

THE COLUMNS

by pupils; for pupils HSD's Newsletter: Issue 137

Photo - Ruby McNair

Well, it's officially December. The proper beginning of the season of Christmas (do in fancy text). I've noticed the Christmassyness has been somewhat more restrained than usual. I've barely heard any Wham and no Mariah Carey whatsoever. Actually...that's probably a good thing. Enjoy the Christmassyness of the coming weeks as it all builds to a single day that we try to stretch to a week just to stave off the inevitable anti climax.

– Editor Charlie

Advent Unwrapped

Lucy Smith

Another year, another advent begins. Each morning we open the next door of our advent calendars with great joy, the Christmas trees can finally go up, and the shops begin to play Last Christmas on repeat. But where did this all come from? In terms of Wham! we may never know, but I can answer the rest!

The word advent comes from Latin (surprise surprise), the word *adventus* meaning 'coming' or 'arrival', referring to the birth of Jesus. We can trace this back to the 5th century AD, mainly in Gaul (modern day France), where they used this time as preparation for the coming of Christ. However their idea of preparation is by no means the same as ours today, in fact,

much like Lent before Easter, advent was a 40 day period spent fasting, praying, and reflecting. Not a scrap of chocolate in sight, and not necessarily always related to Christmas. (it wasn't until the middle ages they became directly linked)

Moving on: The Christmas Wreath. Now this was introduced by St Gregory I sometime during the 6th century, an evergreen wreath symbolising the eternity and everlasting nature of God. Yet this was not popularised until the 19th century, when a Lutheran minister added candles onto this in an attempt to interest young children, by counting down the 4 Sundays with candles until Christmas. The Christmas tree itself originates in Germany during the 1500s, but famously was brought across to Britain by Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria in 1848.

Leaving the best for last: The Advent Calendar. This is a really quite modern tradition, although in the past, people did make chalk marks to count down the days, it wasn't until 1908 that the first commercial advent calendar came into play, created by German publisher Gerhard Lang. However, these calendars were mainly just illustrated, with religious pictures, or Bible verses. Cadbury produced the first chocolate advent calendar in 1958, which has then spiralled into whatever mess of crazy advent calendars we have now, ranging from Lego to makeup.

St Gregory 1





So as usual, our Christmas traditions come from a jigsaw puzzle of other cultures, though it does appear that many of them seem to be German. In the end, as long as my room is filled with an obnoxious amount of fairy lights, I couldn't care less where these ideas come from.



Asia Floods

Jack Mitchell



Over the past few weeks, parts of Southeast Asia have been hit by floods and landslides caused by torrential rain and cyclones, leaving over 1,000 dead. Indonesia and Sri Lanka have been the most affected by the floods, but parts of Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia have also seen fatalities. The widespread destruction has also left millions displaced, a huge issue for governments in the region.

The Indonesian island of Sumatra was hit by Cyclone Senyar which caused mass landslides that devastated the area. Although described as 'weak' by typical global cyclone strength standards, the tropical storm formed roughly a week and a half ago and has led to over 700 deaths, making it one of the most deadly of the tropical storms faced by Southeast Asia. It also affected parts of Southern Thailand and Northwestern Malaysia.

Cyclone Ditwah was another extremely devastating storm, forming and hitting Sri Lanka at the same time as Cyclone Senyar was doing so a few thousand miles away in Indonesia. Over 1.4 million people from 400,000 different families have been displaced by the cyclone in Sri Lanka, a country with a population of roughly 22 million. Roughly 500 Sri Lankans also lost their lives as a result of the heavy rainfall and the landslides and widespread flooding it caused on the island. The storm then entered the Bay of Bengal before reaching Southern India, but its effects there were relatively minor when compared with how it affected Sri Lanka.

Other smaller and more localised storms also affected the region but the two aforementioned cyclones were by far the most destructive. Recovery plans and rebuilding work is estimated to cost governments billions, and individuals even more. Countries such as Nepal and Australia have pledged millions to aid the recovery efforts, as well as organisations such as the World Health Organisation which is supporting the region's emergency health services and providing money to improve water sanitation as well.

Experts say the cyclones reflect a shift in weather patterns due to climate change, and that what we are seeing is part of a 'new normal' of more frequent extreme weather events. This will inevitably lead to many more deaths and an astronomical cost to governments and citizens who have to foot the bill for recovery efforts. The high death toll after these most recent cyclones exposes the weaknesses of many countries who will struggle to cope with the increasing number of climate disasters. Whether or not these kinds of disasters can be prevented by a global effort to tackle the root cause of global warming remains unclear, to the detriment of the many countries that may suffer greatly in future.



Under the Floorboards | Case File 6

The Christmas Finale

Al Forbes

Over the last few weeks I have been so fortunate to write my deep dives (or rants) as a part of Under the Floorboards. Over time, I have grown a little cult which reads my articles, I have made the editors go mad with my long pieces of work (sorry Charlie), and spent my Saturday afternoons taking my time to research and write my articles. I hope you have enjoyed reading this series as much as I have enjoyed writing it. But, it isn't over just yet! I'm back once more with my deep dives, so please, for the last time, enjoy this copy of Under the Floorboards.

Christmas has always had a secret shadow side beneath the glitter and lights. Example, the Grinch shows the other side of Christmas, one we don't see. We often forget about others trying to keep ourselves happy. And winter, sparing the lights, is the darkest time of the year, something which humans have always feared (especially me and my fellow vampire-like introverts).

For centuries, people told scary stories at Christmas, not comfortable cosy tales. Tales of ghosts, and creatures creeping around us, or men with weird fashion tastes breaking and entering on Christmas Night... wait... that's just Santa, never mind.

You see, many cultures believe the veil between worlds thins during midwinter. Modern Christmas is so joyful on the surface, but it grew from something much stranger. The contrast between cosy celebrations and ancient fears creates tension, as the 'dark side of Christmas' reveals what we try to hide under the festivities.

Winter folklore is packed with monsters, punishers, and night-walkers. These figures existed to teach lessons, construct rules, and explain danger. Most of them were shaped by harsh winters, where survival, before the more modern society was established, wasn't a guaranteed pass to the next season.

Many dark Christmas creatures come from pre-Christian pagan traditions. Early Europeans, for example, viewed winter as a dangerous season full of spirits. The Wild Hunt myth influenced several Christmas monsters, and when Christianity spread, it absorbed these older myths into what has now become Christmas. In fact, the Puritans went as far as to ban Christmas completely, as it was seen as a distraction from praying and worshipping their god. But, as said, the Yule traditions merged with Christian beliefs which created hybrid rituals.

Here are some key creatures that I am referring to. Krampus was a horned punisher who drags bad children away (kidnapping). Perchta is a being who rewards good people and punishes the deceitful. Gryla was an Icelandic giantess who hunts misbehaving kids. The Yule Lads were once tricksters and criminals before they were 'softened'. The Yule Cat is a monster that eats those without new clothes. Mari Lwyd is a sort of Welsh horse-skull spirit which demands entry and drink (a thirsty demon)? And finally, Frau Holle, a winter figure who enforced fairness and hard work. So basically, if you aren't a creepy thing that is interested in harming kids, then you're a pain for a writer who hates autocorrect.

But you might be asking, why did these creatures exist? Well, they obviously helped communities control behaviour and kids during long, isolating winters. Fear was used as a tool to keep families safe, just like the government... ehem, anyways. Monsters explained natural dangers like cold, hunger, storms, and drunk horses

Today, these myths reflect our fascination with fear and darkness, and revivals like Krampus-parades show people enjoy controlled fear. These creatures now symbolise our winter anxieties and hidden emotions.

With me talking about Christmas and winter's effect on us, what really is the effect? Darkness triggers evolutionary fears built into our biology, with the cold, isolation, and long nights increasing anxiety. Humans naturally gather and tell stories to cope with darkness, like the Grinch, for example. Scary stories helped people bond through shared fear (a now common theme in this article), folklore acted as a survival tool, teaching caution, and Advent used to be a ghost-story season, not a joyful one. Even the Victorians told Christmas ghost stories long before Santa came around the corner.

See, people need contrast, joy feels stronger when the darkness surrounds it, as a cement-like object, or a limit, I can't say for certain. Winter forces introspection, making dark stories feel fitting, and in the modern day, fear feels safer in a controlled environment (like folklore or films) – maybe that's why there's a lot of anti-Christmas movies.

But the more modern psychological reasons are a bit different, but basically the same. Christmas pressure creates emotional tension between families and friends. Many people, mostly older people, are isolated at Christmas. Rituals and family traditions usually cause a lot of stress, especially if you have children that are growing up and for some reason don't want to be dressed like a Christmas tree with their parents.

Nowadays, people (companies) use Christmas as their marketing strategy. Christmas (as I've said) is one of the most stressful holidays of the year. Consumerism creates pressure to buy, perform, and impress (AKA showing off to guests). Social media amplifies comparisons, unrealistic expectations, and Christmas stereotypes. Videos come up of overly optimistic people saying, "this afternoon me and my kids put up our Christmas tree" with a timelapse of happy people laughing as they transform their living room into a Christmas wonderland. This is unrealistic – I'm willing to bet money that as soon as that camera turns off, there will be shouting, screaming, and tears. Remember that. It ends up with many people feeling guilty if their Christmas doesn't look 'perfect', or 'expensive', or 'grand'.

Over the years, winter and Christmas turned from a demonic period to a clean, cheerful, family-friendly Christmas. The Georgians brought over Christmas trees from Germany, and Victorians pushed for lighter-themed Christmases. The darker traditions and stories were being replaced to 'protect' children. Companies standardised the cheerful version, solidifying it in society, and the modern holiday became unbalanced, joy without shadow.

The forced happiness can make people feel fake or overwhelmed, and people often end up hiding stress, sadness, and frustration for everything. The missing balance makes the season emotionally intense – everything that modern Christmas is against but can encourage. Now, holiday spending peaks worldwide and increases debt, loneliness rises during Christmas for many people, crime can spike due to financial stress and lack of awareness, stress can cause conflicts, the usage of lights increases pollution, and excess wrapping paper is just a massive waste.

Christmas has always had both light and dark sides through history, and even though modern psychology hides the darkness, it still very much affects us. Folklore, psychology, and traditions show how humans cope with winter, and shadows under Christmas reveal real fears and real emotions.

But, even though the darkness is very much still here – darkness under the floorboards isn't evil – it's human.

So as you buy presents, gifts, decorations, please, please, please be aware of who and what is around you. Don't forget about the isolated or those who may not have what you do, and be safe this season.

It's been an absolute pleasure writing the Under the Floorboards series, and I really hope you've taken something from these articles. I hope these articles have made a difference, even if it's just one that makes you wet yourself reading it. So, for the last time in this series – be safe out there, and remember... make sure you check Under the Floorboards...

Till next time!

QUIZ NIGHT RESULTS

Maisey Lafollette

If you ever wondered how many pillars are at the front entrance of the school, what Walt Disney was afraid of, who the two bestselling authors of all time are, and which state JD Vance was born in, then this was the quiz for you!

On Monday evening, I hosted my quiz night fundraiser for Broughty Ferry Library at Woodlands Hotel. There were 158 participants who donated over 100 gently used books for the library. The raffle was a great hit, with numerous local businesses donating super prizes and in total I raised £1,426.05 for new books for the library.

It was a successful event, and I was supported by some High School students for which I am very grateful. Also, thank you to staff for encouragement and advice.

I've learned so much from the event, as it took a lot of work to prepare for. I had to email, phone, and meet with several businesses about donations or hosting the event, I designed the flyers and tickets myself and I also wrote and delivered the quiz, which was a fun challenge as there was ad-lib back and forth with the audience with ages ranging from sixteen to eighty-five. My favourite category in the quiz was books and probably the hardest for the quizzers was the American category. I hope some people left the event having had a fun evening, meeting new members of the community and maybe having learned a new fact or two!

Dentophobia:

Matthew Jameson

What is its effect on dentists and patients alike?

Ever since I was a child, I had seen the impacts and causes of dentophobia. 'Dentophobia' is simply an irrational fear of dentists, dental environments, and dental procedures. I remember striking scenes from my childhood about dentophobia in movies and books. So, how does dentophobia impact dentists and patients alike? Well, with dentophobia, patients are more likely to refuse treatment and miss appointments due to fear. This can therefore lead to worsening oral health, and minor problems can soon turn into major issues for patients. It is not only patients that are affected by this however. Dentists also face this issue, as patients' on-edge behaviour can make treatment more difficult to carry out. Missed appointments also come at a monetary cost. Despite these issues, there are many preventative measures to reduce the symptoms of dentophobia.

Dentophobia can develop for a wide range of reasons, and each individual may form their fear differently. Negative childhood experiences are one of the most common causes. This can include painful procedures, treatment that went wrong or uncomfortable interactions with a dentist at a young age. Fears linked to pain, including trypanophobia (fear of needles), haemophobia (fear of blood) and pseudodysphagia (fear of choking), can also intensify anxiety around dental care. Media portrayals contribute as well; films like Final Destination 2, Finding Nemo and Little Shop of Horrors often present exaggerated or frightening dental scenes that stay with audiences. Parental influence is another factor, as children may adopt anxious attitudes toward

dentistry if they see similar fears in their parents. Older generations or veterans may also experience dentophobia due to historically more painful treatments or earlier medical trauma. These varied influences highlight that dentophobia exists on a spectrum from mild unease to a debilitating phobia. Some symptoms that can be experienced by those with dentophobia include chills, dizziness, excess sweating, heart palpitations, nausea, shortness of breath (dyspnoea), trembling and an upset stomach (dyspepsia) (1). These effects can make the dental experience worse for many patients and dentists. This can lead to further unpleasant incidents and deter patients from returning to clinics.

When dentophobia is severe, patients may delay or avoid appointments entirely, which can have serious consequences for their oral and general health. Minor issues such as small cavities can progress into painful decay, infections, or the need for more complex treatment, which may further increase anxiety. Missing routine dental checks also means conditions like gum disease can go unnoticed, raising the risk of tooth loss as well as contributing to wider health problems such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. In some cases, oral cancers may go undetected, with life-threatening outcomes. Avoidance can also affect self-esteem; concerns about bad breath (halitosis), tooth appearance or deteriorating oral hygiene may make individuals even less willing to seek help. Surveys reflect this pattern—one study found that 44% of people experience dental fear or anxiety and that 76% of these individuals put off visiting the dentist (2).

Conversely, dentophobia also has a significant impact on dentists and dental practices. Missed appointments reduce income as dentists are typically paid per patient. It can also disrupt clinic schedules, making waiting lists increasingly difficult to manage. Reception staff may struggle to reorganise appointment slots and high levels of non-attendance contribute to longer delays for patients who urgently need treatment. In fact, a whole year's worth of appointments have been lost since lockdown as of the 10th of February 2022. (3) This is due to cancellations or patients not even turning up to appointments continuously, leading to many hours being wasted which could have been spent helping patients in need of treatment. Even when individuals with dentophobia do attend, dentists may need to spend additional time helping them feel calm enough to proceed, slowing down the day's schedule. Managing highly anxious patients over time can also contribute to professional burnout, as the emotional and cognitive demands increase. This can be highly demanding for dental teams at a clinic. Together, these pressures demonstrate that dentophobia affects not only individual patients but the efficiency and wellbeing of the wider dental workforce.

However, there are ways to reduce dentophobia. Some methods include: sedation by use of laughing gas, or oral sedation. This can allow treatment to proceed with reduced discomfort from the patient. In fact, under laughing gas, suggestibility (the ability to be more easily coached to relax) increases by 10% approximately (4). This shows how stronger forms of sedation can support more positive treatment experiences. Dentists also usually visit schools to help support children in their own environment and give dental support and information to children. They can also give out complementary toothpaste and toothbrushes. This can be seen in examples such as Dundee Dental Connect, which collaborate with primary schools, ESOL schools and foodbanks to help promote good oral health. Non-invasive check-ups can also help patients gradually build confidence and become more comfortable within the dental environment. CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) can also help, reframing thought patterns about dentists through guided relaxation (deep breathing) before and/or after appointments and the use of noise-cancelling headphones to help reduce sensory overload caused by the various equipment used by dentists.

In conclusion, dentophobia can come in many forms. It affects many of us in different ways, whether it be slight discomfort or feeling petrified to even walk inside. These fears can affect dentists and patients alike, with worsening oral health occurring when people miss appointments due to fears, and dentists losing income and having to help in situations with highly anxious patients. These symptoms of dentophobia however can be remedied in many ways by slow introduction towards good oral care, or coping mechanisms put in place such as deep breathing or noise-cancelling headphones, even stronger forms such as sedation can help with dental anxiety. Dental anxiety is a major issue in public health concerning oral health, as many face fears due to these numerous

factors. By improving awareness, access to supportive interventions, and early exposure to positive dental experiences, health systems can help reduce the burden of dentophobia on patients, professionals and public health.

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A Serial by Hal Arita

Chapter 2 – continued

20:00 | 06.02.2100 | UST-5 | Maracaibo, Ultimate Trump States

Thiago sat on a crate during his break in the market, the humid air thick with the smell of old carpets and sharp spices. Around him, men shouted prices, women bartered over fruit, and somewhere nearby, a dog barked at nothing. Above the chaos, the massive screen in the square blared the usual propaganda — soldiers marching in perfect rows, flags waving, a voice promising prosperity through obedience.

Then, the screen flickered. The anthem cut short.

“This is not a warning. The virus was not born. It was made. They are coming for the truth — and for those who still remember. Find it beneath the ice before it’s too late.”

For a heartbeat, the world stood still. Then came the screams — people rushing for cover, soldiers scrambling to cut the feed, vendors abandoning their stalls. Panic rippled through the crowd like fire through dry grass. Thiago didn’t move. His eyes stayed locked on the now black screen, the echo of the voice still ringing in his ears. The virus? He’d heard rumours, whispers traded in the alleys — but this felt different. Real. Dangerous.

He clenched his fists, mind racing. Whoever sent that message had just painted a target on themselves... and Thiago knew he had to find out why.

20:00 | 06.02.2100 | UST+8 | Xin Beijing, Xi Empire

Yan Mei sat alone in her father’s office, the glow of her phone the only light in the quiet room. Everyone else was gone for lunch, and the silence felt strange in a building that usually hummed with footsteps and voices. She scrolled through the digital news feed, half-distracted, when suddenly the screen glitched.

A new headline flashed up—no source, no logo—just a white snowflake-like symbol and three letters: ICE. Then, a voice—cold, metallic, and human all at once—echoed from the phone’s speaker.

“This is not a warning. The virus was not born. It was made. They are coming for the truth — and for those who still remember. Find it beneath the ice before it’s too late.”

For a moment, she thought it was a prank. But then she heard the same words again, outside this time—broadcast from loudspeakers, overlapping, distorted. The sirens started soon after, wailing through the streets like something out of an old war film.

Her father burst into the office, his face pale, breath uneven. “Yan Mei! You must go home. Now. Things aren’t safe here.”

She stood, clutching her phone. “I don’t want to go back. It’s my first time out of that stupid monastery—I finally get to see the world.”

“NO!” His voice cracked through the room, loud and desperate. “I’m sorry. If there was any other way...”

He didn’t finish. Outside, the sky had turned a dull, unnatural grey.

And finally...

Seven Questions for Staff



Welcome back again! Today I bring you the man who needs no introduction, our very own Mr Kent.

1. Cats or dogs, and why? – **Dogs – where do I begin? Cats are so evil, dogs are always happy to see you and they’re stupid loyal**
2. What did you want to be when you were younger? – **A rugby player**
3. Comfort TV show/movie? – **The Lord of the Rings (extended edition of course)**
4. What department do you wish you were in? – **‘The autonomous people’s republic of Mayfield’**
5. Favourite musical artist? – **Red Hot Chili Peppers**
6. What was your first job? – **A gardener for my dad’s company**
7. Go to karaoke song? – **It’s My Life – Bon Jovi, as you can get the audience to sing it for you**

I’m torn between loving these answers, and hating them, but I can’t argue with Lord of the Rings, however much I may hate dogs. Until next time!

Editors' note



We hope you enjoyed this edition! As Christmas draws nearer, festivities start to pop up everywhere, but the columns keeps churning...



Your Editors - Charlie, Emma, and Shan