

## New Year's Revolution

Let me tell you a secret; for most of my life, I hated New Year. I could never really see the point of it - what exactly are we celebrating again? And I found that countdown (to nothing in particular) more sinister than exciting. This admission is particularly shameful as I come from Scotland; and up north, New Year (or 'Hogmanay' as we call it) is taken very seriously indeed.

Part of my prejudice probably stems from the fact that, although I was born in Scotland, I grew up in England, and in England, the school holidays began a full two weeks before Christmas day, which generated an unbelievably exciting build up of tension to the big day itself. Moving to Scotland, and the Scottish school system, saw me kept in the classroom 'till December 23rd. I felt like I had had a large slice of my own precious Christmas snatched away from me.

I let this bitterness get the better of me: I became the New Year's version of Scrooge and refused to participate in Scotland's arcane Hogmanay rituals, like embracing inebriated strangers at The Bells (12 o'clock), sharing a mince pie and a glass of sherry (yuck), or, worst of all, linking arms and joining in with a verse or two of Auld Lang Syne, in the dreaded sing along. My cup of kindness was half empty.

And I stayed indoors too, watching T.V; something carefully selected to have no connection whatsoever to the occasion, a Werner Herzog film perhaps, or a wildlife documentary about the migration of birds, anything that chimed with my anti New Year agenda.

But, over the years, I've been forced to rethink my position a little. Perhaps it's my age or the dignified example of Japan, but New Year no longer feels like a warmed over version of Christmas minus the presents, but a valid holiday in its own right, to be, if not embraced passionately, at least given a warm handshake.

And we have recently seen the emergence of a new type of New Year, less cheesily traditional, more ambitious, and, I'm forced to admit, more fun. The old favourites are still there of course - the illuminations, the fireworks displays; the hastily erected skating rinks, the club night extravaganzas, but the scale is bigger.

Last year, the London Eye New Year's Eve fireworks attracted 700,000 people and this year looks to be just as humungous. Back up north, and Edinburgh's Ne'er Day street party has become a gigantic affair (ticket only) with 300,000 revellers expected to join the fun. Even dear old panto (Britain's seasonal version of Takarazuka) has had a makeover, or face-lift, with more modern and sophisticated productions and better-known stars (there are even 'adult' pantos these days).

So there are no excuses not to have fun this New Year even for die hard killjoys like myself: wherever you are in the UK you should not be too far distant from a torch lit procession or hedonistic gathering where you can 'see in the New Year' in style.

And in the disarmingly convivial afterglow and indestructible, booze-fuelled optimism that accompanies the first moments, at least, of the dawn of a new year, you may even make a few new friends. And even if you don't manage that, you should at the very least take away some very pleasant memories of New Year in the UK, to be shared with loved ones at a future date.

I still prefer Christmas though....

<http://www.viewlondon.co.uk/whatson/london-eye-new-years-eve-fireworks-feature-1564.html>  
<http://www.edinburghshogmanay.com/>