



Some people decorate their Christmas trees with baubles. Others decorate them with memories.

My parents loved Christmas, and we always had visitors, often from overseas. On Christmas Eve, we would sing carols and read Christmas poems around the tree. Everyone would listen patiently while I creaked out 'Silent Night' on an ancient concertina someone had found in their attic. Then we would watch as the candles burnt down, taking bets on which would last longest.

Many of the decorations I hang up each year date from those days: battered straw stars, little woollen elves, tiny toadstools, collected when we lived in Sweden in the 1950s; foil hearts and origami cranes, made by Danish and Japanese friends in the 1960s; miscellaneous angels, survivors of long-gone angel chimes or hanging mobiles.

Over the years there have been additions: most of them gifts rather than purchases. A glass angel from Norway, a homemade bead star, a feathery owl, a koala wearing a Christmas hat, a pottery angel, a pair of whacky sheep: each one reminds me of a person or a place and lights a spark of gratitude in my heart.

What memories will you be hanging on your tree this Christmas?

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