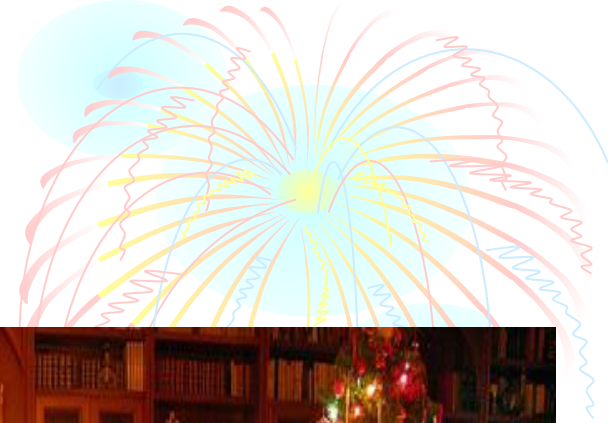


Christmas Traditions in Great Britain



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Christmas



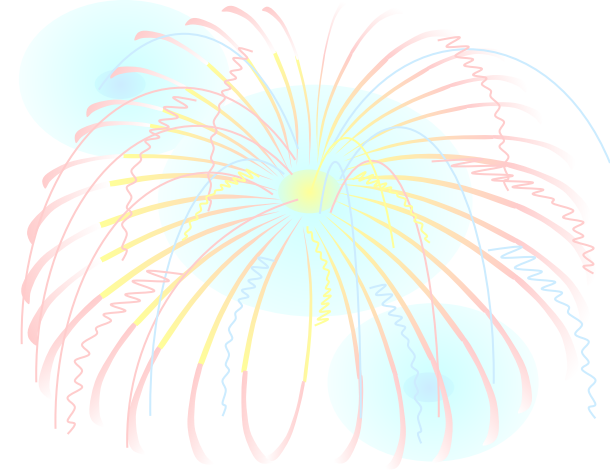
**Christmas Day ,
December 25, is
probably the most
popular holiday in
Great Britain. It is a
family holiday.
Traditionally all
relatives and friends
get together and give
each other presents.**



History of Christmas

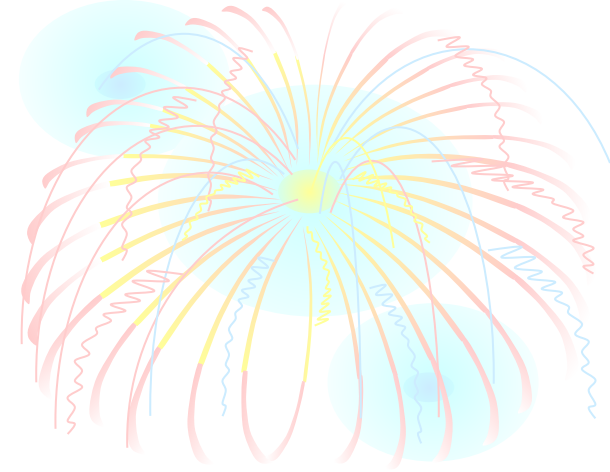


The history of Christmas dates back to thousand years. The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336AD in the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine (he was the first Christian Roman Emperor). A few years later Pope Julius I officially declared that the birth of Jesus would be celebrated on the 25th December.



St Augustine was the person who really started Christmas in the UK by introducing Christianity in the 6th century. He came from countries that used the Roman Calendar, so western countries celebrate Christmas on the 25th December. Then people from Britain and Western Europe took Christmas on the 25th December all over the world!

Stockings



Christmas - is a holiday for the whole family, but most of all children love it and wait for Christmas. They hang out near the fireplace stockings for gifts.

Christmas Tree

The first Christmas Trees came to Britain in the 1830s. They became very popular in 1841, when Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's German husband) had a Christmas Tree set up in Windsor Castle. Ever since then, Christmas Trees have been a part of a British Christmas.



Because of the danger of fire, in 1895 Ralph Morris, an American telephonist, invented the first electric Christmas lights, similar to the ones we use today.





Holly, Ivy and other greenery such as Mistletoe were originally used in pre-Christian times to help celebrate the Winter Solstice Festival and ward off evil spirits and celebrate new growth.

The U.K. and Germany were the main countries to keep the use of the greenery and here the Christian meanings are :



Holly



Holly became the recognized symbol of Christmas. According to some versions, from it the wreath of the Christ was done, and a berry holly have reddened from blood of the Savior. The prickly leaves represent the crown of thorns that Jesus wore when he was crucified. The berries are the drops of blood that were shed by Jesus because of the thorns.

Ivy

It has to cling to something to support itself as it grows.



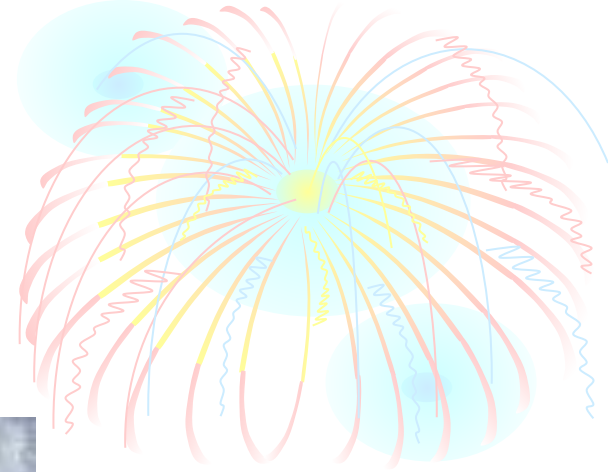
This reminds us that we need to cling to God for support in our lives.

Mistletoe

The practice of hanging it in the house goes back to the times of the ancient Druids.



It is supposed to possess mystical powers which bring good luck to the household and ward off evil spirits. It was also used as a sign of love and friendship in Norse mythology and that's where the custom of kissing under Mistletoe comes from.



The custom of kissing under Mistletoe comes from England! The original custom was that a berry was picked from the sprig of Mistletoe before the person could be kissed and when all the berries had gone, there could be no more kissing!

Candles



One of the main traditions of these weeks are wreaths with candles which have special meaning. Such wreaths are done on the first Sunday of this period, and usually they consist of 5 candles: four red and one white.



Santa Claus is often connected with the name of St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas was a Bishop who lived in the 4th century AD in a place called Myra in Asia Minor (now called Turkey).

He was a very kind man and had a reputation of a man who helped the poor and gave secret gifts to people who needed it.

Because of his kindness Nicholas was made a Saint.







Christmas Cards

People around the world send Christmas Cards to their friends and family.

The first Christmas card was created and sent in 1843. A man named John Calcott Horsley printed the first Christmas card for Sir Henry Cole, the friend who had given him this idea.



Christmas Dinner

The typical dinner consists of turkey with potatoes and other vegetables such as carrots and sprouts. In Britain this is followed by Christmas pudding - a sweet pudding containing a lot of dried fruit and often covered with burning brandy. Other traditional dish in Britain is a Christmas cake - a cake containing a lot of dried fruit and usually having a covering of icing (hard sugar) made to be eaten at Christmas.





*Merry
Christmas*