

Christmas Traditions

How will Christmas be for people this year? With this in mind I began to think about Christmas past. My sister and I hung our dad's wellington socks up either side of the mantelpiece and hoped Father Christmas would bring what we desired. We always got tangerines, selection boxes, a compendium of games (which I hated) and our main presents. Boxing Day would be the time for our aunty, uncle & cousin to arrive and some years, friends of mum and dad. They had sherry, port and I should imagine beer but I don't remember having wine.

Boxing Day was also the day that dad would do magic tricks. Making a kitten appear out of a top hat. Break an egg, then make it whole again with the aid of table tennis bat. Don't ask me how it was done, but it was. He ventured into other things. His disaster was a house made of cardboard with a cotton wool snow roof, displayed proudly on the sideboard. String had been carefully threaded through the back to the windows, this string would act as a fuse when set alight. The idea was that the windows would open and presents cascade to the floor. Unfortunately something went amiss and it went up in flames. He also made a snowman but I don't remember that being a success either.

He persevered and his moment of glory was his "Rocket". Simple but effective, all you need is card string and a balloon. The body is made from a piece of card formed into a tube with card fins at the bottom. A card base glued into place with a hole in the centre. String threaded through the base



from the inside and securely tied. Then small presents wrapped and tied with individual strings. These strings are gathered together and tied to the string inside the rocket. Another small hole made near the fins and again string tied from inside. Now for exciting bit. To make the nose cone, a balloon was put in the open end and blown up until it fitted tightly in the space. Another length of string sellotaped to the balloon. More string attached to the "tie" of the balloon and the rocket suspended from the ceiling.

Anticipation would be high as it came time for the launch. The string fuse would be set alight. We watched as the flame flickered up to the balloon which would burst with bang. The rocket tipped (but remained hanging from the ceiling) and the presents would dangle from the inside of the rocket. We never tired of it and for many years carried on making it, so it became a tradition for our own family.

One year we even did it at Greengate, to the consternation of the people gathered. The rocket need not be filled with presents, sweets could be put in which would spill out over the floor. So that is our family Christmas tradition, are there any more out there?

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