

## Christmas in the trenches

My name is Francis Tolliver, I come from Liverpool.  
Two years ago the war was waiting for me after school.  
To Belgium and to Flanders, to Germany to here,  
I fought for King and country I love dear.  
It was Christmas in the trenches where the frost so bitter hung.  
The frozen field of France were still, no Christmas song was sung.  
Our families back in England were toasting us that day,  
their brave and glorious lads so far away.

I was lying with my mess-mates on the cold and rocky ground  
when across the lines of battle came a most peculiar sound.  
Says I "Now listen up me boys", each soldier strained to hear  
as one young German voice sang out so clear.  
"He's singing bloody well you know", my partner says to me.  
Soon one by one each German voice joined in in harmony.  
The cannons rested silent, the gas cloud rolled no more  
as Christmas brought us respite from the war.

As soon as they were finished and a reverent pause was spent,  
'God rest ye merry, gentlemen' struck up some lads from Kent.  
The next they sang was 'Stille Nacht'. "Tis 'Silent Night'" says I  
and in two tongues one song filled up that sky.  
"There's someone coming towards us" the front-line sentry cried.  
All sights were fixed on one lone figure trudging from their side.  
His truce flag, like a Christmas star, shone on that plain so bright  
as he bravely strode, unarmed, into the night.

Then one by one on either side walked into no-mans-land;  
with neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand.  
We shared some secret brandy and we wished each other well  
and in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell.  
We traded chocolates, cigarettes and photographs from home,  
these sons and fathers far away from families of their own.  
Young Sanders played his squeeze box and they had a violin  
this curious and unlikely band of men.

Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more.  
With sad farewells we each began to settle back to war.  
But the question haunted every heart that lived that wondrous night  
"Whose family have I fixed within my sights?"  
It was Christmas in the trenches where the frost so bitter hung.  
The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung.  
For the walls they'd kept between us to exact the work of war  
had crumbled and were gone for evermore.

My name is Francis Tolliver. In Liverpool I dwell.  
Each Christmas come since World War One I've learned its lessons well:  
that the ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame  
and on each end of the rifle we're the same.

**John McCutcheon**

# Christmas in the trenches

John McCutcheon  
choir arrangement by Sue Gilmurray

Tenor

My name is Fran-cis Tol-li-ver, I come from Li-ver-pool; two years a-go the war was wait-ing

4

T. for me af-ter school. To Bel-gium and to Flan-ders, to Ger-ma-ny\_ to here, I fought for King and coun-try I love

8

T. dear.

S. A. Mm - - - mm

T. B. Mm - - - mm

'Twas Christ-mas in the tren-ches where the frost so bit-ter hung; the fro-zen fields of France were still, no

12

S. A. mm - - - mm

T. B. mm

Christ-mas songs were sung. Our fam-ilies back in Eng-land were toast-ing us\_ that day, their

15

S. A. Aa

T. B. mm

I was ly-ing with my mess-mate on the cold and rock-y ground, when a

brave and glor-ious lads so far a-way. Aa

19

S. A. Aa

T. B. Aa

cross the lines of bat-tle came a most pe-cul-iar sound. Says I 'Now lis-ten up me boys', each

22

S. A.

T. B.

aa Aa Aa

sold-ier strained to hear as one young Ger-man voice sang out so clear. He's sing-ing blood-y well you know' my

26

S. A.

T. B.

As one by one each Ger-man voice joined in in har-mo-ny. The can-nons rest-ed si-lent, the part-ners says to me

30

S. A.

T. B.

gas clouds rolled no more, as Christ-mas brought us res-pite from the war. As soon as they were fin-ished and a

Aa

34

S. A.

T. B.

rev' rent pause was spent, God rest you mer-ry, gent-le-men, struck up some lads from Kent. The

Aa

37

S. A.

T. B.

next they sang was 'Stil-le nacht' and in two tongues one song filled up that sky. There's

Aa aa

'Tis Si-lent night' says I and in two tongues one song filled up that sky. There's

41

S. A.

T. B.

some-one com-ing t'wards us, the front-line sent-ry cried. All sights were fixed on one lone fig-ure

44

S. A. His truce flag like a Christ-mas star shone on that plain so bright, as he

T. B. trudging from their side.

47

S. A. brave-ly strode un-armed in-to the night. Soon one by one on either side walked in-to No man's Land. With

T. B. Aa - - - - -

51

S. A. neith-er gun nor bay-o-net,— we met there hand to hand. We shared some sec-ret bran-dy and we

T. B. Aa - - - - - Aa - - - - -

54

S. A. wished each o-ther well, We

T. B. and in a flare-lit soc-cer match we gave 'em hell.

57

S. A. trad-ed choc' lates, cig-ar-ettes\_ and pho-to-graphs from home, these sons and fa-thers far a-way from

T. B. Aa - - - - - Aa - - - - -

60

S. A. fam' lies of their own. Aa - - - - -

T. B. Young San-ders played his squeeze-box and they had a vi-o-lin, this

63

S. A. *Aa* *Mm*

Soon day-light stole up-on us, and France was France once more. With

T. B. *Mm*

cur-ious and un-like-ly band of men.

67

S. A. *Mm* *Mm*

sad fare-wells we each be-gan to set-tle back to war.

T. B. *mm* *Mm*

But the quest-ion haun-ted ev-ry heart that

70

S. A. *mm* *Aa*

beat that won-drous night: Whose fam' ly have I fixed with-in my sights? 'Twas Christ-mas in the tren-ches where the

T. B. *mm* *Aa*

74

S. A. *aa* For the

T. B. *aa*

frost so bit-ter hung. The fro-zen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung,

77

T. B. My

S. A. *aa*

walls they'd kept be-tween us to ex-act the work of war had been crum-bled and were gone for e-ver more.

T. B. *aa*

81

T. name is Fran cis Tol-li-ver, in Li-ver-pool I dwell. Each Christ-mas come since World War One I've

S. A.

T. B.

84

T. learned its les - son well. That the ones who call the shots won't be a -

S. A. That the ones who call the shots won't be a -

T. B.

86

T. mong the dead and lame, and on each end of the ri - fle, we're the same.

S. A. mong the dead and lame, and on each end of the ri - fle, we're the same.

T. B.