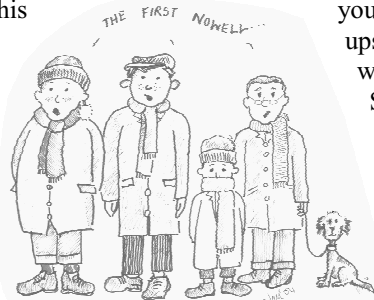


Continuing the Celebration of our 25th Year Boyhood Memories of Christmas

Carol Singing

“Carol singing started about 10 days before Christmas. We usually went in threes and fours, starting at the Court. If Squire Graeme Thompson had guests and was in the right mood, you would be asked to sing one or two carols and were suitably rewarded. If not the butler gave you short shrift and a penny. Mr Willis, known as ‘Puffer Willis’ because of his habit of blowing his cheeks out when working, was our saddler and harness-maker, also a pillar of the Chapel. We serenaded him with ‘The First Nowell’..he did not appreciate our efforts and soon told us that we should find there was ‘an hell’ if we didn’t shut up. Next we sang at Mr Page’s, the policeman, who in those days lived in the centre of the village opposite Mr Willis. He gave us what appeared to be a half-crown and said; “Split this between you”. It was a penny wrapped in silver paper.



Christmas Feasting

The great morning arrived. After opening our stockings we were off to sing in the choir at the 8 o’clock service. We sang up the church in those days, starting with ‘O Come All Ye Faithful’ and ‘Hark the Herald Angels Sing’ at the 11o’clock service. Dinner was next, no turkeys in those days. Good local beef from a farmer you knew and Mr Pratley from Milton, the butcher, would tell you whose beast it was. Then we had plum pudding with lots of silver three-penny

pieces to find, then mince pies. After dinner, out came the best cloth and a bowl of nuts, Blenheim apples and home-made wine. Next we went back to church for the Carol Service which was always held on Christmas Day. Then Christmas tea with a rich fruit cake baked by Mark Bunting (no icing in those days); after tea we played games in our own or neighbours houses. Quiet games, you had to be careful not to upset the oil lamp which would have been a disaster. Supper was cold meat, pickles and mince pies and more home-made wine.

‘Wibbly Wobbly’ and Hats

Just after Christmas the Choir and Bell ringers’ Supper was held in the then club room of the Crown. I remember we once had jellies, something we did not have in our own homes and one of the lads, when asked what he would like said ‘Some of that wibbly wobbly tack’. Then we had the sing - song. Some gentlemen took a lot of stopping once started. We told the story of old Sir John Reade whose butler died rather mysteriously and of the ghostly drive on dark nights with the coach and four. The vicar said this was all a lot of nonsense. I wonder if he thought differently when returning from supper at the court one dark night, two lads on bikes without lights making a clicking noise shot past him very quiet and his hat came off”.

L.W.Longshaw

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