

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

There has been a lot of nonsense talked about Christmas this year. Some Councils have renamed it "winterval", and some companies and institutions have taken all reference to the Christmas story out of their cards and messages. It's like seeing Hamlet without the Prince.



I am glad most of our primary schools still put on their nativity plays and sing carols. I am delighted that many of the cards I am receiving still manage to say Happy Christmas whilst illustrating the traditions of the holiday season. Most people of other faiths and of none appreciate that this mid winter break represents the coming together of the Christian celebration of Christ's birth with older pagan winter festivals. The plum pudding and the groaning tables go back a long way and are enjoyed by most, whilst the cards, presents, pine trees and Christmas cakes were embellishments of the Victorians who saw a commercial opportunity with the growing wealth and incomes of their society. They wanted to make the tills ring as well as the Church bells. Our retailers are hoping that is not just a fairy story this year.

It is a special time for children, who become excited by the thought of presents and by the magic of the stories – the birth of Jesus in a manger, and the folklore of Santa Claus and his famous reindeers. They accept and enjoy the glorious muddle of these traditions for what they are – great fun, a welcome respite during the colder and darker part of the year, and days of religious significance for those who do believe in Christ.

It is a time to remember all those who are lonely, ill or hard up. A visit, a card, a present can make all the difference for those who have little. I hope you and yours have a wonderful Christmas. Just for a day or two forget the traffic, the gas bills and the Council Tax, and enjoy yourselves.

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