

Christmas Mutterings
(or “*Christmas ain’t what it used to be*”)

Do you remember when Christmas started in mid December (or even as late as the 24th) and finished by January 6th? If you do, then you’re probably as old as me, and remember Christmas Past as the “good old days”.

They still say that Christmas comes but once a year – and that’s true – trouble is, it never goes away! It takes until February to eat up the last of the Turkey, there are Mince Pies still on the supermarket shelves in their attractive Christmas boxes well into March, by May we’re being reminded to join the Christmas Club (we usually get April off Christmas thoughts as we increase waistlines by another inch with Easter Eggs!), and then by June it’s time for the Christmas Special repeats on TV!

During July and August we are barraged with reminders to book Christmas meals early in pubs and restaurants up and down the country, and then by September, the shops are starting to put up the Christmas decorations and it’s all start again!

What happened to Spring and Summer and Autumn (a very good question this year for TVR rag top owners – what DID happen to Summer this year? Did I blink?). In the “good old days” Christmas was so much simpler – or is it me just getting older and grumpier. Perhaps I’m just becoming more like my eighty-something year old father who happily admits to being a miserable old git!

I’m sorry, but I don’t want to go into Woollies or Marks and Sparks on a warm September Saturday, in my shorts and tee-shirt and dream of a White Christmas! I’m just glad we haven’t got the proliferation of Christmas shops that have sprung up in the States, that sell nothing but Christmas decorations all year round. They’re can only be staffed by deaf people or those who are mentally deranged – any sane hearing person would be one Oz wheel short of a set after a couple of months of “All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth”.

And when it does get round to the event itself, what happened to those “days of yore” when we could sit on Santa’s lap without the fear of being molested or having to get parents to sign waivers in triplicate? Do you remember how every Santa looked different but they all smelt the same – a combination of mothballs, tobacco and booze!

And haven’t decorations changed? What happened to those paper streamers we made by hand, having to lick the end of each piece as we threaded it through the next? Or for that matter what happened to a single line of 12 large brightly coloured bulbs that stayed on (until they failed at least)? These days it appears that if you don’t have sufficient lights to need a sub station in your garden, and at least half of the light pulse on and off with the passing traffic going over the speed bumps outside your house, you are labelled as Mr. Grumpy!

Talking of decorations, I think it’s time we had some TVR crackers (no – not the girls at the Motor Show – the ones you pull!!). We could have TVR “one liners” like

Q. What happened when the frog’s TVR broke down?

A. It got toad away...!

Q. What did the wizard driving the TVR say to the other wizard when being chased by a policeman?

A. Quick, turn the car into a side street!!

Perhaps not!

Other things have changed too. I remember when I was a kid going out carol singing, from house to house, and getting lots of shiny pennies to spend. These days most of the people would be too frightened to open the doors to carol singers, as half of them will “duff you up” if you don’t give them at least a fiver!

But we used to have great fun. I remember a few years ago, when Beloved and I ran a local church based youth club, we all went carol singing to our local hospital just before Christmas. We learnt a new song, which was “My peace I give unto you, it’s a peace that the world cannot give...” (words that Jesus spoke to his disciples). The idea was that we would sing this as we left each ward as our parting song – but we forgot, and didn’t remember until we stood outside the hospital about to go home.

So we decided to sing it to the building, in the hopes that the patients in the rooms nearest would hear it. There were several lights on quite close, so we sang out as loudly as we could. A passing pedestrian commented, “You’ll have to sing louder than that if you want them inside to hear – that’s the morgue!” Oh well!

Sometimes we used to sing slight variations on Christmas carols! Anyone remember:

“We Three Kings of Orient are,
One in a taxi, one in a car,
One on a scooter, blowing his hooter,
Following Yonder Star!”

or

“While Shepherds washed their socks by night”!

Well, I thought it was time we had some new variations, so, after three, please all join together in this new TVR rendition of “Good King Wenceslas”. One, two, three...

*Good King Smo-len-ski looked out, from his Blackpool tower,
Rows of Tiv’s lay round about, full of British power,
“There’s one thing we need,” he said, “To make them more plusher,
Let’s paint each the colour red, like the flag of Russia!”*

*He wants TVR to grow, and be seen in action,
Lots more racing Tiv’s on show, lots more grunt and traction,
Then he told the crew they should, try and work much harder,
If the quality’s not good, they’ll be renamed Lada!*

Oh well! That's me off Mr. Smolenski's Christmas card list! Not that I was ever on it, of course!

Presents aren't the same either, are they? There was a time when people would make each other Christmas presents. A couple of years ago I suggested to beloved that we should do this. It took her a good 15 minutes before she could regain her composure, and between the remnants of the laughter, ask, "Like what? The only thing you can make is a mess!"

I thought that was a bit unfair and suggested I could frame some of my better photos and offer them as presents, to which she replied "But you only take pictures of TVR's – who would want one of them?"

She's got a point! Back to the drawing board!

But presents aren't the same are they? In my youth it was an apple, an orange and some nuts. These days your Apple is a PC, your Orange is a network on the new mobile phone, and your nuts are – well – your nuts!

But people do expect more and more today. And if they are not satisfied, instead of keeping the well meant present until next Christmas and then giving it away to some unsuspecting relative that you don't normally see from one year to the next, they box it back up and return it to the shop the day after Christmas to get it changed – hence the name Boxing Day – the day most people pack their new presents back into the boxes to take them back to the shops.

Either that or they save them all up for the next car boot! The whole of the car boot business would probably collapse if it wasn't for unwanted Christmas presents.

When it comes to presents, Beloved wasn't too happy with me last year. I asked her what she wanted for Christmas, and she said, "Oh, just surprise me!" so at 3 o'clock on Christmas morning I leaned over, in bed, and shouted "BOO!".

What do you give the person who has everything? Apart from a burglar alarm, of course!

Anyway – here's a Christmas verse all about (TVR) presents (with apologies to Clement Clarke Moore):

*Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house
No-one was stirring – except for my spouse,
She was busy wrapping presents, some TVR books,
A TVR shirt that is good for my looks!
A TVR jacket, two TVR hats,
And even a pair of new TVR mats.
She mused as she listened and heard me still snoring:
"Why is it my husband's so terribly boring?!"*

*She wrapped up a tie, with TVR on it,
Some nuts, some bolts and a TVR grommet;*

*She wrapped up a nice pair of TVR socks,
But refused point plank with the new T5 box!
She put out the lights and switched off the fires
And left all unwrapped my new set of tyres!
Why is it that wives don't know how it feels
To open, at Christmas, a new set of wheels?
And despite all the kisses, the thanks and the hugs
She can't see the romance in a new set of plugs!*

And if that hasn't got you in a Christmassy mood, I'll offer you my rendition of the TVR 12 days of Christmas, which starts with a part built TVR, then you add the bits missing, until by day 12 you are ready for its first run – but there's a sting in the tail:

*On the 1st day of Christmas my true love gave to me, a part built T-V-R car,
On the 2nd day of Christmas my true love gave to me, two number plates and a...
On the 3rd day of Christmas my true love gave to me, three cans of oil, two ...
On the 4th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, four driving lamps, three...
On the 5th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, five forward gears, four...
On the 6th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, six rear lights glowing, five...
On the 7th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, seven dials a'spinning, six...
On the 8th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, eight plugs a'sparking, seven...
On the 9th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, nine spokes per wheel, eight...
On the 10th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, ten Leven switches, nine...
On the 11th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, eleven fuses blowing, ten...
On the 12th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, twelve points for speeding!*

Well, that's me done for another year of Mutterings. I'm off to put on my red suit, white beard, and boots – no I'm not playing at Santa – I'm going out in the TVR and blast through every front facing speed camera I can find and then challenge the boys in blue to prove who was driving!

Have a peaceful, meaningful and points free Christmas!

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