

# A Boy Called Dad

**His daring exploits have included walking the entire coast of Britain, trekking the foothills of the Himalayas and rowing the Atlantic, but becoming dad to three girls has proven to be the greatest adventure for Cambridge dad Chris Howard**

**F**estive felicitations from fatherdom! Well, didn't that just sneak up on us all? The leaves fell, the weather turned and all the calm cold air of timelessness disappeared all to quickly as the inevitable familiar festive radio tunes began to hound our every waking moment.

The email sign offs changed to holly-spiked compliments and the panic of the big day loomed over us all like the bad smell of regurgitated gravy a few hours after Christmas dinner with uncle Bob and aunt Mary.

But low! Hark the herald angels sing, I am not a Grinch, believe me. . . please, I swear it on his velvet redness; I am a believer and will be until my candle is extinguished. Even when my children finally decide it's not for them, I shall uphold that He - the one true SANTA - is real because if he isn't then surely you wouldn't get presents?

I want to write about how Christmas is a time for reflection and remembering all those sombre times in our lives; the ones we've lost and the magic feeling that's no longer, but I simply find it too hard not to laugh at all the ridiculousness we dedicate to this time of year.

I could list the life hacks that might benefit you right now like; book the nativity off work, buy your advent calendars ahead before they sell out, make travel arrangements and ensure that dates are fixed with friends and family months, yes, months in advance.

Pull out your Christmas jumper from the back of the chest of drawers for said dates (yes I mean the back of the drawers you can't see; that annoying black hole that swallows things throughout the year as you shove all life's annoyances in).

Make sure you've got delivery slots of groceries, presents, flowers, nuts, gift sets of deodorant for the nephew no-one really wants (the set, not the nephew). Tickets for the Christmas light walk at whichever place you didn't do last year but wanted to the year before. Christmas drinks with work and the jumper - don't forget that or risk losing the respect of your boss and colleagues eternally for not being in the spirit (get into the spirits instead; I'm good

with that!). Don't forget mince pies, the M&S bits because everyone has that one relative that expects nothing less despite other retailers existing now for like at least 1,000 previous Christmases. It's a good idea to communicate with your nearest and dearest about what they might like, what they're hoping for and what you can do to make their day as sublime as the next-door neighbour's wreath. It's a great idea!

However, I'm a dad about town, I've got all the time in the world, everything will be fine and it will all work out until I realise on Christmas eve that I'm frantically sweating around the Grand Arcade in too many layers looking for that thing my wife talked about at some point back in August. Was it the little red scarf or the black tunic? Standing literally scratching my head and realising it may have been neither and perhaps I'm supposed to just get the sprouts because she's on top of everything anyway. Let's just hope it's that. I run a lot and it's a good job really as I always seem to leave everything to the last minute at Christmas, right to the wire.

Except signing up to random running events like the Cogwheel Canter or the Bonfire Burn. . . can't possibly be the reason I'm a little less organised than usual though. Running makes people more organised, focused, useful.

I resolve to make my priority remain the very human kindness that makes Christmas 'Christmas' - I tell my children to believe that truth and kindness are everything and nothing is needed more than that. I tell them and my wife that I love them and that this is the best Christmas ever. I tell them that because I'm grateful of the socks (no-one wants socks) and hope they'll come run the turkey and yule log off with me. . . whatever happened to chocolate liqueurs anyway?

And what do the Stoics think of Christmas? I believe the best insight to it from a dad's perspective can only be joy. Joy of seeing the attitude of your children practicing gratitude no matter what they've received. Yep that's it, it must be. . .

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Read more about Chris's adventures at [thecoastwalker.com](http://thecoastwalker.com)

