

# Scarlet's Christmas Carol



My wife Diane and I absolutely love Christmas. We always have done, even when we were younger and our love of the season was considered very un-cool by our friends. Part of what we love about Christmas is the element of tradition. As we have been together for over 17 years now, we have many of our own little traditions as well as the big ones we all share. Our trimmings go up early, we always go for a walk on Christmas Day, before we start cooking our traditional Christmas dinner. Being vegetarians we always sit down to a nut loaf, and I have perfected the recipe over the years. We give our presents first thing, and I am awakened very early in the morning by a very excited wife without fail.

A major tradition that Diane started was the reading and watching of Dickens' A Christmas Carol. We read the story every year, normally on Christmas Eve.

Of course, A Christmas Carol has a special, if mixed, place in the hearts of disabled people because of Tiny Tim. Many disabled people consider this famous literary character as the embodiment of a tragic poor little cripple but Dickens created Tiny Tim to demonstrate to his readers the injustice so widespread in Victorian society. In a society that had such wealth held in the hands of a few, how could it be right that there were other people who were so poor? Scrooge's epiphany during the piece leads him to support the Cratchit's and ensure young Tim's future. It is acknowledged that Dickens played a major

**IT IS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT DICKENS PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN CHANGING VICTORIAN SOCIETY VIEWS**

part in changing Victorian society views, from supporting the attitude of laissez-faire to a more philanthropic caring one. This led eventually to the creation of the welfare state and the NHS.

As a life long socialist, and someone who would not be here without these two iconic British institutions, this means that Dickens is one of my heroes. I also feel that A Christmas Carol is even more relevant at the moment. It seems that recently every time I turn on my TV or radio or read a newspaper, someone is complaining about how expensive it is to provide support for those people in our modern society that are in similar situations to the Cratchits. For some reason disabled people are being especially targeted in this money saving witch hunt, and many of the services that play an essential part in ensuring independent lives are being dismantled in the name of cost. While I would love to go off on one of my patented political rants here, I won't, as I know that some of our readers will agree with much of the current moves to change the way the state supports disabled people. The driving reason behind this support (I think) is the desire to create a society that doesn't just commit disabled people to the scrap heap and force them into a life on benefits, and I whole heartedly agree with this sentiment. My only issue is that disabled people still live in a world that is not fully accessible to us and are surrounded by attitudes that see us as less than the majority, and both of these make it harder for us all to find a useful place in society.

Now all of this might sound very depressing and negative, especially for the Christmas issue of PosAbility magazine, but I don't think this has to be the case. We are now at a real turning point and if disabled

people all work together, whatever our political views, we can help build a better, fairer society. If the world we live in is like Ebenezer Scrooge, then we must be like the three ghosts. Like the Ghost of Christmas Past, we must remember how badly disabled people were treated in the past and as the Ghost of Christmas Present we should be proud of how far we have come in our quest for equality. But it's the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come that should give us hope. As the Social Model of Disability states, it is the world around us and the barriers put in our way that actually disable us. If we continue in our progress to remove these barriers then we may eventually create a world where the word 'disability' does not describe a lack of ability but will be instead the name given to a vital and valued section of society. I know that's a Christmas present that is top of the list.

That's all from me this year. Sorry if I got a bit heavy, but A Christmas Carol always gets me like this. So to you all, "God Bless us, everyone" (other deities are available). ■

