

# *The* **NEWS** *Shed* <sup>Christmas special</sup>

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*Wishing all our readers  
a merry Christmas and  
a happy New Year*

The next edition of *The* **NEWS** *Shed* will be out on January 7

## A very weird Christmas

» Hiding brooms, scaring children, roller-skating and throwing porridge

Every family has its own traditions at Christmas – but there are some weird and wonderful festive customs around the world – from roller-skating to throwing porridge at the ceiling!

### NORWAY

A Christmas Eve tradition in the Scandinavian country is for people to hide their brooms in a safe part of the house. The custom has been carried out for centuries and dates back to people fearing witches or evil spirits came out on that day to steal brooms to ride on.

### SWEDEN

A huge model of a goat made from straw is erected every Christmas in the castle square of the city of Gavle. It has become popular for people to try to burn down the 40ft (13m) beast.



The Gavle goat in Sweden

### AUSTRIA

Everybody loves Santa Claus, but in Austria and some neighbouring countries they also have the opposite – a scary figure called Krampus, who comes out to frighten children who have not behaved themselves. Krampus parades see men dressed in scary demon costumes with horns do their best to scare the audience.

### NETHERLANDS

We are used to putting out a stocking for Santa to fill with gifts. But for Dutch children it is the custom to put out a shoe.

### VENEZUELA

As in many countries around the world, people go to church on Christmas Eve – but in the South American country it has become traditional to get there on roller-skates!

### UKRAINE

A type of porridge called kutya is a popular Christmas dish in the east European country – but first people throw a spoonful of it at the ceiling. If it sticks there, it is supposed to bring good luck in the year ahead.

### PHILIPPINES

While we decorate fir trees at Christmas, in the city of San Fernando there are displays of huge lanterns.

Each district of the city produces its own lantern, more than 15ft (five metres) across and illuminated with thousands of bulbs, and San Fernando has now become known as the Christmas capital of the Philippines.



## Having a GREEN Christmas

■ A real Christmas tree is better for the environment than a plastic one – as long as you buy locally from a sustainable source and recycle properly afterwards.

Reusable wooden trees are also available and there are now schemes where you can rent a tree, which the farmer will collect after Christmas and replant ready for next year.

■ Try to save and reuse wrapping paper on presents.

If you need to buy a new roll, make sure it can be recycled. Use the 'scrunch test': scrunch a piece of the paper in your hand, and if it stays in a ball it can be recycled. If it unfolds itself, it contains material that can't be recycled, such as foil or glitter.

■ Make sure the Christmas cards you send are made from recycled paper and can be recycled again – or send an e-card instead.

Cards you receive can be saved to make decorations or gift tags for next year.

■ Don't waste food. Plan what you are going to need and don't buy too much. If there are leftovers, make sure they are eaten not thrown away.

### The NEWS Shed

■ The News Shed is a digital newspaper, produced weekly to inform, entertain and educate pupils and to provide resources for their teachers.

■ It is among a whole host of educational resources at:

[www.literacyshedplus.com](http://www.literacyshedplus.com)

■ For contact details please see the website.

» Six of the most popular toys and games flying out of the shops this Christmas



**Scalextric Justice League Batman vs Superman** £39.99



**Lego Elf Clubhouse** £84.99



**Ravensburger Solar System 3D Jigsaw Puzzle** 522 pieces, £39.99



**Gravitrax Pro Extreme** construction game, £89.99



**Harry Potter Scrabble** £24.99



**Horrible Science Explosive Experiments** £17.99

» Christmas records from Guinness World Records

■ The most expensively dressed Christmas tree was valued at £6,975,880, put up at the Emirates Palace hotel in Abu Dhabi in 2010.

■ The most lights lit at the same time on a single Christmas tree was 194,672 in Malmedy, Belgium, in December 2010.

■ The largest Santa Claus was 65.62ft (20 metres) tall and 22.97ft (7m) wide, and was put up at a shopping centre in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2013.



■ The largest gathering of people wearing Santa hats was 30,333 at a baseball stadium in California on June 25, 2014 – six months away from Christmas!

■ The largest gathering of people dressed as Santa's elves is 1,110, organised by a children's hospice in Yorkshire.

■ Canadian man Jean-Guy Laquerre has 25,104 items of Santa memorabilia.

**Guinness World Records, £10**



## » Exclusive interview We talk to author **Alexandra Page** about her brilliant children's new book, *Wishyouwas*

**Q Tell us a little about your new book, *Wishyouwas*.**

**A** One night during London's Great Smog of 1952, 10-year-old Penny Black stumbles upon a small, springy, ungrammatical creature, trying to make off with a letter from her uncle's post office.

But *Wishyouwas* is no thief. He belongs to the subterranean world of the Sorters, self-appointed guardians of lost letters who live in hiding in the Post Office Railway tunnels.

*Wishyouwas* and Penny form an unlikely friendship which is soon tested. Somehow they must convince the human-fearing Sorters to leave the safety of their secret world and avoid the clutches of sinister Royal Mail rat catcher, Stanley Scrawl.

**Q What was your inspiration for the story?**

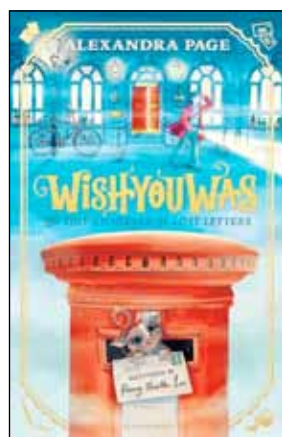
**A** Letter writing has played an important role in my life. When I was little, my mum and sister moved to Zimbabwe. During the school holidays I would board a plane as an unaccompanied child and, just like a letter, be 'posted' thousands of miles away to Africa and back again!

Years later while working in London, I walked past a building which had a sign saying it was near where the first 'Penny Post' was founded. I began to imagine a story about a girl called Penny getting lost in the post and remembered visiting the Post Office Railway when I was seven. *Wishyouwas*'s name popped into my head and the world of the Sorters quickly grew from there.

**Q Why did you choose to set it in the 1950s?**

**A** 1952 was pretty bleak. The King died that year, sweets and chocolate and other luxuries were still rationed, and then London suffered a terrible, choking smog.

Most people didn't have phones, so letters were a major form of commu-



**Wishyouwas** by Alexandra Page (pictured below), illustrated by Penny Neville-Lee

nication, making the Sorters' work even more important. The early 1950s were also a time of great change in society, reflecting the changes the Sorters face in their own world of The Bureau, which made it the perfect setting. Penny Neville-Lee has caught the atmosphere and period details brilliantly in her illustrations.

**Q Will we hear any more from *Wishyouwas*?**

**A** We certainly will! I am busy finishing the sequel, which will publish in 2023.

It takes place over the Coronation weekend in June 1953, when Penny and *Wishyouwas* are entrusted with a top-secret mission by the Royal Postmistress herself and uncover a deadly, treacherous plot.

Meanwhile lots of changes are happening in the Sorters' world, including some big surprises I'm looking forward to revealing!

**Q And you have another book out at the moment, *The Fire Fox*, for younger readers. Tell us about that.**

**A** The *Fire Fox* is the story of Freya, who is

whisked away on a magical adventure with an arctic fox whose fur sparks to create the Northern Lights.

It's about the love that still surrounds you even when someone close to you is gone and draws inspiration from the Saami myth of the magical arctic fox Tulikettu. The story has been brought to life with simply stunning illustrations by Stef Murphy.

**Q What were your own favourite books as a child?**

**A** I loved *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton and everything by Roald Dahl but especially *The BFG* and *Matilda* – I desperately tried to move objects with my eyes, but it never worked!

I devoured adventure stories where the children manage on their own, like *Swallows and Amazons* by Arthur Ransome and *The Secret Island* by Enid Blyton. Between ages nine and 11, I read almost nothing except *The Beano* comic, with its brilliant, bonkers and brave characters.

**Q Which other children's authors do you admire?**

**A** There are so many! Piers Torday is like a wise wizard to me, and his books are brilliant. Maz Evans is a goddess, whose writing balances pathos and humour perfectly. I love books by Lesley Parr and Helen Peters, whose historical fiction is both hopeful and heart-breaking.

The author I aspire to be most like is Eva Ibbotson, who wrote a real mix of different stories with a blend of adventure, humour, friendship, love and historical detail.

**Q Why do you think books and reading are so important for children?**

**A** Stories dramatise ideas about what it means to be human and test those ideas by putting characters into difficult situations which bring out the best (and worst) in them. They offer one way of learning more about who we all are.

But also, reading – whether fiction, non-fiction, comics or graphic novels – offers a little bit of certainty in a world which is always changing. Immersing yourself into worlds of fact or fiction can bring adventure, comfort and most importantly, hope.





# Merry Christmas? No, happy birthday!

» The stars who were born on December 25

## CRICKET

Three of England's leading cricketers of this century were all born on Christmas Day.

Opening batsman **Marcus Trescothick** and fast bowler **Simon Jones** were both part of the famous England side which won the 2005 Ashes series against Australia, the first time they had overcome their old rivals since 1986-87.

Trescothick (known as Banger because of his love of sausages) scored 431 runs in the series, second only to Kevin Pietersen's 473, while Jones took 18 wickets.

The following year, **Alastair Cook**, who also has a December 25 birthday, made his England debut, replacing Trescothick in the team.

Now Sir Alastair Cook, he went on to make 12,472 Test match runs for England, 3,000 runs more than anyone else, and captain his country in Test matches a record 59 times.

## THE ARTS

Singer-songwriter **Shane MacGowan** not only wrote one of the best-loved Christmas songs, *Fairytale of New York*, he was also born on Christmas Day.

MacGowan wrote the song with Jem Finer, a fellow member of Irish folk-punk group The Pogues, and sang it with guest vocalist Kirsty MacColl.

Scottish pop singer **Annie Lennox** (pictured) is another music industry figure who was



born on December 25. She came to prominence with a band called The Tourists before joining Dave Stewart to have several big hits as the Eurythmics.

English singer-songwriter **Dido** is another who celebrates her birthday on December 25.

In the world of film, actor **Humphrey Bogart** and actress **Sissy Spacek** were also born on Christmas Day, as was Danish supermodel **Helena Christensen**.

## FOOTBALL

One of Brazil's most celebrated footballers, **Jairzinho**, was born on Christmas Day.

Real name **Jair Ventura Filho**, he famously scored in every one of Brazil's games at the 1970 World Cup, culminating in the third goal of the 4-1 win over Italy in the final – widely held to be the greatest World Cup final. He ended up with 33 goals in 81 games for Brazil over a remarkable 18-year period.

Brazilian football coach **Joel Santana**, who managed an incredible 35 teams including the South African national team, was also born on December 25.

Those celebrating Christmas birthdays in British football include former Scotland star **Gary McAllister** and player turned wacky TV football pundit **Chris Kamara**.



Treble tops: The Spice Girls

## The race to be No.1 at Christmas

Being at the top of the pop charts on Christmas Day is much coveted by music acts and is an honour enjoyed by some of our most popular songs.

■ In 1984, pop stars Bob Geldof and Midge Ure wrote *Do The Know It's Christmas?* to raise funds to fight a famine in Ethiopia. They gathered together a super-group called **Band Aid** to perform it, made up of dozens of the era's leading stars.

The song was at No.1 at Christmas and spent five weeks in the top slot. Re-releases or re-recordings of the song were also No.1 at Christmas in 1989 and 2004. A fourth version in 2014 also reached No.1 but not at Christmas.

In total, *Do They Know It's Christmas?* has been at No.1 for 13 weeks.

■ Two of pop history's most popular groups have had the Christmas No.1 position for three years in a row, all with different songs.

**The Beatles** did it from 1963-1965 with *I Want to Hold Your Hand*, *I Feel Fine* and *Day Tripper*. The feat was repeated from 1996-1998 by the **Spice Girls** with *2 Become 1*, *Too Much* and *Goodbye*.

■ Two of the most enduring festive songs were No.1 in successive years, *Merry Xmas Everybody* by **Slade** in 1973 and *Lonely This Christmas* by **Mud** the following year.

■ A famous Welsh preacher of the 18th and 19th centuries was born on Christmas Day in 1766 and was given an appropriate name when he was christened... **Christmas Evans!**

■ Noel, Countess of Rothes, born on Christmas Day 1878, was a heroine of the Titanic disaster. She took the tiller of one of the lifeboats and helped row it to the safety of a rescue ship.



# This WEEK in HISTORY

**December 18, 1981**

The Tupolev Tu-160, a Russian heavy strategic bomber, made its first flight.

It is the world's largest combat aircraft, largest supersonic aircraft and largest variable-sweep wing aircraft. It is capable of travelling at twice the speed of sound, known as Mach 2, which is 1,380mph (2,220kph).



**T**he world's first full-length animated film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, had its premiere in Hollywood.

Based on an 1812 fairytale by the Brothers Grimm, the film has earned more than £400million

**Dec 21, 1937**

at the box office and is still in the top 10 earning films using traditional animation, rather than computer or stop-motion techniques.

Walt Disney, who produced the film, was presented with a unique honorary Oscar award for the film –

one normal-sized statuette and seven miniature ones.

Can you remember all seven dwarfs' names? They are listed below upside-down, so no cheating!

The seven dwarfs are: Grumpy, Dopey, Doc, Happy, Bashful, Sleepy and Sneezy

**December 20, 1955**

Cardiff was officially proclaimed capital of Wales. Until then, Wales had no official capital.

**December 22, 1989**

The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin was re-opened after nearly 30 years, effectively ending the division of East and West Germany. The two countries were formally reunited as one country on October 3, 1990.

**December 19, 1983**

The original football World Cup, the Jules Rimet Trophy, was stolen from the headquarters of the Brazilian Football Confederation. Brazil had got to keep the trophy permanently after winning the World Cup for the third time in 1970.

The gold trophy was in a cabinet behind bulletproof glass, but the wooden back of the case was ripped off. The trophy was never found and is thought to have been melted down.

The trophy had earlier been stolen from an exhibition in London in the build-up to the 1966 World Cup in England, but was found at the bottom of a garden hedge by a dog called Pickles a week later.



**December 23, 1986**

An aircraft called Voyager became the first to fly non-stop around the world without any refuelling. It took off from California nine days earlier and made a 26,366-mile (42,432km) journey before returning.

**December 24, 1818**

One of the most popular Christmas carols, Silent Night, was sung for the first time in the Austrian city of Oberndorf.



# Roast turkey, Christmas pudding... and football!

**L**ike many other professions, footballers will be hard at work over Christmas.

It is traditional nowadays for a full programme of league football to be played on Boxing Day.

That means that after spending Christmas morning with their families, most players will then have to go into training on Christmas Day to prepare for the next day's game – and many will then spend the night in a hotel to get ready.

But until around 60 years ago, it was common for matches to be played on Christmas Day itself.

In those days there were far fewer public holidays, so Christmas Day gave clubs the chance to put games on when many people were not at work. The matches would often be local derbies, with the same two teams meeting again the following day.

The last full programme of games on December 25 was in 1957, but some clubs continued the tradition after that.

## Fact SHED

### Boxing Day 1963

Blackpool	1-5	Chelsea
Burnley	6-1	Manchester Utd
Fulham	10-1	Ipswich
Leicester	2-0	Everton
Liverpool	6-1	Stoke
Nottm Forest	3-3	Sheffield United
Sheffield Wed	3-0	Bolton
West Brom	4-4	Tottenham
West Ham	2-8	Blackburn
Wolves	3-3	Aston Villa



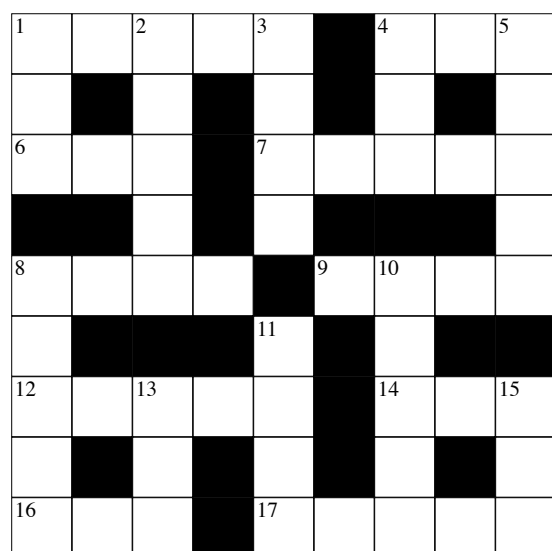
The last English game in the top division on Christmas Day was in 1965, when Blackburn beat Blackpool 1-0. In Scotland, it continued right up to 1976.

Boxing Day is now the big football day, and the First Division in 1963 threw up one of the most famous rounds of games, when 66 goals were scored in 10 matches (see panel). Perhaps the goal-

keepers had eaten too much Christmas pudding? Manchester United lost 6-1 at Burnley that day – but then beat the same opponents 5-1 just two days later back at Old Trafford.

This season, clubs will play three times in a week: a full programme on Boxing Day, another in midweek and a third on the weekend of January 1 and 2.

## CROSSWORD



### ACROSS

- 1 & 7 He travels in a sleigh pulled by reindeer (5,5)
- 4 What you might need to cut down a 9 across (3)
- 6 Expected score in golf (3)
- 7 see 1 across
- 8 Your tummy might do this after too much Christmas dinner (4)
- 9 Your presents may be under this (4)
- 12 & 14 Small round tart at Christmas (5,3)
- 16 A small measure of drink; a baby (3)
- 17 Figures of Joseph, Mary and Jesus in the stable make a nativity \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (5)

### DOWN

- 1 Take a small drink (3)
- 2 Which pole 1 & 7 across lives near (5)
- 3 Curved structure over an opening in a wall, for instance (4)
- 4 Large body of water (3)
- 5 Unused leftovers (5)
- 8 Own up to (5)
- 10 Unit of Indian money (5)
- 11 Honey makers (4)
- 13 Food item with a hard shell (3)
- 15 December 24 is Christmas \_ \_ \_ (3)

Ask your teacher to find the solutions online with the reading comprehension answers