

The Icelandic Yule.

An illustrated presentation in English reviewing the beliefs and traditions of Icelandic Christmas past and present, from pagan gods to practical joking Christmas Lads.

National Museum of Iceland Desember 15 and 22, 1pm

Presenter: **Terry Gunnell**

Head of Folkloristics at the University of Iceland



Yuletide Lads at the National Museum

The Icelandic Yuletide Lads (jólasveinar) have absolutely nothing to do with the international red-clothed Santa Claus, who is a version of St. Nicholas. The Yuletide Lads are descended from trolls, and originally they were bogeymen who were used to scare children. During this century they have mellowed, and they sometimes wear their best, red, suits. But they still tend to pilfer and play tricks.

The number of Yuletide Lads varied in olden times from one region of Iceland to another. The number 13 is first seen in a poem on Grýla (the Lads' mother) in the 18th century, and their names were published by Jón Árnason in his folklore collection in 1862. About 60 different names of Yuletide Lads are known. They visit the National Museum on each of the 13 days before Christmas. They usually wear their old Icelandic costumes, and try to pilfer the goodies each likes best.