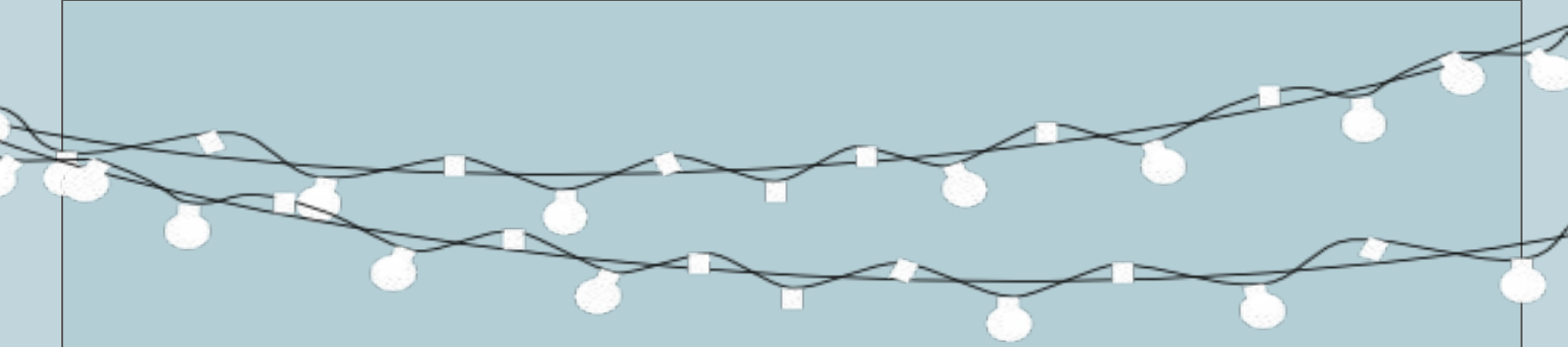




THE ILLUSTRATOR

Issue 8



THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH SIXTH FORM STUDENT PAPER



2

Sixth Form
Update

3

A Green
Christmas

5

Christmas
in Germany

7

All I want for
Xmas is...?

9

Christmas
Unleashed

11

Air Defence, Covid-19
& the Sleigh

13

The Winter of
Discontent

15

The Sleigh:
a Review

17

Why does Xmas
get all the ads?

20

The Evolution of
Santa Claus

23

Heading Home for
Christmas

27

What's your fav
Xmas song?

30

Creative and
Recipe Corner

33

Our Thanks

SIXTH FORM UPDATE

Welcome to the 8th edition of The Illustrator and another amazing half-term at TGS Sixth Form!

I continue to be impressed and feel so proud of our Sixth Form students who, despite 'everything', still manage to find a way to be brilliant! We have had a variety of initiatives that have highlighted how generous and caring our students and local community are; ranging from donations for Afghanistan, Books for Africa, Rainbow laces and Food Bank collections, as well as continuing to look out for one another.

Our Year 13 students have now completed their Mock examinations and await their feedback, whilst our Year 12 students continue to grow and develop their academic potential. Year 13 having now completed their UCAS applications, are receiving some great offers, and although it's been extremely stressful, several of our students have received interviews at Cambridge, Oxford as well as those pursuing medicine.

Our Sixth Form Open Evening was well attended and we have had over 100 applications so far and I've already had the pleasure of meeting many current Year 11 students, as well as those from several other schools. The Sixth Form seems like it will be well represented again...

I must also thank our wonderful teachers and staff who have also had to adapt to the current climate, and without them our students would not flourish.

As we enter into our festive break, please take time to be with your families and friends and also make sure that you are kind to yourselves too.
See you in 2022!

Mr Alexander (Director of Sixth Form)

I'M DREAMING OF A GREEN CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a time for giving and receiving presents, for spending time with one's family and eating lots of delicious food. But how often do you consider the impacts that the holiday has on the planet? Here are some simple ways of having a more sustainable Christmas, whilst at the same time saving some money.

Christmas trees are one of the most important symbols of Christmas. If possible, try to buy a natural Christmas tree to decorate, or even try renting one, rather than buying a plastic PVC tree, which will end up in landfill. Ensure the tree is grown as locally as possible, as the further it has travelled, the more emissions that will have been released whilst transporting it. If you buy a tree that has a root ball, once the holiday is over, the tree can be planted and enjoyed for another year. If not, make sure to dispose of the tree responsibly: how about cutting up the logs and making a bug hotel?

Decorating the tree with plastic baubles that won't decompose isn't very environmentally friendly, so maybe try making your own decorations for the Christmas tree. Rather than buying plastic ones when the previous year's ones go out of



fashion, try cooking some biscuit decorations. The biscuits, which can be a range of flavours, though gingerbread works particularly well, can then be decorated, bringing the family together with a more personal Christmas tree. The other reason for having more sustainable biscuit decorations, is that they can be eaten; less waste, more food!

When buying presents, it is easy to purchase far too many and go over budget. However, by thinking quality over quantity, the presents that you buy might be better appreciated if more thought has gone into them. For example, try local markets. They have some great unique products which are made locally, rather than being mass produced. You would also be helping small businesses along the way.

Regifting often has a stigma around it. However, if you have a present that you have received, sat untouched in a cupboard, then pass it onto someone else. It does need to be done with care, try not to offend the

original giver and check any use by dates if they are food items.

Once you have all your sustainably sourced gifts, the next step is to wrap them. Avoid papers which are mixed materials, such as those with glitters, foils or plastics mixed in with them. They can't be recycled, so instead, use wrapping papers which only contain paper from certified sources, or even try recycled wrapping papers (don't forget to use biodegradable sticky tape!). Or, to save some money, try reusing wrapping paper from the previous years' gifts. By cutting out sections from large presents, you can save money by not having to buy so much wrapping paper this year, as well as conserving paper. On the other hand if you want to ditch paper altogether, use a scarf to wrap your present instead. Not only is a scarf a practical present during the winter season, but it can be considered a gift itself.



If someone gives you a present with wrapping paper on it, and you are not sure what material it contains, try the scrunch test. When you scrunch the wrapping paper in your hand, and it doubles in size, it contains plastics which cannot be recycled. However, if the paper stays relatively the same size, then it can be recycled. Take the time on Christmas day to remove the non-biodegradable sticky tape from any gifts received. Sticky tape can't be recycled, so removing it from wrapping paper means that the paper can still be recycled.

For those who still enjoy sending Christmas cards, maybe try sourcing plantable ones. Once the recipient has finished with it, they can pot it up, and enjoy the plant that grows from it.

Alternatively, make your own cards - don't forget to use decorations that can be recycled or reused. Christmas isn't Christmas without some sparkle, so if you are adding some to your cards, find some biodegradable glitter, thus preventing microplastics from being released into the environment and polluting it.

You don't have to include all of these ideas this Christmas, but implementing just one or two can make all the difference.

Megan Turner

CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY

In Germany the first taste of Christmas arrives when Lebkuchen (gingerbread) and Spekulatius (gingery biscuits) suddenly appear on the supermarket shelves at the beginning of September (very early to get into the Christmas spirit I know). From the first Sunday in Advent onwards, the famous German Christmas markets, Christmas hits on the radio and Christmas lights spread the Christmas spirit throughout the land. 78% of Germans celebrate Christmas, as, like in most other western countries, it is seen as an important family tradition. Roughly one in four Germans go to church at Christmas; attending the Christmas service at midnight on Christmas Eve is a traditional ritual.

But what are the Christmas traditions in Germany? According to surveys, most people said Christmas involves candles, a Christmas tree, baking Christmas biscuits and buying presents. In 2016, almost 30 million Christmas trees stood in German living rooms – preferably real ones, because plastic abominations are heavily frowned upon by your average German.



However, some traditions are more obscure, such as the yearly viewing by many Germans of an old British black-and-white comedy sketch, 'Dinner for One'. In 2017, more than 12 million Germans tuned in, but this year it will be shown 12 times on German public TV channels alone, starting at 10.30 in the morning and continuing until just before midnight. How the Germans never fail to find this mundane show hilarious year after year utterly bemuses me.



So what happens in the course of a typical German Christmas? Well, it's not that different from a typical English Christmas, but there are a few subtle differences:



Germany celebrates Christmas with two public holidays, 25th and 26th December. For many people, 24th December, Christmas Eve, is divided into a hectic morning and a festive evening. When Christmas Eve falls on a working day, the shops are open until noon, kept busy as people buy their last presents or food for the festive meal. Afterwards attention focuses on decorating the Christmas tree with fairy lights and colourful baubles, wrapping up presents and preparing food. In the early evening families gather, some cultivate classic traditions like singing and making music together. The evening meal is followed by the distribution of presents: this is when everyone is allowed to unwrap the parcels lying under the Christmas tree. Finally, weeks after writing wish lists to the 'Christ Child' (German santa), children expectantly wait to see whether their wishes have been fulfilled, while young people who have returned to their hometowns for the holidays often set off again late at night to meet up with old friends.

But now let's take a look at another seemingly bizarre tradition practiced every Christmas Eve; eating Kartoffelsalat (potato salad). According to the old Christian tradition, the period from St Martin's Day on 11 November until 24 December was a time of fasting. That is why a simple dish is served – for example, carp, because fish is the symbolic fasting meal. However, the most popular dish throughout the country is potato salad with sausages; according to a 2016 survey, that is what almost one in two Germans eat on Christmas Eve. On Christmas Day and the day after, which are both public holidays, people enjoy a lavish feast on a festively decorated table. The traditional Christmas meal is roast goose with potato dumplings and red cabbage.



Fergus Dark

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS...?

Christmas is generally seen as a positive time for gift giving, spending time with family and having fun. However, this isn't the reality for some. According to The Bank of England, a typical UK household spends on average almost £740 more in December than in other months. Additionally, Britain as a whole spends £19m on presents each year. Events like Black Friday and Cyber-Monday contribute to this concept that Christmas should be about spending money which is a damaging notion especially for those who cannot afford to buy these expensive gifts.

Companies are able to play on our desire to buy ever extravagant gifts for people by introducing and promoting deals. They create products specialised for the season and use clever advertising like the John Lewis Christmas advert so that we associate their brands with the positive aspects of the festive season.

In November, we will collectively spend just under £446,000 every minute of every day on presents alone. Families with children under 18 will spend anything from £1000 to more than £2700 in total at Christmas.



One in 14 go into overdraft. The cost of Christmas will be higher this year. Energy bills are rising- at an increase of 49% and products being imported from China cost 10.7% more than the year before.

There is a lot of pressure to spend more money during Christmas time, especially for families living below the poverty line who may have children that expect to receive gifts because all of their friends and peers do. This can be a cause of great concern for some parents who don't want their children to be disappointed when they hear what their classmates received for Christmas, when they couldn't afford similar presents. As well as this, other costs like heating and electricity go up in the winter times which would increase the difficulty for lower income families to be able to celebrate Christmas as we know it now.

Some advice for making Christmas less about consumerism would be to, if you can, get people the gift of an experience instead of a product. This would mean more to someone as you could spend time together sharing the experience, and it would also be more of a memorable gift. As well as this, it would support struggling industries that didn't get any customers due to covid. You could also put a budget in place so that people buy more imaginative or practical gifts that you know will not be wasted. Or you could even make handmade gifts yourself which would be more personal and save money. Donating to an organisation/charity as part of someone's gift would allow you to give something back to the community

Christmas is also seen as more of a burden than a celebration by those who have no one to share it with.



As there is so much emphasis on the occasion representing love and family, it is considered the loneliest time of the year for over 1.5 million older people, with those who have recently lost someone struggling the most.

Age UK found that 77% of over 65s agree that the first Christmas after losing someone is the hardest. There should be more compassion for people who don't have anyone to celebrate the festive season with, especially due to its portrayal as a time for community. Over 750,000 older widowed people often feel lonelier over Christmas than at any other time of the year. About 870,000 people will be eating dinner alone on Christmas day this year including 1 in 10 people aged over 80. Age UK is an organisation which aims to combat loneliness by conducting various activities and services which can offer support to those who are alone. Christmas is not a joyful time for everyone so it's important to be kind and considerate to anyone who you see is struggling, particularly at this time when there is pressure to have a certain experience at Christmas. These perspectives on Christmas should make you question what you really want for Christmas.



CHRISTMAS – UNLEASHED!



Christmas is a time of year that most of us love and enjoy, looking forward to it (and maybe even preparing for it...) from the middle of November onwards! It's a magical time for family, exchanging gifts, extravagant decorations, and fairy-tales of Santa and his elves.



There is no denying the fact that all of these aspects combine to make for a very beautiful and wholly wholesome time of year that's dominated by happiness and hope and joy - and, like it or not, commercialism. The ravenous consumerist culture that has formed in many 'western' societies has enabled the rise of commercialised events on an epic scale, and retailers become swollen with the sheer amount of Christmassy stuff. A hardware store near where I live begins Christmas before Halloween is even over!



But my intent here is not to moan about commercialism. You've all heard rants about it countless times, I'm sure. And there definitely is a case for it. My reason for writing here is to attempt to strip back all the flashy lights, the stockings, and the fairy-tales to expose once more the pure heart of Christmas, the real 'Christmas Spirit' - Jesus Christ!

The fact is, Christmas has, for many people, become a meaninglessly flamboyant celebration of nothing. I'm not suggesting that you and your family have not perhaps forged a meaning for it yourselves, that may well be true. But in many ways Christmas has become tame, and the happiness and hope and joy that we associate with this time of year are merely an inkling of the explosion of these things that can be experienced when we take a step back and consider for a moment what it is



that's actually going on - the full expression of God's amazing kindness!

So much of what we adore about Christmas time is rooted in the events that took place around the time of Jesus' birth on the first-ever Christmas. The candy cane is one of the most treasured symbols of Christmas, but did you know that it has its origins in the Biblical account of Jesus? The confection is decorated with vibrant red stripes, which symbolize Jesus' blood, which he shed on the cross to save us from our wrongdoing; and brilliant white stripes, symbolizing the full forgiveness his sacrifice brings. Other Christmas traditions also boast a foundation in the Bible, including the much-anticipated exchange of gifts, which is a nod to the kingly gifts presented to baby Jesus by the Magi from the east; and the fairy lights which remind us of the bright star that appeared to guide said Magi to Jesus.

What I'm proposing then is nothing quite so revolutionary as abolishing our culture's understanding of Christmas or declaring that only Christians are allowed to celebrate. True, it's a Christian festival that's been adopted by our culture, but the Christian faith, as with many others, relies upon being adopted in order to spread its Good News. Instead, I would urge you to take a few moments, just in your heart, to strip it all back and let your gaze fall full upon the real nature and meaning of it all - the Magi, the star, the Good News of God's kindness; and at the very heart of Christmas, the birth of Christ. Then, and only then, can Christmas truly be unleashed!



AIR DEFENCE, COVID-19 AND THE SLEIGH

Various sources suggest that all 195 nation states are at least 0.01% Christian: even on the secluded North Korean Peninsula there are 12-15,000 Christians and in 2016 state-sanctioned festivities occurred. As a Christian festival, it follows that every nation requires a visit, thus Father Christmas and his sleigh must visit around 800 million homes and travel 160,000,000km - further than the distance from the Earth to the Sun. To make this possible, he must achieve an average speed over 4,700,000 km/h, which according to a spokesperson from Purdue University, Indiana, would create sufficient air resistance to instantaneously vaporise the aircraft and its cargo.

Vaporisation, however, is not St Nicholas' only problem. A plethora of regional volatilities and Covid-19 public health measures have blighted his ability to drift freely through international airspace. Let us consider just a few of the challenges he may face...



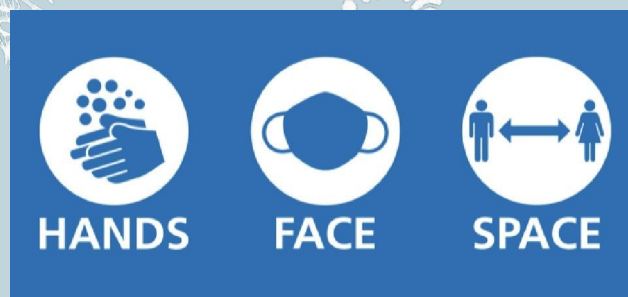
It is of strategic importance for nations to monitor their airspace. The task of overseeing these 'Air Defence Identification Zones' is undertaken by military organisations such as the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).

For example, when a suspicious aircraft enters UK airspace without the necessary permissions (which happens fairly regularly), it is detected by the Control and Reporting Centre (CRC) at RAF Boulmer and a proportionate response is ordered by RAF High Wycombe, which may involve the scrambling of Typhoon GR4s from RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Coningsby. Exciting stuff.

But where does this leave the man in red?

Well, one would hope that the RAF wouldn't engage the sleigh with AMRAAM air-to-air missiles, however breach of airspace restrictions in volatile regions could inadvertently trigger armed escalation between nations.

For example, China has recently renewed its commitment to ending Taiwanese independence and has declared control of airspace above the South China Sea. Perhaps a hypersonic sleigh could provide the perfect excuse for military belligerence? Furthermore, were a herd of airborne reindeer with radioactive noses to prance over the Ukrainian border into Russia, the Kremlin may feel obligated to slice off another Crimea-sized portion of Ukraine...



The expedition is complicated further as all nations have imposed individual international travel restrictions, often red-listing nations with high infection rates (e.g. Southern African Nations) and barring their previous visitors from entry. On arrival into the UK for example, regardless of his vaccination status, Father Christmas must take three PCR tests, submit a passenger locator form and self-isolate for 10 days. If arriving from a Red-Listed country, isolation must be in a government-approved quarantine location. Many EU member states such as Germany have further banned all Red-List arrivals without native citizenship. As a result, in order to avoid hundreds of days of self-isolation or dozens of lengthy citizenship applications in Europe alone, Red-List countries must be last on his itinerary. Nations such as China, Russia and Australia have closed their borders completely, thus he must seek special diplomatic dispensation or face prosecution.

Following such analyses, a pessimist might suggest that all is lost. "Christmas is cancelled," they declare fervidly. Indeed, avoiding sparking a war, complying with 195 rolls of regulatory red-tape, extensive self-isolation and delivering all those presents in just 36 hours (due to different time zones) does seem a tall order. But we are missing something... He has magic on his side.

THE WINTER OF DISCONTENT

The festive season is a joyous time. People sing carols and exchange gifts with one another. 43 years ago, however, this was a very different story: people were not crowding the streets to embrace the Christmas spirit, but rather crowding to strike and refuse to work on their current wages. It wasn't Christmas lights covering the pavement, but uncleared rubbish, waiting weeks to be taken away. Gravediggers went on strike in Merseyside leading to a backlog of bodies waiting to be buried, doubtless a very sinister occurrence. The Prime Minister was at a conference in Barbados at the time and was spotted frolicking in the sea, seemingly unaware of the perilous position the UK was in. "Crisis, What Crisis?" was the front-page headline reported by the Sun, which increased the great divide between the government and the people.

But how did it get this bad? Let me explain how the Winter of Discontent happened and the impacts on the political sphere.



In 1975 the Prime Minister was Harold Wilson and inflation was at a huge 24%. The Prime Minister decided to implement phase one of a pay policy, which proposed a limit on wage rises of £6 per week for all earning below £8500 annually. In 1976 Harold Wilson unexpectedly resigned as PM, and the Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, entered No 10. Phase 2 of the pay policy was set out in 1976, aiming to return to free collective bargaining - where the government does not set any income policy and leaves individual businesses to create their own, however this was rejected by the TUC (Trade Union Congress). In 1977 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced phase 3 of the pay policy which was very similar to phase 2, however the free collective bargaining was to be introduced in stages and the government agreed not to interfere

with wage negotiations. In 1978 the new policy to combat inflation was to cap wage rises at 5%, but this was widely condemned and the TUC voted overwhelmingly against it. Callaghan continued the policy anyway.

The trouble started when Ford Motor Company gave their workers a wage rise within the 5% cap, which disgusted their employees, and on October 5th 1978 57,000 Ford employees were on strike. During the strike Vauxhall Motors offered their employees a wage rise of 8.5% which escalated the problem further. Soon it was lorry drivers who went on strike, sparking a chain of strikes in the UK workforce: the gravediggers, the bin men, the nurses and the train drivers, leaving the UK economy decimated. The strikes finally ended in 1979 when the government came to an agreement with the TUC which was given the title "The Economy, the Government, and Trade Union Responsibilities".



The consequences to the Winter of Discontent was Labour completely losing public trust. Later in 1979 Labour lost a vote of no-confidence in Westminster and a General Election was called. Margaret Thatcher of the Conservative Party won the election and set about dealing with the inflation crisis. Labour didn't win another election until 1997, 18 years after the Winter of Discontent which demonstrating the scale of their defeat. The whole situation was damaging for the UK not just economically, but also on an individual scale, as most of the population were affected in some way. Covid might be bad, but at least they still collect our bins.

THE SLEIGH – A REVIEW

From a young age, one of my favourite things to do whenever in a shop would be to look at the car magazines and read reviews of the latest and greatest machines in the hope that one day I could drive one. I have now achieved this, but even I can appreciate that a review of my current car: a 7 year old Hyundai i20, wouldn't be particularly interesting. So instead I have decided to take a look at a prestigious vehicle that was the first mode of aviation, the first to break the sound barrier and even at the ripe old age of 198 years old, is still the best annual mode of transport to deliver the world's presents. I am of course talking about Santa's sleigh.

The first mention of this groundbreaking machine was in an American newspaper when author Clement Clarke Moore wrote of a sled being pulled by reindeer through the air.



However this was over a century ago and in this time we have seen the emergence of car manufacturers such as Mercedes and Rolls Royce. We have also seen Boeing and Airbus become pioneers in air travel and the Japanese bullet trains have achieved impeccable speed and efficiency for all who go on them. So why then has the bearded fellow stuck true to his sleigh for so long?

In order to get such a machine off the ground, a considerable amount of power is needed. Elon Musk was very proud to announce that his latest Tesla Model S Plaid Edition cars would manage 0-60 MPH in less than 2 seconds thanks to a motor producing north of 1000 horsepower. Unfortunately we are dealing with the unknown of reindeer power and for ethical reasons a direct comparison in power between the species is proving difficult to make.

Despite this, DriveTribe's Mike Fernie had a stab at running the numbers to make a comparison and he estimated a peak output of 6.37 trillion horsepower needed to make the journey each year, a considerable amount more than my Hyundai to say the least .

I know, at this point, some of you may be thinking: "That's great, but we are living in an ecofriendly world and 6.37 trillion horsepowers' worth of sleigh hurtling around the globe every year can't be good for the environment". This is where the beauty of the power source comes into its own because it runs on a fuel that the boffins in the North Pole are calling "Manufactured Autonomic Granulated Ice Crystals" and it's these crystals that make the journey one of very few to be carbon neutral.

To travel all night long brings up the issue of visibility and this has been dealt with in many creative ways, from pop up headlights to infrared night radars. A more modern vehicle I have been watching the progress of is the Rivian R1T: an electric pickup truck with a distinct bar light across the front of the car to illuminate the road. lighting was a flaw of the original models of the sleigh until 1939 when Rudolph was released as an optional extra. This new addition added a further chunk of power and a very helpful red sensor on the front to see through the fog, similar to that of a vespa moped, yet Rudolph manages to produce far more lumens, without using any electricity at all.



The final factor when buying a new vehicle is the importance of comfort. Rolls Royce have been pioneers in the car industry with coach built machinery and authentic products for the interior and in recent years, the seats in the skies have improved with full size beds 30000 feet in the air for those who fund such a luxury. In contrast, the sleigh is hardly the pinnacle of comfort with the only change in its lifespan being a switch to imitation animal skin for the upholstery to comply with the environmental regulations. Perhaps the pilot's generous diet is contributing to the comfort of the seat by adding some much needed padding on the pilot.

All the magic of Christmas is clearly bestowed upon this machine and this raises it to the apex of all transport. I just wish I could have one of my own the next time I'm stuck in the A134's traffic jams.

WHY DOES CHRISTMAS GET ALL THE ADS?

The Festive Season and Why You Should Know About Other Holidays

We're all familiar with the common narrative spun during this time of year - of men in red suits breaking and entering, of coal and stockings, of mince pies and pine trees, of elves and chocolate. Some of the more Christian families will focus on the birth of Christ (Christ Mass), attend church and share the message of their Lord. To them, the corporate picture that most of us associate with Christmas is overshadowed by their religious practices, but the end of the year never used to be all nativities and mangers.



The new year has always been associated with new beginnings, those cultures with different calendars still strongly carry this message of rebirth; the Chinese New Year is a fantastic example of this. It's also a fantastic starting point, while it may not be held at the same time as many 'festive' holidays, it follows the same premise. Reflection, and hope for the future, are key themes that follow every culture during this time of year.

Candles play an important role in most yuletide celebrations: the menorah and its 8 candles that represent hope in the future after struggle in the past, reclaiming Jerusalem after its siege. The three green candles on the kinara represents future bounty and opportunity. Even the word yule comes from other faiths that have inspired our modern cultural mish-mash, for example the yule log. Nowadays a yule log is a tasty chocolate cake designed to look like a log, but it has its origins in the ancient Norse faith and was used to symbolise the sun's return. A large log would be decorated with ribbons and carried home to be burned for the 12 nights of yule.

These faiths all take place at the same time, and all follow principles regarding the same message of hope, faith and fresh starts. So, why is the spotlight on Christmas? Why do we get Christmas ads and lights, why do we give each other Christmas cards and share Christmas dinner, even if our family isn't strictly Christian?

Historically, the Roman festival Saturnalia was held during this time to celebrate and worship the bounty of Saturn.



Pagan faiths dominated the end of the year with celebrations of plenty, which was eventually replaced as the Roman Empire was turned Christian by Constantine. Allegedly, Christmas and the birth of Christ was moved from March 25 to December 25 by the Roman Church in order to undermine the pagan religions and standardise Christian belief, overwriting and overshadowing Saturnalia. Overtime, as Christianity became an ever-more dominant belief, other standing winter faiths mostly fell out of practice, as there were simply fewer members of that religion when compared to Christianity.



So the real reason why Christmas is celebrated could solely be put down to popular demand, but this does not mean we need to only concentrate on Christmas. I strongly believe that every reader should spend this Christmas happily, and take some time to look into what others may be celebrating at the end of the year worldwide, it not only makes you more aware of other practices, but you may also come to learn more about the quirks of Christmas that you never thought twice about.

Brandon Howard

THE EVOLUTION OF SANTA CLAUS

Have you ever wondered how *Santa Claus*, the legendary figurehead of Christmas who brings gifts to good children, came to be, and why he has so many different names? Here in the UK alone he goes by *Santa*, *Father Christmas*, and *Saint Nick*. As it turns out, the “*Santa*” of the 21st century is a mesh of various Christmas traditions and characters who have merged into the globally recognised “brand” which Santa today represents. In fact, the modern image of Santa has been imported from North America, and was fused by several pieces of European folklore that were brought over to the New World by colonial settlers.



Santa's roots can be originally traced back to *Saint Nicholas* (circa 270-343 AD), who lived in what is now Turkey but at the time was part of the Roman Empire. “*Saint Nick*” forged a reputation as a generous gift-giver during his lifetime, and was thus venerated as the Patron Saint for Children.

“*Saint Nick*” forged a reputation as a generous gift-giver during his lifetime, and was thus venerated as the Patron Saint for Children. This served as the basis for the Dutch *Sinterklaas*, who leaves gifts for children in the Netherlands and other Dutch-speaking places every December 6th. *Sinterklaas* shares several noticeable features with the modern *Santa Claus*. Both are depicted as elderly men with long white beards, red clothing, and helpers (with the Dutch character *Zwarte Piet* fulfilling the role of elves) and both keep track of whether children have been naughty or nice. Key differences include *Sinterklaas* riding a white horse instead of reindeer, and wearing bishop clothing instead of Santa's red coat.

The Netherlands was not alone in the concept of a midwinter gift-bringing celebration. Exchange of culture, as well as the desire for respite during the cold, dark winter solstice, resulted in midwinter feasting, festivities becoming commonplace. In Germanic cultures, this became known as the Yule season, which was later transformed from a pagan festival to the Christian Christmas, largely phasing Yule out.



The English *Father Christmas*, although now synonymous with *Santa*, was originally completely unrelated and was formed by gradual personification of traditions arguably predating Christianity. During the 17th century, Father Christmas was used as an allegory to protect an already declining Christmas from Puritan beliefs, which would have seen the festival outlawed.

Throughout the Victorian period, however, Father Christmas enjoyed a resurgence in popularity, helped partially by his implicit appearance as the “*Ghost of Christmas Present*” in Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, where he wears a holly wreath, bears hordes of food and drink, and is adorned in Green, rather than Santa’s distinctive red.

In Central Europe, meanwhile, the traditional Christmas gift-bringer is known as *Christkind*, meaning Christ-child. Christkind is a product of Martin Luther and his Protestant Reformation, and takes the spiritual appearance of an angelic infant Jesus. *Christkind* has faced immense competition from the Americanised Santa Claus, and has fallen out of favour. But, some Christians prefer its use as unlike Santa, they believe Christkind retains the “true meaning of Christmas”, that is celebrating the birth of Christ.

While I have focused on three examples, other versions of gift-bringing old men found throughout Europe include *Saint Basil* in Greek tradition, and *Ded Moroz* (Grandfather Frost) in Slavic folklore.



Much of the growth of the *American Santa* was through an 1823 poem by author Clement Clarke Moore called *A Visit from St. Nicholas*, which British people will probably recognise as *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*. The poem began to establish key features about the character including the sleigh of reindeer and his "little round belly that shook when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly". Santa's red and white fashion style, inherited from *Sinterklaas*, was a source of advertising potential for the Coca-Cola company, who plastered Santa across their advertising beginning in the 1930s. While Coca-Cola was not the first company to use Santa in their advertising, they were certainly not the last to see Santa's economic potential. During the 20th century the traditions of worker elves and Santa's wife (*Mrs. Claus*) also rose to popularity. Santa Claus continues to evolve and spread around the world today.

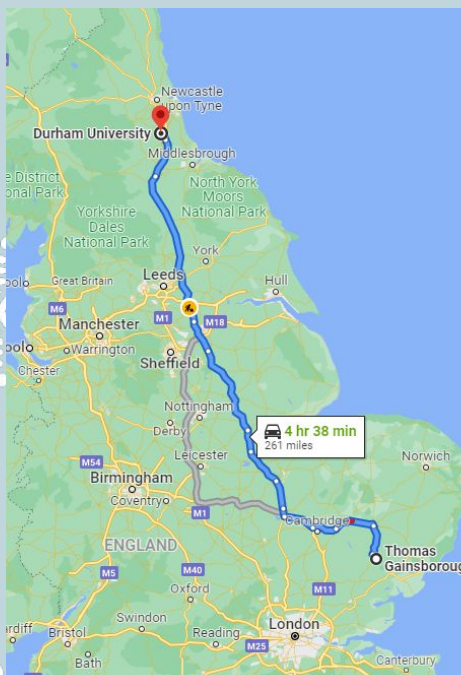
From Santa we can learn that while folklores and traditions are by definition old, they are ever-changing and morph in fascinating ways as you traverse our planet. The mystery of whether he is real has captured the minds of children around the globe. Simultaneously, another debate about the true meaning of Christmas continues to be discussed, does Santa hold up to the traditions of gifting those in need, or does he just represent excess materialism in a world where massive inequalities still exist. I'll leave that verdict up to you!



HEADING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

Prepare yourself; the festive season is upon us and with it the mass exodus of university students. Over the next few weeks, the UK will see the mass migration of students moving home for the Christmas break whether this is by plane, train or automobile. But not all of us will be driving home for Christmas.

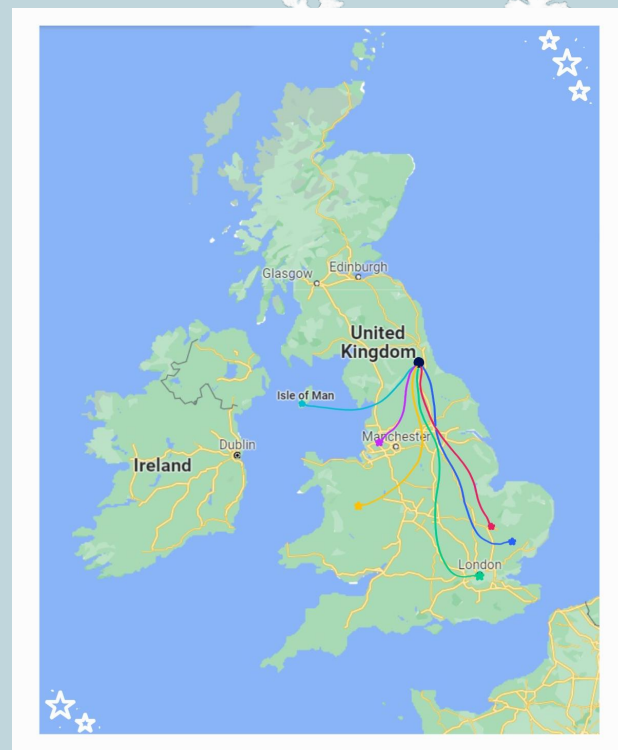
For me, this will be the first time I've been back home since starting university in September and let me tell you, I cannot wait. This being the first time I'll be back home in 4 months is not because I didn't want to. Believe me, starting a new life in a new place is very intense (I'll tell you about it sometime) and there are many times where all I've wanted is to be in my own house. But living about 290 miles from home does have its drawbacks.



For one, train tickets home are extortionate. Driving 5:30 hours there and back and forcing my parents (or just one of them) to commit to the 11 hour round trip would not be fair and, they soon realised, would not be a fun idea. I always knew I'd be getting the train to and from university during the term, however I did not expect that even with a railcard the train fare would be so expensive. Some may call this naive if they frequently have to use trains to get around but as like many people I've met who would only catch the train occasionally for family trips or holidays, it's been quite a shock. Using railcards, discounts, booking weeks (or even months) in advance, splitting the journey up or not buying a return or open return but just two separate tickets are all strategies used to bring the cost down a bit from the £44 (one way) to £134 (open-return) margin that myself and other students face when traveling home. This and the busyness of end of term assessments keep students on their toes. At the start of November I considered coming home for the weekend but the looming deadline season paired with the cost persuaded me and my parents that I'd made it this far, I could wait another month before coming back.

I, however, have it easier still than some of my cohort. Like many universities, Durham is home to international students from around the world. I've met people from India, America, United Arab Emirates as well as places closer to home such as Germany, Isle of Wight and Jersey. For these students, getting home is trickier still with some having to stay in college (if they allow it) or having to make other arrangements as they cannot get home either due to money, lack of flights or (in today's crazy world) due to the length of covid isolations upon entering or reentering the country.

For Ellie who lives in Jersey. Getting home means leaving at 6am for a 3 hour train to Manchester before making connections to get to the Island itself, meaning she'll arrive home at about 5pm. Despite this, she seems as excited to get home as our friends who only live a short way away in Yorkshire. The excitement of getting home seems to be a universal experience amongst students in my accommodation.



While the term officially ends on the 10th, some people are staying longer due to transport reasons. I leave Durham on the 11th however for a while I may have had to leave on the 12th or 13th due to ticket prices and the general lack of tickets.

Others, however, are staying even longer. To avoid having to pay for a train ticket my next door neighbour will be leaving on the 18th when her parents will also be moving back down the country. For someone living in catered accommodation where meals end on the Saturday of the 11th, this has the potential to be a challenging time.

Meanwhile, international students like Arth have a whole other set of complications:

"I am from Ranchi, India which is exactly 7726 Kilometres away from Durham. My plans for the winter Break is to revise everything from my first term at law school as I have not a lot to do when I'm staying in Durham for most of my winter break apart from going to London for Christmas and New Years to stay with my friends. I am unable to go to home for Christmas as the Covid travel restrictions to India from the UK are extremely volatile and there's a chance of India being put into the red list if the Covid cases upsurge and that would result in me being forced to do rest of my term online which I would not be okay with.

I will miss everything about not being home for Christmas as I would not be with my friends or family, in a distant land all by myself for the first time in my life. As well as that, all of my friends in university would be back home as well and I would be left with my own company, which is why I will be drenching myself in work as much as I can.

I am still excited for the winter break for a multitude of reasons, which include needing some time off from an extensive course like law, being able to have time for myself, being able to explore more places in the uk and the chance of experiencing the infamous Christmas and New Years in London.

Usually back home we celebrate Christmas with Friends and Family, exchanging presents, intimate gatherings, good food, insane new year parties and in this process creating happy memories for later to dwell upon."



I won't go into details about the questions raised about packing (is my bag big enough?, What clothes should I take, which should I leave?, What books/ work do I need to take? Will everything fit?!) but I hope you can see that travelling home for Christmas takes some logistical planning. Driving (or flying or riding) home for Christmas is not as easy as the songs make it seem. While it's a lot easier for my friends from Yorkshire, Wigan and Cheshire to get home, I think we're all just as excited as each other. Some people have been able to make the trip back home during the term but the excitement of being home, or at least with friends and those you love, for Christmas is a whole other trip.



As you're moving across the country you're thinking of being in your own bed, your family's cooking. Seeing friends and family you haven't for months and being in a place of comfort. Even now I'm planning what I want to watch and read while I'm at home, what I'm going to eat, who I'm going to see and when and how to make the most of this precious time at home. They say you miss university as soon as you get home, and I might. University is another world. One you've got to know and create your own rules and timetable for, one where you have new friends and places you'll miss but at the moment I can't wait to hear that first Christmas song, start seeing names on signs telling me I'm almost back and, most importantly, giving my family the first of many hugs over the next month.



Merry Christmas everyone. Keep safe and have a happy holiday.

Katherine Chapman

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE XMAS SONG?

Let's see what the staff had to say...

"Shakin' Stevens 'Merry Christmas Everyone' is my favourite Christmas song but for a long time it just reminded me of disappointment. The video for the song depicts a young boy taking a plane to Lapland to meet the 'real' Father Christmas. Every young child's dream. The year was 1987 and I entered a Christmas card design competition set by a high street bank. My design was of Father Christmas in a bed adorned with a festive patchwork quilt the night before, the night before. I was very excited when a representative from the bank came to my school to announce the lucky winners, and yes, you guessed it, it was me. A person in the school the year before had won and had been jetted off to Lapland for their prize. I had never been on a plane before and couldn't believe my luck. There had obviously been cutbacks at the bank that year as the first prize was no longer a flight to meet Father Christmas, but instead a trip on the Chappel and Wakes Colne railway. Still to this day this course of events may be my biggest disappointment, so Shakin Stevens' song/video is bittersweet." **MR SMITH**



"My favourite Christmas song is 'Lonely this Christmas' by Mud. As a 14 year old I can remember myself and my three best friends Sharon, Donna and Dawn spending hours round at Donna's house choreographing a dance routine to this song. There was lots of laughter and silliness. Once we perfected the routine it was then the trauma of choosing our outfits ready to wear for the Christmas disco where we performed our routine. We thought we were fantastic. The song still makes me smile!"

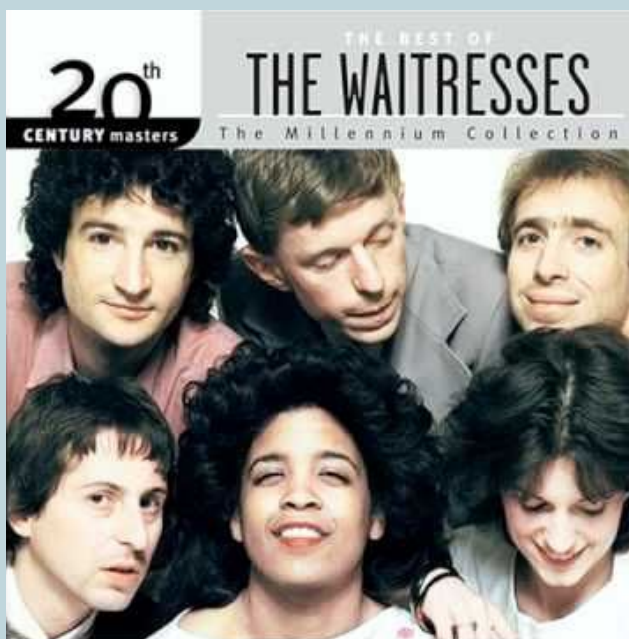
MRS YAPP

"Do they know it's Christmas - Band Aid. This resonates with me as I was absolutely horrified by the pictures from Africa portraying millions of starving children and adults and I was inspired by the song to do something about it!

I was relatively young back then(no laughing please), and I wanted to raise as much money as I could to make a small difference to this huge problem. After several weeks



of fundraising I was fortunate enough to have raised £100, and even more excited when I was able to hold a £100 note which would make a considerable difference to those that needed it in Africa. I was presented with a signed Band Aid book and to this day, I get goosebumps whenever I hear it." **MR ALEXANDER**



"What is my favourite Christmas song? There's not a simple answer to that question, mainly because the mere sound of many a Christmas song has me reaching for the off switch on the radio. Indeed, the opening bars of Mariah Carey's scream-a-thon "All I Want For Christmas Is You" has been known to make me spontaneously nauseous. It's something about the obligatory sleigh bells sound, the 'let's all sing it together', and the annual

cringe factor that make choosing a Christmas song I actually tolerate, let alone like, such a difficult choice. 'Feliz Navidad' by José Feliciano has a catchy tune to it, and is one that I find myself singing along to, but the one song that I would still choose to listen to is 'Christmas Wrapping' by an American new-wave band called The Waitresses. In the early 1980s, when I was about 13, I was given a bass guitar for Christmas and remember spending hours over the holidays trying to learn the bass line to this song. Thirty years on, and I still haven't cracked it. Maybe Mariah isn't so bad after all." **MR BLAGONA**



"Ok, so it's common knowledge that I am a bit of a Grinch... Or at least until December the 24th! I do like Christmas, but I loathe most of the drivel that passes for festive music (Wham's 'Last Christmas'? ... Pass me the earplugs!) So, for me, choosing my favourite Christmas song, was a bit of a tricky one. The song I have chosen is '[What's This?](#)' sung by Jack Skellington in Tim Burton's film *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. I adore this film and happily roll it out for Halloween, Christmas or frankly any other occasion! For those of you who don't know the film, Jack is the Pumpkin King of Halloweentown who, bored of his life of scaring children, stumbles upon Christmastown and decides to take on usurp Santa's festive role instead. This song conveys Jack's wonder and awe having arrived in Christmastown and seen snow, reindeer, elves and all the other Christmassy things for the first time. " **MRS BYHAM**

"I am choosing as my favourite Christmas song 'Fairytale of New York' by The Pogues. I know that is quite contentious this year because of the language used in it. I believe it is not being played on all mainstream music channels because of this. I enjoy the slow build up and change into a quicker tempo, and the sound of the instruments being played. The song itself just gives me a warm feeling and reminds me of great Christmas social events of my youth." **MRS KING**



"My favourite Christmas song is 'Last Christmas' by Wham!. I like this song because it reminds me of Christmas with my nan as we listen to that song every year. When I listen to it, I think of snow on the ground and sitting by the fire all warm. This is my favourite song because it just makes me feel very christmassy when I listen to it. " **LOIS PILGRIM**

CREATIVE CORNER:

Y13 MOCK EXAM 3-COURSE MEAL

Last half term Y13 completed their practical food mock exam. The brief was to cook a three-course meal for the restaurant of a new Spa that was opening. The food needed to be seasonal and healthy these are their finished dishes. I'm sure you will agree with me, they did a fantastic job.

The two menus were Hot-smoked salmon with crispy chickpea salad, Beetroot, and spinach arancini served with rocket, tomato, and a balsamic vinegar reduction. Tropical trifle mess.

The other menu was Fishcakes, Turkey ragu with homemade wholemeal pasta, Whole strawberries with a chocolate filling.

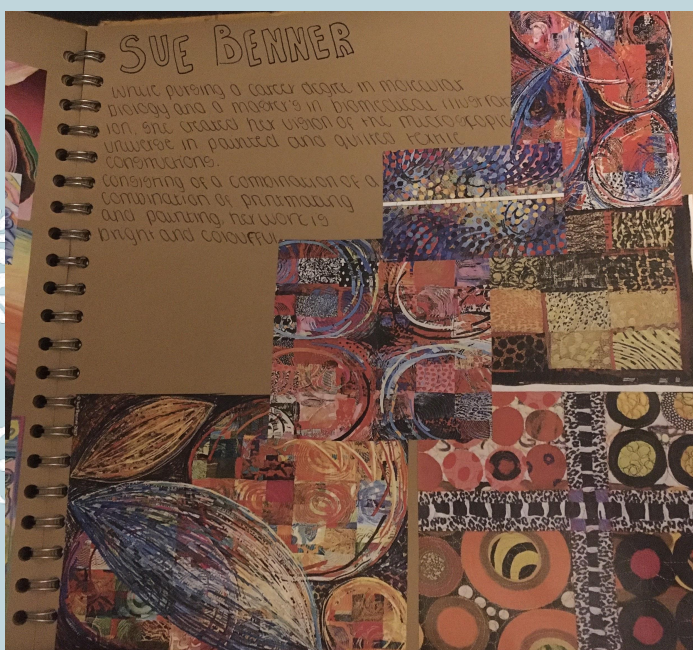
Mrs Hunt



CREATIVE CORNER - LIBERTY EDNEY



In my experiments with decayed surfaces I carried out experiments inspired by Shelley Rhodes who is a textile artist. Her work consists of concertinas, fabric works and paintings. I created two concertinas (image 1 & 2) and fabric works.



Now I am carrying out experiments inspired by beneath the surface, exploring viruses, cells, the environment and the human body. Inspired by Sue Benner's work I am creating pieces with photo transferring, printing and sewing. (Images 3&4)

RECIPE CORNER: GINGERBREAD LOAF

Winter is the time for staying indoors (something we just couldn't get enough of for the past year and a bit), and getting comfortable in the warm and dry. With your blankets and movies all lined up to get you through this facsimile hibernation I would strongly recommend this warm, lightly spiced gingerbread loaf.

Ingredients

- 225 g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tbsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground mixed spice
- 115 g unsalted butter (chilled & cubed)
- 115 g golden syrup
- 115 g dark treacle
- 115 g dark brown muscovado sugar
- 275 ml milk
- 1 free range egg (beaten)

Don't have treacle? That's fine! Substitute with molasses or more golden syrup.

Method

- Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C Fan/350°F/Gas mark 4.
- Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda, ginger, cinnamon and mixed spice into a large bowl. Add the butter and rub into the flour with the tips of your fingers until you have a mixture that looks like breadcrumbs.
- Pour the treacle and syrup into a small pan and melt gently until runny and then set aside.
- Put the sugar and milk into another pan and gently heat and stir until the sugar dissolves. Set aside until lukewarm then whisk the milk into the flour mixture followed by the treacle mixture and then the egg. Mix all together until you have a thick batter just like double cream.
- Pour into a loaf tin, greased with butter and lined with greaseproof paper. Bake in the oven for 45 minutes or until a skewer put into the centre comes out clean. Leave to cool then remove from the tin and wrap in foil for at least a day before cutting it.

Thank you to all who contributed to Issue 8!

Samuel Wainwright

Brandon Howard

Charlie Wilson

Eleni Brinkley

Amy Allitt

Callum Ryan

Fergus Dark

Davit Rickards

Megan Turner

Andrew Nicoll

Katherine Chapman

Liberty Edney

Lois Pilgrim

Mrs Hunt

Mrs Byham

Mrs King

Mr Blagona

Mrs Yapp

Mr Smith

Mr Alexander

Happy Holidays!

Did you enjoy the Illustrator?
Want to get involved?

We are a student team which aims to
create one issue each half term.

There are lots of roles on offer,
including regular writers and designers.

We also really appreciate one-off pieces!
You could write about your hobbies, a
story, or a biographic piece, interview
someone, review a film, recommend a
recipe, submit some artwork or
photography...

Please click the [Link](#) or email
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