

# Local History Cafe



Sir John Moore Foundation, Appleby Magna

## Happy Christmas

Another memory from Anne Silins taken from [applebymagna.org.uk](http://applebymagna.org.uk)

“Christmas dinner would be a feast, and the table was set with the best silver and china. How grown up I felt, except for my legs, on those itchy horse-hair chairs. My skirts were never long enough to cover all of my legs, and if I did manage to pull my skirt down far enough, the horse-hair still scratched the back of my knees ...”



1

### HISTORY MYSTERY

Last months image was a 1st century Roman dice with Latin inscriptions

2

### FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

SirJohn Moore Foundation Heritage Centre

3

### UP COMING DATES

History Cafe Meetings  
15th December



### Winter Snow

1963 was a particularly harsh winter in Appleby with several feet of snow



### Royal Message

Memories of King George VI Christmas Message Page 3



Snowy days around the village ....  
Page 2

Welcome Gaby  
Page 6

The Front Parlour  
Page 9



Snowy days  
around the  
village ...



## “Comments...”

Here are a selection of comments received from our Facebook Pages

**S**hopping in the winter and especially on cold wet December evenings with the wonderful windows of the stores lit up and inviting you to come in. The butcher shops with their turkeys hanging up and the lovely green grocers with their fresh herbs and mistletoe.”

*A very evocative scene from Eileen M.*

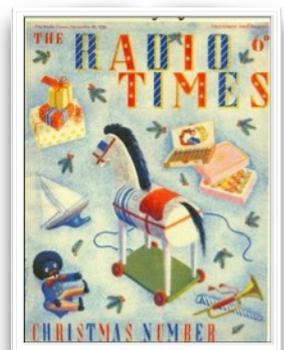


## “Christmas Party ...”

Sir John Moore School Christmas Party  
1936

**T**he children in this photograph from our archives will have lived through a turbulent year before sitting down to their jelly and ice cream and no doubt the school hall would have had streamers across it. However, a few short days before the party at the end of the school term, the radio would have broadcast the abdication speech of King Edward VIII.

His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Act received Royal Assent at 1:52 a.m., ending King Edward VIII's reign. Edward's younger brother Albert, Duke of York succeeded to the throne as King George VI. Edward gave his abdication speech by radio to a worldwide audience.



© UK Christmas TV



*On the way to the shops. Church Hill*

**C**hristmas morning breakfast ... pork pie and bread and butter ... warm from Porkie Wright's shop on Narborough Road Leicester. This was in the 1960s. Back then we got freshly baked bread from the Co-op bakery quoting 49570 our check number ... Magical times!

*Memories from Diane Phillips.*

Dragging our stockings we'd all tumble into my parent's bed. Who would get the best place, in between my parents? It was warm. No danger of getting cold when the excitement began to fade, and there was no danger of falling out when someone got over enthusiastic. It was a bit of a squeeze especially as I had five brothers and sisters ...

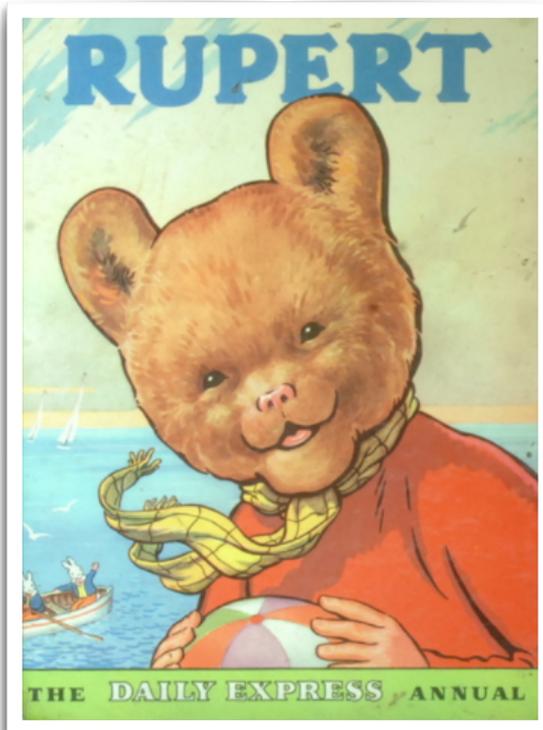
*Christmas Day memories from Jane Cartwright*

## “Distant Memories of Christmas ...”

Marina Sketchley, a History Cafe member, recalls Christmas Day at home ...



I remember when I was little, the excitement of waiting for Father Christmas to come down the chimney (because I had been good). We three girls would go to bed in a fizz of excitement, then we would be listening, in the dark, for the slightest sound. Once we nearly caught Dad out. Of course, at some point we drifted off to sleep, but oh the thrill and shrieks when we found a stocking at the bottom of the bed. We shook everything to see if it rattled, then we discovered, say, a little box of paints and a drawing book, a Rupert Bear Annual (a special treat), a pretty hankie and socks, some bright golden pennies and some nuts. We admired and played with them until lunchtime.



© Mammy Bear Books

Lunch was traditional, chicken or turkey with stuffing, carrots, sprouts, mashed and roast potatoes and parsnips, followed by Christmas pudding and custard.

No alcohol, except beer for Dad and Grandad. We would still be at the table when it was time for the Queen's speech. This was very special to Mum and Dad. They were very patriotic and we stood throughout her speech, noting every word.

As the evening wore on, our house would start filling up with uncles, aunts and cousins and the house got noisier with chatter and laughter. I would sometimes creep under the stairs, away from the hubbub.

We had an old upright piano which none of us could play but Dad would try to knock out a tune. He had a fine voice and we would all join in, singing boisterously.

Mum was always in the kitchen, cutting up dozens of sandwiches of meat, cheese, pickles, beetroot and piccalilli (home grown). We girls passed plates around and somehow there was room for everyone to eat.

Meanwhile, the beer flowed. Dad's cheeks got rosier and his speech more slurred, but oh how happy everyone was!

"Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth; that can transport the sailor and the traveller, thousands of miles away, back to his own fire-side and his quiet home!"

Charles Dickens, The Pickwick Papers

## “Games, games, and more games !”

Rosie Johncock casts her mind back to childhood  
Christmas Days ...

### Paper chains ...

I remember the week before Christmas, Uncle would get a tree from the woods; not always a pine or a fir, but it was a tree. The decorations were brought down from the attic and we would all decorate the tree. Paper chains made from coloured strips of paper were hung diagonally across the sitting room and the front room. There is something magical about Christmas Eve in the lives of children. It lasts only the one brief evening, but is like a spell, mysterious and magical.

On Christmas morning I found my stocking, hanging from the knob of my bed. It bulged with oranges, white and pink candies and Turkish delight.

We had a real Christmas tree that was decorated with baubles tinsel and lights. On Christmas Eve pillow cases went under the tree, which we hoped would be filled with some presents! Sherry and a mince pie for Santa, carrots for the reindeers. We were so excited we hardly slept. In the morning Father’s LP of Christmas carols echoed up the stairs. We rushed down stairs. Excitedly ripped paper off our presents, underwear, a doll, a Bunty annual, crayons with our names on and a colouring book. One year I remember I was given a pretty dress that my grannie made for me.

After that excitement we would be taken to church before finally going home for a yummy Christmas dinner turkey, sprouts, parsnips and roast potatoes veg home grown. The Christmas pudding would be set on fire and luckily there would be enough sixpences inside for all five of us. It was served with Noel sauce. We had to eat our dinner in time for the Queen’s speech. We always had to stand and raise a glass to her.

In the evening aunts and uncles would arrive and we would play charades and games like eating chocolate with a knife and fork with hat scarf and gloves. It was mayhem with teams rolling the dice to get two 6’s before they could stop and fan a tissue fish across the floor. I remember playing a game where we had to draw a picture and your team had to identify what you were drawing.

Oh lots of lovely memorable happy Christmas’s we had growing up.

*Rosie Johncock is a current member of The  
Local History Cafe In Appleby Magna*

"And that, of course, is the message of Christmas. We are never alone. Not when the night is darkest, the wind coldest, the world seemingly most indifferent..."

## 2020 - The Past, The Present and Our Future

Gabriella Zavoli, our newest group member reflects on a very different year.

I, like many others started this year full of hope. 2020, a year to make changes, move forward, achieve, be inspired and realise potential. The year started with great success. Coordinating an exciting 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary project for BASW (The British Association of Social Workers), where I work as their Heritage Project Coordinator, and on a personal level; a house and location move. Then Covid struck us all, it came like a bolt of lightning, out of the light and into uncertainty. We all wondered, 'what will the future hold'?

I spend so much of my life looking at the past, working in heritage we always look to the past to see how this has and will impact the future. This time I find myself looking to the past for guidance and looking into the great unknown for the 'new normal' and what the future will mean to us all moving forward.

Heritage is part of all of us, it encompasses who we are. It tells a story about where we have come from and asks us to learn about where we are going. In



reflection history has always been part of my inner essence. Culture, history, engagement and learning are the key pieces that keep me striving each day to continue the work I do. From learning comes development and from this comes growth. Moving from Birmingham to Appleby Magna during a pandemic has not been easy. The craziness of the move, chaos of home improvement and working from home. I continue like many to search for new purpose in a changing world. As a historian, heritage project coordinator and curator I have worked on many interesting projects UK wide but above all, the most important factor is continued development and learning. I am so excited to meet new people, become part of the community here in Appleby Magna and look forward to my volunteer work starting at Sir John Moore Foundation.



So I end the year as it began, a lot has happened, positive and negative in equal measure however I have hope. 2021 is upon us, may we all be stronger together. I look forward to meeting you all soon.

© Gabriella Zavoli

# The Holly and the Ivy

The Victorian Era changes Christmas forever ...

For thousands of years people around the world have enjoyed midwinter festivals. With the arrival of Christianity, pagan festivals became mixed with Christmas celebrations. One of the leftovers from these pagan days is the custom of bedecking houses and churches with evergreen plants like mistletoe, holly and ivy. Apparently, as well as their magical connection in protecting us from evil spirits, they also encourage the return of spring.

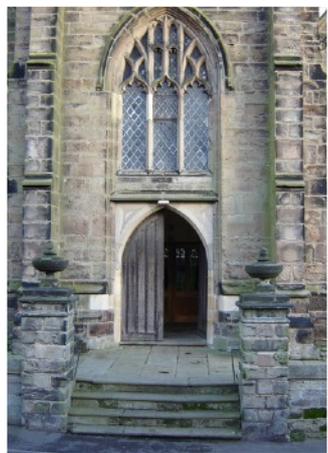
No era in history however, has influenced the way in which we celebrate Christmas, quite as much as the Victorians. This was certainly the case in Appleby Magna with

the church being decked out in holly and ivy for the first time.

Before Victoria's reign started in 1837 nobody in Britain had heard of Santa Claus or Christmas

Crackers. No

Christmas cards were sent and most people did not have holidays from work. The wealth and technologies generated by the industrial revolution of the Victorian era changed the face of Christmas forever. Sentimental do-gooders like Charles Dickens wrote books like "Christmas Carol", published in 1843, which actually encouraged rich Victorians to redistribute their wealth by giving money and gifts to the poor – Humbug!



© Richard Dunmore

## Home for Christmas ...

Karen Brown, a member of Local History Group, recalls a very special Christmas Day ..

“My Dad was a Royal Marine Commando back in the day. My Nana said that one Christmas he told her that he couldn't get leave. However one snowy night 2 days before Christmas there was a knock on the door.

Nana rushed to open it, and there stood my Dad....with a turkey over his shoulder!! My Nan still doesn't know where he got that turkey from!”

Now that's a proper Christmas present ...



Karen's father's armband ..

“One can never have enough socks,” said Dumbledore. “Another Christmas has come and gone and I didn't get a single pair! People will insist on giving me books”.

Harry Potter

## A Christmas string a long

Christmas Day 1975 or it could have been 1976, Duncan Saunders recalls how the day started for his the two young sons.

The two boys had bedrooms on the top floor of Eastgate House and late on Christmas Eve , my wife and myself started on the top floor, with a length of string, with the message "follow the string".

The string went down two flights of stairs, through the hall and kitchen and outside; turned right out of the back door and continued down to the drive. Across the drive to an empty stable. Over the stable door and there was their first pony, Sweep. The stable was not empty! We must have bought a few balls of string?



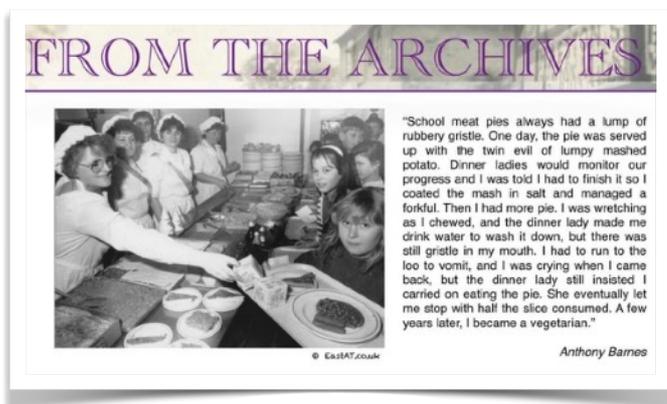
© Duncan Saunders

These are Duncan's two sons with Sweep. Duncan is a member of Local History cafe

## Facebook Snippets ...

SJMF Heritage Centre Online

It always surprises us as to which topics get more attention than others on our Facebook feed. Last month if you recall it was one about Scrumping Apples ... Well this month one of our headline posts was about school meals and it gave a lot of folk an opportunity to recall their own thoughts about the topic. Some good and some quite frankly horrific.



Other posts this month have included being sent to the headmasters study and we also continued our series on the staff that worked both at Appleby Hall and the Rectory. This in particular has allowed some of our readers to connect with their past ancestors who were in service at this two places. It's always good to connect folk with their past. In the coming month we are going to be looking at old school text books ... happy and not so happy memories there we suspect ...

## Dearest Santa ...

A Christmas childhood remembered  
by Lisa Talbott ...



Dearest Santa, let me say  
I've loved you since forever-a-day.  
Grew up with you; as all kids do.  
And every year I've thought of you.

You brought us toys and countless joys.  
(Indeed for all the girls and boys.)  
You cast your magic every year  
creating memories; cherished dear.

Oh Santa dear. Remember me?  
back in 1963?  
I was twelve, in a hospice bed.  
I had a tumour in my head.

You ho ho ho'd. You beamed your smile.  
We sat and chatted quite a while.  
I held your hand, in trepidation  
as you described my operation.

You left, and I tried hard to sleep.  
I wanted this whole night to keep.  
And you made my Christmas wish come true.  
I'm better now, all thanks to you!

Since that Christmas - years long gone,  
(56 if I'm not wrong)  
I tried to glimpse you every time  
to thank you for this life of mine.

We never met again of course,  
My cancer left with no recourse.  
I left that hospice six months after  
in the echo of your laughter.

Dearest Santa, my old saviour,  
grant this old girl one last favour:  
(I'm much too old to hang a stocking  
and Lord above my memory's shocking),  
tell me truly did I see, that Christmas Eve of '63,  
you and matron, in the snow . . .  
kissing 'neath the mistletoe?

© Lisa Talbott 2020

## History mystery ???

This month's History Mystery Object is from the 17th Century and the well to do of Appleby Magna would be well used to these .... It's made of clay, although some were of wood. It is about three inches long ...

The answer will be in our January Newsletter



© image Museum of London

## The Front Parlour ...

Taken from Anne Silins monthly country  
Diary on [applebymagna.org.uk](http://applebymagna.org.uk)

The front room was transformed beyond belief. Holly and evergreens and bright paper streamers were everywhere. The mantle, usually so prim and severe, now was all gay with holly, bells and silver angels. In the front room gifts were laid out on a table, never put under the tree. I could always count on a good number of books, for I was a great reader. The Enid Blyton "Five" series were a big favourite with me and I read and re-read them. Also I could always count on a new fountain pen.



© Atlas Obscura

On Christmas morning, Grandma pulled her chair right up to the radio to hear the Christmas message from King George VI. Grandma was a royalist to the core, and sat on her chair with great dignity for she knew that the King was speaking to her. Uncle turned the radio on and moved the dial to the correct frequency. If he had the aerial wire placed correctly the sound seemed to come out so loud you could hear it from the other rooms. Most of the time we listened to the radio for war news. I was quite convinced that there were little people inside the radio and that they were actually talking just to us. Sometimes a tube would blow and the radio would light up and get warmer than usual, but no sound would come out. Someone would have to go to Ashby to buy a new tube.

## “Whats happening on Whats App ...”

What's been online  
this month

Our Whats App Group has been alive and kicking again this month with the usual wide variety of topics. Marina retailed her own Christmas story as a young girl growing up in Birmingham. *(Read it yourselves on page 4)*

There was also a discussion of the origins of the Last Post around November 11th, and Remembrance Day.

One of the stranger discussions that developed last month was the making of “The Lady Killers” in 1955. Some of us remember it as a “Sunday Afternoon”



© Ealing Studio Archive

type film, others had not heard of it ... How history reveals different things to each of us.

## A Christmas long ago ...

Memories of  
Sarah Wilkins of  
an Appleby  
Magna Christmas,  
100 years ago ...

I remember going to Sunday school parties that were



held in one of the Rectory fields. On Christmas Eve I used to walk to the Rectory to collect a joint of beef, and on Christmas afternoon I went to the church to collect a two-shilling piece for my grandma. One year I lost the coin in the snow as I was crossing the field between Top Street and Bott's Lane. To this day I wonder what happened to that coin. I searched and searched but never did find it!

## A Musical Christmas Past ...

Aubrey Moore reflects on a Christmas present he was given over a century ago ...

One Christmas Day, early in the century I was given a phonograph. It was the latest thing and considered to be a reproduction of the human voice in clear tones beyond the wildest dreams. The machine was an Edison Bell, named after the famous inventor. The records were cylindrical, made of a black substance we called wax, very brittle. They were carefully kept in cylinders of thick cardboard. To drop

### In this month

**1697** ... Sir Christopher Wren's St Paul's Cathedral is opened in London.

**1922** ... BBC broadcast its first light entertainment programmes.

this was to break the record. The selection was limited. New records could be bought at most music shops. They only played for a short duration, no long-playing records. I can remember two of the first half-dozen I had. 'I'm off to Philadelphia in the morning' and 'She cost me seven and sixpence', not very high class, each chorus ending 'I wish I'd bought a dog'. It was the only phonograph in the village and was in great demand at parties.

© Peter Moore from the book "Son of the Rectory" October 2010

## Become a newsletter contributor ...

We always welcome stories and memories to feature in our newsletter. Our topics for the next three months are: Church stories, Travel, Transport and school memories.

Send your thoughts memories and stories to the Editor.

The email is:  
**awmoore702@gmail.com**

## Published 1st January 2021



**Carved in stone ...**  
Martin Jarvis sent us this wonderful story after seeing our article on ancient graffiti ...

**M**artin recalls an interesting story about his Mother in the girls carved their initials into one of the pieces of stonework. The story is even more strange because many years later in 2013, when further repairs were being carried out, the stone with the initials was found and removed. Stella, at the church had heard the story from Sally and recognised the initials. Unfortunately, Sally passed away just before she was reunited with the piece of masonry. It was on show at her funeral and given to us afterwards.

**Church repairs**  
19th century repairs used stone from Hopton Wood quarry near Wirksworth in Derbyshire.

**Goldlocks!**  
Karen Brown relates the true story of a sticky church situation. The full story is on Page 3.

**Welcoming the New Year**  
Appleyby Magna's first footing ... Page 6

- 1 HISTORY MYSTERY**  
Last month's image was a curlew for a wig ... More on Page 4
- 2**  
In Victorian times decorations came down on Twelfth Night and were burnt.
- 3 UP COMING DATES**  
History Cafe Meetings 16th February

Coming in the next issue ...

Church matters ... Graffiti on the roof ... 1963 Snowdrifts ... Victorian First footing ...



## Peelings ...

It was on a December Tuesday evening in 1930 that the first mains electricity came to village. The Moore's Arms had its supply switched on from the Tamworth Electric Company ...