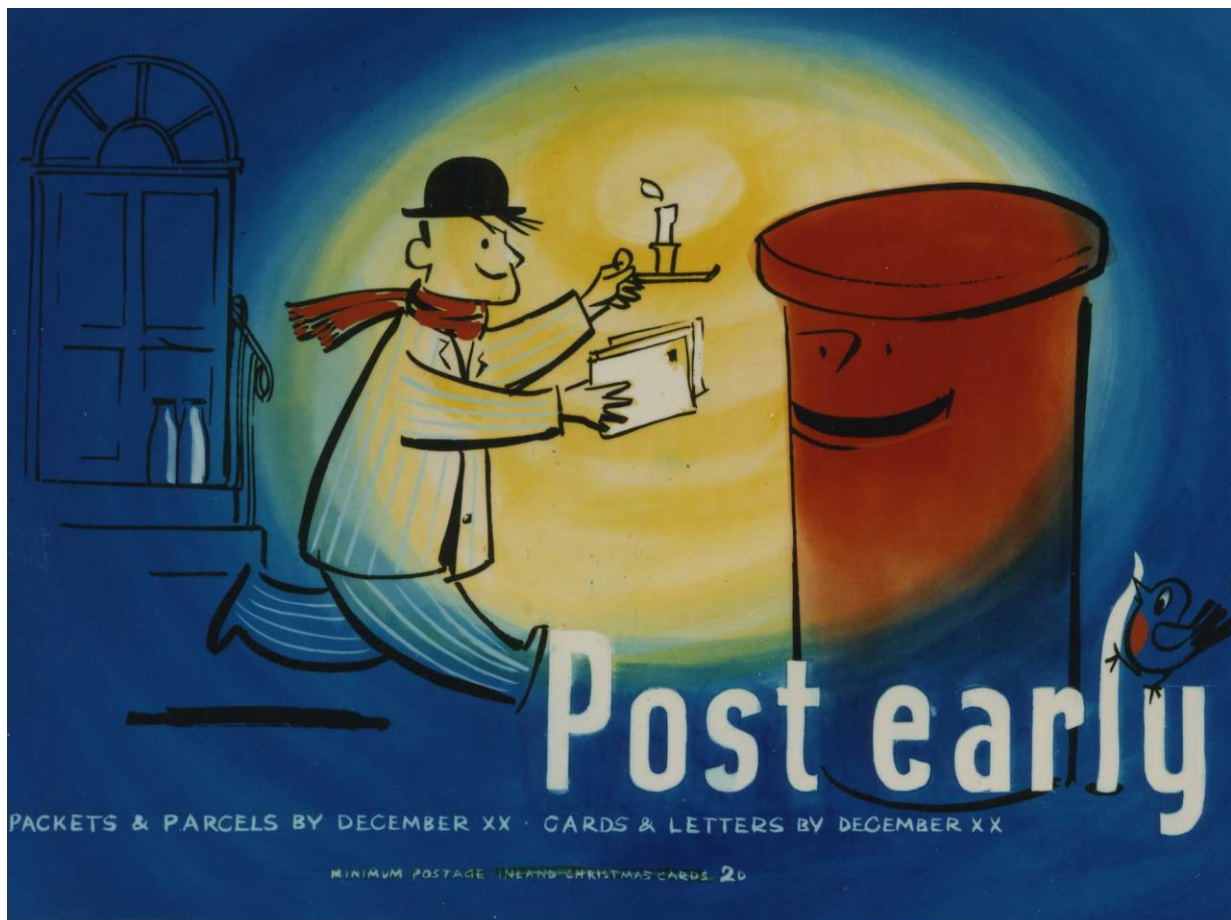


Post early for Christmas by Ray Pearce



I was listening to my wireless the other day, the listeners were advised to post their Christmas post by November 30th which is next Wednesday. This was because there were going to be strikes by the postal workers as well as the trains. In the olden days when I was but a lad posting early meant mid-December. The older I get the earlier Christmas seems to start. It used to be November but now it starts early in September. Another “special” day seems to have crept into the calendar from over the water, Black Friday. So called bargains are to be had in the shops but it seems more like a ruse to get rid of unwanted stock cheaply.

For the retail trade Christmas is the most important time of the year. Planning starts as soon as the January sales have finished. In the UK estimated Christmas sales will be £82.2bn of which £30.02bn will be online sales.

As children my two sisters, my brother and I had happy but inexpensive times. We made some of the decorations ourselves by making paper chains out of strips of coloured paper. We all had a stocking with a tangerine orange in the toe, nuts and small presents. I remember one year asking for and getting a cowboy hat. We always had a book each and a family jigsaw to be started on Boxing Day. How times have changed, I heard of a 12 year old boy asking for, and getting a computer console costing over £100. Three of us were in the local church choir so we always

went to a carol service on Christmas morning. Jumping forward 12 years to 1954 in the army in Malaya I attended a carol service at St. John's Church, Ipoh in central Malaya and will try to find a picture of that church. I still have the order of service.



We often had neighbours in for tea and party games with forfeits. Being in the choir one of my forfeits for getting a question wrong was to sing a song of my choice. Being shy I would only sing behind a heavy thick curtain on our front door. I've changed a bit since then. In those days a favourite Christmas song was Bing Crosby crooning I'm dreaming of a White Christmas. Now, in my view, it is Slade with Noddy Holder's hit Merry Xmas Everybody. It was released in 1973 and sold over a million copies that year. It is estimated that the Royalties from this hit song amount to half a million pounds EVERY year.

If Christmas Day was on a Sunday there was always two way family favourites. With personal messages from service men and woman serving abroad. Jean Metcalfe in London and possibly Cliff Michelmore in Germany. Happy Days.

Finally what about those Christmas cards to be written? I write a message in every card I send, why someone asked me when you have a computer, send them electronically, not likely. If President Kennedy could write a personal message in several hundred cards he sent then so can I. Many of mine are charity cards with paintings of Steam trains to support children living on railway stations in India. May I wish all my readers a very happy Christmas and a blessed New Year.

Ray Pearce 24.11.2022