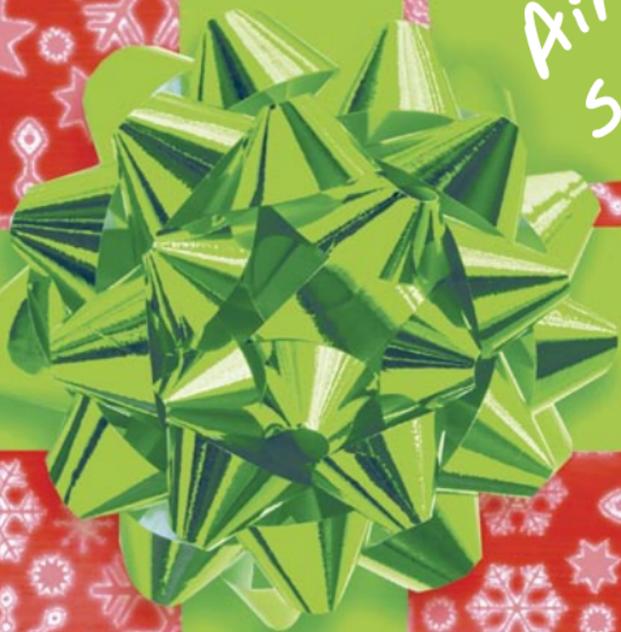


*Tangerines,
Air Raids and
Santamobiles*





Tangerines, Air Raids and Santamobiles

Darnhill groups and residents have worked with writer Joy Winkler to lovingly create this little gift book of Christmas words to get you in the festive spirit. Wartime memories and stories for children sit alongside writing about how we celebrate Christmas today and young people's hopes for the future, plus a special new poem by Joy herself. Dip in and we guarantee you'll find some real crackers.

Participating groups:

Darnhill Festival Association
Darnhill Library
Darnhill Story Group
The Good Companions
St Margaret's C of E Primary School
Woodlands Children's Centre

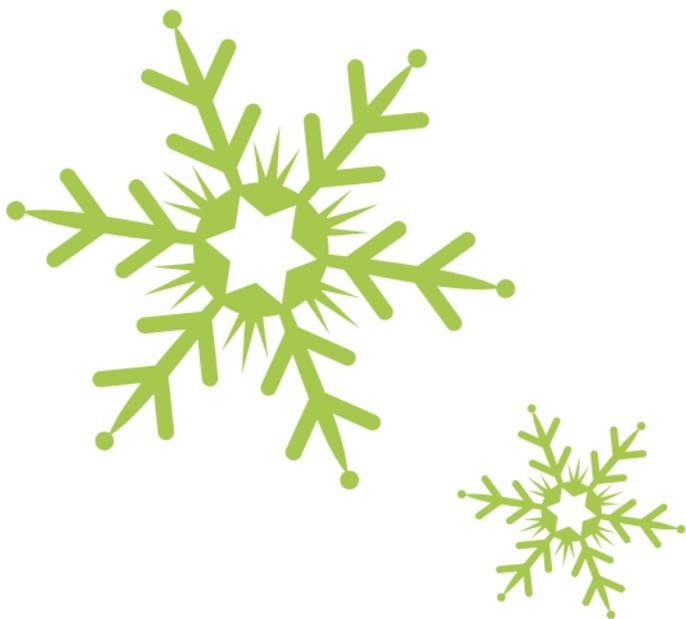
Workshop Facilitator and Story Gatherer: Joy Winkler
Tell Us Another One Co-ordinator: Kim Haygarth

Tell Us Another One is Cartwheel Arts' three-year adventure in storytelling and creative writing, working with diverse communities in Rochdale Borough. Activities include a monthly writing group at Darnhill Library. For more information contact Kim on 01706 361300 / kim@cartwheelarts.org.uk



LOTTERY FUNDED





I'm Here

You'll catch me as I rub my eyes and peep
through tight November curtains, tired of sleep
in attic rooms. Seductive in crimson cellophane
I'll brush autumn leaves from the counterpane,
shake out snow-white sheets, plump my pillow,
fill every vase in the place with premature willow
wands and silver twigs roughened with a glitter glow.
You'll catch me persuading businessmen to brash
bow-ties and unattractive flashing reindeer socks,
unwise underwear and the promise of jolly Santa sacks.

You'll know I'm here from the sudden waft of cloves
in the air and cinnamon. And the way I charm coy doves
to hug the roof of the town's nativity scene.
You'll know I'm here when the sleet-soft rain
brushes your cheek. I'll regale you with tales and foibles
of festivities past and hand-me-down baubles
and wartime grit. And later when giggling tinsel's
safe on the tree, I'll make free with choirboys' tonsils,
making them swing like young church bells.
I'll applaud children's pictures with cotton wool balls
pretending snow, then recall your childhood from years ago,
bringing it into crowded rooms to be warmed by fire glow.

You'll know I'm here when reindeer earrings catch your eye
and children cry for angel Alice bands, and shy
toy penguins almost wave in the arid supermarket air.
You'll know I'm here when a merry atmosphere
oozes through musak into pubs and small cafes,
when doors on advent calendars start running out of days.
Then dusk will be spiked with urgency for home
And you will know that Christmas-time has come.

Joy Winkler

This poem was specially commissioned by Tell Us Another One for Darnhill Christmas Festival 2007

Toys and Games

I got a panda but the dog bit its neck, it got stitched though, not thrown away.

I got a doll from Canadian lodgers, it had big hair and a kilt.

I got a Post Office set and a Sweet Shop and a doll that got new dresses every year.

I got new clothes for Tiny Tears.

I got a tiny piano and sat on the stairs tinkling little tunes.

I got a Tippy Tumble with a battery in its back.

I got an annual, Rupert Bear, an orange and an apple and a new penny.

We played Snakes and Ladders, Charades and the Paper Fish Race

We played Memory Tray and Cat's Cradle

We played Postman's Knock, Hide and Seek, Rally Vo

Shovehalfpenny, two balls and tasting blindfolded.

Darnhill Festival Association

Christmas at Home

Shopping in town midst hustle and bustle

Paper and tinsel decorating the room

Jack Frost on windows, breath misting and moist

Kids peeping and peeking pulling corners of wrapping

Anticipation in the gloom of the night

Squeals of excitement, disappointment, delight

Dad making porridge, salty and horrid

Mum red faced and flustered cooking our dinner

Mince pies and biscuits, yummy and sweet

Log fire perfumes with aroma unique

Brothers and sisters caring and sharing

Songs round the organ, Dad entertaining

Pictures on walls, mysterious and magic

A family together, Christmas at home.

Kathleen Chorlton

A Tawdry Christmas

We used to get really excited on Christmas Eve, my sister and me. We shared a bedroom and were like twins, there being just 18 months between us. We most certainly weren't spoilt. Back then we might receive dolls, selection boxes, socks and nicks and playing card games. And one memorable year, we had a lovely bagatelle game - albeit a gift to be shared between us.

But then (I do not remember how old I was) my ungenerous mother must have decided I was too old for Christmas to be special. I awoke with anticipatory pleasure of seeing my presents and never felt such disappointment and sadness. I think there were only three tawdry things at the end of my bed. A brush and comb and some socks. I do not recall if my sister felt the same or perhaps her presents weren't such a let down.

I believe it is cruel to so suddenly cut off Christmas delights when it is thought a child has reached a certain stage.

Sylvia Stevenson



Bernard the Bear

Annabel was no ordinary little girl. She hated dolls, she hated ponies, she hated her girly name and, above all, she hated pink. One icy winter's morning, about a month before Christmas, her Uncle Tom presented her with a brand new pink coat.

"Anna! Look what Uncle Tom's bought for you", Annabel's father exclaimed. Annabel eyed the coat and turned up her nose in disgust.

"But it's not even Christmas yet. Why am I getting a present?" She sulked.

"I'm sure she loves it really," her father said to Uncle Tom, looking embarrassed. "Anyway Annabel, today I'm going to be visiting mummy at the hospital so you'll be spending the day with Uncle Tom helping out at the toyshop!"

Annabel turned up her nose again and began to grumble. She hated the toyshop – all those ballerina dolls with their ugly pink tutus and fluffy stuffed toys with their silly grins, not to mention all the spoilt children tugging on their parents' arms, whining to be bought the latest toy this Christmas. Helping in the toyshop would have been any child's dream. Not Annabel's – she HATED it.

Uncle Tom's Toyshop was quite a large building in the centre of town. It was a mish-mash of fake snow, glittering tinsel, flashing lights and cheerful music, as well as piles and piles of toys.

"Now Annabel, you be a good girl. You can play with any of the toys, just don't make a mess and don't get under the customers' feet," Uncle Tom warned her. Then, seeing her gloomy face, he added, "I tell you what. How about you pick out any toy from the shop and you can keep it? It's my treat for you helping me out." And with that, Uncle Tom walked off to the counter to serve his customers, leaving Annabel on her own, staring at the shelves upon shelves of toys.



After a few minutes wandering around the shop, Annabel found a display of the latest 'Kira' dolls, with their glamorous, glittery outfits and stylish jewellery. A group of young girls, about Annabel's age, were surrounding them.

"My daddy is buying me a Rock Superstar Kira doll AND a Summer Sun Kira doll for Christmas," one girl boasted.

"Well MY daddy is getting me a Twirling Ballerina Kira doll AND the Kira Dance Studio AND all of her tutus and ballet shoes," another girl bragged. Seeing Annabel approach, one of the girls turned around and spoke to her, "Where are the special edition Christmas Kira dolls?" She demanded impolitely.

"Please," said Annabel.

"What?" The girl snapped.

"Say please," Annabel scowled.

"You had better show me where they are or I will get my mummy to tell the owner that you are rude."

Annabel shrugged; "We've sold out" she lied. She knew they had lots of the dolls in the storeroom but these girls were so spoilt they didn't deserve anything.

After another hour of looking around the toyshop and rummaging around in the storeroom, Annabel still hadn't found a toy that she liked... except for one. His name was Bernard, and he was a beautiful, if a little tatty, patchwork bear. She had found him at the back of the storeroom, stuffed underneath a stack of boxes. Normally, Annabel didn't like teddy bears, but this one was different. He had something magical about him. Bernard was covered in multicoloured patches and had a sparkly gold collar around his neck. His right eye was a bit loose and he had threads hanging from his legs, but in Annabel's eyes he was perfect.

"What do you have there Annabel?" Uncle Tom asked her, walking into the storeroom.

"I found this bear. This is the toy that I want to keep please,"

Annabel told him, hugging Bernard to her chest.

“That old thing?” Uncle Tom said, taking a closer look at the bear, “he’s from last year’s stock. I can’t sell him at all. You can have him but I don’t know why you’ve chosen that tatty old thing over something new like a Kira doll.”

Annabel made a face at her Uncle, “I’ll take the bear thank you.”

“It’s just you and me now Bernard,” she whispered to him.

After that, Annabel spent all her time with Bernard. They would stay up all night chatting, or sit on her window ledge watching the snowflakes coating the ground, or they would go on adventures, discovering new places and treasures. They were best friends, never to be separated. Until one winter’s day, about a week before Christmas Annabel (and Bernard) had been to visit her mother in hospital, as she was now getting better and almost ready to come home - just in time for Christmas. Annabel introduced Bernard to her mother and they all chatted about school and Christmas and how awful her father’s cooking was. After a while, Annabel’s parents started talking about boring ‘grown up’ things, so Annabel and Bernard went off to explore. After wandering through a maze of dull corridors, Annabel finally reached a brightly coloured dayroom.

“This place looks good,” she said to Bernard, as she glanced around at the colourful tinsel and bright fairy lights. In the corner of the room was a large red and gold Christmas tree covered in shining baubles and wooden Christmas decorations. At the very top of the tree was a beautiful silver angel. “I like your bear,” a small voice sounded behind her. Annabel spun around to face a small, thin girl. She was dressed in pink stripy pyjamas and pink slippers. Ugh. Pink thought Annabel.

“His name is Bernard and I’m Annabel. I’m visiting my mum,” she said, scowling at having been interrupted.

“I’m Sarah. I’m a patient here.” The girl moved closer and Annabel hugged Bernard protectively.

“Don’t worry,” Sarah said, “even though I’m ill you can’t catch it. Anyway, where did you get that bear? He looks so special. I’d love a bear like that. Last Christmas I saw one in a toyshop in town, but I was bought a Kira doll instead. I HATE dolls!”

“So do I!” Annabel grinned. She explained to Sarah all about her Uncle’s toyshop and about how she found Bernard. They spent a long time chatting about their shared dislike of dolls, and about their favourite TV programmes and favourite subjects at school. Annabel realised that they had a lot in common. She also learnt that Sarah would be in the hospital over Christmas and it made her feel sad.

When it was time to go home, Annabel made a decision. She had spent most of the weeks before Christmas being grumpy and scowling, it was time to do something nice for someone for a change. Before she had chance to change her mind, she thrust Bernard into Sarah’s arms.

“Here, you have him. Make sure you take good care of him. Merry Christmas,” Annabel hugged her new friend. Sarah looked surprised.

“For me? Are you sure?” She asked.

“Yes. He likes you, I can tell. He’ll keep you company and you won’t be so lonely.”

“Thank you. Thank you so much. I’ll look after him well. Make sure you come and visit us again soon. Merry Christmas to you too!” Sarah was grinning from ear to ear.

As Annabel waved goodbye and turned to walk away, she knew she had done the right thing. With a new friend, and lots more adventures to be had, this was turning out to be the best Christmas she had ever had.

Karen Johnson



The Good Companions group talk about food

Why not try Flo's recipe. Fry an onion, melt white crumbly cheese with milk in a pan until it's melted. Mix this with the fried onions and eat it with fried bacon. Then enjoy it!

Christine Jones, Rita Hawthorne and Phyllis Ryan

Last year I had cheese and crackers for my main meal

- it was wonderful!

I also like cheesy nibbles

I love strong cheese -

the way it burns my tongue off.

Marlene Hulse

Growing up in County Meath, Ireland, we would have goose on Christmas Day and then we had Little Christmas on 6th January, the 12th day of Christmas, and ate turkey.

Catherine Butterfield

As nurses we loved working Christmas Day. We would dress up in tinsel over our uniforms, dress the doctors up in corsets and drawers and run them up and down the ward in wheelchairs. The Salvation Army would come in and play music, and nurses would dance up and down the ward with visitors. The doctors served Christmas dinner and it was a great meal (although people on special diets would have to have theirs minced up). All the patients were given presents too. We left our families back home cooking dinner.

Iris Lockett and Catherine Butterfield

During wartime at Christmas a neighbour would knock on the door to say, "Mrs Blackley, there's oranges at Danny's market". They were like gold dust then. We used to rush down and we'd only get one each.

Marlene Hulse

Christmas for me

Christmas for me starts when the tree comes out of the loft and it ends when I throw it all back again!

I now decorate my tree in two colours. This year it's red and gold. It has been pink and white, pink and gold and silver and white. Our tree as a child was always all colours and although it was lovely, I just decided to change it.

I always loved the carol service at school. Christmas carols are beautiful. When I hear carols, it takes me back to being a child.

I also associate snow with when I was a child, and thick fog. I remember being sent home from school early and getting home and getting warm.

My Jack feels at his presents and if he thinks they are clothes, he throws them to one side and they get opened last!

Christmas for me is writing cards, wrapping presents in shiny paper and matching bows. It's thinking of people old and new.

Christine Jones



So just what is Christmas?

Year 5, St Margaret's C of E Primary School

Christmas is green because of Christmas trees

Christmas is satsumas because I can smell them

Christmas is the Jingle Bells because they jingle

Christmas is wonderful air you can taste

Christmas is the tickle of the prickly tree.

Rebekah Wardle

Christmas is white because of all the twinkling lights in the window

Christmas is turkey because I can smell the tempting smell in the kitchen

Christmas is crunching because of all the wrapping paper crunching

Christmas is chocolate because it's always in my stocking

Christmas is presents because I can feel all of them in my hands.

Thomas Renwick

Christmas is red, that's Santa delivering the presents

Christmas is turkey because of Christmas dinner

Christmas is creeping down the stairs

Christmas is chocolate in my stocking

Christmas is presents and guessing what they are.

Michaela Wailes

Christmas is red because of Father Christmas's red jacket

Christmas is the smell of chicken cooking on Christmas morning

Christmas is the sound of my brother shouting, 'It's Christmas!'

Christmas is the taste of gravy on my Christmas dinner

Christmas is the touch of my brightly coloured presents.

Leanne Taylor

Christmas is red and makes me think of the blood of Jesus and Father
Christmas's suit
Christmas is the turkey on the table
Christmas is cheers of joy because of all the presents
Christmas is excitement that I can taste on my tongue
Christmas is going downstairs to open my presents.

Connor Finn

I see green and it reminds me of the Christmas tree
Christmas reminds me of mince pies and chips
I hear the bells ringing and the children singing
I can taste chicken roast
I can see stars above like guards
I hear the bells ringing, singing and things
It reminds me of the stars, the moon and the wind
Jack Frost comes and makes us cold, so get tucked up
Because Santa Claus is coming to town.

Tania Kelly



Christmas Surprise

Once upon a time, deep in the blazing hot desert, lived Princess Goldilocks, a shy but beautiful girl with long yellow flowing hair. It was a very hot day and Princess Goldilocks lay daydreaming in her little house which was made up of an old dirty log left there a long time ago and a ripped striped blanket which was used as a shelter from the monster face of the sun.

Everyday was difficult for Princess Goldilocks. Every day she set off for the oasis, the water garden in the desert. At the oasis there grew the most amazing fruit, big red berries that looked like precious stones shining like diamonds. Although the fruits looked beautiful, Princess Goldilocks knew that they were poisonous and should never be eaten.

One day though, as Princess Goldilocks went to collect water from the oasis, oops! The metal bucket she used to collect the water dropped to the ground, spilling the water on the blanket of hot white dusty sand. She was only allowed one bucketful a day.

“What will I do now?” She frowned.

She looked at the big red berries with such a desire to eat them. They looked so luscious even though she knew they were poisonous and should never be eaten. But maybe just this once...

Then in the distance she heard the sound of jingling bells. They got nearer and nearer. “I wonder who it can be,” thought Princess Goldilocks as she gazed into the distance.

Eventually the sun dimmed and a loud “Ho, ho, ho,” could be heard.

“Well, who would have believed it,” laughed Princess Goldilocks, as she opened her present of chocolate and ginger beer, “Fancy seeing Father Christmas in the middle of the desert!”

Yvonne Owen

Christmas Decorations

Christmas was paper chains and paper lanterns that we made ourselves from sticky strips of coloured paper. We'd ice around cut-outs of bells and Christmas trees and angels to make tree decorations. We'd put cotton wool on the tree and on the windows to look like snowflakes and make labels from last year's Christmas cards by prinking round the edges.

Christmas was all red, white, green and gold and the angel kept year to year. We had pipe-cleaner stars, concertina streamers and bonbons on the sideboard. We'd make calendars and hang crêpe paper streamers corner to corner of the ceiling, meeting at the light in the middle of the room.

Christmas was ribbons, parcels and string and gold spray on everything. We had a homemade nativity that came out every year.

Darnhill Festival Association

Sounds of Christmas

You can hear children's laughter
secret rustle of paper
stairs creaking
silence of outside.

You can hear pots and pans
rattling in the kitchen,
Dad playing the organ
at Sunday School concerts.

You can hear 'Away in a Manger'
'Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer'
'We Wish You a Merry Christmas',
children sleeping.

Darnhill Festival Association



Christmas for me (2)

Christmas for me tends to start as soon as the previous Christmas is over. Shopping is accumulated over the year.

Each year we decorate the tree with the children and play a Christmas CD whilst doing it. It's fun to get out all the decorations and especially the home-made ones which come out every year. We have a star, which my nine year old daughter made at nursery when she was only two. It has her photo on it and it is interesting but also a bit sad to see how much she has grown.

Christmas hasn't always been a happy time for me. 13 years ago when my eldest daughter was 14 months old she was taken into hospital with pneumonia. Unfortunately, this was just the tip of the iceberg and she was diagnosed with a genetic condition, which was terminal. We spent all Christmas sitting by her bedside and trying to make it as special as possible for her. On the 30th December she died aged 16 months. It took time to get back to enjoying Christmas again.

When I was young and living at home, my mum spent ages putting the tree up and decorating it, making sure it was symmetrical. On Christmas morning when my mum was at work, my sister and I would sit looking at our presents. Once, our cat ran around the back of the tree and grabbed the lead from the lights, pulling the tree over. My sister and I spent ages trying to get it back to how it was, but it was never the same afterwards.

When the girls were younger, I used to wait until they had gone to bed and then go outside into the yard and shake some sleigh bells so that they would think Father Christmas was on his way and go to sleep.

And now on Christmas Eve when the children are in bed and Father Christmas has been, my husband and I get out the cheese and crackers and a bottle of wine. This has become a tradition, and the time alone together which we look forward to before the chaos of the next day.

Joanne Flynn

Christmas Was...

Our family together at home, happy times,
Fairy lights and baubles and Christmas tree pine
Grown-ups drinking sherry, port and QC wine
The fun of cracking nuts with the old flat iron.

Paper chains, fairy lights, a ball at the window
A child's cardboard toffee shop, endless games of Ludo
A new peg rug that we'd all made, the old fairy every year
Holly on the pictures and lots of festive cheer.

Tangerines in paper, cox's pippins, dates
Jelly setting under saucers to keep away cats
Not as many Christmas cards as we have today
We only ever got them from those who lived away.

Very cold, lots of snow, side-streets slippery as silk
A horse plodding down the street delivering our milk.
Big shop on Christmas Eve and lots of things home-made
Happy, happy memories, the sort that never fade.

Ruth Ralphs, Agnes Jacques, Barbara Forsyth, Netta Corfield





Dear Santa

Dear Santa

I would like a High School Musical bag, to be as beautiful as a butterfly, some happiness and for more healthy food to be brought out. Thanks Santa, lots of love Courtney



Dear Santa

I would like a laptop to talk on MSN, I would like more friendship so that no-one fights, I would like a holiday for my friends for two weeks and less fighting in the world. Thank you from JACOB

Dear Santa

I would like £10,000 and a big holiday for my friends and family and a time machine. Thank you very much, love EBONY

Dear Santa

I would like a Nintendo Wii for my family in my house, happiness and joy for everyone and more sweets and chocolate for every single person in the world. Love CHLOE



Dear Santa

I would like lots of presents but I will only choose 5: a PSP, to have a happy life as well as love for everyone, friendship and kindness throughout the day and money for wealth. That's all I have to say. IMOGEN

Dear Santa

I would like an iPod for Christmas for myself, love for the world, a mansion with five rooms for my friends, no pollution to save the world and an attic with a glass roof so I can see the stars at night. Love JARED

Dear Santa

I would like a real baby's pram because they are my size and better to push (not a real baby though), cosiness, a room full of fruit and smoothie makers and healthy people.

St Margaret's C of E Primary School, Year 5

My Christmas Was...

Putting food out for Santa
Keeping under the covers
Trying desperately to get to sleep
Waking early
Finding a sack of little gifts
At the bottom of the bed
Joining my mum and sisters downstairs
Taking turns opening presents
It used to take until lunch!

Now Josh's Christmas is

Letter to Santa
I send a reply
Put food out for Santa and Rudolph
Read 'Twas the night before Christmas'
Let him pull a cracker
One present before bed
New PJ's and a book.

Max's first Christmas will be

A sack with his name on it
A bauble on the tree
Photos for our memory book
A happy family.

Heather Taaffe

Working Christmas

Christmas isn't a happy time for everyone. I used to work with adults with disabilities, many of who had no contact with family and no friends.

I enjoyed working with them on Christmas Day. We, the staff, bought them little individual gifts, made Christmas dinner and tried to give them an enjoyable day.

Heather Taaffe



Double Decker Buses and the Christmas Fair

Gran was going to take me to the Christmas Fair.

“Are we going on the double-decker, Gran? You said we would next time you took me out.”

“Yes, darling, it’s due in a few minutes, so we’d better hurry. Say bye-bye to Mummy.”

Out in the cold, we just got to the bus-stop when the double-decker arrived. It was great on the top deck, we had a good view of the traffic and shops and tops of trees and tops of traffic lights all the way to the village.

I saw a dog nearby and a cat on a garden wall, and I felt as if I could reach up to the branches on the big trees. Then it was time to get off the bus and head to the Civic Hall in the village. I wondered what Father Christmas would say to me. Would I have to sit on his knee? I had a funny feeling in my tummy.

“Gran,” I said, as we joined the long line of children waiting to see Father Christmas, “I don’t want to sit on Father Christmas’s knee - will you tell him?” Gran said she would and that I was to just think about what I was going to ask him to bring me at Christmas.

Then we were shown into the cave. Oh, it was beautiful. Bright lights, bells all over the walls and ceiling and there was Father Christmas. A big, happy, smiling sort of granddad, with a bushy white beard, dressed in a bit red coat with a white fur collar and a big pointed red hat with a white bobble on the top.

When he saw me he asked my name. “Emma”, I said shyly. I said, “I’m four”.

“Tell me what you would like me to bring you on Christmas night,

Emma. I know you have been a good girl."

I didn't really know what to say and blurted out, "A fairy tunnel". I don't really know why, because I'd never seen one. Father Christmas said, "Good girl, of course you can have a fairy tunnel, but would you also like to choose a parcel from my sack here at my side?" I was very shy so the little fairy standing next to him handed me one.

Before we left the cave, I heard Gran say, "Emma was too shy to give you a kiss, Father Christmas, so would you like me to give you one?" And before he could say "Yes" or "No", she kissed him! She kissed Father Christmas! He laughed and said, "We don't need any mistletoe, do we Gran?" All the ladies waiting with their children and grandchildren at the door of the cave smiled and clapped their hands.

I love Gran very much, especially since she told Father Christmas that I didn't want to sit on his knee. I think I would have cried if Gran hadn't saved me!

Roni Prior



Christmas is Coming

Christmas is coming, presents are bought
I go out searching for who will have what.
The music is playing wherever you go
I just keep thinking, "when will it snow?"
Go in the attic and bring down the tree
Hiding the presents so no-one will see.
So many Santas wherever you look
Come here for dinner as I love to cook.
Christmas is here now, the tree looks so good
Preparing the dinner, including the pud.
Get up in the morning, put on the CD
The kettle, the heating and also the tree.
We gather together and open each one
Facial expressions reveal so much fun.
Put all the wrappings into the bin
Now I'm in the kitchen, where do I begin?
Peeling the veggies, carving the meat
Welcome the family and give them a seat.
Decorate the table with crackers and things
Slipping the napkins into their rings.
All at the table we put on the hats
Secretly thinking we all look like prats.
Dinner is over, the washing up done,
The day almost over, we've had lots of fun.
The telly is rubbish, so let's have a nap
Big tin of chocolates secure on my lap.
Sat on the couch with a large glass of wine
Top up the glasses so everyone's fine.
Boys winding down now, they've been a bit nutty
Anyone fancy a big turkey butty?

Suzie Garside

Christmas for me (3)

For me Christmas starts when I see the decorations in the shopping centre along with busy people out Christmas shopping.

Every Christmas Eve I was allowed to open just one Christmas present. It was always some pyjamas!

We had to be in bed before a certain time, otherwise Father Christmas wouldn't come. (Good one, Mum!)

On Christmas Day I would wake up in my bedroom at 6 am to find a sack at the bottom of my bed full of little toys – this kept me in my room for a bit longer.

My brothers and I would then go into my mum and dad's bed and have a cup of tea. It sounds strange now!

10 minutes later we would make our way downstairs and sit around the Christmas tree and take it in turns to open one of our presents.

After all our presents were open, my mum would make bacon and egg sandwiches while we played with our toys.

Unfortunately, my mum died when I was 14 and all the Christmases thereafter were very sad for me. Up until my beautiful daughter, Isabelle, entered the world and changed everything.

I have found my Christmas spirit again. I try to make Christmas as special for Isabelle as it was for me.

I will especially enjoy this Christmas 2007 as I have my gorgeous son, Jonah, who is six months old and he is a delight.

Rachel Brittain

Eve Wants Snow

Eve woke to breakfast with excitement tickling her tummy. Running to the window she felt like she would burst. But looking out, her heart sank. No snow lay upon the ground. Not even a single tiny snowflake was floating from the blue sky. Suddenly mum's voice echoed from downstairs shouting Eve to breakfast.

Dismally Eve trudged down the stairs. With a glum face she took her seat. Neither Mum's concern for her sadness nor the tempting cheese on toast lifted her mood.

After breakfast, Eve reluctantly dragged herself out to play. It was the holidays after all. As she stepped into the bitter December air, bright sunlight startled her eyes.

Eve strolled through the crisp leaves of autumn. As she gazed at the many colours, a little raindrop tickled her nose. Shivering, Eve sheltered under a tree, wrapping her coat around her. She drifted into a daydream, imagining snowmen and sleigh rides.

A voice suddenly broke Eve's dream. Looking around she couldn't see anyone. Then there it was again, like a harp gently playing in the wind.

"Who's there?" Eve asked.

"We are!" Looking up Eve's eyes grew wide. There before her sat two fairies on a branch. One had pale skin and white hair and was dressed in a silver dress. The other had orange hair and a golden skin and was dressed in yellow.

"Who are you?" Eve asked.

"I am the winter fairy, the BEST fairy around," said one.

"No, I am better. I am the summer fairy," said the other.

"Oh," said Eve, a little dumbfounded.

With that the fairies began to argue loudly. Both insisted that they were the best. As they argued, sparks flew all around the field. Yellow sparks turning flowers into beautiful blooms. Blue sparks making frost wherever they touched.

"Stop! Can't you see what you're doing?" Eve shouted, regaining her voice. Both fairies stood stunned. Staring at Eve they asked, "Who is better, then? You decide."

Eve said calmly, "Summer is lovely. We get to the beach and play water fights, but winter is good too. You can build snowmen and taste snowflakes."

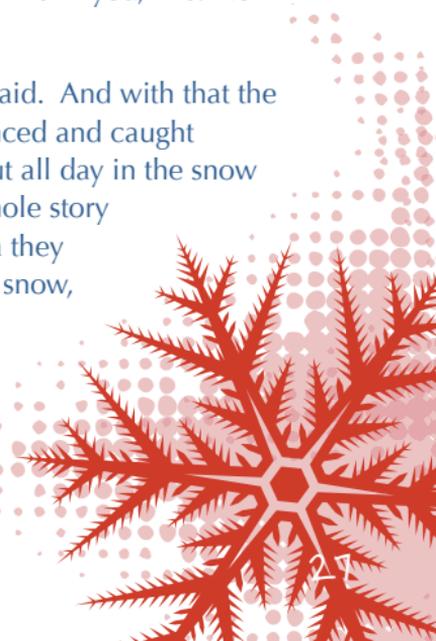
The fairies looked at Eve with anticipation. Finally she announced, "We should have both!" The fairies glanced at each other, confused. Eve went on, "The world's a big place, you should share, have half each then swap."

The fairies smiled and flew up to dance. "Thank you, Eve. Now what can we do to make you smile?"

"Just now I want snow, really deep," she said. And with that the snow slowly fell from the sky and Eve danced and caught snowflakes on her tongue. Eve played out all day in the snow and when mum asked she told her the whole story and finished with, "That's why in Australia they have sunshine for Christmas and we have snow, so both fairies are content."

And as Eve settled into her bed that night, she felt happy for her lovely snowy day.

Katie Haigh



The Good Companions group talk about celebrating Christmas

We used to have a party on Christmas Eve. We'd have supper at midnight and dance and have all sorts of games. My daddy taught us all to dance the waltz: 1,2,3, 1,2,3... We had a piano in later years when we got a bit richer.

Lilian Benbow

We used to go to Australia for Christmas as we had family there. We had lovely Sydney sunshine and a BBQ. All the houses came together and brought tables out in the cul de sac. There was a Father Christmas called David with an Australian accent. All the Australians used to say: "Oh don't the English speak nice".

Margaret Pickering

Come All Ye Faithful is one of my favourite hymns. We used to have to sing for our presents! We pretended to play silent tunes on pretend instruments and people would get a present if they guessed the tune.

Lilian Benbow

We used to go carol singing after Church on Christmas Eve in Miles Platting and then we'd go to the organist's house for a buffet afterwards. We liked to listen to his CB radio; one time we could hear the Police radio and a local boy had gone missing.

Joan Jones

In Heywood there were four picture halls and four dance halls. It cost 1d and 2d for the best seats in the pictures. On Christmas Eve everyone met in the centre of town and then went off to the dance halls.

May Lloyd, Janie Wellbourne, Winifred Barker, Evelyn Jackson and Lilian Taylor

The Good Companions Group have seen 1,922 Christmases altogether and hopefully will see many more.

Christmas for me (4)

Christmas for me is seeing the happy smiling faces on my two granddaughters' faces when they open their presents, because at the moment it's still magic.

Christmas is having all my family round for lunch and just being together.

Christmas is also a time to reflect on members of the family who are no longer with us, but who are still very much a part of us. We remember when we were young and all still living at home. Mum in the kitchen, Dad in the pub, and then us all coming together at the dinner table.

Christmas is watching the children at school where I work as they practice for their plays and sing carols. It is the choir that comes and sings on the Precinct.

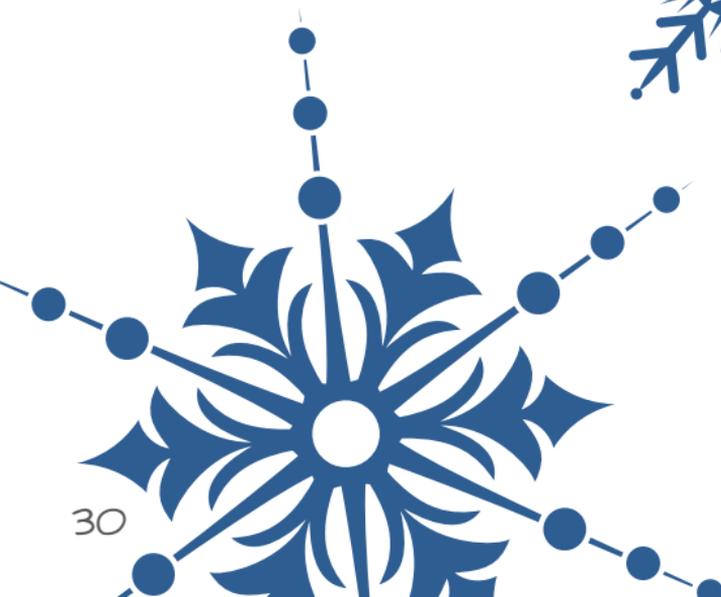
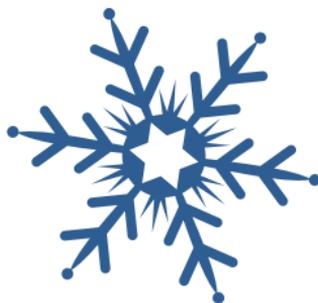
Sheila Howard



It's Christmas

Please, please, Santa Claus
Bring me a bear with big blue paws
Bring me a smart Nintendo DS
Bring it me quickly on the Christmas Express
We know that Christmas is about Jesus our Lord
We know to be peaceful, put away our swords
When I get my bow and arrow, I won't do any harm
I promise I'll be good, I promise I'll be calm

Year 4, St Margaret's C of E Primary School



The Year 2050: Thoughts on Christmas Future
Year 4, St Margaret's C of E Primary School

Here we are in the year 2050. Santa has an electric sleigh and just one robot reindeer. He only drives in the day. He drops your presents at your door. For dinner we will eat roasted DINOSAUR MEAT!

Antony Mee

Here we are in the year 2050. Mr Claus is on his way on his Santamobile with his seat belt strapped on tight.

"I wish I could get a pink laptop," moaned Katie.

Today for our Christmas dinner we are going to have chocolatey chips and toffee sprouts. I phoned Mr Claus on my banana mobile and asked him, "Where are you?" "I'm on my way," said Mr Claus. We had a multi-coloured Christmas tree.

Alana Jordon, Chelsea Hughes and Caitlin Warham

Here we are in the year 2050. Santa might have a jetpack stuck on the back of his chair. He might bring robot flying horses for presents. When I get my flying horse I will be able to explore.

Connor Clayton and Robbie Farrand

Here we are in the year 2050. In the year 2050 Santa is actually called Santa Sleigh and he comes down in a Santa JetPack. He is the greatest Santa ever. He brings X Box 360 for little boys' and for little girls he brings diaries' and for the babies he gives rattling toys. For Christmas dinner we have Dr Pepper and roast flamingo, lions and wild cats. We have a metal Christmas tree and wrappers to put on the tree. When the girls and boys get their presents, they will get Christmas crackers. Jokes come out of Christmas crackers.

Chelsea Hughes

A Rabbit Family Christmas

In a far-off time, when animals walked and played in a magical park, trees were green in summer and in winter their branches glistened with sparkling frost and winter snow.

Beth Rabbit lived in a burrow that went deep into the ground with Mummy Rabbit, Daddy Rabbit and her many brothers and sisters.

They were very happy, their burrow was warm and cosy and they always had enough to eat.

It was almost Christmas and the Rabbit family was busy preparing for the forest party. Beth was making paper chains when there was a loud crackling sound' and before anyone knew what was happening, they found themselves covered with cold, wet soil, stones and twigs. As quickly as it began, it stopped. All was silent and everyone began to shiver and shake. They looked up and what had once been the roof of their burrow was now a very large hole.

Beth stood beneath it and looked up at the snowy sky above her. Oh, no," she said, "Christmas has gone!"

The whole family looked sad and unhappy as they looked at the mess around their feet.

"What has happened here, then?" a loud strange voice shook the little burrow. Beth was startled and looked around but she couldn't see who had spoken.

"Indeed, this is a sorry sight," the strange voice said, even louder this time.

Beth looked up and saw the oddest creature she had ever seen leaning through the hole above her head.

"Who are you?" she said.

"I am one of the Christmas elves," the creature replied. "I was actually calling to see what was on your Christmas wish list this year, but I guess I know what you all want now."

With that the elf smiled and was gone.

Daddy Rabbit gathered his family around him and led them outside. "Never mind," he said. "We can make Christmas another day – but now we must make our home safe again.

They all stood in a circle wondering where to start. Then through the wintry trees came the sound of laughter, the clip clop of hooves and the tinkle of bells.

Out of nowhere, came a large sleigh on which sat a huge person dressed from head to foot in red. Behind him were a whole army of little people carrying spades, branches of fir trees and baskets of moss.

Without any more ado, they all got to work and soon the hole was covered. A small figure beckoned from the entrance to the burrow. The Rabbit family went inside.

The horrible mess had gone and in its place was soft green moss, a roof that smelled of pine and in the corner stood a tree decorated with red berries and on a table lay a wonderful selection of forest fruits.

Their new friends smiled and waved as they turned to leave.

"Who was that?" asked Beth.

"I don't know," said Daddy Rabbit.

At the distance they heard the cry, "Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas everyone."

The Good Companions group talk about their early Christmas memories

One of my earliest memories is of when I was three or four and hanging my dad's woolly stockings (freshly washed) on the mantelpiece. We'd get an apple, an orange, a twist of raisins and a new penny. It wasn't the good old days in terms of wealth, but it was in terms of how people treated one another.

Marlene Hulse

Father Christmas broke my dolly - he dropped it down the chimney. My daddy was so upset he went to every shop to see if he could find a doll and he couldn't find a shop open. He ended up at the dolly hospital on London Road and they mended her.

Lilian Benbow

We were a family of 14; mum and dad had both been married twice. Mum would cook and we'd all sit down together. We didn't play games but we went to church three times on Christmas Day and we had a Christmas party there. We got an apple, an orange and a toy. If you were long serving at the church you were given a children's book.

Peggy Thompson

One year I wanted clogs and mother brought me some red leather ones. Then it snowed and when I went to the park they got stuck in the snow and I didn't like them anymore. Mother gave them away.

Joan Jones

There are bad memories as well as good though. Nothing stops death and illness but you'd carry on for the kids. Cromer Mill in Middleton always closed for Christmas. I used to work there as a doffer, replacing full bobbins. You couldn't believe the noise in there - that's why they could all lip read.

Christine Jones, Rita Hawthorne and Phyllis Ryan

We used to look in the fire and make pictures from the flames and embers. And we'd roast chestnuts and sit around the fire and listen to 'Man in Black' on the radio. There was no light on just the fire glow. And we'd toast marshmallows on the fire, sing carols and make up stories in turn.

We got a chocolate smoker's set with cigars and cigarettes, jelly babies, dolly mixtures and red lips. We ate Christmas pud with 3d bits in, The pudding was round like a ball

May Lloyd, Janie Wellbourne, Winifred Barker, Evelyn Jackson and Lilian Taylor



My Favourite Doll

A wooden doll made out of pegs, a rag dress and a piece of cloth for a headscarf,
A Black doll, Lulu, who went to the doll's hospital when I was seven for mending,
A pot doll given to me by an aunty with no children - I also had a cheap pram and the wheels kept falling off,
A rag doll made by my mother with a porcelain face.
These were pre-plastic days!

The Good Companions

The Good Companions group talk about Christmas during wartime

On Christmas Eve 1940 in Manchester there was a blitz. I was thrown out of my chair. I remember my husband saying, "Cheetham Hill's getting it." The bombing started at 6pm and lasted until Christmas Day morning. Two girls who were with us that night found they had no front door or windows when they got home. I worked for the Post Office back then. I remember that I had one letter I couldn't deliver that year because the house was actually gone.

Kath Lane

We had the blitz at Christmas in Manchester. I worked in a factory making baby suits. The gates still opened for work at Fairfield Street and we were told we still had to turn up even though the bombs were flying over us.

Peggy Thompson

There was an air raid practically in our backyard. Watching it I thought it was great, but dad smacked me and said, "Get in. I hope you never have to see this again in your life". Although we all were on rations, we were healthy.

Joan Jones

In Openshaw and Ancoats in the early 1940s before the war, children used to go to the shops on New Year's Day, say "Happy New Year" to the shopkeeper and get an orange in return.

Group discussion

Remembering Christmas

I can remember as a small girl not being able to sleep because I was too excited. My parents told me that Father Christmas wouldn't come unless I was sleeping. I remember shutting my eyes as tight as I could and I actually heard bells jingling in the distance. I was panicking that 'he' wouldn't come because I wasn't really sleeping, but all I remember is waking up in the early morning (too early for my parents) and all my presents were there waiting for me!

Joanne Birch

Baby's First Christmas

Christmas hasn't really meant much to me before,
just one stress of shopping and eating and drinking too much and spending a fortune.

But this year is baby's first Christmas...

Shopping for her presents is going to be a treat
Decorating the tree is something for which I just can't wait

Wrapping up her presents will be no mean feat
Christmas morning this year, we won't be getting up late!

Joanne Birch



Samantha's Dream World

Once upon a time there was this snowy forest far, far away where a beautiful young girl called Samantha Angela lived. She had lovely blonde long hair and had always wanted to live in a tree cave made of branches, twigs and autumn leaves that glistened with shiny glints of icicles that would eventually turn to snow.

She had plenty of friends in the forest. There was a special friend, a big white bear. There were the robins who gave off this lovely red light from their red breasts. There were the white owls that would hoot to her to let them know they were calling on her. And there were the little foxes and white bunny rabbits.



However, one day she didn't see or hear from anyone at all. So she went to call on her friends. She called on her best friend, the big white bear who lived deep in the forest. It was so hard to find him as he was pure white against the snow. But she did find him though lying down and sneezing. He had the flu.

She was so worried that she called on the white owls. Again they were hard to find as they were pure white against the snow. She did find them though, but they were hanging from the branches of their home and were sneezing as they had the flu too.

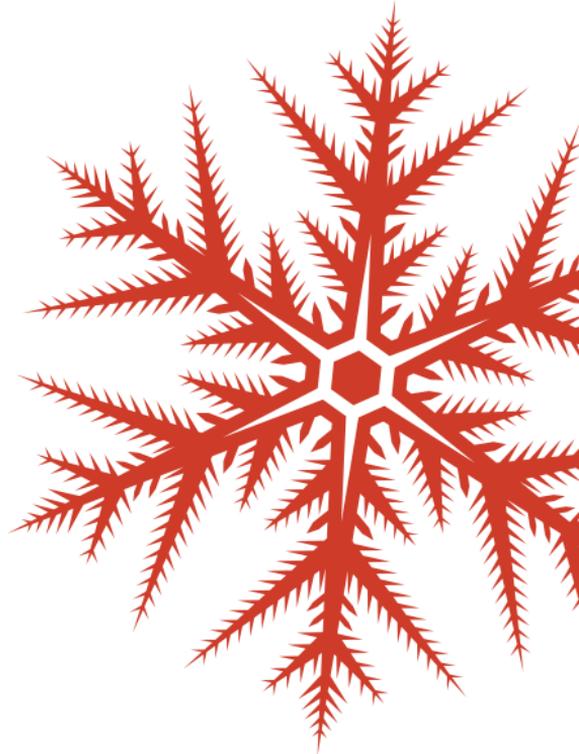


She went to find the bunny rabbits but they were hard to find as they were pure white against the snow. She did find them though, deep down in their homes, but they were sneezing as they had the flu.

The foxes, who were usually playing out in the snow were nowhere to be found. She searched and searched until finally she nearly stepped on them; she only knew they were there because they sneezed suddenly. And the poor robins were not shining any more, they too were sneezing. Every one of her friends had the flu.

“What shall I do?” she asked herself. She had always wanted to be a nurse or a vet for animals so she went back to her tree cave and boiled some leaves, berries, twigs and branches to make a perfect medicine to make all her friends well again. And it did! Soon they were all round to visit her again, and they all went out into the forest to play.

Carol McGowan



Food, Glorious Food

I saw my auntie chop the head off a chicken and then it still kept running around. Then she plucked it. It put me off eating chicken. You could get one-day-old chickens on Otley market at Easter and fatten them up for Christmas. When they were little, you kept them in a drawer by the fire to keep them warm.

I can remember the turkey cooking in the oven on Christmas Day, homemade mince meat and puddings, crossing the sprouts and Dad's salty porridge. He only made it at Christmas and we all had to have some.

I can remember having a goose for Christmas Dinner and then keeping the grease all year for colds and coughs. What with that and Grandma's medicine, which was really whisky we were healthy.

I can remember bowls of pickle, piccalilli, beetroot and onions, all homemade, pear-shaped tinned ham, tangerines, dates, nuts in shells. We cracked the nuts with a flat iron. After the war, when we got bananas, I didn't recognise them. We had cocoa and sugar in corner bags. We kept tins of salmon and ham in case of visitors and you could make it go further if you mixed pink and red salmon with a bit of butter. When the tin was empty Dad put it on the shed for a bit instead of in the dustbin, just to show off.

Darnhill Festival Association



Christmas Weather

Blizzards, real snow and wellies,
Jack Frost on the windows.
Fog, and being sent home.
When we walked out we got taller
our shoes clogged with snow.
The snowman had a carrot nose,
coal eyes. We wore liberty bodices
and gloves on strings. It's not
the same snow these days,
it's watery snow these days.

Darnhill Festival Association

Being cosy inside at Christmas

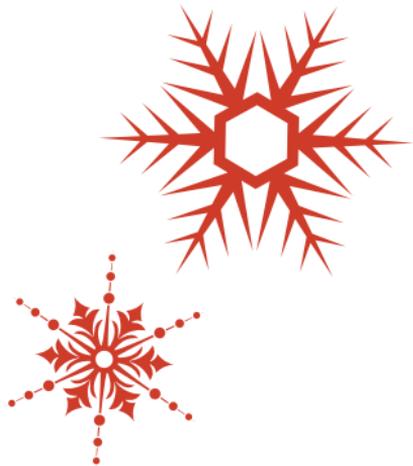
Dick Barton, Special Agent
on the radio, the Huggets
and Journey into Space.
The Queen's speech,
the Christmas Service,
playing records and The
Magic Lantern show.
The smell of spices and cloves,
pine tree, log fires, mince pies.
Toast and chestnuts on the fire,
hours spent preparing the dinner.
Don't bang the door or the cake
will crack. Leave out a pie
and a drink for Santa
with his heavy sack.

Darnhill Festival Association

All Aglow

The firelight all aglow
A Christmas tree so bright
Decorations all around the room
And feel the heat from the firelight!
Children with eager faces
The longing in their eyes
Looking at the gifts
Waiting for a surprise.
Time for bed for the kids
Excited they run up the stairs
Sacks are hanging up
Arguing which is theirs.
In the morning yells and squeals
Kids shouting "Santa has been!"
Dragging their sack down the stairs
Giving off a happy scream.
Mum preparing the dinner
With a turkey roast
The children are having a laugh –
Who can eat the most?
What a lovely day we've had
The children are happy too
A Happy Christmas is had by all
So "Merry Christmas" to you!

Lilian Davies



Cheer

Christmas time is love and joy
The smile on the face of my little boy

Wrapping the presents for all to see
The building anticipation of what it could be

The silver, red and the green
All around to set the scene

The smell of the tree
The laughs from my three
Making my life feel complete

Preparing the dinner for all to enjoy
Setting the table with my eldest boy
The glasses, crackers, the garland too
I've got the feeling it's gonna be a good do

Welcoming the family, offering them a drink
Then quietly stepping back so I can think
The memories of childhood come flashing back
And I'm wishing that I could turn back the clock

Christmas is here
But some families steer clear
And do their thing at New Year
Christmas isn't always such fun
When you spend it alone it can be really glum
So go out of your way and make someone's day
And fill up more people with cheer.

Sam Wallis



