

Always a Trifle!

Waking up as a child to the smell of the roasting turkey on Christmas morning and feeling sick with excitement all day on Christmas Eve, just two of my many abiding childhood festive memories.

A stocking at the end of the bed with a hairband or ribbons, a satsuma, chocolate coins, a pencil or crayons and a small piece of coal! . The 'stocking' was in fact my Uncle's football sock!

I was very fortunate, growing up with both sets of grandparents living within a mile of our home. At Christmas lunch we usually had about 15 people squeezed around the table, aunts and uncles all wearing their paper crowns. I remember the ladies drinking Baby Cham or Snowballs and the men drinking beer. I don't think we had reached the dizzy heights of wine with a meal in the 60s. After lunch, my little Welsh Auntie Irene would start the singing, the table cleared and pushed to one side, Nana Brown loved to dance to 'Knees Up Mother Brown'. I was mesmerised by glimpses of her long johns as she kicked her legs high in the air! The Conga would snake around the house and out into the front garden, the Hokey Cokey, the 12 Days of Christmas and a few carols. During the evening another huge spread would be laid out. The buffet included cold ham and pease pudding, cold turkey, pickles and salad, then mince pies, a Christmas cake with 'snow' icing and little plastic ornaments recycled every year and of course there was always a trifle!

My mum and her mother would be planning the food for at least a month before. Throughout the year they used to save money every week for a Fairpak food hamper, many hours were spent poring over the contents of the catalogues. Mum would make sausage rolls and Nana the Scotch eggs, all cooked on Christmas Eve.

Uncle John (Mum's brother), is only 4 years older than me, we grew up more like brother and sister. I remember one Christmas Eve, I was staying at my grandparents' house and couldn't sleep. John told me to look out of the window, I was about 5, so he would have been 9ish .We knelt on the bed and pulled back the curtains, "Can you see Father Christmas?" John asked.

I pressed my nose against the cold glass "No I can't."

"Look, over there." He pointed out of the window.

Amongst the twinkling stars in the dark night was a red light.

"I think I can hear the bells" I whispered.

"Well HE won't come if you're not asleep."

I went back to bed and shut my eyes tightly.

That is my absolute favourite Christmas memory, I can still feel the excitement that I felt that night.

I've run out of words to recall the story of when John was a teenager and lost the turkey, or the time he tipped me out of the wheelbarrow!

Very happy Christmas memories.