



THE CORK FOLKLORE PROJECT

PRESENTS

Christmas Memories

We've waited all year and it's here at last - Christmas!

The most wonderful time of the year for nostalgia, shared memories and reflection.

Take time out to read the Christmas memories recounted here and see how they compare with your own.

We would be delighted if you would care to share your recollections of Christmas with us.

You can do so by contacting Cork Folklore Project at corkfolklore.org and Cork City Libraries at corkcitylibraries.ie.

We hope that you and everyone special to you enjoy a wonderful Christmas.

Nollaig Shona daoibh go léir.



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BREEDA SHEEHAN

“Christmas night, I remember going to bed and, I’d lie awake. If I woke in the morning I wouldn’t open my eyes, because if we saw Santy he’d leave us nothing. So, I’d lie in that bed with my eyes closed tight shut until I’d hear someone moving around. And no way would I open my eyes until I heard somebody up, because I was afraid that if I opened them and he hadn’t come, or he was there, I’d get nothing. So there was that sense of wonder about it, you know, it was magical!”



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LIAM O hUIGÍN

“At Christmas time we used to sit opposite the Mercy Hospital and we used to sing carols and patients used to throw a few coppers out the window. Whether they did so because they were enjoying us or whether it was to get rid of us, we never found out. But, of course, when the money would come down, we were all down on our hands and knees looking for the money.”



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JOHN CHRIS KELLEHER

“The Holly Boughs that came out at Christmas at the time were brilliant. They were great and people would buy them to send them all over the world. There was great sale for Holly Boughs, so there was a few bob to be made. And on the morning The Holly Bough came out, there’d be very few fellas at school. They’d be all down Faulkner’s Lane waiting to get Holly Boughs to sell them, to try and make a few bob. Because a few bob, at the time – and coming into Christmas – a few bob was money.”



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TONY F. HEGARTY

At Christmas I do remember having him [*Tony's father*] hanging big socks, these big adult socks on the mantelpiece and putting a candle stick on top of it, and in the sock there were oranges and apples. He was a “jocker”, he used to put a potato in them!

That was his idea for a joke, cause we didn't appreciate it very much. In fact an orange and pomegranates was something you didn't get, only at Christmas, because there was still Cadbury [*chocolate*] rationing after the war. There was still fruit shortages, there wasn't a lot of fruits coming to the country. I think people couldn't afford much fruit.

It was expensive comparing to now, so to get an orange on Christmas was really just incredible, it was exotic!



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FELIX BARRETT

Christmas Day you didn't go to anybody else's house nor nobody came into your house, and it was just as well because if they would be coming all you would be hearing about the stories from way back about the bad sheep and about the ghosts and different things like that!

I was thinking about the flour bag, what was done with that? It was emptied, then two or three of them would be sewn together. The women in the house would make a sheet out of it. They were cotton so they make a sheet out of those.



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BIDDY BARRETT

Santa would be a big thing. Not that we got a whole lot, but I mean, just the idea of Santa coming and leaving something t'was a major thing, and also I suppose getting the house ready you know, ready in so far as putting up holly and Ivy and getting these paper decorations going and streaming them across the kitchen and preparing the candle as well ... and then of course the Church for us added a big thing to it because that was a huge job, getting that ready, that took of a lot of time. All the figures for the crib would be kept in the sacristy and they were brought out then at Christmas time. My brother would collect holly and ivy from a local farmer. That would come out I suppose a week or two before Christmas and then the straw for the crib would be collected.



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MARGARET NEWMAN

“My mother always had a big heart. Her heart was bigger than herself. She wanted to give and give. I’ll always remember one Christmas. Someone sent the sick poor to the door and my mother opened it and my dearest sister went out and she said, “Mam, there’s two gentlemen at the door”. So my mother went out. He said, “We’re doing our Christmas rounds. Your name came up on the list.” So says my mother, “For what?” “Well, we have vouchers here,” he said “and you can get this that”. So she said “I’m very, very grateful to ye now and it is very thoughtful of whoever sent ye up. They thought of us but there’s people round here worse off than me.” She sent them across the road then to the woman across with all the kids. “She needs it more than I do,” she said.”



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NORA HANOVER

“I remember going to bed Christmas Eve night and one thing you’d be dreading in case you woke during the night, and you’d say in your prayers, please don’t leave me wake and see Santy coming into the room, because you were always told that Santy...

You weren’t supposed to see him, like until you woke then Christmas morning like”



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NORAH COLEMAN

Interviewer: Norah, do you remember the lovely tradition of visiting the different cribs in the churches at Christmas?

Norah: We used to do that on Saint Stephen's Day. You'd be taken to all the parishes, Saint Francis, Saint Augustine's, the South Parish, Saint Patrick's. There was always a lovely crib at Saint Patrick's.

Interviewer: We kept that tradition up for many a long day, even our own family. And Nora, would you have taken a little piece of straw from the crib for your prayer book?

Norah: You would, a little piece of straw from the different cribs.



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