

# Christmas in the Trenches

## John McCutcheon, 1984

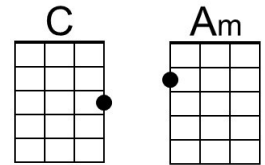
"Christmas in the Trenches" is a ballad from John McCutcheon's 1984 album *Winter Solstice*. It tells the story of the 1914 Christmas Truce between the British and German lines on the Western Front during the Great War from the perspective of a fictional British soldier. Although Francis Tolliver is 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](#), Wikipedia

# Christmas in the Trenches

(John McCutcheon, 1984) – [Christmas in the Trenches](#) by John McCutcheon

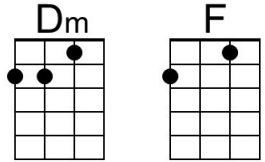
**C** **Am** **F** **Dm**  
My name is Francis Toliver, I come from Liverpool.



**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.

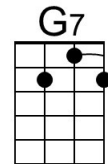


**G7** **F** **C**  
'Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost so bitter hung.

**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 a 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.

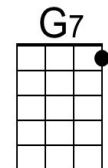
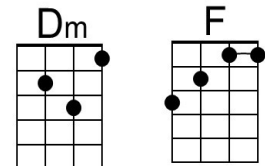
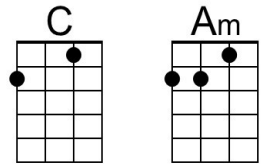
**C** **Am** **F** **Dm**  
As soon as they were finished, and a reverent pause was spent,

**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.

## Baritone



**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.

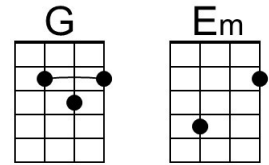
**C** **Am** **F** **Dm**  
My name is Francis Toliver, in Liverpool I dwell.  
**G7** **F** **C**  
Each Christmas comes since World War I, I've learned its lessons well.  
**C** **Am** **F** **Dm**  
For the ones who call the shots won't be among the dead and lame,  
**G7** **C**  
And on each end of the rifle we're the same.



# Christmas in the Trenches

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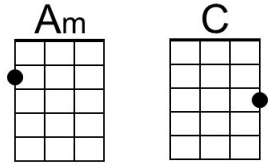
**G** **Em** **C** **Am**  
My name is Francis Toliver, I come from Liverpool.



**D7** **C** **G**  
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**D7** **G**  
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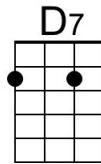


**D7** **C** **G**  
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**Em** **C** **D7**  
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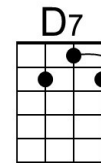
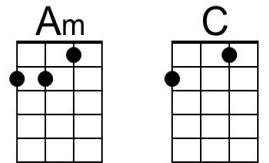
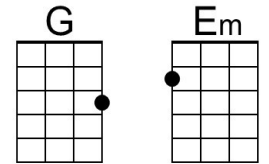
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