

From Past to Presents



This season, many of us will be struggling to achieve 'the perfect Christmas' for our families and loved ones. With each year that passes, the commercialisation of what should be a simple and traditional family holiday grows and we are encouraged to spend, spend, spend to make it a success.

Here at **You First**, we wanted to remind our readers of the true meaning of Christmas, so we asked some of our senior care residents to share their memories of Christmases gone by, showing us how we can take pleasure in the simple joys of the season, without breaking the bank...

Hanging the stockings...

May Biddle, (86) St Catherines, Cheshire.

"As one of eight children, my family didn't have much money to spend at Christmas, but that never seemed to matter. My fondest memories are of Christmases filled with wonderful excitement; my brothers and sisters and I would wrap up in our winter woollies and go outdoors to dig up our Christmas Tree which we'd decorate with homemade ornaments; At 5am we would spring out of bed to open the couple of presents we would get. One of my most treasured memories is waking up one Christmas morning to find the most beautiful dolls house waiting for me."



Spiritual celebration...

John Mackey (74) of St Catherines, Cheshire, retired Vicar, recalls his memories of the true spiritual meaning of Christmas...

"The weeks leading up to Christmas day were a very special time in the Church parish. On each of the four Sundays before Christmas, the children from the congregation would come up to the altar to light the Advent candles. They would sing "The Holly and the Ivy", starting with the first verse on week one of the Advent, then adding another verse each Sunday until Christmas day when we would all sing the complete carol."

The first Christmas Tree

Franz Münchow (90) Carlingwark, Castle Douglas

"As a child living in Germany, Christmas was always greatly celebrated. For Christmas lunch we would either have "gans" (goose) or "ante" (duck) with "flouman" pudding (plum pudding) for dessert, washed down with "glü" wine (mulled wine) for the adults. The "weihnachtsbaum" (Christmas tree) was revealed to the children on Christmas Eve, we weren't allowed to see it before then. It was Prince Albert, who was from Germany, but married to Queen Victoria, that first took a Christmas tree to England. As soon as the Prince and Queen were shown standing with their children around the tree, the rest of the country began to adopt the tradition too."

Mistletoe...

Jean (79) and Cathy (103) from Winsford Grange and Betty (91) from St Catherines, Cheshire, talk about their memories of the festive season...

"Making the decorations for the Christmas tree... saving them for the next year... listening to the Carol service at Church... writing a letter to Father Christmas... getting a doll, fruit and nuts in my stocking... listening to the Salvation Army... helping put the threepenny bit in the Christmas pudding... kisses under the Mistletoe... greeting friends and family with love and wishing our neighbours well."

Tears of joy...

Joan Bosbury (89) St Stephens, Cheshire.

"It was Christmas Eve, and I had been apart from my husband, Bert, for three years due to the war; he was serving in North Africa and Italy whilst I was staying with my parents. After work I had gone upstairs to my bedroom when I heard a knock on the door... the next thing I knew someone put their hands over my eyes saying "guess who" - it was Bert! He had come home on leave for Christmas for a month. I was so pleased to see him I burst into tears. That was the best Christmas I have ever had."



A family day...

Stan (69), Alex (88), Gwen (86), Marie (90), Russell (84) and David (73) from St Stephens, Cheshire, recall memories of Christmas as a special time, spent with family...

"Travelling to Leicester for a big family Christmas and taking Rex the dog along too... getting the most fantastic Hornby train set from Santa Claus when I was 7... all the hard work of making dinner for 10... getting a doll called Susie and thinking that Santa was a very nice man... waking up to find a basket full of goodies on Christmas morning... helping mum stir the Christmas pudding... my sister being born on Christmas Eve... getting married on 3rd December and having a wonderful first Christmas with my wife"



Christmas Carol...

Pat Moore (74) from Hough Green, Widnes, tells us of a very special Christmas memory...

"During the first Christmas of the war, my family and I were evacuated to Blackpool, where it was bitterly cold, with layers of snow all around. It was a difficult time, being away from our home and our friends, but all that seemed to be forgotten about when on 1st December 1939 my little sister was born. We called her Carol, because of the festive season; that year was my most memorable Christmas."



CHRISTMAS RECIPE

Here's a traditional Scottish recipe brought up-to-date for those of us who would rather be snuggling in front of the Eastenders Christmas special, than tied to the oven; The Microwave Clootie Dumpling (similar to Christmas pudding), sent in to us by the residents at Merse House, Kirkcudbright:-

Microwave Clootie Dumpling

- pint water
- 1 cup of white sugar
- 1 level dsp mixed spice
- 1 level dsp cinnamon
- 1lb sultanas
- 1lb raisins
- 1lb margarine
- 1lb plain flour
- teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 2 eggs beaten



Method

1. Line a medium Pyrex bowl with cling film which hangs well over the sides.
2. Put the sugar, water, spices, fruit and margarine in to a saucepan and bring to the boil and simmer for 1 minute.
3. Remove from the heat, mix in the flour, bicarbonate of soda and add the beaten eggs.
4. Pour the mixture in to prepared Pyrex bowl, but do not cover the mixture with the excess cling film.
5. Cook in the microwave for 9 minutes and allow to cool before cutting.

This recipe serves 20 of our residents and is a great favourite served with either custard, cream, or sometimes fried in butter.