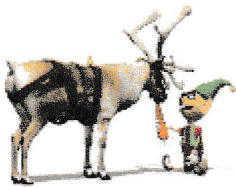


The names of the Christmas elves

In the pagan times of Scandinavia, people believed that house gnomes guarded their homes against evil. Although these gnomes mostly were benevolent, they quickly could turn nasty when not properly treated, so it is told. Throughout the centuries, they were either loved or loathed. Some people even believed them to be trolls and cannibals. The perception of gnomes largely depended on whether a person was naughty, or nice.

When **Christmas** became popular again as a festive season in the middle-1800s, Scandinavian writers such as Thile, Toplius, Rydberg sketched the gnomes' true role in modern life: fairies that are somewhat mischievous, but the true friends and helpers of Father Christmas (Santa Claus). They are the **Christmas elves**. Artists such as Hansen and Nyström completed the picture of elves for us.



Living in Lapland

At one stage it was thought that the elves live in **Father Christmas'** (Santa's) village in North Pole. However, in 1925 it was discovered that there are no reindeer in the North Pole but there are lots in Lapland, Finland. Nobody has actually seen their village because the passage to it is a secret that is known only to Father Christmas and the elves. We know that it is somewhere on the Korvatunturi mountain in the Savukoski county of Lapland, Finland, which is on the Finnish-Russian border.

On January 6 the elves light up their torches and come down from their secret village in the mountain to play in a secret field to celebrate the last day of Christmas.

The names of the elves

The elves are the children of Gryla and Leppaludi, their father and mother. Some people say that there are 13 elves, some say 9, some 6. They are very clever and help Father Christmas to design the toys that children and grownups order by post, email or text. We know at least 6 of the duties they have, including looking after the **reindeer**. Here it is with their Westernised names:

Bushy Evergreen is the inventor of the magic toymaking machine.