



# MERRY CHRISTMAS!

## From the Committee

The committee wish all our members a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Good riddance to 2020. We look forward to a restart in the first term 2021 and the freedom to see each other again.

Unfortunately the AGM via zoom did not achieve a quorum so we have reset it for 14 January 2021. Venue will be confirmed closer to the date. There will be a sausage sizzle after the meeting and a social opportunity to reconnect. U3A will supply the food and you are welcome to bring any drinks other than tea or coffee (which will be supplied) to enjoy.

The committee will be proposing the fees for 2021 stay at \$25 for the 12th year and they will fall due on 1 January 2021 and cover through to 30 December 2021. This means you will not be charged for the period we have not been able to operate this year.

There are a number of new offerings being contemplated for next year, subject to tutors being available. If you can play Bridge and would like to show others how to play we would love you to run a group. A number of members have expressed interest in playing Bridge. Please contact Colleen if you can help.

Have a think about joining the committee and having a say in the running of our U3A. Nominations will be accepted at the AGM. It is not an onerous task but very rewarding.

Please take care over the holidays, it can be a dangerous time on the roads and your safety is important to all of us. A big thank you to our Tutors for their continued support. Without them we would have nothing to offer. Remember, everyone in our U3A is a volunteer.

There are no paid staff.



### CHRISTMAS PUDDING IN THE BUSH, 1856

Christmas on the Victorian Goldfields during the 19th century was an interesting affair – many people on the goldfields were accustomed to the typical white Christmas they enjoyed in England, and suddenly found themselves celebrating in the intense heat of Australian summer!

There are many newspaper references to Christmas on the goldfields in the mid-late 1800s which paint a fascinating picture of the times. Many articles lament the weather and show a yearning for winter snows and warm fireplaces. Others describe the festivities, food and decorations on display.

*Image source: State Library Victoria*

### CHRISTMAS EVE IN BALLARAT

*From The Star, 1859...*

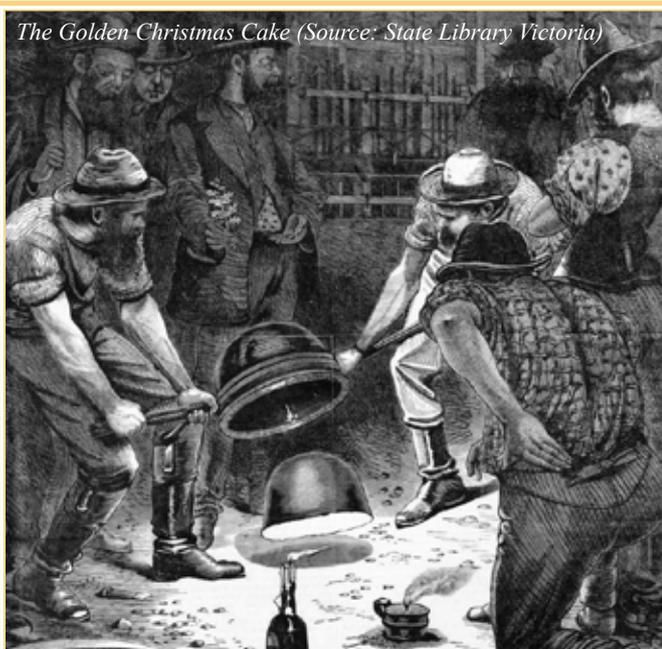
Christmas Eve in Ballarat filled our thoroughfares with crowd upon crowd of people shopping for the morrow's dinner, or for "boxes" to give in memory of the season.

The Main road broke out early in the day into a profusion of beauty spots in the shape of boughs, nosegays, and temptingly arranged masses of fruits, home or exotic. The fruiterers, butchers, and poulterers, and some of the hotelkeepers, decorated their fronts with ever greens, till in some places the Main road suggested "feasts

of tabernacles" or country dancing parties under "green bushes."

Turkeys, ducks, and fowls were seen and heard everywhere, either huddled in cages for selection or in transit, with the spit or the oven in the prospective of the purchaser, if not of the happily unconscious bird. Other crowds mixed with the shopping crowds, and elbowed their way to the theatres or rendezvous for "making up" the sports or picnics of the Monday, and thus the eve wore away, and, we are glad to add, without a fire.

The Golden Christmas Cake (Source: State Library Victoria)



## Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers, 1872

Adventide, despite the absence of the old world associations in the shape of carols, waits, snow, and frost, with the yule log, the mistletoe, the holly with its scarlet berries and the family gatherings, still continues a time of deep rejoicing in this sunny southern land.

In the far bush and on the busy goldfields, in the crowded city and the quiet hamlet, Christmas brings with it associations far different to its surroundings in the old world. They are characteristic of the new country, yet they lose nothing of their intensity in the change of locality and climate.

Here the glad celebration of the season takes place, for the most part, under the broad canopy of Heaven; and picnics, athletic sports, and trips over the briny waves suffice as outlets to the feelings. In the wild bush, round the night fire, yarns are spun by the travelling stockmen; and men live over again the scenes of their youth.

On the goldfields the mining companies generally endeavour to have a large crushing for Christmas,

and turn out their golden Christmas cakes for exhibition in the windows of the local banks to the admiring gaze of hundreds. The picture above depicts most accurately a scene where the golden cake has just been dropped from the retort. Our artist has well illustrated the event, and the engraving will supply our readers who have never been upon the goldfields with a truthful sketch of this interesting operation.

'Tis not the traditional plum pudding of the old Christmas days, but it is one far more valuable, containing locked up within its golden grasp the means which rightly used will help to impart comfort and material prosperity through the length and breadth of the land.

A cake which was exhibited the other day in the window of a jeweller's shop in Melbourne, weighed 3764 oz., and was worth £15,026\*. This cake was the result of the last crushing made by the Great Extended Hustler's Tribute Company, Sandhurst, and is said to be the largest cake of gold ever produced in Victoria.

\*Today's value: \$4,893,200.

## National Cat Herders' Day – Tuesday 15 December



You don't have to be a cat lover to celebrate Cat Herders' Day; you only have to be someone attempting to complete a seemingly impossible task or working in a job that is a continual up-hill battle, tall-order, hard-work, or in short, some activity that is like 'herding cats'.

Have you ever seen a cowboy or cowgirl herding cats? Didn't think so – that's because if we ever attempted to it would take us longer than an infinite monkey to type the complete works of Shakespeare.

You've probably heard the saying that something is as impossible as "herding cats", used in reference to a seemingly futile or difficult task. Granted, if you have actually attempted to literally herd a bunch of cats for some reason or the other, you would know exactly how impossible this task actually is.

All of that said, as far as we know, there's no one out there who's actually a professional cat herder. If there were, this day would actually be for those folks. This is a day for everyone who has to face the frustration of trying to manage the unmanageable, anyone whose day to day life involves insurmountable tasks.



"These little ones are mice... These over here are hamsters... Ooh! This must be a gerbil!"

# Memories of Christmas in Cork, Ireland

## Looking forward to Christmas

I remember when Christmas was a wondrous time for us, growing up in Cork City in the 1950s. The anticipation started to build about a month or so ahead of the event itself. On country walks we collected holly and ivy to decorate the house and we also hung up paper chains across the ceilings of the kitchen and the sitting room.

We loved going to look at the Christmas toys in the shops. One shop had a train set working, right there in the window. We gazed in amazement, with our noses pressed against the glass, as the engine chuffed along the tracks which wound in and out amongst the bright new toys. Another shop had the latest bikes and scooters on display and every child secretly dreamed of owning one.



Patrick Street, Cork in the 1950s.

Most of the things we longed for were beyond our parents' budget and we seemed to know that, instinctively. We never asked for the expensive things when we wrote our Santa Claus letters. My Daddy took our letters with him to work in the Post Office. He told us that there was a special box for putting them in from which they went straight to the North Pole. Mammy told us that Santa Claus would definitely come on Christmas Eve, if we were good.

We were far luckier than most children as we always got a great present, as well as a book. The book was a shiny annual, with a hard cover, with names like: *The Beano* or *The Dandy*. I got *The Bunty* or *The Judy* which were girl's versions. Our Mary got *The Jack and Jill Annual* while she was still small and I remember getting the *Rupert the Bear Annual* when I was smaller.

While playing out in the terrace (which is what we called our street) with friends, we used to wonder a lot about how Santa Claus was able to tell in which house



each of us lived. All the houses looked the same, which would have been confusing for him we thought. More importantly, we worried about how he managed to avoid being burned to death as he came down the chimney. In most of our homes the fire was kept smouldering in the range or fireplace all night in winter, as it was the only heating most houses had.

My friend Rita said that she had written a letter to Santa asking for a bike and a doll's house and a set of paints and brushes. I said she was being greedy.

"What about all the other children in the world?" I said crossly. "Someone might end up with nothing if you ask for three things."

"But Santa brings as many things as you ask for," she argued.

"I heard that the elves only make one toy for everyone," I argued, "and that's why our Mammy and Daddy have to send a postal order to pay for our presents... Having all those elves working for him, Santa has an awful lot of mouths to feed."

They could all see the sense in that, as none of us were well-off and feeding mouths was a serious business.

## Getting ready for Christmas

About two months before the actual day, Mammy started the Christmas baking. Making the Christmas pudding was a special event. The pudding mixture contained aromatic spices which we only experienced at that time of the year: cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and allspice



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scented the house. The puddings were mixed and then steamed in their bowls in the big saucepan on the gas stove. The kitchen got all steamed up, of course, but that was all part of the festive atmosphere.

We had a family ritual, as we each were given a turn at stirring the pudding mixture. It smelled deliciously of dried fruit, mixed spices, lemon and orange grated peel and the stout and ale which was added “to keep it moist” and for added flavour. Mammy said each sentence of a traditional wish list, while we were stirring and we repeated it after her.

On winter’s nights coming up to Christmas, after our baths, we would sit around the fire and Mammy would sing all the Christmas songs and carols she knew, while she darned the holes in our socks. We had a wireless (radio) but record players were expensive and television had not yet come to Ireland. Mammy’s collection of songs seemed endless to us and I was always impressed that she could remember all the words to every one of them.

One of the best presents I remember was a baby doll, which I now realise had been naked when bought. It was dressed beautifully with underwear and a pretty dress. It was the same material as a dress my mother had made for someone the previous summer. The doll also had a beautiful knitted cardigan and bonnet which was in the same colours as our school jumpers. I marvelled then at the coincidence that the elves should have had the same material and wool as we did in our house. Now, I marvel at my mother’s patience, love and dedication to keeping our childhood dreams alive by going to such trouble.

After our excitement at discovering our presents we would go to the next terrace to show them to Nana and Auntie Theresa, who was home for Christmas from England where she was a WRAF lady.

Nana would give us biscuits and watery raspberry cordial. We thought it was a pity that Nana didn’t know the correct measurements to make the cordial stronger but we would never have thought to tell her that.

Auntie Theresa gave us lovely presents too, more exotic because they came all the way from England, on the boat from Fishguard in Wales to Cork. I remember getting a thick reading book from her titled *Heidi*. The following year I got the sequel *Heidi Grows Up* and the next year the third of the series, *Heidi’s Children*. I loved those books so much that I must have read them 10 times each and I still have them today.

Later in the day we’d have our Christmas dinner, which was roast goose with potato, sage and onion stuffing, served with marrowfat peas, roast potatoes and celery sauce.

It was our favourite meal of the year, of course, and afterwards we had Christmas pudding with custard. We were so full that we were happy to sit and read our respective books for a few hours until the card games started with the adults in the evening.

When we were quite young we all learned to play Rummy, A Hundred and Ten and Forty-five as well as all the children’s games of Beggar-my-Neighbour, Sevens, Donkey and Long Donkey as well as Pick-up-Two. We thoroughly enjoyed the feeling of being allowed to play for sweets (instead of money) with the grown-ups, or “blown-ups” as my brother Jim used to say.

We usually went to bed about eleven o’clock, happy and tired out from our wonderful celebrations.

*Maggie Cunningham*

Reprinted from *Remember When. Reminiscences of U3A Members.*



## Christmas Cracker Jokes...

*in case you run out*

Q	What do you call an old snowman?	A	Water
Q	Who hides in the bakery at Christmas?	A	A mince spy
Q	What did the snowman say to the other snowman?	A	Can you smell carrot?
Q	What do elves do after school?	A	Their gnome work!
Q	What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa?	A	A rebel without a Claus
Q	Why has Santa been banned from sooty chimneys?	A	Carbon footprints
Q	What kind of motorbike does Santa ride?	A	A Holly-Davidson
Q	What happened to the man who stole an advent calendar?	A	He got 25 days

## The Computer Swallowed Grandma

The computer swallowed grandma.

Yes, honestly its true!

She pressed 'control' and 'enter'

And disappeared from view.

It devoured her completely,  
The thought just makes me squirm.  
She must have caught a virus  
Or been eaten by a worm.

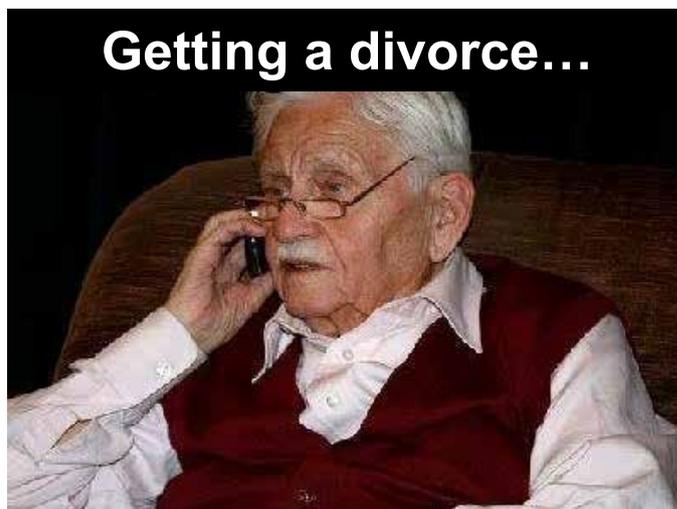
I've searched through the recycle bin  
And files of every kind;  
I've even used the Internet,  
But nothing did I find.

In desperation, I asked Google  
My searches to refine.  
The reply from it was negative,  
Not a thing was found 'online.'

So, if inside your 'Inbox,'  
My Grandma you should see,  
Please 'Copy,' 'Scan' and 'Paste' her  
In an email back to me.



## Getting a divorce...



An elderly man in Scotland calls his son in New York and says, "I hate to ruin your day, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are divorcing. Forty-five years of misery is enough."

"Pop, what are you talking about?" the son screams.

"We can't stand the sight of each other any longer," the old man says. "We're sick of each other, and I'm sick of talking about this, so you call your sister in Chicago and tell her," and he hangs up. Frantic, the son calls his sister, who explodes on the phone, "Like heck they're getting divorced," she shouts, "I'll take care of this."

She calls her father immediately and screams at the old man, "You are NOT getting divorced! Don't do a single thing until I get there. I'm calling my brother back, and we'll both be there tomorrow. Until then, don't do a thing, DO YOU HEAR ME?" and hangs up.

The old man hangs up his phone and turns to his wife. "Okay," he says, "They're coming for Christmas and paying their own airfares."

## 4 Ingredient Weight Watchers Mocha Fruit Cake

*Anyone can make this delicious cake...*

- 2 cups self-raising flour
- 150gm fruit and nut chocolate (or chocolate chips is fine), chopped roughly
- 1kg mixed dried fruit (or sultanas/raisins will do)
- 2 cups strong black coffee

1. Soak the dried fruit in the black coffee, preferably overnight.

2. Mix in flour and chopped chocolate.

3. Pour into a 20x18cm slice tin and bake at 170 deg C for approximately 40 minutes or until a skewer inserted comes out clean.

