Christmas in Devon the 1920s

Rosalind Leveridge

Even the briefest of surveys of the literature relating to this topic demonstrates the significance of the festive period in Devon during this decade. Articles in the press, personal accounts, weather reports, oral histories, diaries, advertisements, commentaries on trade and commerce, church notices, and reports from charities and institutions, all tell their stories of Christmas at this time and combined together, create a picture of contrasts: of wealth and poverty; sadness and joy; warmth and cold; benevolence and indifference. The extracts below, in the main drawn from contemporary sources, are often deliberately lengthy or unedited, so that not only the content, but also the style and words of the contributors themselves are represented to reproduce more effectively a sense of the 1920s.

Poverty and the aftermath of war

At the beginning of the decade, the impact of the recent war was still very much in evidence. In some areas of Devon there were high levels of unemployment, one such being Plymouth. The plight of struggling families in which the father was out of work seemed even more pitiful at Christmas. An article in the *Western Morning News* in December 1920 highlights the contrast between them and wealthy shoppers purchasing extravagant gifts "even for 'Pongo' the Pomeranian, seated on a soft cushion in the waiting car."[1] Just a few streets away from this "picture of merriment, bustle and plenty", were 2,000 unemployed waiting patiently in two hour long queues at Millbay Drill Hall for the issue of special Christmas provisions. The article also contrasts the altered status of these men who, having been fêted as heroes just months before, were now reduced to asking for handouts of food.

> **Joy and Penury**
>
> Santa Claus will not come to their little ones, leaving expensive toys, Teddy bears, and model railway engines. It is doubtful whether there will be sufficient food for the hungry mites in many homes. There were women carrying ill-clad babies in their arms in the long procession of workless war heroes. Children, looking cold and hungry, walked by the side of their fathers and mothers, gazing eagerly towards the benches piled with cakes and chocolate.
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> It was the most tragic scene witnessed for many years. These were the men who six years ago formed another queue – outside recruiting offices anxious to enlist in the armed forces of the empire. … Many wore medal ribbons on their breasts, discharge badges on their coats… and wound stripes told a story of suffering and sacrifice. Now these men carried sacks and pillowcases and even kitbags – the kitbags they carried whilst trudging along the muddy roads of Flanders to the tune of 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary.' Are we forgetting? The queue, sad figures most of them, were waiting for their share of the provisions to enable them to 'keep the

[1] *Western Morning News*, 24 December 1920, 5.

> wolf from the door' at Yuletide. Dejection was the predominant note. It was difficult to imagine that this long line of men, with stooping shoulders and weary bearing, were once in a squad of straight, upright stalwarts on the barrack-square… Two years of unavailing search for work. The wife ill and the kiddies hungry, had altered them…
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> The Drill Hall resembled a huge meat and provision stores. On the benches were piles of joints, loaves of bread, bags of baby food, jars of jam, tins of biscuits, packets of chocolate. There were also custard powders, buns, cakes, and sacks of flour, and heaps of vegetables.
>
> There were pathetic incidents without number. Small children carried cabbages and baskets of provisions which were almost too big for them. Most of the men in that remarkably tragic procession were poorly dressed and unshaven, but not a few bore traces of refinement. But, whatever their positions in life before the war, they were comrades now in every sense of the word…
>
> Tables stacked with bags of fruit and nuts were an endless source of delight to the kiddies. Each child received them, and the eyes of the tiny mites glistened joyously as they eagerly opened the bags and took a last longing gaze at the tables as the queue passed on.
>
> As they received their generous share of provisions, the procession gradually dispersed from the Drillhall and there was a remarkable scene in Walker-terrace as the crowd, carrying heavy bundles of food, streamed out of the building and proceeded to their homes.[2]

A brief comment in the *Western Morning News* of 1924, following a long item about the trading successes of the season, indicates that little had changed since then:

> "THE SPECTRE. In some homes, however, the spirit of Christmas is being kept alive by indomitable pluck and determination alone. There is little else to inspire good cheer with the spectre of want brooding over an unemployed man, who sees his little ones silently longing for toys and food, and growing more wan and more silent day by day."[3]

William Tucker who grew up in South Zeal in the 1920s, described how little there was to give at Christmas in very poor families and how expectations of receiving anything were very low:

> Christmas was all right if you 'ad a lot of money, but I don't think, to be quite honest, and be truthful about it, I don't think that people looked forward to Christmas too much. It was a time for 'aving a few pints and things like that but you couldn't afford very much, that's if you 'ad kids you know an' it was a helluva scrape to find something for kids. I can't remember 'aving very much for Christmas you know I mean just a few .... you always used to get a stocking and 'ang up a

[2] Ibid.
[3] *WMN*, 24 December 1924, 3.

> stocking but 'twas generally a few nuts in the bottom and orange an' apple maybe you know. If they give you anything for Christmas it was a pair of shoes or a jersey or somethin' like that - it as out of the question ... toys - never ad 'n' toys… [4]

Also living in South Zeal at the time was Doris Palmer, who found a simple way to earn a little money to brighten up Christmas:

> I remember when us was g'wan school us never 'ad very much money and us used to go singing carols. You can't sing now, you've got to 'ave a permit now but us used to go singing carols so that us, we'd 'ave something for Christmas, and us used to go out singing and us used to come home, give the money to mother for 'er to get a bit of Christmas cheer, few oranges and sweets ... Us used to do very well with us singing carols, yes, Christmas Eve, and there was me 'n me sister and Doris…[5]

Shops and shopping

Whist the commercial build-up to Christmas was undoubtedly more restrained in the 1920s than now, there were nevertheless advertisements appearing in the press for all manner of goods from geese to cigars from October onwards. Pophams in Plymouth advised:

> Wise folk are choosing their Christmas presents NOW. The choice is wide and the variety remarkable, whereas nearer Christmas the best of the selections may be gone. During these four weeks POPHAMS extend a cordial invitation to Christmas shoppers to come and walk through the premises – visit the Children's Toy Bazaar and make their choice from the largest collective variety of everything suitable in the West of England.[6]

In Salcombe, it was the window displays at the butcher's which most impressed Alan Rodick, who lived there as a child:

> I must just mention Christmas and especially Christmas Eve in Fore Street with the Street just about damned full from five o'clock till about ten pm. Most presents were bought then and much of the food. All the shops were decorated with paper streamers and the like, plus holly and other green stuff. Much as we loved sweets and toys, it was the displays in the Butchers' windows that drew everybody to them. The windows open and framed all round with row upon row of turkeys, geese, ducks and chickens, plus game birds and hares.
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> Huge joints of beef etc, in the windows on the marble slabs, and with more dressed turkeys, geese etc. surrounding the centre-piece, a fully-grown, complete pig – scalded and hairless with his ears pricked, an orange in his mouth, and the most

[4] William Tucker, interviewed by Jane Tyler, 30 April 1987, Okehampton oral histories, A07, Part 4.
[5] Doris Palmer, interviewed by Jane Tyler, 14 July 1987, Okehampton oral histories, A13, Part 12.
[6] *WMN*, 29 November 1920, 1.

> mischievous smile on his face and a twinkle in his eyes – though the Lord knows he had not really got much to smile at. Old friends meeting in the street – some perhaps not seen since last Christmas Eve. And at ten thirty or so, the men coming out of Burners and joining the men from the Kings Arms etc to sing carols by Condit lake and being conducted fairly efficiently too by the same man every year. It truly was Christmas.[7]

In 1927 in Ilfracombe, there was much seasonal enthusiasm and optimism for the festivities ahead:

> Really seasonable weather. Keen, cold air, clear sky, and night frost. Such have been the conditions experienced at Ilfracombe this week. Everything augurs well for an old-fashioned Christmas. The shops are brilliantly lighted: the windows can be seen toys to delight the hearts of the children; gifts for young and old—to suit every pocket. Ilfracombe Chamber of Trade has arranged an effort to persuade people to shop the town—it is advice worth following. Over the festive season various entertainments, dances, and other functions have been arranged. [8]

However, Christmas shopping that year for some had become challenging because of the uncharacteristically snowy conditions. Whilst for some this added to the atmosphere, for others in Exeter it had been dangerous and inconvenient:

> Notwithstanding the semi-arctic conditions that have prevailed during the past few days, Christmas shopping has proceeded fairly satisfactorily, although those who acted upon the advice to " shop early" were not only enabled to make their selections with greater convenience, but were spared the discomfort of slippery roads and pavements and a biting easterly wind. However, during yesterday there was an amelioration in the conditions, most of the snow disappeared under the influence of a higher temperature, and the streets of Exeter and other of the larger centres in the county presented a distinctly Christmassy appearance. There may be those who profess to be delighted with what they are pleased to term old-fashioned Christmas weather." Well, perhaps they are, but for most people the experience of the past few days has been sufficient. Snow-covered towns and country may make attractive scenes but they look much better merely depicted on Christmas cards. The weather experts promised a continuation wintry conditions, but last evening rain set in, and the muggy weather so often associated with Christmas may again prevail.[9]

By the 1920s, a visit to Father Christmas was already a well-established tradition. Large department stores, such as Colson's in Exeter (who annually distributed 500 Christmas dinners to the poor) or J.C Tozer's of Devonport, created grottoes, scenes and lavish displays to entice in children and parents with open purses.[10] Walton's, a store in Exeter, went to extraordinary

[7] Alan Rodick, *Salcombe in the 1920s,* Transcript of talk. Salcombe Maritime History Paper no. 10, 8.
[8] *North Devon Journal*, 21 December 1927, 5.
[9] *EPG*, 21 December 1927, 4.
[10] *WMN*, 15 December 1921, 1.

lengths in 1928 to depict the Arabian Nights, which included a moving elephant and a magic carpet which by means of a "mechanical contrivance", floated through the air:

> Here, too, one encounters that treacherous old rascal, "Blue Beard," being foiled in his wicked career; the cavern of the "Forty Thieves"; "Sinbad the Sailor," aboard a fully-rigged ship riding the waves; "The Lion and the Unicorn," contending for the crown; 'Humpty Dumpty," through whose agency the visitor induced to swell the coffers the charitable objects "Fairyland" is designed to assist; "Aladdin, whose mission is to supplement the appeal of "Humpty Dumpty"; "Robinson Crusoe"; "Dick Whittington." with whom the mechanical elephant provides a novel attraction; and other characters from the realms of Fairyland, including, course, Father Christmas himself, with an ever-ready ear for the little folks' requests and a phenomenal memory. [11]

The enterprising George Walton combined commerce with philanthropy – the considerable sums of money he raised each Christmas for good causes also served as a good advertisement for his store:

> Since 1921 "Fairyland" has been the means of raising over £2,000 for distribution between the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, the Rest Haven Convalescent Home (Exmouth), and the City Mission. Last year alone yielded £318— record. Besides "Fairyland" there is a miniature Olympia of children's motor cars, big display of toys—mechanical and otherwise— fur animals, dolls, games, books and so forth; while there is also a wide range articles suitable for gifts for members of the older generation.[12]

[11] *EPG*, 8 December 1928, 7.
[12] Ibid.

Walton's Fairyland, *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette,* 18 November 1927, 2.

Luxury at Christmas

Christmas sunshine cruises, designed to lure residents away from a Devon winter, were advertised early on in autumn. Despite the Blue Star Line's assurances that cruising was not just for the rich, with fares from 42 guineas per person, this type of Christmas was definitely for wealthier Devonians, who could go to local agents in Plymouth to book their voyage.[13]

Cruise advertisement in the *Western Morning News*[14]

[13] *WMN*, 24 September 1929, 4
[14] *WMN*, 24 September 1929, 4.

The Arandora Star was one of the best-known ships of the world, known familiarly as the "chocolate box" or the "wedding cake".[15] She carried the rich and famous around the world in style and luxury.

Arandora Star[16]

Conversely, many wealthy visitors, especially from London, descended on Devon at Christmas, seeking refinement, luxury, and in the case of Torquay the promise – often unfulfilled – of a milder climate.

> CHRISTMAS IN TORQUAY. Great preparations have been made at the Torquay Hotels for providing their numerous visitors with all the facilities for spending a joyous Christmas. The Great Western Railway Company has brought thousands of visitors to the town and practically all the hotels — especially the big ones— will be full. The only doubtful factor is the weather. We have had alternate fine and wet days, in many cases shopping has been delayed. Never have the shops of Torquay looked more attractive or displayed such a variety of articles since the war. In the wholesale markets the-supply of Christmas fare is reported to be both cheaper and larger for many years. In the hotels the traditional Christmas will be observed. There will be an abundance of good things, and entertainments will be held on a lavish scale. It is becoming more and more the custom for people who have the necessary means to spend the Yuletide holiday away from home. This is probably to a large extent due to the domestic servant problem, and proprietors of hotels have made it their business to make their guests as happy as possible by providing a real Christmas atmosphere. Carefully selected programmes are provided including music and dancing. whist drives, and bridge parties, drawing-room entertainers. dancing exhibitions, and in some cases even the moving

[15] https://www.bluestarline.org/arandora.html
[16] Ibid.

> pictures are brought into requisition. Visitors to Torquay will receive a hearty welcome this Christmas.[17]

The *Western Morning News* was confident of a high number of visitors and the county's provisions for hosting them:

> THE TRIUMPH OF YULE. THE WEST PREPARES FOR RECORD FESTIVAL. FULL PROGRAMME AMUSEMENTS. TO-DAY'S BIG RAIL RUSH. " The most thoroughgoing Christmas since the war " is the general expectation of Yuletide, 1925. Every sign points triumphantly to show that the Christmas spirit '-' is abroad to an almost unparalleled extent, and what is true of the West no doubt applies to the entire country. Seldom can seasonable activities have been so widespread and so energetically conducted. The Post Office and railways, sure barometers of nation-wide movements, report record pressure, and the entertainment world, though its turn does not come until after Christmas-day. is making correspondingly vast preparations.[18]

Weather

Across the decade the weather in December varied considerably from one year to the next. Whilst the planned pattern of activities, entertainments and customs remained similar from one year to the next, the vagaries of the weather – and their impact – were always a source of comment in the press:

1920 – "CHRISTMAS AT SOUTHMOLTON. The weather at Southmolton on Christmas Day was fine and mild, with several hours' sunshine. Roses were still in bloom in the open**."**[19]

1921 – "Forecast for Christmas – a westerly type of weather is likely to persist over Christmas: stormy and wet at times; probably cooler temporarily on Friday and Saturday."[20]

1922 – "HARDY SWIMMERS. TWENTY - EIGHT CHRISTMAS BATHERS AT PLYMOUTH. Although the bad weather of last week brought the temperature of the sea at Plymouth suddenly down to 47 degrees, 28 intrepid bathers took part in the Christmas morning dip from the Promenade Pier. Fourteen of those who took the water were ladies, and one of the bathers was Mr. J. Quick, who is 79 years of age."[21]

1923 – "The weather during the Christmas holiday has been unfavourable for much outdoor enjoyment. The morning Christmas Day was line, but in the afternoon a thick drizzly rain came on, making the fireside more attractive than outdoors."[22]

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[17] *Torquay Times and South Devon Advertiser*, 24 December 1924, 4.
[18] *WMN*, 24 December 1925, 3.
[19] *North Devon Journal,* 30 December 1920, 2.
[20] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 23 December 1921, 16.
[21] *WMN,* 27 December 1922, 5.
[22] *NDJ*, 28 December 1923, 5.

1924 – "The full force of the gale was felt at Teignmouth …Tremendously heavy seas broke over the Promenade, carrying with it tons of sand and shingle. Along the sea wall, spray rose to a height of 50ft and fell on trains and the railway. The river was so swollen that the storm water from the town was unable to find an outlet, with the result that Station-road, Bank-street, Wellington-street and other thoroughfares were impassable. People came to the provision shops but were unable to be served, as the water flooded the pavement a foot deep. On Saturday morning there was a tremendous flood down the Dart following a stormy night at Totnes …About a score of homes were flooded… On Boxing Day at Totnes there was much rain. As on Christmas night, the weather became very rough, and rain and hail fell during the night."[23]

"TORQUAY WEATHER. DECEMBER 21st TO 27th. *934. The weather of the week was of the quick-change variety and except for snow we experienced every type of weather that makes up the British climate. A flash of lightning and a clap of thunder is not unusual in December but three slight thunderstorms in one day is unique. Our share of rain was lavish but not quite so profuse as in some parts of the country. The gales on the 23rd and 27th though pretty hefty were less violent than on the western coast where they experienced the full force of the south-westerly and west wind. One redeeming feature however, was the comparatively high temperatures, but this is not unusual for Christmas time being very little in excess of last year and the year before, and slightly below 1922. The mean maximum for the week is 51.7`F, mean minimum 45 .0 F.[24]

1925 – "Even the weather, as if perversely aware of its comparative unimportance at Christmas, seems determined to cooperate with seasonable snow and frost. Whether Plymouth will enjoy a white Christmas is doubtful, but the neighbouring moors are already snow-covered. But even snow would have its elderly detractors, whereas dry, line weather would please everybody. Fortunately, there very sound prospect this universally popular brand of weather blessing the precious Christmas days. At Plymouth yesterday the barometer rose steadily, and an easterly wind indicated that hopes of a cessation of rain might not be too extravagant. Whatever is our ultimate climatic fate, it is consoling think that Christmas is of all festivals the least dependent for its happiness the freaks of the weather."[25]

1926 – "For two or three days weather experts have been chilling marrow in people's bones by telling them about a "very cold air over Russia" that will sweep south-westward; and that " snow or sleet showers will occur in Eastern districts." Happily "elsewhere the weather will fair." Personally, l am glad to think I in the "elsewhere" area, as I prefer seeing "real old Christmas weather Christmases" represented on paper or canvas to actually experiencing them. But records do not very strongly support the belief that the proper weather for Christmas involves heavy falls of snow, hard frosts, and biting winds. Investigation rather points to larger number of Christmases being dull, damp and muggy, the weather to keep people at home they should be at the greatest of all English festivals. I noticed the extracts from the "Gazette" 100 years ago that appeared on Monday that at the corresponding time the year then full blown primroses were selling London two bunches penny. There could not have been much hard weather or the primroses would not have bloomed early so profusely. little

[23] EPG, 29 December 1924, 8.
[24] *TT*, 2 January 1925, 4.
[25] *WMN,* 24 December 1925, 3.

crispness with sunshine may be acceptable, especially "for the young, but blizzards and easterly winds should be barred. The low temperature and strong northeaster prevailing yesterday were quite wintery enough for me."[26]

1927 – In 1927, Christmas Day was pummelled by one of the worst blizzards of the 20th century across Britain. Snow fell thick and fast and monstrous snowdrifts cut off many villages; power lines and trees collapsed and dozens of cars were abandoned on roads blocked for days. Dartmoor was hit particularly hard, and on 27 December a bride and groom in the village of Princetown, Devon, wanting to get to church, were trapped in their own homes by vast snowdrifts; they only escaped by clambering out of top floor windows and dropping on to the snow. At Dartmoor prison, some of the warders were imprisoned in their homes by snow and had to be dug out by the convicts.[27]

"As if smitten with remorse for the severity of its behaviour during Christmas week, the weather in the last day of 1927 was almost Springlike in its benevolence. The afternoon had glorious sunshine, the warmth of which helped to emphasise the dissolving effect initiated by the steady rainfall of the morning the snow brought by the blizzard. People were eager to be out of doors as they had been previously keen on remaining beside the fire. At night, however, a sharp frost prevailed, and the streets of Exeter yesterday morning had to be negotiated with great care. The weather prophets are not encouraging, but it is to be hoped they are wrong, they have been many times, and that more bearable conditions will prevail."[28]

1928 – PHENOMENAL FLOODS IN BARN STAPLE DISTRICT. Bullocks and Sheep Drowned. In contrast to the great gale of a month or so ago, Barnstaple and district experienced phenomenal floods in the week-end. There was heavy rain on Christmas Night and Boxing Day, and on Thursday there were torrential downpours which continued through the night. the result, in an amazingly short time the river Taw and subsidiary streams rose to an unprecedented height, the fresh water at Barnstaple extending from bank bank, and giving the appearance of a swiftly ebbing tide. The river rose no less than eight feet in the space of a few hours, and the roar of water coursing through the arches, Barnstaple Long Bridge was almost deafening. ' Stockowners on the higher reaches of the river experienced severe losses, the carcases of four bullocks, and of a number of poultry and sheep being seen floating down the river from Castle Quay, Barnstaple, on Friday afternoon. the Quay the curious sight was also witnessed of two live moles being borne along on some flotsam and jetsam; the little animals were speedily rescued.[29]

1929 – "On Christmas-day it was stormy, but yesterday there was a great improvement, with plenty of sunshine, and it was quite the best Boxing-day weather for years."[30]

[26] *EPG*, 23 December 1926, 9.
[27] https://www.theguardian.com/news/2012/dec/24/weatherwatch-white-christmas
[28] *EPG*, 2 January 1928, 4.
[29] *NDJ*, 3 January 1929, 3.
[30] *WMN*, 27 December 1929, 6.

The Christmas Post

In the 1920s, the postal service was a vital means of communication. Since Britain only ranked 12th in the world in the number of telephones per 1,000 people in 1929, the importance of the mail cannot be overestimated.[31] It brought parcels, packets and letters to the remote corners of rural Devon. The Post Office was also a large employer – the Postmaster General when asked in 1920 reported that 63,257 ex-service men were permanently employed in its service.[32] As this report from North Devon illustrates, sending and receiving mail, and the efficiency with which it was handled by the service, were essential matters at the time.

> LYNTON'S POSTAL CHRISTMAS. How much of the Christmas season is associated with the visit of the postman, and what pleasanter sound is there at this time than his welcome rat-tat? Lynton and Lynmouth have had their full share this year of the Christmas post. Favoured by dry seasonable weather and early posting on the part of the public, the great bulk of the work was completed Christmas Eve. On Christmas morning, the mails arrived by motor at 10 a.m. and delivery in the twin towns was completed by dinner-time. People in outlying areas were served almost as soon, and altogether, this year's Christmas Day was a great contrast to last, when the mails arrived as late as 11.30 a.m. During Christmas week, 137 sacks of letters and 198 sacks of parcels have been dealt with at the local post office. The figures for last year were 103 and 167 respectively, which is convincing proof of the heavier posting this year. Compared with some places in the country, these figures may appear small, but when the population of Lynton, and Lynmouth is considered, the size of the local Christmas mail is anything but small, nearly 1.300 parcels have arrived for delivery during the week, and is estimated that between 14.000 and 15,000 letters and packets have reached the twin towns in the same period. The local post office staff are used to heavy traffic, especially in the summer, and it is interesting to learn that they annually deal with over a million letters and packets, and over 37,000 parcels. These figures are astounding perhaps, but it must be remembered that no other seaside resort in the country, size for size, has so many first-class hotels and boarding houses. The importance of Lynton and Lvnmouth from a postal point of view is well illustrated by the commodious and thoroughly up-to-date post office building which was completed about three years ago. Apart from slight delays incidental to the Christmas post, the work has gone off without a hitch, and the local staff are to be congratulated on their efforts. They have been greatly helped by the public posting in good time, and so spreading the work more evenly.[33]

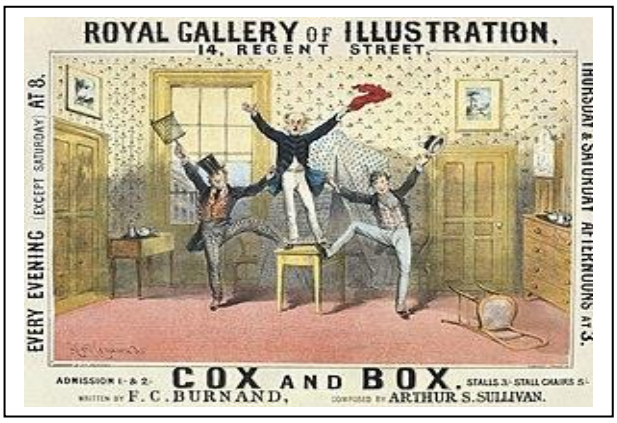
[31] https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/nov/22/masters-post-duncan-campbell-smith-review
[32] https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1920/nov/16/postal-service
[33] *NDJ*, 30 December 1926, 7.

Christmas listening

For many families, the wireless was a focal point and provided popular home entertainment.

> VARIED CHRISTMAS FARE BROADCASTING. PROGRAMMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS. Christmas, being mainly spent in festivities in the home, is essentially a time for wireless entertainment. In their effort to cater for all tastes the British Broadcasting Corporation have been conspicuously successful, the programmes arranged presenting an extremely varied and attractive appearance. Carol services will be relayed to 2LO this afternoon from King's College Chapel, Cambridge, and this evening from St. Mary's Church, Whitechapel. In tbe early evening Mr. E. P. Benson, Mr. W. W. Jacobs, and Mr. Desmond MacCarthy will tell ghost stories. At 9.20 p.m. Mr. Will Goldston will describe conjuring tricks for the Christmas party. 'The programme the Wireless String Orchestra which follows includes A carol symphony, ' by Victor Hely Hutchinson. From Cardiff at six o'clock this evening there will be Welsh ghost stories, whilst at 9.35 ' Christmas Cards," a revue devised by Dorothy Eaves, will be broadcast, the programme being built on old-fashioned Christmas cards, each the basis of a scene for the revue. To-morrow's programme opens with a service relayed to 2LO from York Minster. There is light music at lunch time and the afternoon. After the Children's Hour (Christmas in 2029) there will a short address by the Archbishop of York, who will speak from "Take Your Choice," which will be given from 7.30 pm., besides being received by most other 8.8.C. stations, which will also be relayed to New York in exchange for programme of the National Broadcasting Company of America, which is being relayed for British listeners between 4 and 5 o'clock on the same afternoon. The main theme of the London programme will be the celebration of Christmas in the Walworth home of the family, characters whom Mabel Constanduros invented and has made familiar to millions of listeners. In addition to the entertainment which listeners will receive from overhearing the Buggins- family at their festivities, a loud speaker will be installed in their typically Walworthian home for the reception of the normal 8.8.C. programme. To this Tommy Handley will contribute, as well as George Pizzey. of the 8.8.C. chorus, Michael Hogan and Mabel Constanduros, Jack Payne and his 8.8.C. Dance Orchestra, and Walter O Donnell and the Wireless Military Band. Mr. Winston Churchill makes an appeal on behalf of the British Wireless for the Blind Fund 9.20 p.m. The "Cox and Box," operetta by Burnand and Sulliivan, follows after which Bransby Williams will be heard as Scrooge. ' Dance music from 10.30 to midnight concludes the programme. “Cinderella," a phantom pantomime by Ernest Longstaffe, will be broadcast from SGB. At 9.20 on Boxing-day “Father Christmas " is the subject of Mr. J. D. Woodruff's miniature biography from 2LO. At 7 p.m. “Handel's Messiah " will be relayed from Birmingham to SGB.[34]

[34] *WMN*, 24 December 1929, 6.

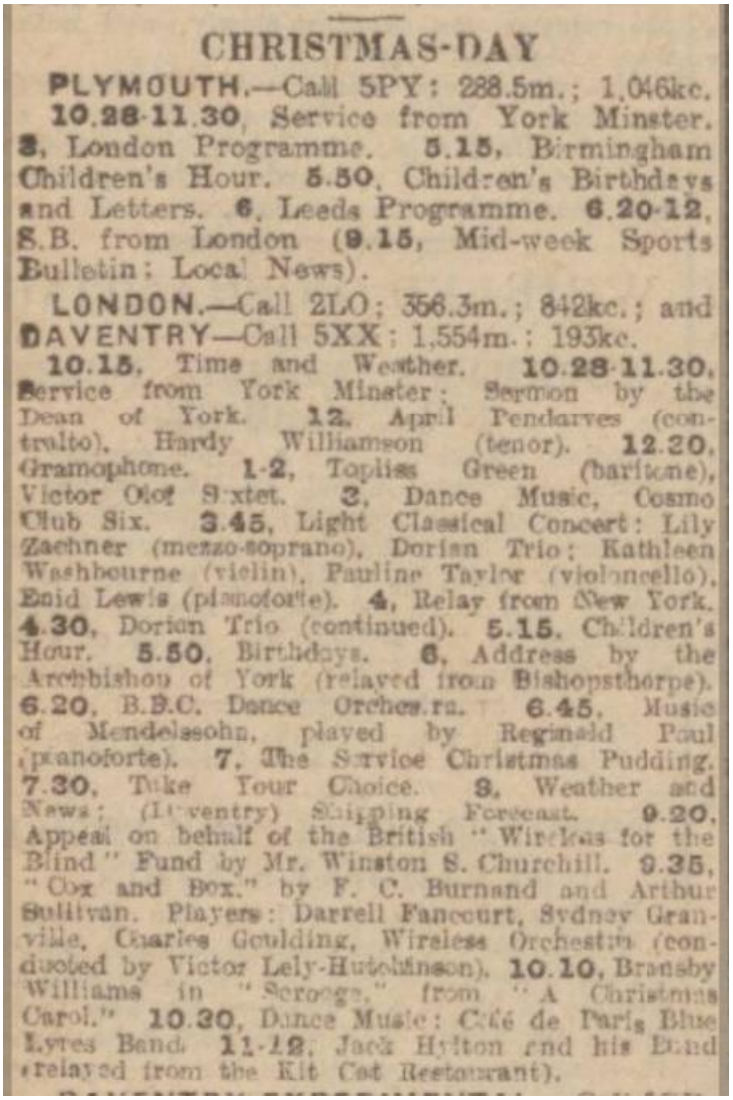


Poster for Box and Cox[35]

Mabel Constanduros[36]

Tommy Handley[37]

[35] https://gsarchive.net/sullivan/cox_and_box/index.html
[36] https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p009y072
[37] https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/genome/entries/0d7d5d98-e12f-4a3d-bf40-ecc930435554



CHRISTMAS-DAY

PLYMOUTH.—Call 5PY: 288.5m.; 1,046kc. 10.28-11.30, Service from York Minster. 3, London Programme. 5.15, Birmingham Children's Hour. 5.50, Children's Birthdays and Letters. 6, Leeds Programme. 6.20-12, S.B. from London (9.15, Mid-week Sports Bulletin: Local News).

LONDON.—Call 2LO; 356.3m.; 842kc.; and DAVENTRY—Call 5XX; 1,554m.; 193kc. 10.15, Time and Weather. 10.28-11.30, Service from York Minster; Sermon by the Dean of York. 12, April Pendarves (contralto), Hardy Williamson (tenor). 12.20, Gramophone. 1-2, Topliss Green (baritone), Victor Olof Sextet. 3, Dance Music, Cosmo Club Six. 3.45, Light Classical Concert: Lily Zachner (mezzo-soprano), Dorian Trio: Kathleen Washbourne (violin), Pauline Taylor (violoncello), Enid Lewis (pianoforte). 4, Relay from New York. 4.30, Dorian Trio (continued). 5.15, Children's Hour. 5.50, Birthdays. 6, Address by the Archbishop of York (relayed from Bishopsthorpe). 6.20, B.B.C. Dance Orchestra. 6.45, Music of Mendelssohn, played by Reginald Paul (pianoforte). 7, The Service Christmas Pudding. 7.30, Take Your Choice. 8, Weather and News; (Daventry) Shipping Forecast. 9.20, Appeal on behalf of the British "Wireless for the Blind" Fund by Mr. Winston S. Churchill. 9.35, "Cox and Box," by F. C. Burnand and Arthur Sullivan. Players: Darrell Fancourt, Sydney Granville, Charles Goulding, Wireless Orchestra (conducted by Victor Lely-Hutchinson). 10.10, Bransby Williams in "Scrooge," from "A Christmas Carol." 10.30, Dance Music: Café de Paris Blue Lyres Band. 11-12, Jack Hylton and his Band (relayed from the Kit Cat Restaurant).

Radio programmes for Christmas Day 1929[38]

Church

Attending a church service during the Christmas festivities was common practice throughout the numerous parishes across the county. Carols, choirs, decorations, bell-ringing, matins and midnight mass – Christmas in the church calendar was a busy time, with three or even four services taking place on Christmas Day itself and many others in the week previous.

Evidently the better the weather, the bigger the congregation at Christmas time. 1927, with arctic temperatures and heavy snow, rain or sleet, was not a good year, either for parishioners struggling to attend services, or priests trying to take them. Even those clergy fortunate enough to have cars did not always have an advantage!:

> CHURCH NOTES. COMMUNION ON CHRISTMAS-DAY. (By ARCUBUS.)
> chief of conversation this Christmastide has been its weather, the extreme cold having adversely affected Church attendance nearly everywhere. Fortunately, the heavy rain did not change to sleet and snow until Christmas night, but the weather

[38] *WMN*, 24 December 1929, 6

> during the whole day was sufficiently unpleasant to test the sincerity of all worshippers. It was gratifying to see that the best attended service in many churches was the early Communion, notwithstanding discomfort of trudging to it in damp and dreary darkness and the absence in most churches of the hymns and carols we usually associate with Christmas. This was all the more creditable, for the test of sincere worship is readiness to give to God, not the desire to derive enjoyment from pleasant music and singing. Matins, late celebrations, and evensong were probably more thinly-attended in most churches than any Christmas-day for a generation, so unpleasant was the weather. Had the Sunday been an ordinary one, attendances would have been smaller.
>
> UNITING SMALL BENEFICES. One lesson taught us by the weather of Christmas, 1927, is not to be too precipitate in uniting small country benefices. One of my pluralist friends told me three or four years ago how admirably he managed, with the help of a motor car, to provide the needful Christmas services in his two churches, separated by four miles of hills, valleys, and moorlands. The stories of motor cars abandoned in snowdrifts this week show that they are not yet an infallible means of enabling priests adequately to serve two distant bands of worshippers on great festivals. Our village churches were built in order that the faithful might receive the Bread of Life at the village altar least on every Sunday and holy day, and fasting Communion for those who desire ought to possible in every village. It is, moreover, not sufficient for the motoring priest to reach his churches. His parishioners, to whom he should be a faithful dispenser of the Holy Sacraments, and most whom must reach church on foot, should be provided with celebrations in the church they can reach, and at the hours when they can be present. During the " shortage of clergy," which is but temporary, this ideal cannot attained everywhere, but we must not rest until made possible."[39]

At the end of the decade it was announced that a Christmas crib was to be placed in St. Paul's Church, Newton Abbot, since the custom of taking children to visit cribs, they thought, was increasing.[40] The parish church of St. Giles in Little Torrington, North Devon, had realised this as early as 1921, and adding a local flavour to the traditional setting:

> With others I thought the crib in the north transept an appropriate innovation. It proved a delight to the children and of interest to the grown-ups. The idea was cleverly carried out, and if not eastern in every particular, the effect was, perhaps, even greater.[41]

The custom had also reached the village of Brampford Speke:

> St. Peter's Church was beautifully decorated for Christmas Day… A special feature was the crib depicting the Nativity, with the appropriate figures in

[39] *WMN*, 30 December 1927, 2.
[40] *EPG*, 1 December 1930,
[41] *EPG*, 30 December 1921,5.

> reverence, the gift of the Vicar. A special service held round the crib in the afternoon of Christmas Day for children was attended also by many adults…. By the generosity of Dean Manning [the Vicar], the school children were entertained to tea, followed by a Christmas tree…After a short carol service at the church the children marched to school where…everything of the best had been provided for their delectation. The Christmas tree was furnished with a handsome present for each child. Hearty cheers for Dean Manning, followed by the singing of 'For he's a jolly good Father,' brought a joyous evening to a close.[42]

Christmas customs and traditions

Whilst many of the customs and rituals which were current in the 1920s are familiar, others, such as eating giblet pie, or 'unhanging' all the gates of the surrounding area as a Christmas Eve prank, are more of their time. In his diary, William, a Dartmoor farmer, approached Christmas with enthusiasm:

> William would cut up trees and make 'ashen faggots' for the girls to decorate. They ate giblet pie, which he specially enjoyed, and a goose on Christmas Day. On Boxing Day he was always back to his duties as a Methodist, and went to Chagford quarterly meeting, where there was sometimes a convivial lunch. New Year's Eve was spent hospitably and enjoyably with family and friends; 'heard the bells ring in the New Year' he wrote at the end of 1920.[43]

At the end of the festive season came the custom of wassailing, which was particularly strong in Devon and Somerset with their numerous cider orchards. In a film from 1927, revellers taking part in the wassail at Whiteway's in Whimple can be seen dancing around the apple trees, sprinkling the trees with cider to frighten the evil spirits, firing shots and of course, drinking some cider.[44]

Returning home for the festive season in this decade, especially following the separations and disruptions to family life endured during the First World War, was important to many Devonians living away, and became a theme in the press:

> Christmas is the family festival. It has been suggested that in recent years it has lost some of its old claim and its charm in this respect, and that there is a greater tendency among people to separate in search of enjoyment. We do not think this is true in the main. Some few may find distraction from care in a change of scene and environment, but for most of us home is the place to spend Christmas, and we are fortunate if its return sees no break in the family circle which it brings together. In the West at least this sentiment dominates all other associations with the season. We are said to be clannish. Cornishmen and Devonians certainly cherish to a high degree a love of the homeland, and however widely they may be scattered never forget or are wholly out touch with the place of their birth. This

[42] *Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 6 January 1928, 5.
[43] Jacqueline Sarsby, *A Dartmoor Farmer, his Daughters and his Diary,* Rotherford Press: Dursley, 2015, 244.
[44] Wassailing apple trees (1927) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izTh_ltnc7k

> local patriotism naturally finds its highest expression in its regard for family ties, and so the trains speeding from the East and the North are bringing to the West crowds of "exiles'" who will spend these next few days in renewing old associations and bringing gladness to the home-stayers.[45]

Seasonal Benevolence

The well-established tradition at Christmas of giving to the poor, both to adults and children, continued throughout this decade. Every poor institution, workhouse and orphanage throughout the county seemed to hold an annual event, usually consisting of a tea, some form of entertainment, and a Christmas tree, presents and often Father Christmas.

Often all the children in the village were invited to a Christmas tea, similarly mostly funded by prominent local dignitaries, businessmen, landowners and philanthropists who were named and thanked in the press for their generosity and usually personally offered a vote of thanks by the recipients too.

The perceived value and benevolence of such events is often emphasised through descriptions of the excited reactions of the participants. The Christmas Day tea held in Hennock in 1921 is very typical of such events, both in terms of its traditions, pattern and content, but also because of the reported reactions of the grateful recipients:

> On Old Christmas Day all the children of the village, to the number of 60, had their Christmas treat at the Church-room. At 4.30 p.m., tea was done full justice to, after which games were indulged in until the Christmas tree had been lit and unveiled, acts which had been eagerly looked forward to. The tree had been prettily decorated by the ladies, and looked charming under its many coloured lights. Great excitement prevailed at the entrance of Father Christmas, carrying two large sacks filled with the presents, which he delivered to the happy recipients, much their delight. The Vicar, the Rev. L. O. Mott. ably personated the "Generous Father," and was heartily thanked for so doing. The younger children received toys, and the elder ones were given useful articles, which had been carefully selected according to their ages. Crackers, sweets and oranges were distributed during the evening, and on leaving each child received a piece of cake. At the close, the Vicar wished all present a prosperous New Year. Hearty cheers were given for those who had ably arranged and admirably carried out all the arrangements…

During the Christmas 1921 festivities, for example, numerous events were held across the county: Sunday School children in Starcross were offered tea and a Christmas tree; Lady Browning presented Devonport United Services Orphanage for Girls with gifts of writing boxes and dolls; l3 hampers full of good Christmas fare, comprising joint of beef, cake, mince pies, Christmas pudding, packets of soup, potted fish, jam, biscuits, tea, cocoa, apples,

[45] *Western Morning News*, 24 December 1925, 4.

nuts, dates, oranges, etc., were sent to 13 needy blind individuals North Devon; 163 children of the unemployed in Torrington were treated to games and a 'romp'; whilst in Chardstock, lucky children were treated to crackers, games, dancing, songs, recitations – and the gramophone.[46]

Many Plymouth homes were made brighter during the Christmas by the fare which was distributed from the British Legion headquarters.

Christmas Cheer: *Western Morning News*, 27 December 1923, 8

[46] *EPG*, 11 January 1921, 5; EPG 6 January 1922, 5; NDJ 5 January 1922,3; NDJ, 19 January 1922, 8; EPG, 6 January 1922, 7.

The nobility and landed gentry with estates also often saw fit to show generosity to their tenants at this time and annually organised teas, entertainments and gifts of clothes such as socks and scarves as well poultry for the adults and toys and presents from the tree for the tenants' children. Julius and Frances Drewe moved to their new home Castle Drogo in Devon in the late twenties from their estate in Wadhurst, Sussex, where generous Christmas gifts and entertainments for all the estate workers and their families had been organised annually:

> CHRISTMAS TREE AT WADHURST HALL. This annual event which eagerly anticipated by all on the estate, children and adults alike—took place on Saturday afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Drewe "Father Christmas" received the guests four o'clock the spacious Riding School, which was very tastefully decorated for the occasion. The-great centre of attraction was the immense Christmas Tree, 30ft. high, which occupied the middle of the room and was brilliantly lit up with electric lights, which the children's presents were prettily arranged. At one end of the Riding School tables Vere arranged with useful presents for the women and older girls, presided over by Mrs. Drewe and the Misses Drewe. At the other end tables were arranged with presents suitable for men, and these were in charge cf Mr. and Mrs. Cedric Drewe. Captain and Mrs. Basil Drewe were unable to be present, owing to Captain Drewe's illness. Although the weather the worse possible description upwards' of 200 were present. As soon the guests had arrived tea was served, (after which the choir of the Wadhurst Hall Private Chapel gave a very nice selection of Christmas carols. This -rag followed the distribution of the presents. At the end of the evening Mr. Booth, on behalf of those present, thanked Mr. and Mrs. Drewe for their hospitality and kindly thought in again giving so much pleasure many, concluding his remarks by calling for hearty cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Drewe and family- and for all those who had contributed to the enjoyment of the evening. Needless to say, the cheers were very hearty. Mr. Drewe expressed the great pleasure it gave Mrs. Drewe and himself to see them there and to know that they had spent such an enjoyable evening.[47]

Having moved to Devon, although not on the same scale, the Drewe family still continued their charitable activities:

> Drewsteignton. The handbell ringers gave pleasing selections in various parts of the parish on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The old and poor of this village have a (rain received much appreciated Yuletide gifts from the Rector and Mrs. Peek, Mrs. Ponsford, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Strong, and Mr. and Mrs. G. Stanbury. The Trustees present at the Christmas charity distribution were the Rev. A. R. VV Peek Mrs. Ponsford, Mrs. A. J. Rowe, Mr. L. De Malan, Mr. H. W. M. J. Partridge, Mr. E. Mudge, and Mr. A Sturt. Adults with four children received 5s each and Is for each child and old ago pensioners and persons in receipt of parochial relief 10s each. The recipients were entertained tea with the Rector and members of the Church Council. The parish church was decorated with hollv, evergreens, and flowers for the Christmas festival, and the services were

[47] *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 27 January 1922, 10

> conducted by the Rector. Those who sent gilts and assisted in the decoration were:— The Rector and Mrs. Peek, the Misses Peek, Mrs. Drewe… [48]

Dorothy Lintern from Okehampton, recalled how local landowner Lady Manning always offered the farmers roast goose and Christmas pudding and a smoking concert.

> After their meal they'd all sit around at great long tables you see, and we 'd put oranges and nuts and things down through the middle and they had extra drinks what they had to pay for themselves and then somebody would get up and did a turn. Course, all the helpers who'd been helping, running up and down, getting the food and that, used to join in, settle down and listen…[49]

Numerous accounts of similar activities persist throughout the decade, varying in scale and scope, but always with the same fundamental philanthropic intentions. This tea and entertainment for 800 children in Ilfracombe in 1929 was one of the biggest:

> ILFRACOMBE'S CHILDREN. Annual Tea and Entertainment For the children of Ifracombe. Thursday last proved a very joyous day, for over 800 were entertained to tea and an entertainment in the Hall. Prior to this, the vast number were invited to the Scala and Empire Cinema Shows through the hospitality of the management (Messrs. G. A. Smith and G. E. Reynolds respectively) This annual event, so eagerly longed for the boys and girls—and even the parents —is one that is obtained through proceeds of a Christmas "draw," organized Mr. Charles. Lewis, who is known the “Santa Claus" of Ilfracombe. This year's success enabled the Executive Committee to make such excellent arrangements and was possible to send invitations to all children. Early on Thursday afternoon the children headed by the ex- servicemen's band marched to the "pictures " and witnessed a full programme. Afterwards over 800 sat down to a sumptuous tea in the Alexandra Hall. Bonbons were also provided for each child. In the evening entertainment by members of the various schools was given and the contributions were effectively produced and applauded. The event concluded with expressions of satisfaction from everyone concerned.[50]

Christmas Presents

Advertisements suggesting suitable gifts for children and adults alike filled the pages of the press in the run-up to Christmas Day. As the technology to create visually eye-catching advertisements was not available in the 1920s, businesses sometimes used repetition, capitals or exclamation marks to attract the readers’ attention, such as these from two Plymouth stores in 1925:

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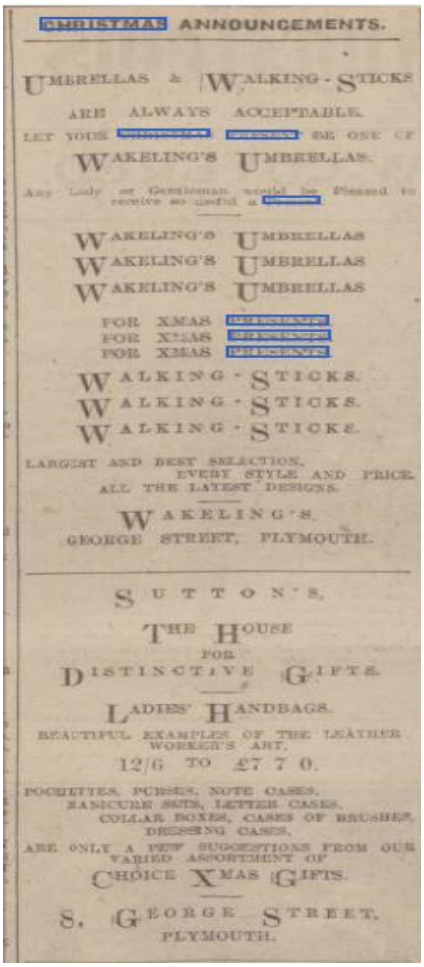
[48] *EPG*, 30 December 1931, 7.
[49] Edith Palmer and Dorothy Lintern, interviewed by Michael Daker, 18 June 1987, Okehampton oral histories, B09.
[50] *NDJ*, 10 January 1929, 7.



CHRISTMAS ANNOUNCEMENTS.

UMBRELLAS & WALKING-STICKS
ARE ALWAYS ACCEPTABLE.
LET YOUR [redacted] BE ONE OF
WAKELING'S UMBRELLAS.
Any Lady or Gentleman would be Pleased to receive as useful a [redacted]

WAKELING'S UMBRELLAS
WAKELING'S UMBRELLAS
WAKELING'S UMBRELLAS

FOR XMAS [redacted]
FOR XMAS [redacted]
FOR XMAS [redacted]

WALKING-STICKS.
WALKING-STICKS.
WALKING-STICKS.

LARGEST AND BEST SELECTION,
EVERY STYLE AND PRICE.
ALL THE LATEST DESIGNS.

WAKELING'S,
GEORGE STREET, PLYMOUTH.

SUTTON'S,
THE HOUSE
FOR
DISTINCTIVE GIFTS.

LADIES' HANDBAGS.
BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLES OF THE LEATHER WORKER'S ART.
12/6 TO £7 7 0.

POCKETTES, PURSES, NOTE CASES,
MANICURE SETS, LETTER CASES,
COLLAR BOXES, CASES OF BRUSHES,
DRESSING CASES,
ARE ONLY A FEW SUGGESTIONS FROM OUR VARIED ASSORTMENT OF
CHOICE XMAS GIFTS.

8, GEORGE STREET,
PLYMOUTH.

Christmas presents: *Western Morning News*, 7 December 1925

SPECIAL SHOW
OVERCOATS
for GENTLEMEN & BOYS
WARM LIGHT WOOLLY
NEW STYLES CHOICE COLOURS

FUR GAUNTLET
GLOVES
From 15/6
LINED GLOVES
From 7/6

Xmas 1927 is already proving one of the Brightest Pages in our long history. The SPIRIT of FATHER CHRISTMAS pervades 191 HIGH STREET, and GIFTS GALORE are to be seen in the brilliantly lit well dressed Windows, and charmingly displayed in all Departments.

When Grandfather was a boy his Mother brought HIM to

PINDER & TUCKWELL

Then Dad came—Now HIS boys come. So 3 GENERATIONS testify to BEST VALUE and GOOD SERVICE, the magnet that draws so many to this CENTRE of ATTRACTION in the heart of old Exeter.

WATCH the WINDOWS.

EVENING DRESS
FOR ALL OCCASIONS.

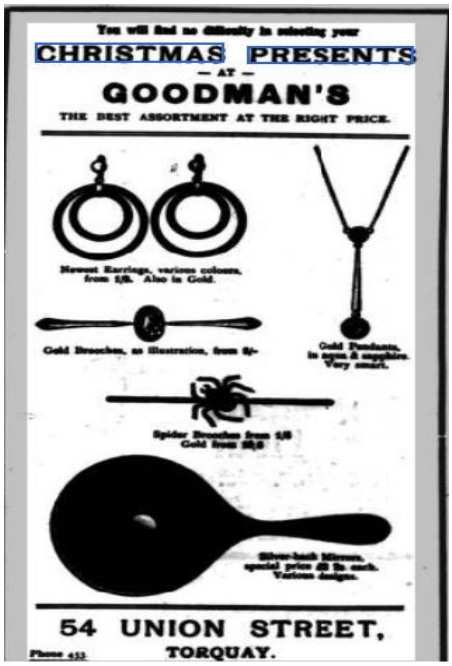
TROUSER & TIE PRESSES
WATTS' NOTED MAKE

USEFUL GIFTS
PULLOVERS CARDIGANS
WAISTCOATS BURBERRYS
DRESSING GOWNS
from 25/6
NECKTIES PYJAMAS
LEATHER COATS
RUGS BAGS HATS CAPS
WOOL & SILK SCARVES
Etc., Etc., Etc.

HANDKERCHIEFS
GREAT VARIETY.

Christmas at Pinder and Tuckwell, Exeter: *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 13 December 1927, 4.

Others used little designs and pictures to illustrate their goods. There was an abundance of gifts on offer for adults, some of which were very much of the era. They ranged from marble clocks to perfume, tweed coats and ties, electro-plated Devon cream dishes and diamonds, kettles and irons, fur collar and cuff sets, trouser presses and pipes, fire screens and fancy bellows, biscuit barrels and tea cosies, soap and shawls and silver toilet sets, Pyrex dishes and pianos, motor cars and cycles, brooches and beads, door knockers and oil heaters, penknives and pyjamas, cigars and silk handkerchiefs, shooting seats and hunting crops, serviettes and, of course, socks.



Christmas presents: *Torquay Times*, 16 December 1921 and 15 December 1921

Toys for children were numerous and varied, with dolls and wooden or metal vehicles being most popularly advertised. Some of the materials used at the time produced alarming results, as in this advertisement:

Torquay Times and South Devon Advertiser, 4 December 1925,11.

Collecting coupons from Puritan soap could lead to a wide choice of free gifts as this advertisement in the *Western Morning News* shows:

Puritan Soap, *Western Morning News*, 7 December 1925, 7.

The diaries of Sir Ernest Satow, an eminent British diplomat and scholar who passed his retirement in Ottery St. Mary, note the presents he received in 1926:

> A present of 'Mocha' chocolate from Olga and a packet of shortbread from the Johnstons of Moffat, to whom I sent a letter of thanks. 25 Dec. Percy and Helen have given me Bryce's posthumous volume 'Memories of Travel' as a Christmas present.[51]

51 Ian Ruxton, ed., *The Diaries of Sir Ernest Satow, 1921-1926 - Volume Two (1924-1926),* Lulu: 2018, 378

Even in the 1920s some people were hard to buy for:

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, 9 December 1921, 7.

Christmas fare

On 25th December 1926 Sir Ernest Satow described his Christmas lunch - with a party of nine in Ottery St. Mary, he sat down to "turkey and plumpudding."[52]

Poultry of all kinds – turkeys, ducks, geese – were widely available and popular at Christmas throughout the decade.

With the approach of Yuletide the preparation of seasonable fare in the West develops into a temporary industry employing many people, two of whom are seen at work.

For Christmas: *Western Morning News*, 18 December 1922, 8.

[52] Ibid.

CHRISTMAS FARE.

This pretty study, taken by one of our staff photographers in the neighbourhood of Plymouth yesterday, shows a flock of geese, which are being reared for the Christmas table, making for a stream near by.

Christmas Fare: *Western Morning News*, 1 November 1922, 8.

Other traditional items included Christmas puddings, which could according to an advertisement in the Torquay press be made just as well using egg substitute:

BIRD'S EGG SUBSTITUTE

BIRD'S Egg Substitute (POWDER)

'Xmas Puddings without Eggs!
— and more delicious puddings you never tasted!

By using Bird's Egg Substitute you can make the finest English Plum Puddings entirely without eggs or baking powder. You will then not only save money, but have rich, light and wholesome puddings. With B.E.S. they are sure to turn out right.

A splendid old-time Recipe for One 'Xmas Pudding.

Bread Crumbs, ½ lb. Flour, ½ lb. Raisins (stoned), 1 lb. Currants (well washed), ½ lb. Suet (finely chopped), ½ lb. Moist Sugar, ½ lb. Mixed Peel, 2 ozs. ¼ of a Nutmeg (grated), Powdered Cinnamon (a small pinch). A little Salt. Near Milk. 1 teacupful, and One piled up tablespoonful of BIRD'S EGG SUBSTITUTE.

METHOD.—Mix thoroughly with a wooden spoon the raisins, currants, bread crumbs, flour, suet, sugar, spice, salt, peel, cut up, and egg substitute; moisten the whole with the milk. Put into well-buttered moulds or basins, tie over firmly with a pudding cloth which has been previously buttered and sprinkled with flour. Boil or steam for eight hours.

N.B.—To make more puddings you simply multiply the quantities by the number of puddings required.

Cut out this advt. and recipe NOW. Purchase the ingredients for making your puddings at once. Puddings are better for keeping a few weeks.

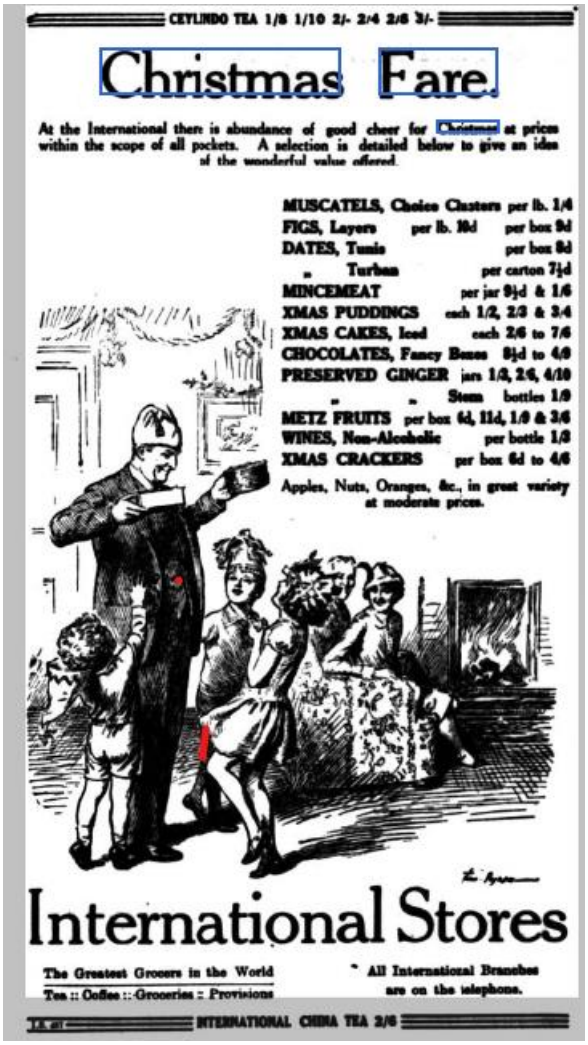
Pkts., 1½d.; Tins, 7d. and 1/2

BIRD'S EGG Substitute

Torquay Times and South Devon Advertiser, 4 December 1925, 10

Christmas cakes could be ordered iced and decorated and delivered to the door from local bakeries, and puddings and mince pies were widely advertised. Christmas specialities at the Devonshire Dairies in Torquay included bacon, hams, veal, ham and egg pie and of course, clotted cream from Devon.[53] Torre Creamery offered scalded cream and Devonshire butter, whilst Hunt's of Chelston delivered fruit, vegetables and fresh local fish.[54] Trump's Stores, in Sidmouth, Axminster, Colyton and Ottery St. Mary, offered their customers a Special Christmas Price list of "enticing delicacies", which could be sent out to homes on receipt of a postcard.[55]

The well-known International Stores, which had branches in most towns across the south and south-west, provided a variety of luxury goods, including figs, dates, and chocolates. Whilst it announced "prices for all pockets", in reality, their goods, as with many other stores, would have been beyond the reach of many:



Torquay Times and South Devon Advertiser, 23 December 1927, 10.

[53] *TT*, 4 December 1925, 10.
[54] *TT*, 4 December 1925, 9; TT, 4 December 1925, 10.
[55] *EPG*, 9 December 1921, 14.

These Christmas hampers catering just for drinks could also be purchased.

Telephone 164.

SACCONE & SPEED, Ltd.,

WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANTS,

50, FORE STREET, DEVONPORT,

Beg to announce the OPENING OF A RETAIL DEPARTMENT to meet requirements of Local Residents. Price List Free on Application.

XMAS HAMPERS.

A.

2 Botts. Very Dry Tawny Port.
1 Bott. Brown Sherry.
1 ,, Barsac.
2 Botts. John Haig's Original Liqueur Whisky.

£2 : 12 : 0

B.

1 Bott. John Haig's Original Liqueur Whisky.
1 ,, Otard's Brandy.
1 ,, Plymouth Gin.
2 Botts. Very Dry Tawny Port.
1 Bott. Brown Sherry.

£3 : 10 : 0

C.

4 Botts. John Haig's Original Liqueur Whisky.
1 Bott. Otard's Brandy.
1 ,, Creme de Menthe.
2 Botts. St. Julien Claret.
2 ,, Very Dry Tawny Port.
2 ,, Brown Sherry.

£5 : 5 : 0

D.

3 Botts. John Haig's Original Liqueur Whisky.
1 Bott. Plymouth Gin.
1 ,, Otard's Brandy.
1 ,, Creme de Menthe.
3 Botts. Very Dry Tawny Port.
3 ,, Paul Ruinart 1911 Champagne.

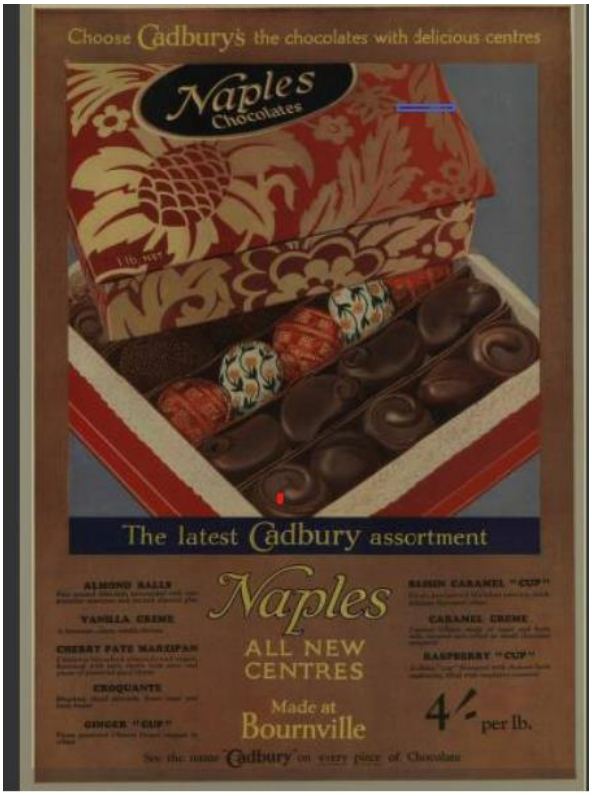
£6 : 15 : 0

CARRIAGE PAID TO ALL PARTS.

Sole Agents for JOHN HAIG'S Original Liqueur Whisky. One case of 12 Bottles sent Carriage Paid to all parts for £7 : 10 : 0. Trade Enquiries Invited.

Saccone and Speed, 15 December 1921, 8.

Whilst Cadbury's advertised their chocolates extensively in the local Devon press, they always appeared in black and white, unlike this more colourful version from the *Illustrated London News*:



Illustrated London News, 21 November 1925, 119

Above all, Christmas seemed to revive ideas of hope and a brighter, better, future. Even in 1924, in a press editorial six years after the end of the war, reference is made to its horrors and suffering.[56] The idea expressed here, that somehow Christmas was a special time which could brighten the present and offer a new start or even usher in a new way of being, is echoed in many other columns and corners of the county.

> To-morrow will be Christmas-day. There is no conjunction of words in the English language which stirs a deeper emotion than that simple sentence… we have had and still have much to cause us anxiety and to overshadow our Christmas joys with doubt and apprehension of the future. Yet there are not wanting signs which seem to betoken a gradual lifting of the cloud which overhangs us and the approach of a time of greater activity in those industries to which we must look for all the material comforts we enjoy. That this is a widely-prevalent impression may be fairly deduced from the fact that the Christmas activities of to-day far exceed those of last year, betokening not merely some substantial advance in material circumstances, but a lightening of the spirit in view of a brighter prospect which is looked forward to with greater confidence than before. Thus the time-honoured good wishes appropriate to the season seem more justified to-day than they did ten years ago, when Christmas found us all in the throes of that world-struggle which has left so many and such heavy scars on the face of our community. It is in the hope and belief that the new dawn is upon us, and that it is about to spread into a brighter and more glorious day that we greet our myriad readers and friends this morning with the old, old wish, in the old, old words: A Merry Christmas and a Happy New- Year.[57]

[56] *Western Morning News*, 24 December 1924, 4.
[57] Ibid

Places mentioned in the text are: Plymouth*, South Zeal, Salcombe, Ilfracombe, Exeter, Devonport, Torquay, South Molton, Teignmouth, Totnes, Princetown, Barnstaple, Lynton, Newton Abbot, Little Torrington, Brampford Speke, Whimple, Hennock, Starcross, Chardstock, Drewsteignton, Okehampton, Ottery St, Mary, Sidmouth, Axminster, Colyton.*