

## THE CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

**W**hy do we have a decorated Christmas Tree? In the 7th century a monk from Crediton, Devonshire, went to Germany to teach the Word of God. He did many good works there, and spent much time in Thuringia, an area which was to become the cradle of the Christmas Decoration Industry.

Legend has it that he used the triangular shape of the Fir Tree to describe the Holy Trinity of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The converted people began to revere the Fir tree as God's Tree, as they had previously revered the Oak. By the 12th century it was being hung, upside-down, from ceilings at Christmas time in Central Europe, as a symbol of Christianity. The first decorated tree was at Riga in Latvia, in 1510.



### Christmas Markets

In the mid 16th century, Christmas markets were set up in German towns, to provide everything from [Christmas presents](#), food and more practical things such as a knife grinder to sharpen the knife to carve the Christmas Goose! At these fairs, bakers made shaped gingerbreads and wax ornaments for people to buy as souvenirs of the fair, and take home to hang on their Christmas Trees.

### Tinsel

Tinsel was invented in Germany around 1610. At that time real silver was used, and machines were invented which pulled the silver out into the wafer thin strips for tinsel. Silver was durable, but tarnished quickly, especially with candlelight. Attempts were made to use a mixture of lead and tin, but this was heavy and tended to break under its own weight so was not so practical. So silver was used for tinsel right up to the mid-20th century.

### The First English Trees

The Christmas Tree first came to England with the Georgian Kings who came from Germany. At this time also, German Merchants living in England decorated their homes with a Christmas Tree. The British public were not fond of the German Monarchy, so did not copy the German fashions, which is why the Christmas Tree did not establish in Britain at that time. The decorations were tinsels, silver wire ornaments, candles and small beads. All these had been manufactured in Germany and East Europe since the 17th century. The custom was to have several small trees on tables, one for each member of the family, with that person's gifts stacked on the table under the tree.

### The Victorian and Albert Tree

In 1846, the popular Royals, Queen Victoria and her German Prince, Albert, were illustrated in the Illustrated London News. They were standing with their children around a Christmas Tree. Unlike the previous Royal family, Victoria was very popular with her subjects, and what was done at Court immediately became fashionable - not only in Britain, but with fashion-conscious East Coast American Society. The English Christmas Tree had arrived!



Decorations were still of a 'home-made' variety. Young Ladies spent hours at Christmas Crafts, quilling snowflakes and stars, sewing little pouches for secret gifts and paper baskets with sugared almonds in them. Small bead decorations, silver tinsel from Germany together with beautiful Angels to sit at the top of the tree. Candles were often placed into wooden hoops for safety.