

# Mr. Charles Boyt

C.T. 1958

By Carl Whiteley



**A big moment for eight-year-old Colin Bagshot, of 82, Lingwood Avenue, Mudeford. C.T. Photos**

IT is the wish of every child at this festive season to visit Father Christmas. There is something about his fresh rosy cheeks, flowing white beard and bright red gown that makes their eyes sparkle and toes tingle.

They talk about him and rehearse their requests for weeks but when face to face they just gaze in awe—delighted beyond words.

What a thrill it must be for Santa. The endless joy he gives by simply patting a head and asking a name. Then he digs into his wonderful sack and out comes a gift—treasured probably more than anything else because it was given by Santa himself.

## TRADITIONAL VISITOR

Father Christmas is a traditional visitor to Staggs store in the High Street. He arrived at the end of last month and by this evening will be ready for a well-earned rest.

Behind the make-up is 42-year-old Mr. Charles Boyt, of Southey Road, Somerford, who has been welcoming children at Staggs for the past ten years.

He thoroughly enjoys the job although he admits that at times he gets some very tricky questions fired at him.

On busy days he has something like 200 little visitors. "Most are shy to start with, but after a few words they become a little more talkative", said Santa. "When they start getting too inquisitive then it is time to ask them what they would like for Christmas".

Quite a number of children ask where he comes from. His answer? Lapland, near the North Pole. But this is one of the easy-to-answer questions.

## DIFFICULT SITUATION

He was faced with a difficult situation on one occasion when a neighbour's small child looked into his face, then turned to her mother and remarked: "He's got Mr. Boyt's eyes!"

But it was quite some time before his own two boys, Derek and Trevor, now twelve and eight respectively, twigged on to the situation.

Gradually they recognised a similarity between Father Christmas in Staggs and their father. One recognised his voice and the other his watch! They were told that Father Christmas was very busy and father was helping out.

Then he is posed the question: "You are not a real Father Christmas" followed by a few remarks that the boys at school say there isn't a Santa Claus. To this he replies: "If you don't believe in Father Christmas then he won't bring you anything". When this reply becomes doubted he takes the boys and girls into his confidence and asks them not to spoil it for the tiny tots.

## SERVED IN MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Boyt has lived in Christchurch since 1935 and served for five years in the Army during the war. He saw service in the Middle East and Italy before returning home in 1945.

He applied for a position at Staggs ten years ago and was asked if he would also like to take

on the job of Father Christmas. He loves children and was delighted. "I look forward to these few weeks before Christmas every year", he said.

As I left the store two little faces peered in through the window. "It's Father Christmas" they said. "Let's go in and see him". Off they went hand-in-hand.

"A Merry Christmas" shouted Mr. Boyt as I departed. And the same to you Santa.