

Many strange customs surround Yule season

LONDON — No annual festival was as many strange and divergent customs attached to it as the Christmas season. And in Britain, these customs are as different as the accents spoken in different parts of the country. From records compiled over the years, some of these old customs have been handed down to present-day generations.

For instance, at every yuletide for 300 years, the inhabitants of Westbury, in Staffordshire, witness a strange ritual started by the will of a citizen by the name of Joseph Hopkins. He provided a fund from which coats and gloves are distributed to needy persons after the Christmas service at Westbury Parish Church.

Thanks to wise investment, this bequest has now reached a value of \$21,000. Although Mr. Hopkins, at the time he made it, envisaged only three poor men and three poor women being its beneficiaries, hundreds of persons have now received need garments through his generosity.

The town of Okehampton, in Devonshire, is the scene of another curious custom on the Sunday after Christmas Day. It goes by the odd name of "The Gilet Market". It consists of virtually an invitation for any young man to speak to, and kiss, any young lady he wishes. The usual midwinter bough is not necessary for this purpose. Those of the fair sex who do not wish to be kissed by entire strangers are usually advised to remain indoors, or stay away from Okehampton for the day.

The "blither-headed" bands, consisting of a motley collection of instrumentalists, are used to enliven the festive season in many Yorkshire towns, but so many years ago are now rarely seen. But in Cheshire, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, at least one brass band tours the streets on Christmas Day as Boxing Day, playing carols and other seasonal tunes.

Picking, in North Yorkshire, adopts a unique ritual in relation to its strolling players. The custom continues the usual activities of an outdoor band with those of the old-time street crier. The instrumentalists are accompanied by a "shouter", whose duty is to call every household by name after Christmas carols have been played in front of his house. The shouter also announces the time of day and the state of the weather. Locally this custom is known as "shouting the wails."

MUMMER TROUPE
Both Yorkshire and Cheshire are known to have troupes of mummers, and Christmas sword dancers still go the rounds of some rural places. The best-known troupe of mummers in Cheshire is the Alderley, which Christmas is the Alderley Age neighborhood.

Like the Hampshire mummers, they perform centuries-old plays in the open air, and the divergent verses are handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation.

Durham children celebrate Yuletide in their own traditional way by demanding a Yule "Doo" or Dooch. It is the image of a baby made of dough, with currants for its eyes, nose and mouth. These confections, representing the Christchild, are conialed to a few localities in the county.

FIRE DANCES
One of the oddest of local customs at Christmas seems to have a direct connection with the Druid days. At Street, in Somerset, a bonfire is lit on Boxing day, and the inhabitants toast sausages on the end of hazel sticks.

Allendale, Northumberland, observes a similar custom although dancing and merrymaking take the place of the toasting of sausages. These festivities last as long as the fires stay alight.

The origin of this affair seems to have been the fire-dances practised by the Druids. They have been, however, adapted to Christian usages, and they have continued for centuries, only being suspended in times of national emergency such as in the black-out conditions of the second world war.

Traffic Deaths Are Forecast

OTTAWA (CP) — The Canadian Highway Safety Council has forecast that there will be 25 road deaths in Canada during the Christmas holiday and 20 in the New Year period. Both periods begin at 6 p.m. on the holiday eve and end at midnight Wednesday night Dec. 23 and Jan. 1.

In 1962, the traffic death tolls were 85 for Christmas—the actual holiday fell on a Tuesday and was considered part of a four-day holiday by the council — and 22 for New Year.

Time Bel'ev'd Not Opportune For Russian Fisheries Deal

OTTAWA (CP) — Fisheries Minister Robichaud said in the Commons the time is not opportune to press for Russia's participation in the North Pacific fisheries convention.

However, he added that if the Russians were to exploit salmon, halibut and herring schools in the North Pacific, it might be necessary to bring Russia into the Canada-United States-Japan agreement.

Mr. Robichaud said that so far there has been no change in Russia's attitude which does not accept the right of any country to preserve fishing rights on the high seas.

There was little likelihood of getting Russian co-operation with regard to salmon, halibut and herring on the same basis as agreed by Canada, United States and Japan.

The fisheries minister, speaking during resumed consideration of his department's 1963-64 spending program, said Canada would be glad to cooperate with Russia in marine fisheries.

Mr. Robichaud said there had been an exchange of notes between the Soviet Union and Canada on the North Pacific fisheries in 1961 and 1962.

Russia at the time had said its fishing operations were not on a large scale in the North Pacific and said that if it went into commercial fishing, it would co-operate with Canada.

tion to Butler's plan to visit the disarmament conference when it resumes in Geneva Jan. 21. Rusk does not plan to attend. The British foreign secretary hopes to meet Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko there. It was stressed, however, that Butler in any talks with the Soviet foreign minister, will be speaking only for the British government — not for the Western alliance as a whole.

Rusk Winds Up Diplomatic Trip

LONDON (AP) — U.S. State Secretary Dean Rusk has wound up a pre-Christmas diplomatic swing aimed at steering the Western allies toward a cautious re-examination of the cliches of the cold war.

Rusk's object is to keep seeking new agreements with the Soviet Union and thus maintain the momentum obtained with the limited nuclear test-ban treaty.

American sources said Rusk was heartened by the outcome of the Atlantic alliance ministerial conference in Paris earlier this week and by intensive London talks with Prime Minister Douglas-Home and Foreign Secretary Butler.

Rusk headed by plane for Washington with the feeling of having conducted useful business with U.S. allies, American sources said. He was described as having, at the moment, a highly-qualified sense of optimism.

FAVORS HARD LOOK
President Johnson's administration favors taking a hard look at all the aspects and problems of the cold war. The assumption is that 15 years of rigidity have produced few solutions of world problems and that maybe a new look at the problems from the Western side and a reasonable attitude from the Russian side would bring solutions closer.

Several areas for possible limited agreement are believed to exist. Among these is a proposal to establish observation posts on both sides of the Iron Curtain to guard against surprise attack.

PREFER SOVIET LINE
The NATO meeting made it plain that the Western powers favor Russia's version of coexistence—imperfect though that may be—to the revolutionary military of the Chinese Communists. However, there is no disposition by the U.S. or any other NATO power to become directly involved in Moscow's worsening dispute with Peking.

Rusk and Butler, meeting Wednesday night and Thursday, found themselves in substantial agreement on the broad outlines of the world situation. Displeasure reports to the contrary, American sources said the U.S. government is raising no objections.

FREDERICK RAB VISIT
OTTAWA (CP)—British Foreign Secretary R. A. Butler is expected to visit Canada "in the relatively near future," External Affairs Minister Paul Martin said Saturday. He told the Commons that he issued the invitation when he met Mr. Butler at the recent NATO ministerial meeting in Paris. He also invited Italian Foreign Minister Giuseppe Saragat to come at his convenience.

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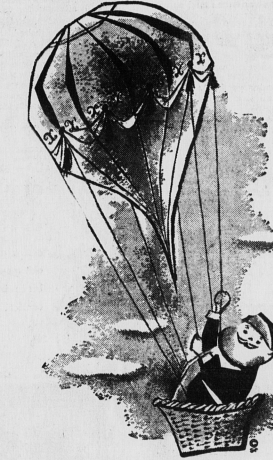
PEACE

As we celebrate the glory of His birth, let us also remember how He taught that love of mankind is the true path to Peace on Earth.

Santa's Due — and it's our cue to wish each of you a very Merry Christmas from all of us

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Sincerest Wishes that your holiday be filled with peace and contentment

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CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

Reverently, prayerfully we celebrate the birthday of the holy Child. May this truly be for you a blessed Christmas.



May your home be bright with joy all through this most festive of holiday seasons. To all of our friends we wish the merriest Christmas ever.

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