

CADBURY FACTS ABOUT EASTER

The following Cadbury FACTS were copied from the Web Site of the Cadbury Egg Company of the UK back in 1998. These are the people that make the Chocolate Cream Filled Eggs and other merchandise for Easter. These facts have been posted before and confirmed by others to have been on the Cadbury Web Site – however of late, I have not been able to find the URL for this web site. It may have been removed due to “heathen protest”. Yahoo is a good place to start.

The Origin Of Easter

The association of eggs with the Christian festival of Easter, celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ, dates back to the early days of the church. However, Christian customs connected with Easter eggs are to a great extent survivals or adaptations of more ancient pagan practices as Easter was closely associated with the pagan spring rites.

The term Easter originates from 'Eostre', the Anglo Saxon Goddess of Dawn. As dawn signifies the rebirth of the day so Easter was associated with the rebirth of spring. Pagan in origins, Easter may be, but the importance of spring is reflected in festivals throughout the world. Apart from the Christian Easter festival, there is the Jewish Passover; Chinese 'Ching-Ming' day - a festival of ancestors and springtime on 21st March; Japanese 'Setsubin' on 4th March in celebration of the 'change of season' and the Latin American carnivals.

The method of governing the date of Easter has not changed for 1600 years since the Astronomers of Alexandria in 325 AD. The Christian festival of Easter is the first Sunday after the full moon on or following the spring Equinox. Christ was crucified during the month of 'Nisan' when the Jews keep the feast of the Passover and the dates for this are calculated in the same way.

Eggs And Easter

For the earliest mankind the egg was a symbol of 'fertility', 'rebirth', 'the beginning' and it ties in quite naturally with the festival of spring. The egg has its place in the Egyptian mythology where the phoenix burns its

nest and is later reborn from the egg which is left; Hindu scripture relates that the world developed from an egg.

The worship of 'Eostre', the Goddess of Dawn (also known as Astarte and Ishtar, the goddess of fertility – BA) was deeply rooted in Germany and was brought to England by the Saxons. With the rise of Christianity in Western Europe, the church adapted many pagan customs to its own purposes and eggs, as a symbol of new life, came to represent the Resurrection. Some Christians regarded an egg as the symbol of the stone being rolled away from the sepulchre.

Early Easter Traditions

Consecrated eggs were used by Christians in church ceremonies until the 4th Century when eggs became forbidden during Lent. However, as spring was the peak laying time for hens there was a glut of eggs. This led to the practice of hard boiling and decorating them in bright colours as a gift for children on Easter Sunday - the end of the Lenten fasting. Prior to the Reformation, eggs were blessed by the church at Easter time.

Throughout the world traditional patterns for decorating these Easter hard boiled eggs have evolved, all of which had a significance in the folklore and religious customs of the country. Eastern countries such as the Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, Russia itself, Hungary and Poland have strong traditions of egg decorations. Most ancient designs are geometric - a star, broken cross, triangle and tripod - all of which date back to the pagan cult of sun worship. The advent of Christianity introduced symbols such as the cross, a church and a fish.

Many Easter egg games developed around the world including egg rolling, throwing and tapping - all of which take place even today on Easter Day. In parts of Britain, particularly the north-east, decorated hard boiled eggs are still known as 'Pace Eggs', a name derived from the Hebrew word Pesach (Passover). These are rolled down a hill and the winner is the egg that travels furthest without cracking.

The Easter Bunny, rabbit or hare is another popular symbol connected with the festival of Easter although in Britain, the Easter Egg commands the attention. The Easter Rabbit tradition is still popular throughout Europe and the USA and many old stories surround it. An 'old

fable' set out in a German book printed in 1682 related the story of the Easter Bunny laying eggs and hiding them in the garden. Throughout Europe, the Easter Rabbit tradition is that if children are well behaved on the night before Easter Sunday, leave a cloth cap or Easter Bonnet in a secluded spot, the Easter Rabbit would leave confectionery and coloured eggs in these 'nests'.