished each other well.

G7 C

And in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell.

G7 F C

We traded chocolates, cigarettes and photographs from home.

Am F G7

These sons and fathers far away from families of their own.

C Am F Dm

Young Sanders played the squeezebox and they had a violin.

G7 C

This curious and unlikely band of men.

C Am F Dm

Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more.

G7 F C

With sad farewells we each began to settle back to war.

C Am F Dm

But the question haunted every heart that lived that wondrous night.

G7 C

"Whose family have I fixed within my sights?"

G7 F C

’Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost so bitter hung.

Am F G7

The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung.

C Am F Dm

For the walls they kept between us to exact the work of war

G7 C

Had been crumbled and were gone forever more.

C Am F Dm

My name is Francis Toliver, in Liverpool I dwell.

G7 F C

Each Christmas comes since World War I, I've learned its lessons well.

C Am F Dm

For the ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame,

G7 C

And on each end of the rifle we're the same.

**Christmas in the Trenches**

C66 G

**(John McCutcheon, 1984) –** [**Christmas in the Trenches**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIxqJlnH2m8) **by John McCutcheon**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| G Em C Am  My name is Francis Toliver, I come from Liverpool.  D7 C G  Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school.  G Em C Am  To Belgium and to Flanders, Germany to here.  D7 G  I fought for King and country I love dear.  D7 C G  ‘Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost so bitter hung.  Em C D7  The frozen fields of France were still, no Christmas song was sung.  G Em C Am  Our families back in England were toasting us that day,  D7 G  Their brave and glorious lads so far away.  G Em C Am  I was lying with my mess mates on the cold and rocky ground.  D7 C G  When across the lines of battle came a most peculiar sound.  G Em C Am  Says I, "now listen up me boys." Each soldier strained to hear  D7 G  As one young German voice sang out so clear.  D7 C G  "He's singing bloody well y'know," my partner says to me.  Em C D7  Soon one by one each German voice joined in in harmony.  G Em C Am  The cannons rested silent, and the gas clouds rolled no more.  D7 G  As Christmas brought us respite from the war.  G Em C Am  As soon as they were finished, and a reverent pause was spent,  D7 C G  "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" struck up some lads from Kent.  G Em C Am  Oh the next they sang was "Stille Nacht", 'tis Silent Night says I.  D7 G  And in two tongues one song filled up that sky. |  |  |
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|  |  |
| **Baritone** |  |
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Christmas In The Trenches (G) – Page 2

D7 C G

"There's someone coming towards us", the front line sentry cried.

Em C D7

All sights were fixed on one lone figure trudging from their side.

G Em C Am

His truce flag like a Christmas star shone on that plain so bright

D7 G

As he bravely strolled unarmed into the night.

G Em C Am

Then one by one on either side walked into No-Man's Land.

D7 C G

With neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand.

G Em C Am

We shared some secret brandy and we wished each other well.

D7 G

And in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell.

D7 C G

We traded chocolates, cigarettes and photographs from home.

Em C D7

These sons and fathers far away from families of their own.

G Em C Am

Young Sanders played the squeezebox and they had a violin.

D7 G

This curious and unlikely band of men.

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Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more.

D7 C G

With sad farewells we each began to settle back to war.

G Em C Am

But the question haunted every heart that lived that wondrous night.

D7 G

"Whose family have I fixed within my sights?"

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The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung.

G Em C Am

For the walls they kept between us to exact the work of war

D7 G

Had been crumbled and were gone forever more.

G Em C Am

My name is Francis Toliver, in Liverpool I dwell.

D7 C G

Each Christmas comes since World War I, I've learned its lessons well.

G Em C Am

For the ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame,

D7 G

And on each end of the rifle we're the same.