

A Childhood Christmas.

Christmas was always special and very much a family togetherness. The two weeks before Christmas was the carol singing period which would bring in some extra pocket money to be spent on small presents for each member of our family. As Christmas eve approached the excitement grew and as this evening would be the last one for carol singing there was a little sadness as well. We had really enjoyed the singing and we knew that we had brought some happiness to a good number of the village folk and now it would be another year before we could do it again.



We knew that there would be presents for each of us especially from our parents and other members of the household. Before getting into bed each of us had a small pillowcase which was pinned to our bed and it was difficult to go to sleep. We woke up very early on Christmas morning to find that our pillowcase had been filled with presents and being very quiet so as not to waken our parents we removed the presents one by one and took off the wrapping paper. There would always be an Orange and this would usually be the only Orange that we would have for a whole year! There was a war on and tropical fruit was not available as it is these days. By today's standards our presents were small and simple but we knew that these were what our parents could afford and we were all very happy.

During the war there were additional members in the household, relatives from London and a few evacuees who were all treated just the same as the rest of us. One Christmas morning we woke up in the early hours and made so much noise in our excitement our parents also woke up and came in and removed all the presents till daylight arrived! Christmas morning breakfast was taken together as one big family and it was treated as an extra Sunday breakfast.

The sitting room would have been decorated mainly with home made paper chains plus some holly and ivy from the woods and of course a decorated Christmas tree. We were taught at Dinton school how to make coloured paper chains and we were encouraged to help decorate the classrooms prior to the Christmas holidays.

Our Christmas dinner was always special as it consisted of a large cockerel which had been reared from a day old chick earlier in the year. This was the only time of the year that we would eat a chicken and a second bird had been reared to be eaten on New Year's day. The cockerel was served with stuffing and vegetables. (all home grown of course, there wasn't any packet food in those days). This was followed by Christmas home made pudding and custard and each child would receive a silver threepenny piece which mother would slip into each slice so that each child would receive one. We were not allowed alcoholic drinks but mother had made some elderberry wine earlier in the year for the adults! At Christmas teatime there were always some hot mince pies to follow the sandwiches and in the evening we would end the day with playing games and a singsong!

