



Christmas Long Ago

As we all prepare for Christmas, buying presents, decorating our homes with indoor and outdoor lights and planning our Christmas Day dinner menu, have you ever thought what Christmas was like for our parents or grandparents? Before we had TVs, phones or computers life was very different.

Kitty who is 85, grew up on a farm in west Clare and her memories of Christmas are of a much more simple but beautiful time.

“We didn’t put up a tree for Christmas, nobody did in fact. We would be sent out the fields to pick berry holly and ivy to decorate the house. A sprig of holly was then put on the mantelpiece over the fire and behind all the holy pictures. We put a candle on every window and these were lit on Christmas Eve. It was the tradition that the youngest member of the family always lit the candles on this night.”



Kitty recalls that preparations for Christmas started as early as October, the Christmas cake and pudding were baked and then stored in tins until Christmas Day. In farming areas, a pig was killed in October so that ham and bacon would be ready by December. Geese were kept and fattened from August until December when they would be sold at the market for Christmas day dinner. Roast goose and ham was the traditional Christmas dinner in Ireland at that time with turkey only becoming popular in more recent years.

There were no supermarkets at that time and all shopping was done at local village shops that usually sold everything from tea and sugar to tins of paint. A big part of the preparation was known as “bringing home the Christmas”. This was the name given to the large shopping done just before Christmas. What was special about this was that along with the usual food items, treats such as sweets and new clothes were also bought at this time.

Kitty recalls that there was great excitement in her house on this day every year.

It was the tradition then that the local shopkeeper would give each customer a free gift known as the “Christmas Box” as a thank you for their business during the year. Kitty remembers that this was eagerly looked forward to as the box would contain luxuries such as biscuits or a bottle of whiskey.

Kitty remembers the whole family would attend mass either at midnight on Christmas Eve or at dawn at 6am on Christmas morning. Then it was home to see what Santa Claus had brought. Santa’s gift list however was a lot different than today. Kitty remembers that children received gifts such as books, footballs, coins and chocolate.

“One year I received an orange and a banana from Santa. I was so excited as I had never seen either fruit before, I thought they were the nicest things I had ever tasted” Kitty recalls

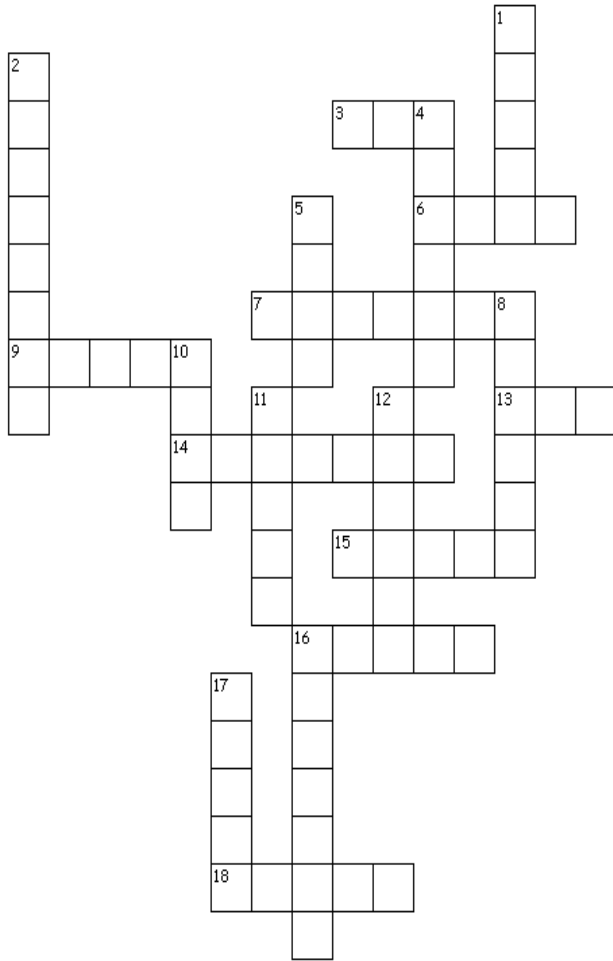
Televisions were unheard of in Ireland then and only a couple of homes had radios so on Christmas night neighbours would visit each other to play cards, chat or play music.

On St Stephen’s Day children and some adults dressed up in disguise and went from house to house singing and playing music in return for money or treats. This was known as “hunting the Wren” and is a tradition that still goes on in parts of Ireland today.

Kitty is in good health living on her own and still driving. Her brother, sister and parents have all passed on so memories of her Christmas childhood although special are a little bit sad. She has seen many changes over the years but some traditions are still the same. She still puts a candle in the window (electric now), goes to mass on Christmas Eve, still insists on cooking her own Christmas Day roast goose and will have her Euro coins ready for anyone who might call on Stephen’s day, hunting the Wren.



Christmas Activities



Across

- 3. Colour of Rudolph's nose (3)
- 6. These insects make honey (4)
- 7. Plum _____, Christmas dessert (7)
- 9. Donald J _____ US President (5)
- 13. _____ Varadkar. First name of Taoiseach (3)
- 14. Frosty the _____ (7)
- 15. _____ Magee, commentator who died this year (5)
- 16. In what county would you find Shannon Airport? (5)
- 18. Silent _____, popular Christmas song (5)

Down

- 1. An _____ a day keeps the doctor away (5)
- 2. RTE TV drama set in Dublin (8)
- 4. 2017 All Ireland Football winners (6)
- 5. In Ireland we call the potato this name (4)
- 8. 2017 All Ireland hurling winners (6)
- 10. An _____, The Irish post office (4)
- 11. _____ McGregor, The Notorious (5)
- 12. First name of wife of president Higgins (6)
- 16. Traditional Irish dinner, Bacon and _____ (7)
- 17. Traffic light colour that tells you to go (5)

Word search

Find these words hidden in the word search

Christmas Santa tree holly present lights
turkey candle Rudolph cards cake pudding

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a w p c y b o u s y c y f h u
t c a r d s v a l t w l y o k
n x s e a b m l p v r k w n e
a e o q n t o m v s v e w z p
s m l s s h e a o l j u e m g
h f u i q r k l i n g n n i s
s l r p g h u g d n r u a i h
y h y u s z h d o n g m p f a
c g q d j t r a o i a q h g n
i r c d s h i y r l m c c e j
y q j i e n b y b z p h a j p
j t n n y e k r u t w h k r o
a t b g t y y v o m r z e f c
h b s p r e s e n t w j t z c
z m h y f o x u x c x j q t l

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See how many words you can make using the letters in the box however the letter a in the middle box must be used in each word

examples: back care

b	c	e
r	a	n
k	g	t



December 2017

Dear Reader

We hope you enjoy reading our monthly worksheet, "The Distance Learner".
Thank you to everyone who has sent us some nice comments and ideas.

We would like to invite you all to enter our Christmas competition.
The closing date will be January 30th 2018.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and may 2018 be a good year for you all.

Kind regards
NALA Distance Learning Team



Competition

If you would like to be in with a chance to win one of two
€25 book vouchers,
please answer this question

In what county did Kitty grow up?

Please send answer and your name

**by Text to 087 198 4228 or
by email to distance@nala.ie**

Closing date is January 30th 2018

All correct answers will be placed in the draw
Best of Luck!