

# The legend of Christmas

A tale as old as time by Lance Kerrigan

Scrabbling to prepare for that one day, when you stuff yourself more than the succulent turkey glistening on an obscenely decorated table that the whole family traditionally squash around.

As you laze sedated from excess, you try to find distraction from the monotony of cabin fever and annual squabbling. Conversation drifts to the meaning of Christmas. I bet presents are the first thing that spring to mind.

Gift giving is believed to have stemmed from the three wise men, but could have been an adaption from the Roman festival Saturnalia: a seven-day festival that began on December 17th.

Santa Claus is a totally separate tradition. Found in various cultures it celebrates the Greek Bishop known for his generosity towards children. St. Nicholas Day was traditionally celebrated on December 6th, but was aligned to Christmas during reformations in the 16th century.

By now the rants of your overly religious relative turns to the secularisation of Christmas. The reality; much of our traditions predate the Christianised version of mid-winter festival.

A fact you can bring to the table; the date of Jesus's birth

is unknown. December 25th was chosen in the 3rd century to coincide with Saturnalia and Yuletide. Be prepared for that relative to bring up the fact December marks nine months from the celebrated feast of the conception of Jesus.

So, why twelve days of Christmas? It's believed this was the duration between Jesus's birth and the arrival of the three wise men. Interestingly, Yuletide, which begins on the winter Solstice, is also a twelve-day feast and Christians are known to be adaptable when converting the pagans. Something that relative of yours should try sometime.

However, tensions have heightened at the table, and all you want to do is keep the peace long enough until the bars open at midnight. So let's try some humour.

Day eight of Christmas is New Years day and a symbolic day for Christians. Jesus was Jewish and under Jewish law every boy eight-days from birth must be circumcised. This day marks the formal naming of Jesus and the first day the blood of Christ is shed. Known as the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ, some branches of Christianity celebrate all night on December 31st while others have—shall we say—rebranded the feast.

How's that turkey digesting? You can thank the Americans for popularising this as the traditional dish. In Ireland, older traditions included Goose for the posh and chicken, ham, or beef for everyone else.

If everyone is still on talking terms, it might be a good

time to suggest some Yulelog for desert. This tradition is of Celtic and Germanic origins, who would burn yule logs to ward off evil spirits.

By now the Christmas spirit should have returned to the table. If not, you'll find it at 'your local pub.' Go now... be merry and enjoy being part of an ever evolving festival.

Seasons Greetings!