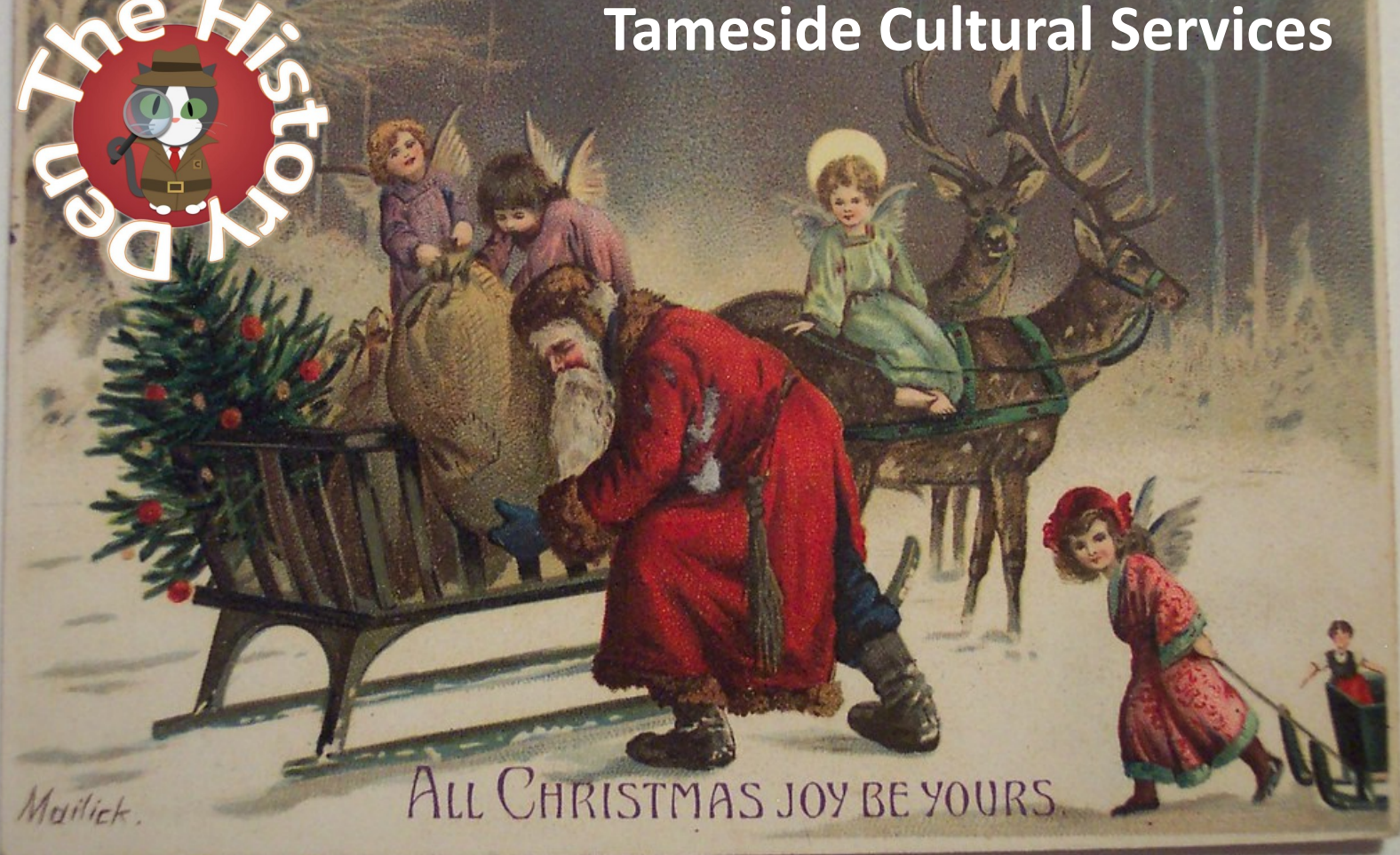




'tis the season to be jolly!!

The word **Christmas** comes from the Old English for 'Christ's Mass', and celebrates the birth of Jesus. The first recorded observance occurred in Rome in AD360 but only in AD440 did the 25 December become the fixed date.

The tradition of **Christmas trees** originates in Germany, where Prince Albert was born, and was introduced to England during the Georgian period.

The custom of sending **Christmas cards** was started in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole who had helped set up the new Post Office. He and his friend John Horsley designed the first card, sold for 1 shilling each (5p). This was a lot of money for many in the 1840s. At the same time, the first 'Penny Post' public postal deliveries began. This cheaper postage was due to the introduction of railways, which could carry far more and were much quicker than horses.

Christmas Crackers stem from a Victorian confectioner named Tom Smith, who noticed how the French wrapped their sweets in coloured tissue paper and decided to try selling a similar product in Britain. However, they only caught on once Smith developed their explosive packaging.

Father Christmas has been traced back in history as far as the 5th century, appearing first as a Saxon "King Winter" who promised a milder winter if people were kind to him. However, when the Normans invaded in 1066, the St. Nicholas story was mixed in with the Saxon mythology to create someone who started to resemble who we now know as Father Christmas.



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culture
Tameside



Here are two 'easy to play' games for the festive season

Snow Ball Race

Firstly decide where your starting and finishing lines should be. This could be on a table or on the floor and indicated by a length of wool or string for the two lines.

Each person taking part picks a **cotton wool ball** and with a felt pen marks it with a colour of their choice

Choose a **drinking straw**.

Place your cotton wool 'snowball' on the start line.

Someone shouts ready, steady, go.

Begin to blow your snowball to the finish without touching it with either your straw or your body.

The first to win will be the person who gets the snowball over the finish line.

To make it harder, you may want to place some obstacles in the way that have to be overcome in order to get to the finish line.



Stack the Gifts

Gather together at least 12 objects from your house to wrap up as 'pretend' Christmas gifts. To make the game harder pick interesting shapes and sizes rather than boxes that you can easily stack (top tip: don't choose something breakable!).

All you have to do is to stack the presents on top of one another.

The winner is the person who has the most gifts in the stack which can support themselves for at least 30 seconds without touching, **or** the person who has managed to use all the presents in their tower without it toppling over.

