



The Royal Society of St George

## The Royal Society Of St. George

British Columbia Branch

Patron: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

**"Representing the English Community  
in British Columbia, Canada"**

### Greetings from the President:

As we are approaching the end of this year and prepare for a new year we need to review the structure of the Royal Society of St. George and how we can better serve our membership. There is a diversity between existing local groups and is illustrative of the problems the executive have encountered this year as we look beyond the local Vancouver area.

The costs and ability to travel between the various groups that make up the structure of the R.S.S.G., B.C. Branch make it difficult for the Executive to provide programs and events Province wide.

There is the Mid Island group that have their own events and find it difficult to get to events on the mainland. They operate independently

There is the Victoria group. Betty has been building membership and events but face the same challenges as the Mid Island group to be involved with mainland events and activities.

We have a Valley group. That is very active and they too find it difficult to attend activities in Vancouver area,

And there are the Vancouver and North shore group due to traffic and other obstacles find it difficult to travel to the Valley.

# Dragon Fire



## November / December Edition

We also have the Okanagan group that is primarily and solely the Okanagan meet up group but do have regular activities.

The Vancouver, North Shore, mainland group who have no planned activities and are not really an organized social group as they consist primarily of the executive.

I firmly believe that we need the Provincial Branch connection with ties to the United Kingdom but we should have satellite clubs doing their own activities and answerable to the Provincial Branch. The club concept is already in place and if approved would remove the difficulty and frustration of the executive trying to plan Provincial activities. Each satellite club would have a Chair person and be answerable to the executive instead of having group leaders who have no responsibility or job description.

The finances would have to be reviewed as the R.S.S.G., B.C. Branch would still require membership dues to Britain and other Branch administrative costs.

We could also consider besides the provincial club concept to have other English related organizations as Associate memberships for the benefit of the U.K. connections. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

Regards:  
Steve McVittie  
President  
The Royal Society of St. George  
B.C. Branch

# Dragon Fire

The Official Newsletter of  
The Royal Society of St. George,  
British Columbia Branch  
Recipients of the Canadian 2008  
Citation for Citizenship Award

Facebook: Royal Society of St George BC Branch

5639 Dunbar Street,  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6N 1W5

stgeorge@telus.net

www.stgeorgebc.ca

## The 2018 RSSG, BC Executive

**President:** Steve McVittie

**1st. Vice-President:** Shawn Wade

**2nd. Vice President:** Open

**Treasurer:** Open

**Secretary:** Open

**Past President:** Jayne Boyer

**Membership Secretary:** Maureen  
Templeton

### Directors:

**Dan Brown:** Past President, “Advisor”

**Lil McVittie**

**Pat Morris**

**Maureen “Mo” Patz, “Advisor”**

**Roger Dawson:** “Constitution/Bylaws,  
Society Act”

**Julian Mattock:** Vancouver Island “Mid  
Island”

**Betty Hubbard:** South Vancouver Island  
“Victoria”

**Dragon Fire Editor:** Steve McVittie

**Auditors:** Dan Brown,

**Financial Volunteer:** Richard Toporoski

## Community Group Leaders:

**Vancouver, Burnaby:** Dan Brown

**White Rock, Richmond, Langley,  
Surrey, Delta:** Jayne Boyer

**Mid-Island and Parksville:** Julian  
Mattock

**South-Van. Island:** Betty Hubbard

**New Westminster, Coquitlam, Maple  
Ridge:** Mo Patz

**Okanagan, Vernon, Kamloops,  
Kelowna:** Lynda Rawson

**West Vancouver, North Vancouver,  
Squamish:** Open

### Special Committee Chairpersons:

**British Classics, Arts and Culture  
Events:** Jayne Boyer

**Social Events, Lunches:** Lil McVittie,  
Mo Patz, Jayne Boyer, Pat Morris

**Van Isle Socials:** Betty Hubbard (Van  
Isle S.) Julian Mattock (Van. Mid  
Isle),

**Community Relations:** Steve  
McVittie,

**History, Culture & Customs:**  
Richard Toporoski

**British / Celtic Groups Liaison:** Pat  
Morris

## Flying the flag



The St George's Cross flag has been the national flag of England since the 1300s and the Society campaigns for it to be flown prominently around the country. In recent years it has been great to see the flag flying at major sporting soccer events but Society members want to see it more widely in everyday life – flying from public buildings, churches, educational establishments and even private residences. When will Brits in Canada be proud and display the Flag of St. George as other countries are proud to display theirs?

Hi Steve:

I am so sorry that you both fell ill during your trip, what a disappointment for you. I hope that you are both now fully recovered.

Thanks for sending over the latest issue of "Dragon Fire". It's the best yet! So many fascinating facts and the events you are holding look amazing, especially the pantomime!

Nick, please would you add it to British Columbia's Branch page on our website.

Best wishes to you all over in BC.

Liz

Elizabeth M. Lloyd  
General Secretary  
The Royal Society of St.  
George



#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for the explanation in the article on history facts about London, in the September - October edition of Dragon Fire, that "Big Ben" is the name of the biggest bell inside the clock in the Clock Tower of the Palace of Westminster and not the name of the tower itself.

Readers may be interested to know, however, that, in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, the name of the Clock Tower was changed to the Elizabeth Tower, thus matching the Victoria Tower at the other end of the Palace of Westminster. (The smaller tower in the centre is St. Stephen's Tower, because it stands at the far end of a corridor which is on the site of St. Stephen's Chapel, the meeting place of the House of Commons before the previous Palace of Westminster was destroyed by fire in 1834.)

Richard Toporoski



## NOTICE

Membership Renewal for 2019 is due on January 1st (\$30 per family)

**EARLY BIRD SPECIAL:  
Membership fee is reduced to \$25 if received by December 31.**

Cheques should be made payable to RSSG-BC and mailed with a completed form to:  
RSSG-BC Membership, 5639 Dunbar St,  
Vancouver, BC V6N 1W5

First Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Prov: \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail\*: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree that my telephone number and e-mail may be published in the Membership Directory, which is circulated to other RSSG members only. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NB: Your e-mail address will be used to notify you of RSSG events and activities only and will not be used for any other purpose or forwarded to any other organization (s).

You may unsubscribe from e-mail communications at any time by contacting  
stgeorge@telus.net

\* \* \*

NEW MEMBERS: Please contact  
stgeorge@telus.net for a new members form

## **Guy Fawkes Day November 5th.**



Guy Fawkes Night, also known as Guy Fawkes Day, Bonfire Night and Firework Night, is an annual commemoration observed on 5 November, primarily in the United Kingdom. Its history begins with the events of 5 November 1605, when Guy Fawkes, a member of the Gunpowder Plot, was arrested while guarding explosives the plotters had placed beneath the House of Lords.

Celebrating the fact that King James I had survived the attempt on his life, people lit bonfires around London; and months later, the introduction of the Observance of 5th November Act enforced an annual public day of thanksgiving for the plot's failure.

Within a few decades Gunpowder Treason Day, as it was known, became the predominant English state commemoration, but as it carried strong Protestant religious overtones it also became a focus for anti-Catholic sentiment. Puritans delivered sermons regarding the perceived dangers of popery, while during increasingly raucous celebrations common folk burnt effigies of popular hate-figures, such as the pope.

Towards the end of the 18th century reports appear of children begging for money with effigies of Guy Fawkes and 5 November gradually became known as Guy Fawkes Day. Towns such as Lewes and Guildford were in the 19th century scenes of increasingly violent class-based confrontations, fostering traditions those towns celebrate still, albeit peaceably. In the 1850s changing attitudes resulted in the toning down of much of the day's anti-Catholic rhetoric, and the Observance of 5th November Act was repealed in 1859. Eventually the violence was dealt with, and by the 20th century Guy Fawkes Day had become an enjoyable social commemoration, although lacking much of its original focus. The present-day Guy Fawkes Night is usually celebrated at large organized events, centred on a bonfire and extravagant firework displays. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy\\_Fawkes\\_Night](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy_Fawkes_Night)

**NOTE: RSSG BC / President & Editors  
Birthday  
76 years young, Nov. 5th. 1942**

If you love to Dance, here is your opportunity. Come Scottish Country Dancing; join one of the many clubs in the Lower Mainland.



## **Lady Aberdeen Tea Dance Mon. Nov. 12, 2018, 1:15 pm Scottish Cultural Centre Hosted by the White Rock Scottish Country Dance Club**

Also you are invited to  
**a Ceilidh Dance  
at the Scottish Cultural Centre  
November 30**

Everyone welcome, no experience or partner required – we teach you almost everything!! Loads of fun and live music too with the resident Ceilidh Band “Calanais.”

Contact: [duncanmackenzie@telus.net](mailto:duncanmackenzie@telus.net);  
[www.rscdsvancouver.org](http://www.rscdsvancouver.org)

THE BRITISH CANADIAN CHAMBER  
OF TRADE AND COMMERCE

LA CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE  
CANADA-GRANDE-BRETAGNE



## **Christmas is back at lunch time!**

Come one, come all and enjoy this city's finest Christmas Party  
Delight clients, staff, family, and others close to you  
Enter the Spirit and Joy of Christmas!  
Fine Christmas Fare, Crackers, and Carols  
Famous BCCTC Draw Prizes  
Gifts for all!!

We look forward to celebrating with you and yours!

**Friday December 7th, 2018  
at the Radisson Admiral Hotel  
Toronto Harbourfront  
249 Queen's Quay West, Toronto,  
ON M5J 2N5**

Reception, Cash Bar starts at 11:30 AM,  
Luncheon begins 12:30 PM  
Early Bird tickets: \$145 + HST,  
Spousal Rate: \$85 + HST

## Carlos O'Bryan's Neighborhood Pub

David Rundle  
the General Manager  
has invited all the members  
of English and Celtic  
Organizations



to a **PUB NIGHT** on

**Friday November 16th.  
from 5:30 p.m. onwards**

I speak from personal experience that the  
beverage selection and food menu are  
outstanding.

Join the members of the Royal Society of  
St. George for a Social Evening of great  
food and English and Irish beverages

**1774 West 7th.  
Vancouver, B.C.**

Check out the food menu:  
[https://www.kobcob.com/general-info/  
Kelly-Food-Menu/](https://www.kobcob.com/general-info/Kelly-Food-Menu/)

## The Royal Canadian Legion Grandview - Collingwood Branch#179

"The Drive"  
2205 Commercial Drive.  
Vancouver, BC V5N-4B6

### Monthly Events:

Grandview Legion holds regularly  
scheduled monthly events such as Thursday  
afternoon bingo, Friday and Saturday meat  
draws and 50/50 draws, monthly jam sessions  
and more. Come on in, join us at our monthly  
events and help support our veterans, their  
families and the community at large.

Upcoming Dinners and Bar Events  
Sunday, November 11th, 2018 –  
Remembrance Day

Sunday, November 25th, 2018 –  
Gray Cup Chili Contest

Saturday, December 15th –  
Christmas Dinner 5 PM to 7 PM

<http://rclbranch179.ca/monthly-events/>

## Tri Cities RSSG Members Bodacious Brits Met The Puppet Master

September 26.

Mo Patz entertained attendees with a  
wonderful puppet show and gave a handout  
showing how to make your own puppet  
too. We meet on a monthly basis at Branch  
133 Port Coquitlam Legion.

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### November 29 2018

Everyone is invited to join us in Port  
Coquitlam Legion Branch 133 1-3.30m for  
Social tea Guest Speaker our very own Peter  
Howard Topic Growing and planting  
Roses...the perfect time for beautiful  
blooms. Cost includes tea, coffee and light  
lunch sandwiches and biscuits. Cost \$5 for  
members \$8 for guests. Please RSVP with  
your phone number and number attending to  
nottinghammaid@gmail.com for catering  
purposes. At this event we will book date  
and mystery trip for December 2018.

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### January 5 2019 ....

Hansel & Gretel  
traditional pantomime.

New Westminster .....For more details send  
email to nottinghammaid@gmail.com.

Performance by  
The Royal Canadian Theatre Company.

### Captain Dan's the man .....

Sept 15 2018....18 members joined at lunch  
together at The Royal Crown Restaurant in  
New Westminster to  
Thank Dan Brown for  
all his wonderful work,  
volunteerism and  
wisdom expended to our  
Society. Dan  
enjoyed lunch in the  
company of his lovely  
wife Marnie, along with  
accolades from those in  
attendance.



In Photo  
Dan Brown, Jayne Boyer, Shawn Wade



## **Subject: Trafalgar Day Lunch South Island Group**

Hi Steve,

Today, Sunday, October 21, 2018, exactly 213 years after the Battle of Trafalgar, the South Island group of Royal Society of St. George met for lunch at the Gorge Vale Golf Club in Esquimalt. Before lunch commenced, Howard Dixon read a piece relating the story of the battle at Trafalgar after which we toasted Lord Nelson to thank him for saving Briton from ever being invaded by Napoleon.

We then had a lovely lunch supplied by the Golf Club after which Margaret Spark played and Wendy Halliday led the singing in several patriotic and pub songs, including There will Always Be an England. There were a few not dry eyes in the crowd. The singing was culminated with everyone standing to sing God Save the Queen.

Several new people came today and wanted to know when our next meetup would be. We are having fun here on the South Island. Our last get together was a Darts/Pint/Dinner night which was more laughs than anything else and everyone enjoyed it wanting to know when the next one would be. Guy Fawkes Day lunch was the answer. Not sure what we can do for that to make it interesting but we will certainly try. Our last gathering of this year will be on Dec 9 for a Christmas full turkey plate lunch at the Gorge Vale.

It has been an interesting year.

Cheers, Betty.

Betty Hubbard  
Director for South Vancouver Island,  
Royal Society of St. George  
Email: [Betty.Hubbard@outlook.com](mailto:Betty.Hubbard@outlook.com)  
Home ph: 250-388-5920



### **Calling all Vancouver Islanders**

The South Vancouver Island  
Royal Society of St. George  
will be meeting for:

**A Guy Fawkes Luncheon,  
Nov 4th, 12:30 pm,  
at Four Mile Restaurant Pr  
ivate Dining room.  
199 Old Island Highway,  
View Royal.**

**A Christmas lunch on  
Dec 9th at noon  
at the Gorge Vale Golf Club,  
1005 Craigflower Rd,  
corner of Tillicum Rd.**

The British community and friends  
are welcome to join us, but must  
reserve at least four days prior to the  
event, with Betty Hubbard, Director  
for South Vancouver Island at  
[Betty.Hubbard@outlook.com](mailto:Betty.Hubbard@outlook.com) or  
phone 250-388-5920.

## Carlos O'Bryan's Neighborhood Pub

David Rundle  
the General Manager  
has invited all the  
English and Celtic  
Organizations



To enjoy a share some Christmas Cheer  
with fellow Brits, Irish, Scots, Welsh,  
Manx and Cornish Expats.

on

**Sunday December 9th.  
from 1:00 p.m. Onward**



**1774 West 7th.  
Vancouver, B.C.**

They have an extensive lunch and  
beverage menu

Check out the food menu:

[https://www.kobcob.com/general-info/  
Kelly-Food-Menu/](https://www.kobcob.com/general-info/Kelly-Food-Menu/)



### The Royal Society of St. George Mid Island Group Vancouver Island

Continue to hold lunches  
nothing more to report at this time  
Contact: Julian Mattock  
[Julian.lylia@gmail.com](mailto:Julian.lylia@gmail.com)

RE: St. George's "British Invasion" 2019

Thanks, Steve.

It was a great event last year, and  
we'd love to participate again. In fact we  
have a dance up our sleeves already!

Louise Murphy  
Vancouver Branch, Demonstration Team  
Manager, Scottish Country Dancing  
604-987-3792

Steve;



Thank you for  
contacting us regarding  
the Society. I would be very interested in  
receiving a copy of your Newsletter and I will  
forward your email to our Board members to  
see what they would like to do with regard to  
our shared interests.

We are in the process of rehearsing for  
our annual Christmas Show and Tea held at  
the Bowen Park Complex here in Nanaimo  
and this may be of interest to your members.  
Information can be found on our Club website  
[www.nanbritclub.ca](http://www.nanbritclub.ca) along with more  
information on our activities. You can also  
read copies of our Newsletters that highlight  
some of our events over the year.

I look forward to hearing from you in future  
and thank you again for contacting us.

Best regards

Malcolm Cottrell  
Newsletter Editor & Webmaster  
Nanaimo British Club



### THE NANAIMO BRITISH CLUB Invites You to Our Annual CHRISTMAS SHOW AND TEA

Location: Nanaimo Harbour City Seniors Complex - Bowen Park  
Date: Thursday, December 13th, 1:00 - 3:00 pm  
Doors will open at 12:30 pm

Tickets: \$ 8.00 / person - limited seating

On Sale from Noon to 2:00 pm - Bowen Park Lobby  
Please note the following dates...

Friday, November 2nd.

Wednesday, November 7th. Friday, November 9th.  
Wednesday, November 14th. Friday, November 16th.  
Wednesday, November 20th. Friday, November 23rd.



Call 250-753-8406 or visit our website at [www.nanbritclub.ca](http://www.nanbritclub.ca) (for more info)

*come along, bring your friends and enjoy a christmas spirited selection of ables,  
swords and poplar songs presented in the inimitable fashion of The Nanaimo  
British Club which you have come to enjoy and appreciate.*



# ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to the overwhelming success of the “British Invasion” in April of 2018 the executive have decide to make the St. George’s Day an annual event. We have had extensive interest again by those that were involved this year and that are looking forward to the 2019 St. George’s Day event.

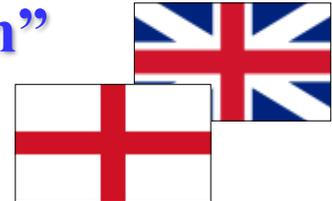
Mark your calendars and plan to attend April 20th. 2019 at the Roundhouse community centre, Vancouver, B.C.



## “The British Invasion”

**The British Are Coming,  
The British Are Coming.**

Sponsored by the Royal Society of St. George,  
British Columbia Branch



**April 20th. 2019  
St. George’s Day Weekend**



**The English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Manx and Cornish  
will be celebrating their History, Customs and Heritage  
at the Roundhouse Community Centre**



**British foods, merchandise and entertainment from  
England, North Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, Cornwall  
and the Republic of Ireland (Eire)**



## THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER

Vancouver celebrates Wales  
(November 2nd to 4th)

**Friday at 7:30 pm:** Noson Lawen with  
"Three Pound Note".

The "kickoff" event is the Noson Lawen on Friday, November 2, and it promises to be an entertaining and fun filled evening.

The group, "Three Pound Note" will entertain us with traditional and modern Welsh and Celtic music. We also have local talent and a big surprise of a revived Welsh tradition on the programme.

We will be charging \$10 at the door, to cover expenses for entertainment and light refreshments, including Welsh cakes.



**Saturday at 2 pm:**  
Tea Party

**Sunday at 11 am:**  
Bilingual Service

followed at 2 pm by our annual  
Gymanfa Ganu Singing Festival

Contact Information  
The Cambrian Hall 215 East 17th Avenue  
Vancouver V5V 1A6  
mail@welshsociety.com  
Telephone: 604 876-2815

## The Royal Commonwealth Society



will hold their Annual Christmas Luncheon at The Royal Vancouver Yacht Club on Wednesday, December 5, 2018. The price and the time is 11:45 for 12:15. Price and further details TBA. Please contact Shawn Wade shawnmwade@hotmail.com

## British Humour by Tommy Cooper

Doc, I can't stop singing the 'Green Green Grass of Home'. He said: 'That sounds like Tom Jones syndrome'. 'Is it common?' 'I asked. 'It's not unusual' he replied.

I'm on a whiskey diet. I've lost three days already.

A man walks into a bar with a roll of tarmac under his arm and says: "Pint please, and one for the road."

I went to the doctors the other day and I said, 'Have you got anything for wind?' So he gave me a kite.

My mother-in-law fell down a wishing well, I was amazed, I never knew they worked.

When Susan's boyfriend proposed marriage to her she said: "I love the simple things in life, but I don't want one of them for my husband".

I rang up British Telecom, I said, "I want to report a nuisance caller", he said "Not you again".

I went to the Doctors the other day, and he said, 'Go to Bournemouth, it's great for flu'. So I went - and I got it.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/comedy/8078185/Tommy-Cooper-dominates-list-of-best-jokes.html>

## The Royal Society of St George

was founded in 1894

The Royal Society of St George has been England's premier patriotic organization, promoting and celebrating the English way of life.

The Society organizes a wide variety of events, from marking significant moments in history to enjoying English food and drink.

## B.C. Highland Games & Scottish Festival



The BC Highland Games & Scottish Festival is expanding. On June 14 & 15, 2019, we will be hosting our 88th Games and we need help as we grow. Specifically, the Organizing Committee is looking for people with specific skill sets to fill the following jobs:

**Ticket Master:** coordinating all online ticket sales and packages for all events. Must be somewhat computer savvy.

**Signage Coordinator:** A new location (Lafarge Lake Park) means lots of new signs. Must be able to read and write.

**Entry Gate Coordinator:** A big job for people who like to organize things. This is a key position that works with many different people running our three entry gates.

**Sponsorship Chair:** This is an important job that starts now. Finding, retaining and massaging our corporate sponsors. Must be comfortable around suits.

**Social Media Coordinator:** Do this from your home. Post to Facebook, Twitter, etc. Keep interesting articles about the Scottish community front and centre all year.

Contact:  
mikechisholm604@gmail.com

### DATES & TIMES TO BE ANNOUNCED

\* Nov. 11th. Remembrance Day  
We will be joining the Drive Legion  
on this occasion

- \* North Shore Christmas Lunch
- \* Annual Christmas Carol Cruise
- \* RSSG Christmas Dinner

### Vancouver Branch Burns Supper

Saturday January 19th  
2019

Bar 6:00 pm  
Dinner 7:00 pm



At The Scottish Cultural Centre  
8886 Hudson St., Vancouver  
Tickets - \$60

Traditional meal with haggis.  
Entertainment by our  
Branch Demonstration Team,  
A dance programme with dances to suit  
everyone to the music of the Vancouver  
Fiddle Orchestra,

Tickets will be available in November  
through local scd clubs, online through  
PayPal at

[www.rscdsvancouver.org](http://www.rscdsvancouver.org),

Email to [burns@rscdsvancouver.org](mailto:burns@rscdsvancouver.org) or  
phone Gill Beattie  
at 604-224-6751.



### Vancouver General Hospital Thrift Store

Thanks the members of the  
British Isles Community  
for their donations

**OUR DON'T THROW IT OUT  
CAMPAIGN**

Has resulted in your basement  
and garage junk raising major  
dollars for the

**VGH Thrift Shop.**

The funds from your saleable  
junk has resulted in equipment  
that is helping saving the lives  
of those in the Hospital

2535 E Hastings St, Vancouver, BC  
Phone: (604) 876-3731

# CHRISTMAS DINNER

United Kingdom



Christmas dinner in the United Kingdom is usually eaten in the afternoon on 25 December. The dinner usually consists of turkey served with stuffing, gravy, sometimes pigs in blankets or devils on horseback, cranberry sauce or redcurrant jelly; bread sauce; Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes (sometimes also boiled or mashed); vegetables (usually boiled or steamed), particularly brussels sprouts and parsnips; with dessert of Christmas pudding (or plum pudding), sometimes mince pies or trifle, with brandy butter and/or cream.

In England, the evolution of the main course into turkey did not take place for years, or even centuries. At first, in medieval England, a main course of boar was sometimes served. Through the 16th and 17th centuries goose or capon was commonly served, and the rich sometimes dined upon peacock and swan. The turkey appeared on Christmas tables in England in the 16th century, and popular history tells of King Henry VIII being the first English monarch to have turkey for Christmas. The 16th century farmer Thomas Tusser noted that by 1573 turkeys were commonly served at English Christmas dinners. The tradition of turkey at Christmas rapidly spread throughout England in the 17th century, and it also became common to serve goose which remained the predominant roast until the Victorian era. (it was quite common for Goose "Clubs" to be set up, allowing working-class families to save up over the year towards a goose before this). A famous English Christmas dinner scene appears in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), where Scrooge sends Bob Cratchit a large turkey. The pudding course of a British Christmas dinner may often be Christmas pudding, which dates from medieval England. Trifle, mince pies, Christmas cake or a yule log are also popular. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmasdinner>

## OUR ENGLISH HERITAGE

### Medieval

After fasting right up until 24 December, medieval people really let rip with twelve full days of Christmas festivities, reaching a crescendo on 6 January, 'Twelfth Night', when presents were given. These celebrations commemorated Christ's birth and the name Christmas (Christ's Mass) is first recorded in England in 1038. Medieval celebrations also combined the servants-as-masters antics and gift-giving of Roman Saturnalia with customs left over from the pagan Saxon Midwinter feast of Yule. These included the Yule Log (kept burning throughout the season), decorating houses with evergreens and eating richly decorated boar's heads, sometimes washed down with mulled 'braggot', extra-strong ale with honey and cinnamon, spiked with brandy.

Boisterous medieval festivities were directed by a Lord of Misrule, whose word was law. The Christmas games he ordered could be rough; among the tamest was 'Hot Cockles', where blindfolded victims had to guess who'd slapped them from behind. If the guess was right, slapper became victim. Carols, originally dances accompanied by sung choruses, were also increasingly popular at Christmas; their words might be religious, worldly, or even rude. Blending devotion with drunken partying, medieval Christmases were also important state occasions, when kings ceremonially wore their crowns at feasts and lawgivings. Henry II, who built the Great Tower at Dover Castle, held Christmas 'crown-wearings' at 24 different places during his 34-year reign.



Pictured: Arthur and Guinevere at a banquet, courtesy of The British Library  
<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/christmas/the-history-of-christmas/>

## Tudor

Tudor Christmases were even more full-on than medieval, but were a tad less boisterous, at least at Court. On Twelfth Night (6 January) a bean was baked into a cake. The person who got it in their slice became 'King of the Bean', or if it was a woman, she chose her 'King', and everyone had to imitate him. When he drank, they drank; if he coughed, they coughed. This was also a time for plays (like Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night') and 'disguising's'. Henry VIII (a talented musician who wrote the Christmas song 'Green Groweth the Holly') and his friends liked to dress up as Robin Hood's Men or Moors, and you had to pretend not to recognize them.

Queen Elizabeth preferred energetic dancing, and had her own 'Dancing Chamber' at Kenilworth Castle. In the popular Christmas 'Cushion Dance', a man laid a cushion before his wished-for partner; she knelt on it, kissed him, and joined the dance. Then she chose her partner in the same way, until everyone was dancing. Perhaps the dancers got their energy from sugar, which richer Tudor people loved. They tipped it into already sweet wine, and held Christmas 'sugar banquets', with elaborate sugar models of castles, dragons, holly and even sugar goblets, all edible. The Queen (whose teeth went black from sugar-eating) also expected lavish presents, then customarily given on New Year's Day, and carefully listed their exact value.



Pictured: Queen Elizabeth I dancing at court c1575 © Alamy Images

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/christmas/the-history-of-christmas/>

## Victorian

The Christmas we know today took shape in Victorian times, when the rowdier celebrations of earlier periods were toned down into a quieter family-focused festival. Queen Victoria and her beloved Albert, with their nine children, played a big part in these changes. The Christmas trees Albert introduced from his native Germany in 1840 rapidly caught on, as did decking them with lights and presents, by now given on Christmas Day itself.

Victorian children's presents were usually quite modest, such as sweets, nuts or oranges, although wealthier kids might hope for a gift echoing the latest technology, such as a toy train. 'Christmas Box' tips to servants and tradesmen were left until 26 December, hence called 'Boxing Day'.

Many other now-familiar elements of Christmas also originated in this period, including printed Christmas cards, Christmas crackers, and eating turkey (instead of the traditional goose) and Christmas pudding. Even 'Santa Claus' and his reindeer sleigh first came here from America in the 1870s.

Most Victorian families went to church at Christmas, and the words (if not always the tunes) of many popular carols (including 'Good King Wenceslas', 'Once in Royal David's City' and 'O Come All Ye Faithful') are Victorian. Better-off people also provided gifts or Christmas feasts for poorer neighbours (a tradition promoted by Charles Dickens' 1843 'Christmas Carol' Scrooge story), and parties for tenants' children were an annual Christmas event at mansions like Brodsworth Hall.



Pictured: Queen Victoria and Prince Albert gather round a Christmas tree with the Royal Children © Alamy Images

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/christmas/the-history-of-christmas/>