

Lets start with the UK and it's main celebrations and customs.

GUY FAWKES NIGHT

Guy Fawkes Night is a bonfire night celebrated in the United Kingdom on November 5 to commemorate the night that would have changed the nation's history. It commemorates the failure of the Gunpowder Plot against King James I by English Catholics led by Guy Fawkes, Britain's most infamous rebel, and Robert Catesby. The plot had been to blow up the Parliament building and assassinate the King. A member of the group betrayed them and Guy Fawkes was arrested just when it was time to ignite the gunpowder and execute the mission. From then, every night on November 5, bonfires were set alight to celebrate the safety of the King. However, others do the ritual in commemoration of Fawkes for his brevity of fighting for Catholicism in England.

PANCAKE DAY

Pancake Day, or Shrove Tuesday, is the traditional feast day before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Lent – the 40 days leading up to Easter – was traditionally a time of fasting and on Shrove Tuesday, Anglo-Saxon Christians went to confession and were “shriven” (absolved from their sins). A bell would be rung to call people to confession. This came to be called the “Pancake Bell” and is still rung today. Shrove Tuesday always falls 47 days before Easter Sunday, so the date varies from year to year and falls between February 3 and March 9. In 2016 Shrove Tuesday will fall on the 9th February.

INTERESTING FACT - The pancake has a very long history and featured in cookery books as far back as 1439. The ingredients for pancakes can be seen to symbolise four points of significance at this time of year: Eggs ~ Creation Flour ~ The staff of life Salt ~ Wholesomeness Milk ~ Purity

POPPY DAY

Poppy Day pays homage to the men and women who died during World War I and World War II. It is a commemoration held in November with people wearing red poppies. Remembrance is part of modern British life, culture and heritage. It becomes a particular feature of the public calendar each year when public, private, formal and informal Remembrance events take place throughout the UK. The Two Minute Silence, held each year at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, marks the end of the First World War.

WHAT THE POPPY MEANS

The poppy is •A symbol of Remembrance and hope •Worn by millions of people •Red because of the natural colour of field poppies The poppy is NOT •A symbol of death or a sign of support for war •A reflection of politics or religion •Red to reflect the colour of blood

THE STORY OF POPPY

In the spring of 1915, shortly after losing a friend in Ypres, a Canadian doctor, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae was inspired by the sight of poppies growing in battle-scarred fields to write a now famous poem called 'In Flanders Fields'. After the First World War, the poppy was adopted as a symbol of Remembrance.

CHRISTMAS

In England less emphasis is placed on Christmas Eve than in other countries, much more is made of Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Carol singing, midnight church services and going out to the pub are some of the activities that many families enjoy (sometimes all three activities can be combined into one fun night out!). Night time on Christmas Eve though is a very exciting time for young children. Children believe that Father Christmas or Santa Claus leaves presents in stockings or pillow-cases. These are normally hung up by the fire or by the children's beds on Christmas Eve.

Children sometimes leave out mince pies NEXT SLIDE and brandy for Father Christmas to eat and drink when he visits them. Now, some people say that a non-alcoholic drink should be left for Santa as he has to drive!

CHRISTMAS MEAL

In the UK, the main Christmas Meal is usually eaten at lunchtime or early afternoon on Christmas Day. It's normally roast turkey, roast vegetables and 'all the trimmings' which means vegetables like carrots & peas, stuffing and sometimes bacon and sausages. It's often served with cranberry sauce and bread sauce. One vegetable that is often at Christmas in the UK are brussel sprouts.

BOXING DAY

Firstly, I must say, it has nothing to do with the sport of boxing. Boxing Day is a national Bank Holiday, a day to spend with family and friends and to eat up all the leftovers of Christmas Day. Boxing Day is a time to spend with family or friends, usually those not seen on Christmas Day itself.

WHY BOXING?

1. The name is a reference to holiday gifts. A 'Christmas Box' in Britain is a name for a Christmas present. Boxing Day was traditionally a day off for servants and the day when they received a 'Christmas Box' from the master. The servants would also go home on Boxing Day to give 'Christmas Boxes' to their families. 2. The name is a reference to charity drives. A box to collect money for the poor traditionally and placed in Churches on Christmas day and opened the next day - Boxing Day. 3. The name refers to a nautical tradition. Great sailing ships when setting sail would have a sealed box containing money on board for good luck. Were the voyage a success, the box was given to a priest, opened at Christmas and the contents then given to the poor.

FOX HUNTING?

Until 2004, Boxing Day hunts were a traditional part of the day, but the ban on fox hunting has put an end to this in its usual sense. Hunters will still gather dressed resplendently in red hunting coats to the sound of the hunting horn. But, since it is now forbidden to chase the fox with dogs, they now follow artificially laid trails.

NEW YEARS EVE

People in the UK celebrates New Year the same or very similar as we do. They wait until midnight and then huge celebrations come up. Mostly in London, where is huge firework show etc

EASTER

People in the UK celebrates Easter the same as we do. Instead of Americans, they have quite different type of celebrating, since they let their children look for the eggs that are hidden on the garden or big parks.

HALLOWEEN

Halloween is a festival that takes place on October 31st. It is very popular in the United States, but it is celebrated by many people in Great Britain, too. People cut horrible faces in pumpkins and put a candle inside. Children dress up as ghosts and monsters and go round people's houses asking, "Trick or treat?". A treat means that they get candies, fruit, nuts or money. If the children do not get a treat, they play a trick on the people. A favourite trick is to put soap on the windows or to make a lot of noise at the door.

OTHER HOLIDAYS

Every part of Britain has its own holiday, which you can see here:

USA

Now, let's move into USA and its interesting celebrations, because there are few very important celebrations and traditions about which we need to talk about.

Let's start with Thanksgiving

THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday celebrated on various dates in Canada, the USA, some of the Caribbean islands, and Liberia. It began as a day of giving thanks for the blessing of the harvest and of the preceding year.

It is because of different days in different months at which are people celebrating their thanksgiving. For example, in the USA it is 4th Thursday of November and in Canada it is celebrated at the second Monday of October. So every year, the Thanksgiving is in different date. Overall, Thanksgiving has religious roots in the history. But, as we know religion and their history, then even here it's really complicated.

First thanksgiving is held in 1578 by an explorer called Martin Frobisher, who wanted to do thanksgiving for surviving his journey from England.

Interesting fact: Each year the President of the United States pardons a turkey. This lucky turkey is guaranteed to spend the rest of its life living freely and not ending up on a turkey platter.

Actually it was Abraham Lincoln who declared, that Thanksgiving will be held at the last Thursday in November. It was at 1863.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Independence Day is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The Continental Congress declared that the thirteen American colonies regarded themselves as free and independent states, the United States of America, and were no longer connected to the British Crown.

Independence Day is commonly associated with fireworks, parades, barbecues, carnivals, fairs, picnics, concerts, baseball games, family reunions, and political speeches and ceremonies, in addition to various other public and private events celebrating the history, government, and traditions of the United States. Independence Day is the National Day of the United States.