BRITISH TIMES

Christmas Edition

Dear Friends!

It's that time of year again, when the smell of warm Christmas Pudding wafts the air; when the sound of Christmas cracker 'pops' leaves duelers wondering who will get the long body of the Christmas cracker rich with party hat, gift and joke, and who the leftover handle; when fireplaces roar and cheeks are rosy from a mulled tipple; a time when chocolate log needs to be covered with an extra sugary chocolate blanket and garnered with a dollop of clotted cream; when the smell from the oven of the homemade minced pies turns to culinary bliss when Mum takes them fresh from the tray and places them in front of you. You pierce one with a fork, mix it with a helping of ice-cream and then: Mmm! Or the time when Dad puts on the woolen jumper with the message: "Forget the kids, bring me a present instead!" and a time when you genuinely feel a bit magical because it is the season to be jolly!

So, dear friends, I hope you enjoy our special edition newsletter with stories and opinions relating to festive seasons worldwide, championing the truly global perspective available at the British Lyceum.

And remember, no holiday is complete without wishing 'Merry Christmas' to the people you care about (and remember, it only works if you tell them in English!)

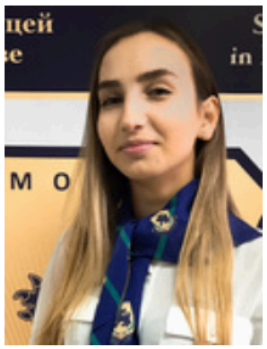
So as I finish my prologue, let me wish you with might
A happy Christmas to all, and to all a goooooooood night

Mr. John

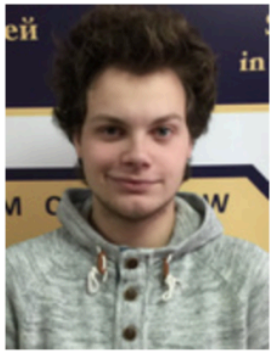
Maria

Jedrzej

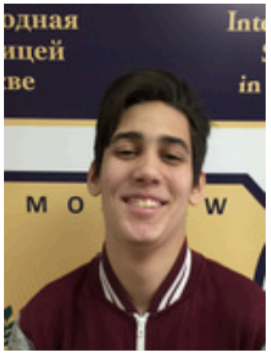
Egor



Kristina



Alex

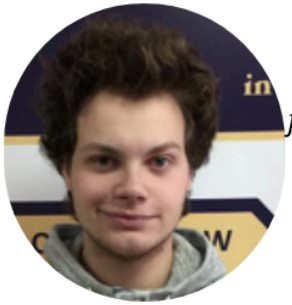


Omar

Daryl McCreery

Damien Butters

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!



It is the yearly celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. It falls on the 25th of December in the Catholic Church and on the 7th of January in the Orthodox Church. The holiday signifies the start of the New Year and of new life. All over the world people celebrate this holiday with the ever green tree – the Christmastree!

ALEX GLUSHCHENKO

Interestingly, in England, Austria, Germany, Spain, France, Czech Republic and many other European countries, Christmas is celebrated on a much grander and bigger scale than Russian New Years. A New year celebration in Europe usually only consists of a modest family dinner. But at Christmas time, no one is bored! Christmas markets, queues for gift shopping, festively decorated streets and houses, Santa Claus, wintery strolls through well-lit parks – this is real European Christmas! To experience it is an absolute must at least once in your life. All of the bright lights, the joyful smiles on the faces of passers-by, the great discounts in shops, and most importantly – Christmas markets! What a pleasure to celebrate Christmas in Europe. The English of course carefully prepare for Christmas. Here the most revered Christmas traditions and customs are followed. If you visit the country, you will definitely see Christmas wreaths with red berries on the doors of houses. They even have their own name for the night before Christmas: "the Night of candles," because at this time the windows of the houses and churches are well decorated with candles.

In Germany, on December 1st, more than 200 cities across the country open their Christmas markets. Sellers wear beautiful medieval dresses, after all, the tradition of fairs began in the XVI century. In Spain, before the Christmas service, people danced in the street holding hands.

And the Spanish festivenights sell all kinds of confectionery, making Christmas even sweeter! InFinland, the lower branches of fir trees which adorn the city streets are leftfor children to decorate throughout the entire month. In Italy, Babbo Natale bringstoys to children who have been good throughout the year. The most famous song,'Tu scendi dalle stelle' ('You came down from the stars'), can be heard on thestreet, in schools, and is even played in the church resting on the spot whereJesus was born in Bethlehem! People eat 'panetonne' ('big bread') full ofraisins and sugar (sometimes sprinkled with chocolate) and towns recreate thescene of the birth of Christ in a living 'presepe,' with donkies, sheperds,blacksmiths, ancient dress and all!

Christmasis wonderful time of the year when everything what you want comes true and eventhe things that you can't imagine, happen. It's time for family, for seeingyour relatives, grandparents and even old friends. People also go out of theirway to help others at Christmas time, such as the British Muslim Nahbi Harun,who decided to celebrate Christmas with the homeless in London. He said:"I wanted to do something for people who need help!". In most Moscowchurches there are Orthodox youth volunteers who annually organize Christmaslunches and dinners for War Veterans and the needy.

What a wonderful time Christmas is! I encourage you all to go out and help others in your own way over this festive period!

OUR BIGGEST CELEBRATION IN EGYPT. EID AL-ADHA

OMAR HIFNAWY

Eid al-Adha, also called the "Sacrifice Feast", is the second of two Muslim holidays celebrated worldwide each year, and considered the holier of the two.

It honours the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son, as an actof obedience to God's command. Before Abraham sacrificed his son, God provideda male goat to sacrifice instead. In commemoration of this, an animal issacrificed and divided into three parts: one third of the share is given to thepoor and needy; another third is given to relatives, friends and neighbors; andthe remaining third is retained by the family. In the Islamic lunarcalendar, Eid al-Adha falls on the 10th dayof Dhu al-Hijjah. The international datesvary from year to year drifting approximately 11 days earlier each year.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CELEBRATION

According to Islamic tradition, the valley of Meccawas a dry, rocky, and uninhabited place. God instructed Abraham to bringHagar (Hājar), his Arabian (Adnan) wife, and Ishmael to Arabia from theland of Canaan.

As Abraham was preparing for his return journey to Canaan, Hagarasked him, "Did God order you to leave us here? Or are you leaving us hereto die?" Abraham did not even look back. He just nodded, afraid that he wouldbe too sad and that he would disobey God. Hagar said, "Then God will notwaste us; you can go." Though Abraham had left a large quantity of foodand water with Hagar and Ishmael, the supplies quickly ran out, and within afew days the two began to feel the pangs of hunger and dehydration.

Hagar ran up and down between two hills, Safa and Marwa, seventimes, in her desperate quest for water. Exhausted, she finally collapsedbeside her baby Ishmael and prayed to God for deliverance. Miraculously, aspring of water gushed forth from the earth at the feet of baby Ishmael. Otheraccounts have the angel Jibra'il, striking the earth and causing the spring toflow in abundance. With this secure water supply, known as the Zamzam Well,they were not only able to provide for their own needs, but were also able totrade water with passing nomads for food and supplies.

Years later, Abraham was instructed by God to return from Canaanto build a place of worship adjacent to Hagar's well (the Zamzam Well). Abrahamand Ishmael constructed a stone and mortar structure – known as the Kaaba –which was to be the gathering place for all who wished to strengthen theirfaith in God. As the years passed, Ishmael was blessed with nubuwwah(prophet-hood) and gave the nomads of the desert his message of submission toGod. After many centuries, Mecca became a thriving desert city and a majorcentre for trade, thanks to its reliable water source, the Zamzam Well.

One of the main trials of Abraham's life was to face the commandof God to sacrifice his dearest possession, his son. The son is not named inthe Quran, but Muslims believe it to be Ishmael, thoughit is mentioned as Isaac in the Bible. Upon hearing this command, Abrahamprepared to submit to the will of God. During this preparation, Shaitan (theDevil) tempted Abraham and his family by trying to dissuade them from carryingout God's commandment, and Abraham drove Satan away by throwing pebbles at him.In commemoration of their rejection of Satan, stones are thrown at symbolic pillarsduring the Stoning of the Devil during Hajj rites.

When Abraham attempted to cut his throat, he was astonished tosee that his son was unharmed and instead, he found a ram had been slaughtered.Abraham had passed the test through his willingness to carry out God's command.

THE OTHER SIDE OF CHRISTMAS

EGOR OLENICH

It is completely wrong to think that Christmas is entire a positive holiday. There are a lot of downsides too, even if you don't notice them all.

Firstly, the shops. There are actually two problemsassociated with shopping on Christmas. It is really hard to find an open shopand even if you are lucky to do so, they are horribly crowded, making you feellike a fish out of water.

Secondly, People only seem like they doing any work.We all understand the Christmas vibe and as such we know that everyone isthinking about the Christmas feast instead of doing their job! This alsocontinues right after the holidays.

Another huge disadvantage is that everyone spends awhole lot of time shopping. It doesn't only include presents, but also involvesunnecessary discount purchases. A lot of people coming out of their houses justto buy some unneeded thing. This creates traffic on roads and an overcrowdedenvironment in the malls.

The number of accidents increases at Christmas timebecause people drink and because people launch fireworks, sometimes both at thesame time! Accidents as well can happen to anybody if he is in the middle of abig crowd.

The Government spends too much money on celebratingthis holiday, in the countryside, towns and cities. This money could be spenton something better than outdoor decorations or cutting down Christmas treesthat are not even sold in the end.

Overall, no matter the negative sides of Christmas,people still love this holiday and keep spending their time with family, andenjoy eating the turkey of course!

CHRISTMAS

DARYL MCCREERY

When I wasa child, I used to get really annoyed about the solemn reminders that Christmaswas all about the birth of the Saviour who brought news of eternal life afterdeath in the loving arms of God. It got on my nerves because everybody knows that Christmas is all about presents, food, and not going to school, right? Right?! The above is an ironic look on childish self-centredness, adult hind sight sentimentality as well as a stab at modern commercialization of Christmas.

This commercialization has gone to the extent that very many people are not aware ofor do not care about the underlying reason for celebrating Christmas in thefirst place. Having said all that, what I love most about Christmas is the timespent with family and loved ones, and the atmosphere of peace, love andgoodwill to all people. You don't have to be Christian or even a believer toappreciate that. Essentially, it is the sentimental side of Christmas that Ilike most.

Did any ofyou know that the vast majority of traditions connected with Christmas,especially the sentimental ones, were 'fixed' by Charles Dickens in thenineteenth century? Thanks to him, we put some food out for Santa Clause, orFather Christmas as he was known then, before putting a stocking above the hearthand then going to bed on Christmas Eve. The stocking is, of course, put out sothat Mr. Clause has somewhere to place the gift he brings to good boys andgirls. The standard recipe for sweet mince pies can also be found in Dickens'works. Many people don't believe me when I tell them that so many traditionsaround Christmas owe a great debt to Charles Dickens, but I will leave it toyou to read his delightful Christmas stories and find the answers for yourselves.

Now, I amnot, by any means, saying that before Dickens there were no Christmastraditions and customs; no, certainly there were, it's just that

differentareas of Britain had their own Christmasy idiosyncrasies, and Dickens broughtthem together and presented them to the English reading public.

Here aresome common things that happen around the festive season. It is cold, wet, and foggy in England at Christmastime.Families welcome the warmth and cheer of a Yule log blazing on the hearth. Theydecorate their homes with holly, ivy, and other evergreens and hang a mistletoe"kissing bough."

Throughout the holidays, carolers go from house to house attwilight ringing handbells and singing Christmas songs. "The Holly and theIvy" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" are English favourites.People give the carolers treats, such as little pies filled with nuts and driedfruits.

The day before Christmas is very busy for families inEngland. They wrap presents, bake cookies, and hang stockings over thefireplace. Children write a letter to Father Christmas with their wishes. Theytoss their letter into the fire so their wishes can go up the chimney. Afterthe children fall asleep on Christmas Eve, Father Christmas comes to visit. Hewears a long, red robe, carries a sack of toys, and arrives on his sleigh pulledby reindeer. He fills the children's stockings with candies and small toys.

On Christmas Day, everyone sits down to the midday feastand finds a colorful Christmas cracker beside their dinner plate. A Christmascracker is a paper-covered tube. When the end tabs are pulled, there is a loudcrack. Out spills a paper hat to wear at dinner, small trinkets, and a riddleto read aloud to everyone at the table.

The family enjoys a feast of turkey with chestnut stuffing, roast goose with currants, or roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. Brussels sprouts are likely to be the vegetables.

Best of all is the plum pudding topped with a sprig of holly. Brandy is poured over the plum pudding and set a flame. Then family members

enjoy a dramatic show as it is carried into the dining room. Whoever finds the silver charm baked in their serving has good luck the following year. The was sail bowl, brimming with hot, spiced wine, tops off the day's feast. It is said that all quarrels stop when people drink was sail.

After dinner, the family gathers in the living room to listen to the Queen of England deliver a message over radio and television. At tea time in the late afternoon, the beautifully decorated Christmas cake is served.

The day after Christmas is called Boxing Day. This day has nothing to do with fighting. Long ago, people filled church alms boxes with donations for the poor. Then on December 26, the boxes were distributed. Now people often use this day to give small gifts of money to the mail carrier, news vendor, and others who have helped them during the year.

Beginning on Boxing Day, families can enjoy stage performances called pantomimes. This activity originally meant a play without words, or actors who mimed or enter tained without speaking. Pantomime now refers to all kinds of plays performed during the Christmas season. Such familiar children's stories as "Cinderella" and "Peter Pan" delight young and old alike. In some towns, masked and costumed performer scalled mummers present plays or sing carols in the streets.

HOW TO HAVE A GREAT CHRISTMAS AS A CHILD

DAMIEN BUTTERS

It's that time of the yearagain, the beginning of the Christmas season. Maybe you haven't really gottenin to the spirit in the past or you just want to make this year memorable. Ihope this will show you the how to from school concerts to waiting for Santa.It will ensure that it will be your most wonderful time of the year.

As a child I would start to get excited at the beginning of December when we allowedopening our advent calendar. It wasn't one of those chocolaty things of todaybut one with angels and small gifts inside so we could begin think about how toshare Christmas together. Day by day would go by and a new section opened.

In between the weeks wewould go to church as a family andlisten to the advent prayers in church as we prepared forthe birth of Jesus. Week 4 seemed an eternity away, week one a life time.

Our Christmas tree was alwaysa natural tree, not stolen from the forest, but purchased from the local gardencenter. We always had fun putting up the tree and hiding chocolate gifts inside for others tofind and eat. Was it my year to put the fairy on top of the tree? With 4brothers the fairy event was only goingto happen once or twice in your childhood.

So we would prepare forChristmas.

Let me skip a few years and tell you that I was envious of my older brother when he was allowed to attend the midnight mass on Christmas eve. Not only did he get to it but he didn't have to go to church on Christmas morning.

Then it came the age I was allowed to go. I was so excited that I could stay up to midnight and attend church and not have to worry the next morning and be able to stay and play while my younger brothers went to church.

There was a downside... I had been a believer in Father Christmas, although I didn't ever admit it. On the year of my first midnight mass our true family tradition of sharing Christmas presents before midnight mass was bestowed upon me. There was true excitement but also sadness of the day I found out that Father Christmas worked with my parents and provided all the support he needed to make sure we got the presents we deserved. I didn't realise that he couldn't visit all of us every year and that his visit was through our parents, friends and relatives.

Today I still thank the work of Father Christmas and how now helps me decide on the best gifts for my family and friends.

RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS

MARIA ILINA

During much of the 20th century as a Communist, atheist country, it was not possible to publicly celebrate Christmas. At present, many Russians continue to identify themselves as atheists, so the religious observance of Christmas has faded out of fashion. Increasingly however, since the fall of Communism, Russians are returning toreligion, primarily Russian Orthodoxy. The number of people celebrating Christmas as a religious holiday continues to grow annually.

Some Orthodox Christian Christmastraditions mimic traditions from other parts of Eastern Europe. For example, awhite tablecloth and hay remind Christmas Eve diners of Christ's manger. As inPoland, a meatless meal might be prepared for Christmas Eve, which is eatenonly after the appearance of the first star in the sky.

The Christmas Eve meal is typicallymeatless and may be made up of twelve dishes to represent the twelve apostles.Lenten bread, dipped in honey and garlic, is shared by all members of thefamily gathered.

Kutya is a concoction of grains and poppyseeds sweetened with honey, which serves as one of the main dishes of theChristmas feast. Vegetarian-style borsch or solyanka, a salty stew, may also beserved along with salads, sauerkraut, dried fruit, potatoes, and beans.

The Christmas day meal may feature a maincourse of pork, goose, or other meat dish and will be accompanied by a varietyof side dishes such as aspic, stuffed pies, and desserts in various forms.

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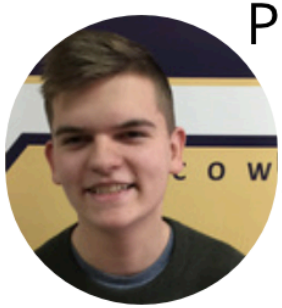
The Russian Santa Claus is named Ded Moroz, or Grandfather Frost. Accompanied by Snegurochka, the snow maiden, he brings presents to children to place under the New Year's tree. He carries a staff, wears valenki , or felt boots, and is carried across Russia in a troika, a sledled by three horses, instead of a sleigh pulled by reindeer.

Russian Christmastide, which called Svyatki, follows the celebration of Christmas and lasts until January 19, the day Epiphany is celebrated. This two-week period is closely associated with pagan traditions of fortune telling and caroling.

POLISH CHRISTMAS



JEDRZEJ LYKHOVID

A Polish Christmas has a lot of traditionsbecause Poland has been followed Catholic Christianity for a very long time(Pope John Paul the Second was Polish). As such, the traditions have existedfor a very long existing in Polish culture

Examples of Polish Christmas traditions arethings like:
-Christmas Eve being celebrated more than Christmas itself.
-12 dishes at Christmas dinner.
-Children receiving presents on Christmas Eve.
-Culinary literature stating that the number of guests at Christmas Eve should be even (plus one plate for the absent/dead/unexpected new comers/infants).
Christmas Eve dishes:
Beetroot, pierogi, carp, Herring, cabbage with mushrooms, Compote of driedfruits, Poppy seed cake, Noodles with poppy seeds.

CHRISTMAS JOKES

- How do sheep wish each other 'Merry Christmas' in Mexico?
- Fleece Navidad!

- What is Santa Clause's mother tongue?
- North POLish.

- Why did the Turkey join Santa's band?
- Because it had the drumsticks.

- Who hides in the bakery at Christmas?
- A minced spy.

P.S. A note from the editor.
No reindeer were harmed in the making ofthis newsletter, though some were copied, pasted, and erased throughout thecourse of its design.