

# CHRISTMAS TREES!

**NG KIDS' time-travelling mouse, Max, finds out more about our famous bauble-bearing greenery!**

Merry Christmas, readers!

Have you ever wondered why we have Christmas trees? Then wonder no more!

Evergreen plants and trees have long been celebrated – way before Christianity. People used to keep branches over their door during winter to ward off evil spirits and witches!

Ouch!

Klunk!

Early Europeans thought that when the days were shorter, it meant the sun was ill. So they celebrated the winter solstice (the shortest day and longest night), as it meant the sun was recovering and green plants would return.

Would you mind keeping the noise down? I still feel a bit rough!

In the 16th century, Christian Germans began bringing evergreen trees into the home for the first time. They even decorated them with candles and apples coated in gold!

Argh!

Oops! maybe I used too much gold!

It was leading 16th century religious leader Martin Luther who first thought of adding candles. As he carried his tree home, he was impressed by the effect of the night stars twinkling through the branches.

Oops!

I'm not seeing the attraction.

Lighted candles and wood are not a good mix!

Christmas trees had been a common fixture in Royal circles since 1800, when Queen Charlotte put one up for a party. But after Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's tree appeared in the Illustrated London News in 1848, things really took off!

People copying trends in magazines. We haven't changed a bit.

Candles were still a problem, though, causing lots of house fires. Miniature lights were invented by Ralph Morris in 1895, after he saw the tiny bulbs used in telephone exchanges.

I definitely think you're onto something...

Nowadays, over 150 million families all over Europe put up a Christmas tree! Lots of work for Santa!

HOW MANY!?!

Traditions vary around the world – in India they decorate mango or banana trees!

It's never much of a surprise when you unwrap the present!

Every year, Norway gives Britain a massive tree as thanks for their help in World War II. You can find it in Trafalgar Square.

We didn't want Nelson to feel left out!

Towns and cities often have 'celebrities' lighting their Christmas tree. Is there an event near you?

Yeah Max!

Max! We love you!

Marry me, Max!