

Sugar Mice and Paper Chains - by Doreen Reed

I was a young child in the 1950's. Sugar was still on ration and birthdays and Christmas were the only times of the year when most children could hope for presents so...

Christmas time when I was young was magical and so much fun.

Preparations lasted many days beginning with nativity plays.

We'd visit Santa in the co-op; Mum said 'Now don't ask for a lot there are many other girls and boys who would also like to have some toys.

Each day we'd ask "When will it come how many days to Christmas Mum?"

Then the calendar showed 24 the day we had been waiting for.

We couldn't wait to go to bed excited by what lie ahead.

We climbed the stairs at 8 o'clock each clutching one of our Dad's socks.

Sock hung up and our prayers said excited, we climbed into bed.

It was so hard to get to sleep we'd like to but we mustn't peep

if Santa saw we were awake then all our presents he would take

and we would have no toys next day and next Christmas was so far away.

In the early hours we'd feel for toys trying not to make a noise

but soon our Mother would appear saying 'go to sleep or toys will disappear'

When daylight came we were so thrilled to find our stockings had been filled with pencils, paints a colouring book, we'd call "Mum, Dad just come & look."

Then we'd go down and we would see a decorated Christmas Tree

with coloured baubles too fragile to be handled by a child.

Beneath the tree perhaps a box that would not fit into our socks.

One Christmas a doll's house was there for my sisters and for me to share,

made for us by Mum and Dad I remember all the fun we had.

In those days too we thought it great to have roast chicken on our plate

and Boxing day another treat roast chicken cold and bubble and squeak.

There was plenty left for next day too we had dumplings and chicken stew, the carcass boiled & left to simmer made chicken soup for next day's dinner.

At Christmastime I still look back and think of Santa with his sack

and sugar mice and paper chains and all the happy childhood games.

It is different now for girls and boys they have so many different toys.

It is different now for everyone. It's not like it was when I was young.