



Julebuk (Norway)

Julebuk has a long tradition in Norway and even though its form has changed with the times, the symbol of Julebuk remains to this day – bringing the community together at Juletid.

In old Norse tradition Julebuk (yule goat) was originally the goat that was slaughtered for the Yule feast. It also described the symbol of the pagan goat (a man dressed in a goat mask and cape) and represented the ghosts of winter nights. The Julebuk would travel from door-to-door to receive gifts from the townsfolk to thank him for protection and keeping the ghosts at bay. Some of the elements of today's Santa Claus come from the traditions of the Julebuk such as giving presents, receiving sweet treats, picking out who is naughty and nice and, of course, magic.

When Christianity appeared the pagan rituals of Julebuk were replaced by the children's activity also called Julebuk, which is very similar to Halloween. Today children walk from house-to-house singing carols at the doorsteps of friends and neighbours. They wear costumes, particularly masks to hide their identity, and often give gifts as well as receiving them.

In Norway, the figure of the Julebuk is used as a Christmas ornament. It is often made out of straw, has a red ribbon around its neck and is found under the Christmas tree. A popular prank is to smuggle the Julebuk into the house of a neighbour and place it to surprise. Once found the neighbour must do the same to the next family. And so the Julebuk travels from house to house throughout the neighbourhood bringing the community together as it did in pagan times.

