



a Victorian Christmas

Queen Victoria

The Christmas period has been a time of festivity since pagan times when the winter solstice was celebrated to mark the promise of spring.

The early Christians were undecided when to celebrate the birth of Christ but in the 4th century the Pope decided on December 25th allowing the traditional festivities to be included in the Christian celebration.

Always a time for communities to come together, the focus shifted slightly in Victorian times. Queen Victoria had a strong belief in the importance of home and family and she encouraged the fashion of making Christmas a family affair with celebrations held in the home as well as outside it.

Christmas Service

Queen Victoria and her family encouraged people to adopt a high moral tone. Charitable works by the wealthy and church going for all were an important part of Victorian life.

The Christmas service was traditionally held in the Parish or village church with a Nativity scene often prominently displayed near the altar and the church decked out with greenery and candles. The whole family and all the members of their household were called by the pealing of the bells and carols were sung during the special Christmas service.

Christmas Pastimes

In 1859 Queen Victoria and Prince Albert gave a Christmas Fancy Dress Children's Ball at Buckingham Palace. The costumes were usually elaborate miniature versions of what was popular for adults at that time - Elizabethan costume, 18th century costume complete with powdered wig, etc. The wealthier Victorians picked up on the idea and it became a popular way of raising money for charity over the Christmas period.

Pantomimes, amateur theatricals, singing around the piano and dancing were all popular during the Victorian period but it was the Church Service on Christmas Day that was the focal point for the whole household.

