**Memories of Christmas Past in Minal**

*These are Miss Lily Head’s own words (1905-1997) transcribed from a Dictaphone by Susan Monson. They give an insight into life in the early 1900’s.*

At Christmas anyone that had a big family or were really poor were helped. Mr Soames used to go round the village at festival times. If it was logs they wanted or coal for the fire, that was paid for. He would go on the coal wagon or the butcher's cart. They used the charity money that was left years ago to give to people who were poor.

There was a Christmas concert at school; every child in the school had to be in it. Girls wore a white dress, a sash and a different coloured hair ribbon according to which part you were taking. The boys had to have velvet trousers and white shirts. The mothers had made the shirts and pinafores, with a clean handkerchief pinned on and shoes cleaned. It was school songs (some in parts) and recitations, not acting.

At Christmas Mr Soames used to take the boys with him to help get the holly; they'd climb the trees and all sorts. It all had to be things that were living and growing, nothing but that. It was all gathered round the hedgerows without knocking anything to pieces. The children were given things to do and were in charge of finding enough holly and ivy or anything that would decorate the church.

At home we always had lovely books at Christmas: Annuals so we could all join in with them and Nursery Rhyme books for the tiny ones. The boys had wheelbarrows made at the carpenter’s and a doll’s cot for the girls and things like that. Christmas time they’d buy us some new records, new tunes which had come out, anything they’d heard us trying to sing. We could play it and learn it properly.

We got nuts from Thickets Road in September. My dad used to put them in a big flower pot down in the damp ground and that kept them, they didn’t go dry. Then he got them up at Christmas. You couldn’t have afforded those things if you didn’t get them that way.