



Six Facts: A Victorian Christmas



★ The Victorians didn't just invent telephones and steam trains – they invented Christmas, too! Before the Victorians, although people went to church on Christmas Day, the real celebration was Twelfth Night. This was on January the 6th – and rich people used to wait on their servants! In Tudor times, one of William Shakespeare's funniest plays was called "Twelfth Night". One of the characters is called Sir Toby Belch – or, as we would say today, Sir Toby Burp! Not long after, when Oliver Cromwell ruled the country, it was actually against the law to sing Christmas carols! The Victorians definitely wouldn't have stood for that ...

★ **1830's: Box of Delights**
For Christians, the day after Christmas Day is St Stephen's Day – and it was only in Victorian times that it became known as Boxing Day (just after Victoria became Queen). We don't really know where the name comes from. Some historians think it replaced Twelfth Night as the day when rich people wrapped presents in boxes for their servants.

★ **1840: Tree-mendous!**
It was Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, who first introduced the Christmas tree to the UK. He came from Germany, where they were very common – and put one in Buckingham Palace in 1840. By tradition, the Christmas tree in London's Trafalgar Square is a present every year from the people of Norway.

★ **1843: What a Card!**
Christmas cards were a Victorian invention. The first one was sent in 1843, by Henry Cole – and showed a family enjoying Christmas dinner. Nowadays, hundreds of millions of Christmas cards are sent in the UK alone!



★ **1843: A Carol for Christmas!**
"A Christmas Carol", a book written by Mr Charles Dickens in 1843, was so popular that many people think it changed the way we celebrate Christmas – and led to the Christmas that we know today! The book tells how the mean Ebenezer Scrooge changed his ways after being visited on Christmas Eve by three ghosts: The Ghost of Christmas Past, The Ghost of Christmas Present – and The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come!

★ **1845: What a Cracker!**
Christmas crackers were another Victorian invention. The first one was made by Tom Smith in 1845 – although he called it a "Cosaque". The world's biggest Christmas cracker was made in 2001 by a group of British schoolchildren. It was 63 metres long!



Victorian Carols

Would You Believe It ... ?

Many of our most popular carols were written in Victorian times. Victorian carols include:

- Away in a Manger
- It Came Upon the Midnight Clear
- God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen
- We Three Kings of Orient Are
- Good King Wenceslas
- The First Noel



Away in a Manger (1885)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

