




Issue 140

Christmas 2024

*A merry Christmas  
and happy New Year  
to all our readers*

#### INSIDE

- ♦ The advent calendar of news
- ♦ Christmas around the world
- ♦ Visiting Lapland
- ♦ Christmas history
- ♦ Festive footy



This is our final  
edition for this  
term. The News  
Shed will be back  
on January 10

## ...and here's how to make it a **GREEN** Christmas

There is so much fun to be had at Christmas, with gifts, cards, games, parties and festive food.

But we should still think about the environment, recycling what we can and cutting out waste. Here are some seasonal tips:

- ♦ 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 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.





## IT'S THE NEWS SHED ADVENT CALENDAR

The nature of news is that stories can be serious or sad, happy or funny – or just plain weird. Here are a few of the news items we have reported during 2024



The Royal National Lifeboat Institute celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2024. It is estimated to have saved 144,000 lives in that time.

The return of television show Gladiators was a big hit with viewers, 6.4 million people tuning in for the first programme.

A set of false teeth worn by wartime leader Winston Churchill were sold at auction for £18,000.

Daniel Fairbrother was training to run the London Marathon while carrying a fridge on his back when police mistook him for a kitchen appliance thief.

King Charles and the Princess of Wales both returned to official duties after being treated for cancer.

A new report revealed that there are now 12,150 girls' or women's football teams in England – double the number seven years earlier.

The world's tallest Lego minifigure, standing 30ft high, was unveiled alongside a new ride at the Lego Windsor Resort.

A runaway train in India travelled for more than 40 miles (65km) with no driver at the controls. Miraculously, nobody was hurt.

French people eat so many frogs' legs – one of the country's favourite treats – that some species are in danger of extinction.

Oliver Bearman became the youngest British driver in Formula 1 history when the 18-year-old took over from Ferrari driver Carlos Sainz who was unwell.

Endurance athlete Russ Cook ran 10,190 miles (16,400km) through 16 countries from one end of Africa to the other. It took 352 days.

The RSPCA marked its 200th anniversary with a campaign asking us to reconsider how we think about animals.

The Nakizumo Crying Baby Festival in Japan saw huge sumo wrestlers trying to make babies cry by pulling faces at them.

A nine-year-old boy called Cooper from Chesterfield won the European Seagull Screeching Championship by imitating the noisy birds.

An albino penguin called Kokosanka was voted the world's favourite penguin in the annual March of the Penguin Madness competition.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp and Manchester United boss Erik Ten Hag both left their jobs – only Klopp did so by choice.

A tourist on the Norwegian island of Svalbard was given a heavy fine for getting too close to a walrus.

An all-female cricket team played in the historic Lancashire League for the first time. Ramsbottom CC Women finished in mid-table in Division 3.

A London dustbin man netted the biggest freshwater fish ever caught on a rod and line in Britain, a catfish weighing 64.4kg.

Nepalese guide Kami Rita Sherpa extended his own record when he climbed Mount Everest for the 29th time.

Steph Houghton, one of the greatest players in women's football history, retired from the sport after winning 15 major trophies.

Taylor Swift's fans danced so enthusiastically at her Edinburgh gig that they set off earthquake sensors almost four miles away.

Pope Francis hosted more than 100 comedians at the Vatican, asking them to spread humour and laughter around the world.

A snail called Jeff won the World Snail Racing Championship, covering the 13-inch course in four minutes and three seconds.





# WHEN CHRISTMAS GOES CRACKERS!

Every family has its own traditions at Christmas - but there are 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.

## VENEZUELA

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

## 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 (*right, top*).

## 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. San Fernando has now become known as the Christmas capital of the Philippines.

## SWEDEN

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

## AUSTRIA

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

## IT'S A RECORD! EXTREME CHRISTMAS

- ◆ 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 Malmey, Belgium, in December 2010.
- ◆ The largest Santa Claus was 65ft (20 metres) tall and 23ft (7m) wide, and was put



- up at a shopping centre in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- ◆ 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.





## WORD OF THE WEEK

### ADVENT

Advent is a Christian season marking the wait and preparation for the celebration of Christmas.

Although our Advent calendars usually start on December 1, the Christian season really starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, known as Advent Sunday.

The word comes from the Latin 'adventus', meaning 'coming'. It is also used to mean the approach or arrival of any notable thing so, for example, the 1920s saw the advent of television and late spring sees the advent of summer.

When we're talking about the Christian season, Advent would have a capital 'A' but in other uses it should have a lower-case 'a'.

## REGION IN FOCUS LAPLAND (OBVIOUSLY!)

- ◆ The Nordic country of Finland is divided into 19 regions and Lapland, home of Santa Claus, is the largest and most northerly.
- ◆ Part of Lapland is within the Arctic Circle, meaning it gets 24 hours of darkness at certain times of winter and 24 days of daylight at the height of summer.
- ◆ Of Lapland's population of more than 180,000 people, around a third live in the regional capital of Rovaniemi.
- ◆ Finland has only been an independent country since 1917. Prior to that it was governed by Sweden and then the Russian empire.
- ◆ There are around 200,000 reindeer roaming Lapland. Wolverines and brown bears are other common native animals.
- ◆ More tourists visit Lapland from the UK than from any other country.



## DID YOU KNOW? CHRISTMAS FACTS

- ◆ The custom of decorating Christmas trees was introduced here by Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria. He brought the idea from his native Germany.
- ◆ The huge Christmas tree put up in Trafalgar Square in London each year is a gift from the city of Oslo, capital of Norway.
- ◆ Santa Claus used to be depicted wearing green. The image of a jovial chap in red started with a Coca-Cola advert in the 1930s.
- ◆ Can you name all nine of Santa's reindeer? Answers at the end – and no cheating!



- ◆ 'Silent Night' is the most recorded Christmas song in history – more than 700 versions have been copyrighted in the past 50 years.
- ◆ When Canadian children write to Santa, he has an official postcode: HOH OHO.
- ◆ The German word for mistletoe is 'mistelzweig'. That literally means 'poo on a twig' because birds eat the berries and help the plants germinate with their droppings!

Answer: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen and Rudolph






**The BACK of the SHED**  
Where the bits and bobs are kept

### NUMBER OF THE WEEK

# 364

That's the total number of gifts handed over in the song The 12 Days of Christmas. How generous is that?



1 partridge in a pear tree.....	x12	=	12
2 turtle doves.....	x11	=	22
3 French hens.....	x10	=	30
4 calling birds.....	x9	=	36
5 gold rings.....	x8	=	40
6 geese a-laying.....	x7	=	42
7 swans a-swimming.....	x6	=	42
8 maids a-milking.....	x5	=	40
9 ladies dancing.....	x4	=	36
10 lords a-leaping.....	x3	=	30
11 pipers piping.....	x2	=	22
12 drummers drumming.....	x1	=	12
<b>Total.....</b>		<b>=</b>	<b>364</b>


## HISTORY WHAT HAPPENED ON CHRISTMAS DAY?

**DECEMBER 25, 1758**

German astronomer Johann Georg Palitzsch spotted Halley's Comet in the night sky – just as he knew he would.

His English counterpart, Edmond Halley, had worked out that comets seen in past years were actually the same one, and predicted when it would next appear. He died 16 years before Palitzsch was able to prove him right.

Halley's Comet – a lump of ice with trails of dust – was last seen in 1986 and is not expected again until the middle of 2061.




◆ The weather here on Christmas Day isn't often suitable for cricket – but it is still an important day for the sport in England.

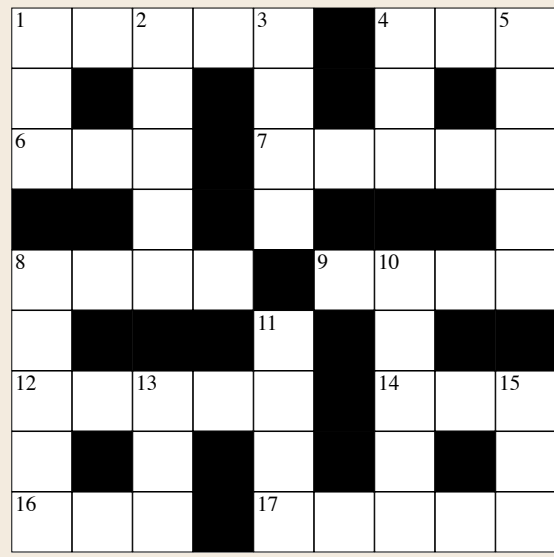
Former England opening batsmen Marcus Trescothick (1975) and Sir Alastair Cook (1984) and fast bowler Simon Jones (1978) were all born on Christmas Day.

### ABOUT US

- ◆ *The News Shed* is a digital news magazine, produced weekly in term-time 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.



## CROSSWORD TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE



- ACROSS**
- 1&4** Popular sweet treat at this time of year (5,3)
  - 6** Balloon bursting sound (3)
  - 7** Santa's complexion is this (5)
  - 8** Container for documents (4)
  - 9** Something we give and receive at Christmas (4)
  - 12** US state, capital Boise (5)
  - 14** Writing fluid (3)
  - 16** Hairy cattle native to the Himalayas (3)
  - 17** see 8 down
- DOWN**
- 1** Santa might need one of these to find your home (3)
  - 2** Himalayan country, capital Kathmandu (5)
  - 3** Irish name for Ireland (4)
  - 4** Christmas \_\_\_\_, final part of festive meal (abbreviation) (3)
  - 5** African country, capital Cairo (5)
  - 8&17** It illuminates a Christmas tree (5,5)
  - 10** It decorates a Christmas cake (5)
  - 11** Sheep fur (4)
  - 13** Request (3)
  - 15** Sports equipment; young fox (3)

Your teacher can find the solutions at [www.literacyshedplus.com](http://www.literacyshedplus.com)





**SPOTY TIME!**  
The BBC's Sports Personality of the Year award will be chosen by a public vote during the annual show on Tuesday evening. An expert panel has drawn up a shortlist of six from which the winner will come: Jude Bellingham (football), Keely Hodgkinson (athletics), Luke Littler (darts), Joe Root (cricket), Sarah Storey (para-cycling) and Alex Yee (triathlon).



**Like 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 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. 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 until 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 goalkeepers 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.

**BOXING DAY 1963**

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

**PREMIER LEAGUE**

**When Christmas leaders become the actual champions**

Liverpool are likely to be top of the Premier League on Christmas Day, although Chelsea could in theory overtake them before then.

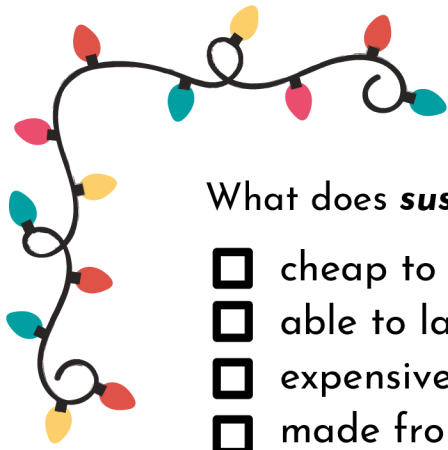
But what does that mean for their chances of being crowned champions at the end of the season?

As the chart below shows, in the 32 completed Premier League seasons, the team top of the league on Christmas Day have gone on to become the eventual champions 16 times – exactly half.

Manchester United and Chelsea have done so five times each and Manchester City three times.

Season	Top at Christmas	Eventual champions
1992-93	Norwich	Man Utd
1993-94	Man Utd	Man Utd
1994-95	Blackburn	Blackburn
1995-96	Newcastle	Man Utd
1996-97	Liverpool	Man Utd
1997-98	Man Utd	Arsenal
1998-99	Aston Villa	Man Utd
1999-00	Leeds	Man Utd
2000-01	Man Utd	Man Utd
2001-02	Newcastle	Arsenal
2002-03	Arsenal	Man Utd
2003-04	Man Utd	Arsenal
2004-05	Chelsea	Chelsea
2005-06	Chelsea	Chelsea
2006-07	Man Utd	Man Utd
2007-08	Arsenal	Man Utd
2008-09	Liverpool	Man Utd
2009-10	Chelsea	Chelsea
2010-11	Man Utd	Man Utd
2011-12	Man City	Man City
2012-13	Man Utd	Man Utd
2013-14	Liverpool	Man City
2014-15	Chelsea	Chelsea
2015-16	Leicester	Leicester
2016-17	Chelsea	Chelsea
2017-18	Man City	Man City
2018-19	Liverpool	Man City
2019-20	Liverpool	Liverpool
2020-21	Liverpool	Man City
2021-22	Man City	Man City
2022-23	Arsenal	Man City
2023-24	Arsenal	Man City





What does **sustainable** mean in the article?

- cheap to buy
- able to last without harming the environment
- expensive but high quality
- made from plastic



Explain why a real tree is better for the environment than a plastic one.

.....

.....

Explain how to test if wrapping paper can be recycled.

.....

.....



Explain why reusing cards or decorations is a good idea.

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.....

Why might a farmer want to replant a rented tree?

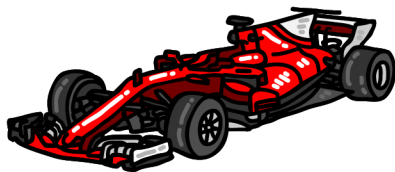


.....

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.....





True or false?  
Tick the correct box.

True

False

A set of false teeth worn by Winston Churchill were sold at auction for over £20,000.

 Yes

The RSCPA celebrated its 200th anniversary this year.

 Yes

Kami Rita Sherpa climbed Mount Everest for the 29th time.

 Yes

Carlos Sainz became the youngest ever F1 driver in history.

 Yes

A snail called Graham won the World Snail racing Championship in 2024.

 Yes

What unusual item did Daniel Fairbrother carry whilst training for the London Marathon?

- a set of false teeth
- a fridge
- a walrus costume
- a lego minifigure



What did Taylor Swift's fans do at her Edinburgh gig that was unusual?

- set a world record for loudest singing
- created a human chain around the venue
- started a flash mob during the performance
- caused earthquake sensors to go off







# Where in the world?

Where would you be if you witnessed the following at Christmas?

A shoe on the doorstep awaiting presents.

Some porridge stuck to the ceiling.

People roller skating to church on Christmas eve.

Explain why some children in Austria may get scared at Christmas.

.....  
.....

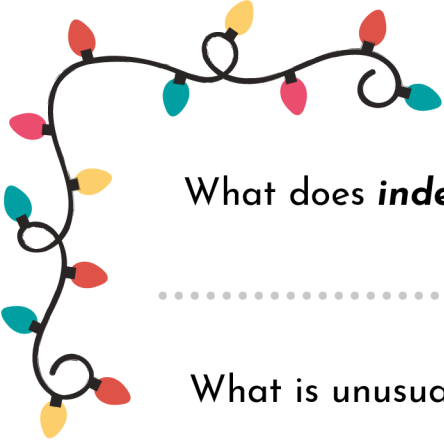
**Find the Numbers**

The height of the world's largest Santa Clause in metres.

The number of people dressed as elves in the largest ever gathering.

The number of lights lit at the same time on the Christmas tree in Belgium.





What does **independent** mean in the context of Finland?

.....

What is unusual about the amount of daylight and darkness they get in Finland.

.....

Why do you think the journalist has included the word **obviously** in the article heading?

.....

.....

.....

What animals might you see if you visited Finland?

.....

.....

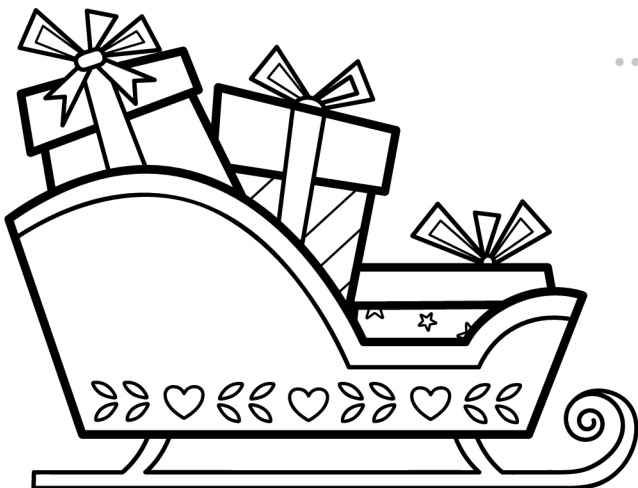
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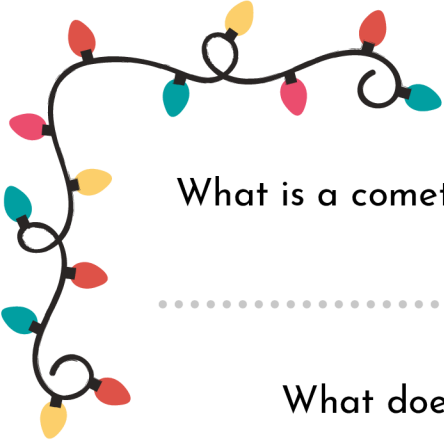
The husband of which monarch introduced the custom of decorating Christmas trees?

.....

What does the german word **mistelweig** mean?

.....





What is a comet?

.....

What does **predicted** mean in the context of Halley's Comet?

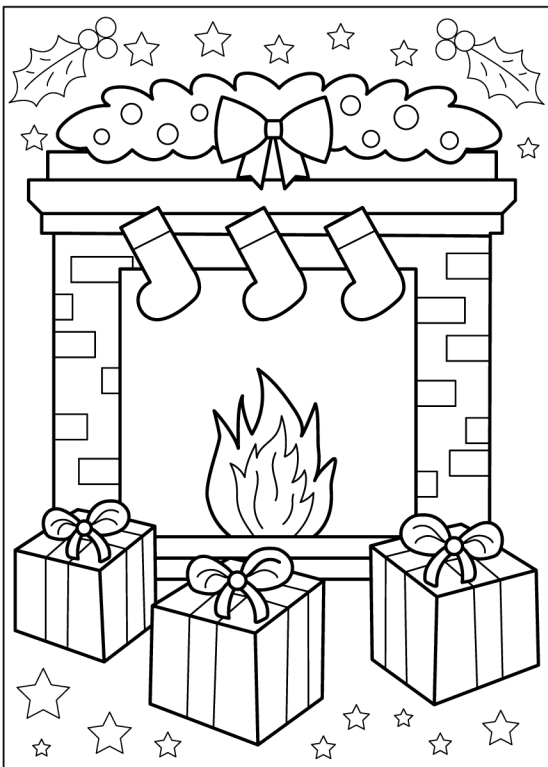
- use reindeer as a form of propulsion for a sleigh
- a scientist who studies stars, planets and other objects in space.
- used knowledge to guess or calculate events in the future
- witnessed an astronomical event

Summarise Edmond Halley's discovery about comets.

.....  
.....  
.....

Explain why Johann Georg Palitzsch was important to Halley's prediction.

.....  
.....



When was Halley's comet last seen?

.....

When is Halley's comet expected to return?

.....





What is a **derby** in football?

.....  
.....



Why were football matches played on Christmas day in the past?

.....  
.....

Summarise what modern footballers typically do on Christmas day.

.....  
.....

Why do you think that Boxing Day matches are still a popular tradition today?

.....  
.....

When was the last full programme of Christmas Day matches played in England?

.....

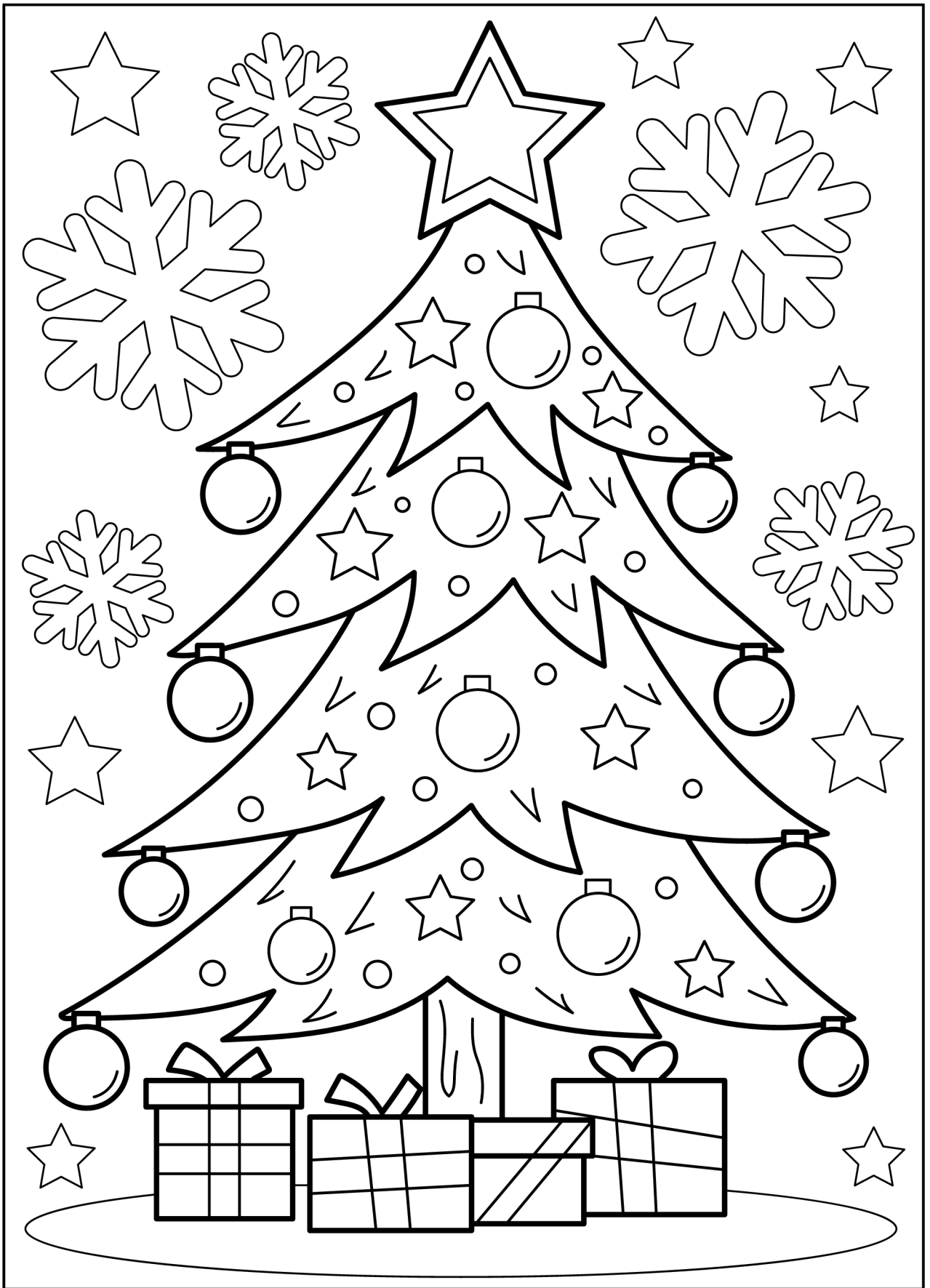
When did Christmas Day matches stop in Scotland?

.....

Which football team has been top of the Premier League at Christmas for the last two seasons?

.....





MERRY  
CHRISTMAS

