

Silent Night

The story of a hymn in stamps by Maggie Bence

On Christmas Eve 'Silent Night' rings out around the world in many different languages but it was sung for the first time in Oberndorf's St. Nikola Church in Salzburg, Austria.



Assistant priest, Joseph Mohr, had written the words as a poem in 1816 and on 24th December 1818 he showed the poem to organist Franz Xaver Gruber asking him to compose a melody for it.



As the church organ was unusable, a song that could be sung without an organ accompaniment was needed for the evening service. The song was therefore to be an arrangement for two solo voices with a guitar accompaniment. Gruber quickly completed his task and he and Mohr performed the new Christmas carol that very evening. Before too long 'Silent Night' was being sung far and wide and has since been translated into more than 300 languages.



Following severe flood damage St Nikola Church was demolished in 1913 and the Silent Night Chapel now stands on the site.



For a few brief hours during the first Christmas of World War One, men from both sides on the Western Front laid down their arms, emerged from their trenches, and shared food, games and comradeship as well as joining together in the singing of 'Silent Night'

