



---

'If you don't have a real tree, you don't bring Christmas life into the house.'

*Josephine MacKinnon, aged eight.*

---

### **A Message from the Chair**

I would just like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a peaceful and happy Christmas. It has been a very challenging year and extremely difficult for some of our members. I send my love and sincerely hope 2021 brings renewed hope that we will soon all meet again!

*Chris Plant*

### **Could you help?**

Members of the Course Team are working hard to get an interesting Zoom programme together to start in January 2021. If you are familiar with Zoom and hold a licence you could give urgently needed help as a volunteer host for a course. Some tutors find leading a course on Zoom a new challenge and very much appreciate the help of a colleague. Even if you do not have a licence, it may be possible, with the agreement of the tutor, to organise the course around two 40-minute slots. If you are able to help, please contact, asap, either: Jane Dennett  
or Pam McGregor

If you are a tutor and prepared to host your own course, please make sure the course admin. team know that.

## Christmas Memories

50 years ago, two blond 7-year-old heads under my window in the deep New Jersey snow: 'Simon, you're getting a bike. Your Dad has hidden it in our spare bedroom.'  
'Shush, Darren. My Mum might hear, and she thinks there's a Santa Claus.'

*Jocelyn Thomson*



Our son is six, struggling to separate reality from fiction.

*Christmas Eve:* We're last on the milkman's route.

*3 a.m.:* Milkman arrives, worse for wear, tripping up the front doorstep. Bottles spill, noisily.

*Next morning:* Jubilant son appears, proclaiming, 'Father Christmas *is* real! I heard his sleigh bells last night!'

*Jocelyn Mascarenhas*



Christmas 1950: Mum poured a little brandy over the Christmas pudding then Dad lit it with a match.—

Will I, won't I, get the silver threepenny bit that I know is inside? My spoon hit something hard. Yes, a gleaming silver coin, mine to keep all year and give back before next Christmas.

*Jan Armishaw*



Memories of our traditional New Year's Eve parties to bid farewell to the passing year and to celebrate friendship. Then New Year's Day, a trip to the Royal Opera House Covent Garden for lunch followed by a performance of *The Nutcracker*. A truly magical start to the New Year!

*Chris Plant and Cindy Van-Ebo*



When my siblings and I were young my Norwegian mother ensured we experienced something close to her childhood Christmases. They were centred on the tree, lit by real candles and holding handmade colourful little bags of sweets and nuts. We joined hands and danced round, singing and miming to Christmas songs—all now a distant but lovely memory.

*Karin Petersen*



Returning from a Christmas morning shift at the hospital I was enthusiastically greeted by the family who appeared 'Very Merry on the Sherry' and oblivious to a burning smell. The Xmas pud had boiled dry and burnt a hole through the pudding basin. We didn't bother setting light to it that year.

*Bardie Keeler*



Fifteen minutes' walk. Here stands the Sacré-Cœur in Montmartre, Paris. Inside no lights, only candles. Midnight strikes. Flames flicker. From the gallery rises a tenor voice singing *Minuit Chrétien*s. No music, only a tenor voice. Tino Rossi, tenor of the Opera House in Paris. 1953 and a magic instant of a childhood.

*Anon*



Switzerland 1950. A green tree hiding on the balcony magically appears on Christmas Eve decorated and lit with real candles. A bell tinkles, the 'Christkind' has been and we tiptoe into the room, excited and full of awe, met by smiling parents. Music, singing, readings with beautiful snow gently falling outside.

*Ursula Steiger*

Upon leaving Midnight Mass we were delighted to see it was snowing and even more so when, whilst walking home, a splendid Father Christmas in all his regalia appeared from a doorway. The spell was somewhat broken when he rode off, not on a sleigh but in a Ford Escort.

Kevin Keeler

☆☆☆

Christmas Day. *Me, to other half*: 'Please put the Christmas pudding in the microwave for four minutes, pause, then another two minutes.' A while later, funny smell emanating from kitchen. On investigation, discovered pudding is now a hard brick.

*Other half* (looking sheepish): 'I tried to reprogramme the microwave to include pause, thought you said 14 minutes.'

Pat Rose

☆☆☆

In 2018 my husband died just before Christmas. My 19-year-old son and I escaped to New York. On Christmas day we had a picnic in Central Park watching skating, went to the top of the Empire State Building and saw *Avenue Q* on Broadway. Everything open. Something different as we had needed.

Suzanne Davies

☆☆☆

A Christmas spent in London with Quaker Homeless Action. Mostly men, sleeping on floor with blankets, helpers having sleeping bags. Many hours spent in food preparation while men have medical and other help. Delicious meal and live music. My treat for all was a huge bag of sweets. A different but worthwhile Christmas.

Jean Caws

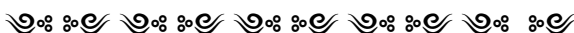


### A Christmas Haiku, with a nod to Dickens

Ghost of Christmas past.  
Lockdown. Now I'm a Vege.  
Adios . . . Turkey . . .



Jenny Harrop



### Exercise for the Brain

With the festive season in mind, think wines for the answers to this quiz—

1. My fist hit his chin on purpose (6)
2. Sounds like a French way to say you're true (7)
3. You'll find this in part of Rio de Janeiro (5)
4. Cinthia can turn funny in Italy (7)
5. What you find in a cemetery (6)
6. Maybe a little green mark in Bordeaux (5,6)
7. This religious woman is very cold (4,3)
8. The night of the dragon slayer? (5,2,7)
9. The point is either black, white or grey! (5)

Answers in the January issue.

Chris Anspack

### Answers to November's quiz

13. Ox-eye daisy. 14. Footloose. 15. Forehead. 16. Gumtree. 17. Catgut. 18. Hair. 19. Hands.  
20. Heartbeat. 21. Rosehip. 22. Intestines. 23. Iris. 24. Jaws. 25. Go for the jugular.

## A Review

A few years ago I found a magazine that enchanted me from the first page to the last. I phoned up and took out a subscription, a present to myself at the time. *The Simple Things* continues to please me each month, it is full of creative ideas, great recipes, especially vegetarian and vegan, it has a real conscience about the environment and simple, but healthy living with advertising kept to a minimum. If you are looking for a gift for a loved one this could be it. Visit: [icebergpress.co.uk/christmas](http://icebergpress.co.uk/christmas) or call 020 3950 1835. If you are asked to leave a message, you can do so with confidence, they will definitely ring back.

*Ursula Steiger*



## Baked Cheese Crisps Recipe

Ring the changes and try this simple but delicious recipe.

1. Preheat oven 180°C/fan 160, gas mark 4 and line two baking sheets with baking parchment.
2. Take 100g grated cheddar and 100g parmesan (you may prefer a milder cheese such as Emmenthal, and be creative and use other favourite hard cheeses if you like) then mix together and season as desired.
3. Take a heaped teaspoon of cheese and place on the baking tray, spreading out into a round. Continue, leaving space between each round, until all the cheese is used up. Top with herbs, small bits of black olives or jalapeño peppers (I just use mixed herbs and black pepper) and give another twist of black pepper.
4. Bake for 6–8 minutes. The edges should be browning and the cheese bubbling when you take them out of the oven. Remove and allow them to cool before peeling from parchment. Place on a rack to cool. Serve warm or cold.

Recipe, courtesy: *The Simple Things*

I prepared these and Pat was my taster and they definitely got the thumbs up from us.

*Ursula Steiger*



## Festive Cheer

We very much wanted to bring some festive cheer to all our members. So the possibility of a December Musical afternoon on Zoom was discussed. Those of us who have experience of Zoom and music or singing know what a challenge it presents. We looked at many different ways of doing it to an enjoyable standard, but the technology or, more accurately the need for better equipment and greater skill and expertise, defeated us.

Many of you will have favourite Christmas music and readings close to hand, but for those who don't and are willing to venture on to YouTube, here are some ideas. Some are purely for listening to, others for joining in and/or watching. Get cosy with your favourite drink and simply go to YouTube and look for:

Carols from King's College Cambridge (1hr 6 mins)

*'Twas the Night Before Christmas* as read by Penguin authors (4.17 mins)

*Once in Royal David's City* by Libera choir Christmas Carols 2018 (2.49 mins)

Rick Steve's European Christmas (52.32 mins)

Delius—*Winter Night (Sleigh Ride)* (5.44 mins)

22 Awesome Christmas Songs and Carols Orkey Orkafor (1hr 15 mins)

Best Christmas Jazz Café Music (1hr approximately)

Sir John Betjeman reads his poem *Christmas* (1954) (5.54 mins)

Michael Bubl —*Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* (3.53 mins)

1 Hour of Christmas Music—Piano, Violin and Orchestra (1hr 3mins)

**Enjoy!**

Please keep sending in your items of interest, from a couple of sentences up to 250 words to Ursula Steiger [ursulae@btinternet.com](mailto:ursulae@btinternet.com) or [Editor@U3ACanterbury.co.uk](mailto:Editor@U3ACanterbury.co.uk)

