

# “War Is Over” (If You Want It)

By Alan Miles – 30 Nov 2013 [[email](#)]

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When I was a youngster and at Christmas time; my Mum and Dad, my sister Brenda and I nearly always visited my Aunty Ellen, and who my Mum called ‘Nan’.

I was always pleased to see my cousin Marilyn, who was and still is a bundle of laughs. I always remember my Uncle Fred (her dad) who didn’t like turkey, and he ate pork instead. They lived at Carr Road and we lived at Fleeming Road. How my Mum and Aunty Ellen managed to cook so many well-cooked tasty meals in their small kitchen, I’ll never know. No-one on earth could make such tremendous mince pies and all else. But boy didn’t it seem to take forever, waiting for your Christmas dinner as a kid.

I can remember being told that dinner would be at 3pm, and then it seemed like forever before 3pm would be here. I used to think it *must be* about 3pm, only then to look at the clock to see that it was only 1pm! I’m sure my stomach grumbled even louder then, and my mouth salivated even more, as I could smell the Turkey Dinner cooking and hear the hot fat sizzling away in the baking tray.

All the men had a nap after dinner, donning a sippy paper- hat on out of the crackers, and all the women were doing the washing-up (quite happily!). All the men were snoring after drinking sherry, port, and beer. Once the dinner had arrived, my Uncle Fred’s teeth used to nearly drop out of his mouth, as he struggled to chew on a slice of roast pork. I still have to laugh as I remember Uncle Fred’s teeth coming out.

What was lovely in the evening, was when everybody came back to life, and had a few more drinks, Uncle Fred would get his banjo out .He had played in a jazz band back in the 1920s. I used to love the sound of the banjo going ‘clunkerty-clunk’; he was definitely the Eric Clapton of the banjo world. But it was verboten to eat any walnuts, especially the bowl with the nutcrackers on, because all the walnuts were the property of Uncle Fred. He used to tell me off for eating his walnuts; I silently nicknamed him to myself ‘The Squirrel’.

After completing a huge pile of washing-up, and having served the tea, I always remember my Mum chatting to my Aunty Ellen. They would start talking about the war; my Mum would start off by saying “*What about the War Nan?*” My aunt would reply “*aww, we don’t want another one*” and they **really** didn’t.

My Mum would continue, “*what about that Lord Haw-Haw? He used to come on the radio with that very posh accent starting with ‘Germany calling, Germany calling’*”. He would say ‘Hello Rats come out of your holes’. Aunt Nan would reply, “*What worried*

*us was he knew all the names, addresses and details and give them out if they were killed in a recent bombing raid". My Mum would reply "he got shot in Germany didn't he Nan". Then my Mum would say "Remember that doodlebug that landed on Burtons up the High Street?" my aunt replied and shuddering "we just missed it Doll didn't we?"*

Yes they knew all about war, they were nearly killed twice, and really wanted to put it all behind them, perhaps this is why they appreciated Christmas so much.

I recall Remembrance Sunday, in my family it was considered as a depressing day , they couldn't wait to see the back of that day. . They were not unpatriotic or 'lefties', they just did not want to be reminded of it anymore. They just wanted to forget the war and Armistice Day, and all else connected with war.

Today Armistice Day, has become greatly exalted, greatly more praised than ever before. I call this 'The Bad Conscience of The Bourgeoisie'. Most of those who praise wars have never really been in one.

Some great memories I hold from Christmas with my family, and would like to thank them for such great times.

I hope that readers of "Walthamstow Memories" have some great memories of Christmas Day too.

Merry Christmas

Alan