**CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS OF GREAT BRITAIN.**

An English proverb says, So many countries so many customs. Words tradition & custom mean a usual manner of doing something from generation to generation (из поколения в поколение).

To know customs & traditions of a country means to understand the people, their art & culture better.

Having a holiday is great fun. Firstly, people have a day off (выходной). Secondly, it’s a variety and change from everyday routine. Every country has got its own national and religious holidays. England has preserved/saved more old ceremonies & traditions than any other country in the world. Most of these traditions have been followed without interruption since the 13th (thirteenth) century.

There are only six public holidays a year in Great Britain. On these days people need not go to work. They are: Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Spring Bank Holiday and Late Summer Bank Holiday. In Scotland, the New Year’s Day is also a public holiday. Most of these holidays are of religious origin (происхождение). But for the greater part of the population they have lost their religious significance. These are just days when people relax and make merry and have fun.

Besides public holidays, there are other anniversaries (годовщины) and holidays, for example Pancake Day and Bonfire Night. Сertain traditions are observed on these days. But these holidays are simple working days.

Every year on the 5th of November Bonfire night is celebrated all over the UK. It goes back to the discovery of the so-called Gunpowder Plot. People watch fireworks and burn effigies of Guy Fawkes( “guys”) on bonfires.

**MY FAVOURITE BRITISH HOLIDAY**

I think the best British holiday is Christmas. Christmas is the main public holiday in Britain. It is celebrated on the 25th 0f December. Christmas is a Christian festival to remember the birth of Jesus Christ. This holiday is celebrated together with family, relatives and friends who share the much loved customs and traditions which have been around for centuries.

Long before Christmas time shops become very busy, because a lot of people buy Christmas presents. People also buy Christmas cards to send to their friends and relatives, watch nativity plays and go carol singing. They put up Christmas decorations inside and outside homes and decorate Christmas trees too. The traditional Christmas decorations are evergreens, such as holly, mistletoe and ivy.

On Christmas Eve (the 24th of December) some people go to a special church service called Midnight Mass which starts at 12 o’clock at night. In churches people sing Christmas carols – special religious songs. Sometimes groups of people walk along the streets and sing carols at the doors of houses. One of the well-known carols is “Silent Night”.

Young children are told that Santa Claus will bring them presents if they are good. Before going to bed on Christmas Eve the children hang stockings at the back of their beds, for Santa Claus to put the presents in when he comes in the middle of the night through the chimney.

Christmas is the day when people stay at home, open their presents and eat and drink together. The most important meal is Christmas dinner. The typical meal consists of turkey with potatoes and other vegetables, followed by a Christmas pudding. Other traditional foods include a special Christmas cake and mince pies — small round cakes filled with a mixture of apples, raisins and spices.

The day after Christmas, the 26th of December, is also a public holiday. It is called Boxing Day. The name goes back to the old tradition: some time before Christmas, boxes were placed in churches for the people to put some money or presents for the poor. On the day after Christmas, the 26th of December, the priest opened the box and gave the contents away to poor people.