



Front Page Poems "Down the Chimney"

by Anne Coulter

He stood in the hearth, black with chimney soot,
Some had even got inside his boot.
He shook it out then put it back on,
The room was empty, the children had gone.

He reached for his sack and pulled it down too,
It was full of toys, all brand new.
He produced the letter the children had sent,
And within seconds understood what they meant.

He placed the gifts carefully under the tree
In a visible place the children would see.
He was tired because this was his final stop,
But still he was merry, and gave a little hop.

Mrs Clause was at home keeping the bed warm
So he knew he wouldn't come to no harm.
Rudolf was impatient, ready to go,
Soon he was back on his sleigh, dashing through the snow...

YOUR CHRISTMAS STORIES

Christmas is a time that is packed with memories. We asked some of our readers to tell us about their favourite Christmas memories.

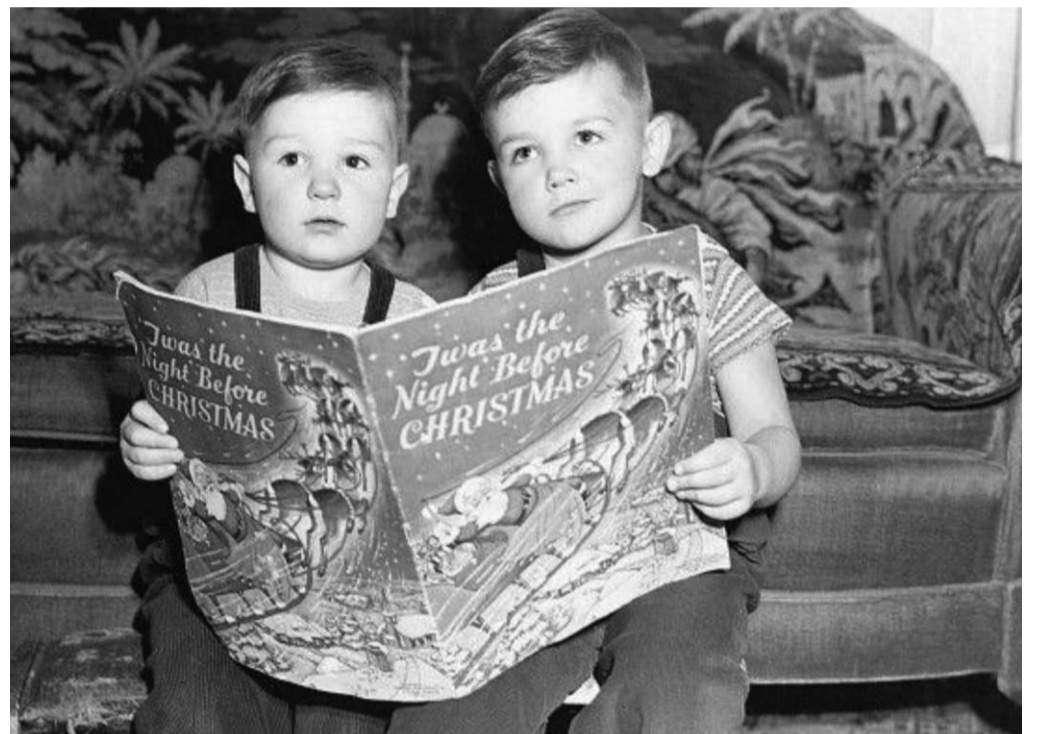
Olivia said:

"We didn't have much money, but Christmas was always a special time. I was the eldest of five children and on Christmas Eve the iron bath would be taken out and we'd all have a bath to get ready for midnight mass. Because I was the eldest I got to the bath water first but the youngest child wasn't so keen. He'd get to the bath water after we'd all used it before him, so he needed to use extra Sunlight soap. Mummy would light the fire and we'd all go up to Clonard Church for midnight mass. There was a beautiful crib display, and the choir was wonderful; lots of fantastic Christmas singing and always jam packed. When we got home we had new jammies to put on.

When we got up on Christmas Day there were stockings with oranges and a sixpence in them. One year I got a doll. Then the next year I seemed to get the same doll but wearing a different outfit. I thought "this looks strange." Mummy had got my aunty, who was a seamstress, to make clothes for the doll to make it look different. The head of my doll fell off during the year, so daddy took me and the doll to the Toy Hospital and got it fixed. Then the next Christmas after that I got the same doll again with another set of clothes. I thought "something is very very strange here!" But I have such happy memories even though money was scarce. Such special times."

Lila said:

"Christmas was in my Grandparents house because we were 'blitzed' out of our own house during the war. I was the 11th out of 13 children. Christmas was very traditional. My mother did all of the baking and cooking. We would all have a turn helping to mix the Christmas pudding and there would be a wee surprise put in to the pudding like a thrupenny bit. The pudding was wrapped in linen and boiled. Our house always smelled of food, soda bread, treacle bread, and Christmas pudding! On Christmas Day we all helped with the cooking. The boys were given the task of peeling the vegetables and the potatoes. The religious side of Christmas was very important to our family too.



Toys would have been made. My dad made us toys out of wood, and Santa always left a stocking bulging with gifts such as apples, oranges and a pencil. Carol singers used to go from door to door or would sing in the street. We always gave them gifts and joined them as they sang."

Phil, a farmer's son, said.

"I grew up on a farm out in South Derry near the Ballenderry river. It was quite a lonely farm and quite bleak. It was cold with no central heating, just a fire, and no electric lights, just oil lamps. There were five of us born between 1937-1942. Christmas helped brighten the place up a bit. And there was lots of anticipation and excitement.

We had an open fire and there was a crook on the wall which you pulled out to put a griddle over the fire for cooking. We hung our stockings up there and would have expected different things. We would have given hints before Christmas. I wanted a football, and the girls would have been expecting dolls and things like that.

In the winter, work on the farm's crops stopped but the livestock still needed tending to, Christmas or not. We had two dozen mixed cattle, bullocks and heifers that lived in different byres, and they needed feeding and milking. We had hens and ducks, and about 100 to 150 eggs that needed collecting every day. We didn't breed turkeys thankfully, because I saw how they were "made ready" for the Christmas dinner. It wasn't a great time of the time of the year to be a turkey!"

Dorothy remembered her brother getting one particular toy.

"He received a small toy tricycle to ride on one Christmas morning, but it had a picture of a duck on the seat. He never rode the tricycle once, because he was afraid that if he sat on the seat the duck might bite him on the bum!"

Belinda remembers Christmas day as a child fondly.

My daddy was a doctor and on Christmas morning we would all get dressed in our good clothes and visit his hospitals. We went to Greenisland Hospital, Musgrave Park, and the Royal hospitals. We would wish Happy Christmas to the patients and staff. The Ward Sisters always gave us Christmas gifts and daddy would give the staff presents too. We'd eat snacks and cocktail sausages. This meant we weren't hungry until later that day.

My aunts and uncles and cousins would join us for Christmas Day dinner. We had the full works, turkey, Brussel sprouts, and desserts. I have a firm memory of sitting with my great grandmother as we both had second helpings of plum pudding and custard. My uncles and aunts were very traditional and they were used to eating lunch at 1pm, but they had to wait until 3pm because we'd been fed at the hospitals earlier that morning and we weren't hungry until mid-afternoon. This tradition of big Christmas Day dinners continued for at least thirty years.

Quick-fire Phone Competition!

The 5th person to call **Lois** on **07595 261253** will receive a £10 Tesco voucher.

Calls will be taken 10am-4pm, Monday-Friday.

Competition closes 15th December 2023.

Winner announced in next edition.

Winner of the November Edition (Edition 43) was **Violet Millar**.



HERE TO HELP

To reach the Engage with Age team see numbers below.

We are always happy to receive your phone calls so our mobile numbers are:

John McCandless 07729 516676

**Hannah Lockhart/
Eileen McQuillan 07423 702721**

Cathy Chambers 07468 695593

Paul Hendry 07436 174793

Anna Albrzykowska 07425 627531

Our telephones are available during office hours and weekdays.

If you phone and we can't answer, please leave a message and we will return your call.

Send your letters to:

**The PAL Gazette,
Engage with Age,
East Belfast Network Centre,
55 Templemore Avenue,
Belfast BT5 4FP.**

Or you can email:
info@engagewithage.org.uk



Anne's Crafty Corner Stitch Tree Christmas Cards

Make your own bespoke cards in an array for festive colours.

What you need:

- Blank A4 Card - use different festive colours.
 - Silver or gold thread
 - Sticky tape
 - Glittery stick-on stars
- You could also do baubles or presents.

To make:

1. Fold card in half.
2. Make a small pinhole at the top of a card blank, followed by 10-12 pinholes 1 cm apart along the bottom.
3. Use a needle and silver thread to stitch from the top to the bottom holes to create a tree shape.
4. Secure the thread at the back of the card with a piece of clear tape.
5. Embellish with a glittery stick-on star to the top of the tree.



Can You Read This Paper Clearly?

If you need a magnifying glass **phone or text Paul on 07436 173793.**

We will send you one through the post for FREE.



The Questionnaire

Name: Hannah Lockhart

Role: The new Development Officer for the PAL Project Befriending Scheme (job share!)

Favourite pastime:

Singing! I love singing. I was brought up playing in church and going to music lessons and I started writing songs as a teenager, like jazzy folk songs. I like listening to Regina Spector and Nina Simone. I started writing and singing more regularly when I got in to my 20s. I also love walking and I go to the Mourne every so often when I get the chance. I'm from the North Coast and I love walking the beaches at Portstewart and White Park Bay.

Why are your pastimes important?

They are important because they help me relax and also process all of the baggage of life. I like singing because it's a chance to express yourself and a chance to meet up and play with other people too.

What is the best thing about living here?

It's probably the scenery on your doorstep. Even if you're living in Belfast you drive ten minutes and you're in the country. We're so lucky with all of the beautiful landscapes and water at the coast.

Favourite Food:

I am a cake fan and I am an enthusiastic but amateur baker. My favourite cake to bake would be a wee banana bread because it's so easy and hard to go wrong.

Favourite Film:

There's a famous modern French Film called "Amélie". I like it because it is so quirky and it gives you a little glimpse of French culture. I like French things. "Amélie" is a sweet gentle story told in a very original way.

Tell us something that not many people know about you?

I lived in Cambodia for 6 months. I was there taking a year out after school, working with a charity. We



were building a haven for people who had been trafficked and people who had been exploited. The people in Cambodia were very welcoming. One of my most vivid memories was visiting one of the biggest Buddhist temples in the world. In Cambodia they have amazing street food too which I still adore – sticky rice and fried banana.

What advice would you give to a young person?.

Say yes to opportunities and don't second guess how you'll feel. That's how you learn.

“Thought for the Month”

submitted by a reader

Christmas! I have always been intrigued to observe the different ways in which the world celebrates Christmas. I remember as a child one of the most exciting things was obtaining the tree. Now, this was not one of the beautiful designer trees we see in magazines. No, a few days before Christmas my father, brother and I, accompanied by our faithful dog Lassie (such an original name for a dog!) would traverse one of our fields and my father would chop down a large holly bush which we dragged excitedly up to the house where my mother would have steaming mugs of hot chocolate ready for us. My father would trim the bush and we took the berries from the pieces he had cut off. We then strung them into garlands with a needle and thread before hanging them on the tree as decorations. As we had no electricity at the time, we didn't have any lights for it but, to us, it was the most wonderful tree in the country!



So – how do we view Christmas, especially when we think of the war and turbulence in our world today? Children will be full of excitement and anticipation; new mothers will have a very special Christmas with their babies; those who, sadly, have been bereaved will be dreading it; others will feel lonely and isolated and some will be suffering from ill health and

perhaps awaiting results of medical tests, or even a doctor's appointment. A myriad of different emotions will be present.

In all our circumstances, there is always HOPE because of that first Christmas. Whatever your faith, or none, may you be blessed and have peace as we enter a New Year.

Night Blessing Submitted by Audrey Lynas

May you be given grace to greet a new day with fresh hope, new found faith and the gift of courage. If sleep is difficult, may you be given a good night's rest. May your soul be strengthened and your spirit steeled to face the challenges and demands of tomorrow.

WHAT'S ON

WALKS

There will be walks in East Belfast. If you are interested in taking part, contact Paul on **07436 174793** or email palproject@engagewithage.org.uk

KIT GROUP

Every Thursday 2pm - The Keeping In Touch Group (KIT Group)
Dee Street Community Centre, 12-16 Dee Street, Belfast BT4 1FT.

T'AI CHI

Every Friday 11am at Dee Street Centre, 12-16 Dee Street, Belfast BT4 1FT.

DANCE GROUP

Every Friday at 2pm. Contact Engage with Age for details on this fun dance group.

Dementia Friendly Coffee Morning

11am Wednesdays 6th and 20th December 2023. To attend, RSVP to Paul at palproject@engagewithage.org.uk

In all instances above, please phone Paul first on 07436 174793 or email palproject@engagewithage.org.uk for details

South Belfast Lifestyle Forum

No meeting in December.

Email cathy.chambers@engagewithage.org.uk for further information.

ONLINE EVENTS

Chocolate Bingo

7.30pm Thursday 14th. Via zoom.

Contact eamon.quinn@engagewithage.org.uk for the link.

Chocolate Bingo Pub Quiz Christmas Special!

7.30pm Thursday 21st December 2023. Via zoom.

Contact eamon.quinn@engagewithage.org.uk for the link.

Free IT Assistance

If you are over the age of 60, live in Belfast, and have a computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone, you are eligible. The training is provided by Ignite IT and can help you with your email, getting online, online safety etc.

To avail of this, call Paul on **07436 174793**.

Childhood Rhymes

from Fred from Coleraine

October leads in winter
The leaves begin to fall
The trees will soon be naked
No flowers left at all.

I studied my tables over and over
And backwards and forwards too.
But I couldn't remember six times nine
And I didn't know what to do.
My sister told me to play with my toys

And not to bother my head.
If you say 54 over and over for a while
You will learn it by heart instead.

Early to bed
Lay as long as you can
Eat bacon and eggs
And you'll soon be a man.

**A big Happy Christmas
and New Year from Fred**

PAL Gazette News

GET INVOLVED! Would you like to join the team that helps put the Gazette together? You can help by writing articles, collecting recipes, searching for competitions, even helping with the mail out.

Call Lois on **07595 261253** if you would like to join the PAL Gazette team.

In the meantime, keep sending in your stories! We love your recipes, special stories, and poems.

Call Lois on **07595 261253**. Or if you use email, send them to info@engagewithage.org.uk



How to have an affordable Christmas without being a Scrooge

Most of us love Christmas but will admit that sometimes it can come wrapped with a feeling of slight dread as we get closer to the big day due to increased financial pressure. Christmas is always expensive but this year it is even harder because of the huge strain on household finances caused by soaring food and energy bills. According to research by PWC the average Christmas budget is £400 person, but this this year will see people slash this budget by at least 10%.

Christmas should be a time of joy and spending it with loved ones, not about lavish gifts and massive amounts of foods that will not be eaten.

Firstly, be honest; Swallow your pride and say to friends and family that you are having a lean Christmas and you may be surprised how many feel the same way. This can open the discussion to what everyone could do to have to a lovely Christmas that wouldn't break the bank. Below are a few helpful tips:

- **Instead of presents** - Agree to having a nice night in at one of your houses, where everyone brings their favourite dish, and a lovely meal is had. Spending time with people is better than any gift.

- **Send cards** - They best way to show someone you are thinking about them is not a lavish gift, but a card with a heartfelt message. You can even make these yourself (see Craft section).

- **Look out for free activities and Christmas Dinners** - There are plenty on offer such as Festive Jazz at 2 Royal Avenue on Tuesday 19th December at 2pm. What a great way to celebrate the festive season and combat loneliness as well as meeting old friends and making new friends. Please keep an eye on the Engage with Age Facebook page for more details if you are online.

- **Food Shopping** - Write a practical list and stick to it. Then shop around if you can or get a friend or neighbour to help you with this.

- **Presents** - If you would like to give people presents, they don't have to cost the world. They can be small thoughtful/ practical or even handmade. Remember lots of shops have deals especially on Black Friday and Charity shops sell lovely gifts.



- **Decorations** - Use last years, you don't need new ones, or make your own. Paperchains are all the rage this year (the Engage with Age office is decked out with paper chains this year!). But have some decorations up as it will get you into the festive spirit.

With a thrifty mindset you can make your money go further without sacrificing any joy

Remember to reach out – Christmas can be a lonely time and sometimes the best present a person can get is a phone call or a visit from a friend or a loved one. If you are feeling lonely try one of the activities that Engage with Age offers, even if it is an online one, and remember Engage with Age has a Telephone Befriender service that can help.

Contact befriending@engagewithageorg.uk or call 07423 702721

Christmas Past

Years ago we lived in an attic house on Portallo Street. Coming up to Christmas, I remember Mum going to buy a tree from our fruit and veg shop on the Woodstock Road. It was hard to pick the right size, so she took a tape measure along with her and went round the trees until she found one that would fit.

She brought it home and we got out the old grape barrel, stuffed it with newspaper and wrapped it round in red crepe paper. I couldn't wait to decorate the tree with our baubles from the old biscuit tin and tinsel from the top of the wardrobe. There were those twinkly lights too and the star for the top of the tree.

The Christmas tree was a bit prickly with all its pine needles but it gave a wonderful scent to the parlour. Mum set the fire and went out to buy peat brickettes. And when she lit it, the flames twinkled in the baubles on the tree and the lovely smell of pine spread all over the house, and I imagined we were in an old country house.

Denis Hyde, from Words Alive



WORD SEARCH



Enter our Word Search competition for a chance to win a £10 Tesco voucher.

Find the following 9 words hidden in the word square above:

- CHRISTMAS • CAKE • ORANGE
- TREE • THREAD • CARDS
- AFFORDABLE • PRESENTS • SCROOGE

To enter, phone Lois Kennedy on **07595 261 253 on weekdays, 10am-4pm.** Please note due to the popularity of competitions all correct entries are placed in a draw and the winner chosen at random.

The winner will be announced in the next edition of The PAL Gazette.

Entries for this edition's quiz need to be in by 15th December 2023.

The winner of November's Edition (Edition 43) was Bernie Morgan.



Return unused antibiotics to your pharmacy for safe disposal, do not flush down the toilet.

Emergency numbers

Emergency services 999 or 112	NI Gas emergency service 0800 002 001
Flooding Incident Line 0300 2000 100	NI Water 03457 440 088
NI Electricity Networks 03457 643 643	Housing Executive 03448 920 901

nidirect.gov.uk

Tea Time Quiz

Answer each of these five questions correctly for your chance to win a £10 Tesco voucher.

1. **What year was the Queen's Speech first broadcast in?**
2. **Babbo Natale is Santa in which Country?**
3. **Who wrote a Christmas Carol?**
4. **Which popular Christmas Flower is thought of as the symbol of the star of Bethlehem?**
5. **On the 9th Day of Christmas, what did "my true love" send to me?**

To enter, phone **Lois Kennedy on 07595 261253 on weekdays, 10am-4pm.** Please note due to the popularity of competitions all correct entries are placed in a draw and the winner chosen at random.

Entries for this edition's quiz need to be in by 15th December 2023.

Winner of November's Edition (Edition 43) was Jean Nesbitt.

For all quiz lovers, join the Chocolate Bingo Pub Quiz without a Pub, 7.30pm on Thursday 21st December 2023.

For zoom link email Eamon.quinn@engagewithage.org.uk

The answers to May's quiz were:

1. The Louvre, Paris, France
2. 1564
3. 7
4. Aluminium
5. Lisbon

Recipe FESTIVE GINGERBREAD LOAF

Submitted by Dolly Misra

Ingredients:

- 8 ozs flour
- 4 ozs butter
- 4 ozs sugar
- 4 ozs syrup
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 eggs
- 4 tablespoons of butter milk
- 1 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon
- 1 pinch of clove
- 1 pinch of nutmeg

Method:

- Heat butter and syrup. Mix baking soda with butter milk and eggs and beat well.
- Add to dry ingredients then add the butter and syrup mix.

- Place in a greased loaf tin. Bake in a moderate oven 180°C (350°F/ Gas Mark 4) for about 1 1/4 hours.
- Stick a knife or cocktail stick in to the bread to check if it's done. If the knife/ cocktail stick comes out clean then the Ginger Loaf is ready.



CHOOSE TO LIVE BETTER

HSC Public Health Agency

Engage with Age thanks its supporters and funders:

OLD JOKES HOME!

Submitted by our Anonymous Phone Caller who loves a joke.



Why don't Christmas trees knit?
They keep dropping their needles.

HSC Public Health Agency

HSC Belfast Health and Social Care Trust



Belfast City Council

HALIFAX FOUNDATION for Northern Ireland

COMMUNITY FUND

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