

1. Complete the text with a suitable word.

The History of Hogmanay

It is believed that many of the traditional Hogmanay celebrations ___ 1 originally brought to Scotland by the invading Vikings in the early 8th and 9th centuries. These Norsemen, or men from an even more northerly latitude ___ 2 Scotland, paid particular attention to the arrival of the Winter Solstice or the shortest day, and fully intended to celebrate its passing with some serious partying.

In Shetland, ___ 3 the Viking influence remains strongest, New Year is still called Yules, deriving from the Scandinavian word for the midwinter festival of Yule.

It may surprise many people to note that Christmas was ___ 4 celebrated as a festival and virtually banned in Scotland for around 400 years, from the end of the 17th century to the 1950s. The reason for this dates ___ 5 to the years of Protestant Reformation, when the straight-laced Kirk proclaimed Christmas as a Popish or Catholic feast, and as such needed banning.

And so it was, right up until the 1950s that many Scots worked over Christmas and celebrated their winter solstice holiday at New Year when family and friends would gather for a party and to exchange presents which came to ___ 6 known as hogmanays.

There are several traditions and superstitions that should be taken care of before midnight on the 31st December: these include cleaning the house and taking ___ 7 the ashes from the fire, there is also the requirement to clear all your debts before "the bells" sound midnight, the underlying message being to clear out the remains of the old year, have a clean break and welcome in a young, New Year on a happy note.

Immediately after midnight it is traditional ___ 8 sing Robert Burns' "Auld Lang Syne". Burns published his version of this popular little

ditty in 1788, although the tune was in print over 80 years before this.

*"Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot and auld lang syne
For auld lang syne, my dear, for auld lang syne,
We'll take a cup o kindness yet, for auld lang syne."*

An integral part of the Hogmanay party, which is continued with equal enthusiasm today, is to welcome friends and strangers ___ 9 warm hospitality and of course lots of enforced kissing for all.

"First footing" (or the "first foot" in the house after midnight) is still common across Scotland. To ensure good ___ 10 for the house the first foot should be a dark-haired male, and he should bring with him symbolic pieces of coal, shortbread, salt, black bun and a wee dram of whisky. The dark-haired male bit is believed to be a throwback to the Viking days, when a big blonde stranger arriving on your door step with a big axe ___ 11 big trouble, and probably not a very happy New Year!

The firework displays and torchlight processions now enjoyed throughout many cities in Scotland are reminders of the ancient pagan parties from those Viking days of long ago.

The traditional New Year ceremony would involve people dressing ___ 12 in the hides of cattle and running around the village whilst being hit by sticks. The festivities would also include the lighting of bonfires and tossing torches. Animal hide wrapped around sticks and ignited produced a smoke that was believed to be very effective in warding ___ 13 evil spirits: this smoking stick was also known as a Hogmanay.

Many of these customs continue today, especially in the older communities of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. On the Isle of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides, the young men and boys form themselves into opposing bands; the leader of each wears a sheep

skin, while another member carries a sack. The bands move ___ 14 the village from house to house reciting a Gaelic rhyme. The boys are given bannocks (fruit buns) for their sack before moving on to the next house.

One of the most spectacular fire ceremonies takes place in Stonehaven, south of Aberdeen on the north east coast. Giant fireballs are swung around on long metal poles each requiring many men to carry them as they are paraded up and down the High Street. Again the origin ___ 15 believed to be linked to the Winter Solstice with the swinging fireballs signifying the power of the sun, purifying the world by consuming evil spirits.

For visitors to Scotland it is worth remembering that January 2nd is also a national holiday in Scotland, this extra day being barely enough time to recover from a week of intense revelry and merry-making. All of ___ 16 helps to form part of Scotland's cultural legacy of ancient customs and traditions that surround the pagan festival of Hogmanay.

2. Complete the text with one of the words below. There are 3 words that you do not need to use.

May Day Celebrations

Many folklore ___ 1 have their roots planted firmly back in the Dark Ages, when the ancient Celts had divided their year by four major festivals. *Beltane* or 'the fire of Bel', had particular ___ 2 to the Celts as it represented the first day of summer and was celebrated with bonfires to welcome in the new season. Still celebrated today, we perhaps know *Beltane* better as May 1st, or May Day.

Down through the centuries May Day has been ___ 3 with fun, revelry and perhaps most important of all, fertility. The Day would

be marked with village folk cavorting round the maypole, the selection of the May Queen and the dancing figure of the Jack-in-the-Green at the head of the procession. Jack is ___ 4 to be a relic from those enlightened days when our ancient ancestors worshipped trees.

These pagan roots did little to endear these May Day festivities with the either the established Church or State. In the sixteenth century riots followed when May Day celebrations were ___ 5 . Fourteen rioters were hanged, and Henry VIII is said to have pardoned a further 400 who had been ___ 6 to death.

The May Day festivities all but vanished following the Civil War when Oliver Cromwell and his Puritans ___ 7 control of the country in 1645. Describing maypole dancing as 'a heathenish vanity generally abused to superstition and wickedness', legislation was passed which saw the end of village maypoles throughout the country. Dancing did not return to the village greens until the restoration of Charles II.

'The Merry Monarch' helped ensure the support of his ___ 8 with the erection of a massive 40 metre high maypole in London's Strand. This pole signalled the return of the fun times, and remained standing for almost fifty years.

Maypoles can still be seen on the village greens at Welford-on-Avon and at Dunchurch, Warwickshire, both of which stand all year round. Barwick in Yorkshire, claims the ___ 9 maypole in England, standing some 30 meters in height.

May Day is still celebrated in many villages with the crowning of the May Queen. The gentlemen of the village may also be found celebrating with Jack-in-the-Green, otherwise found on the signs of pubs across the country called the Green Man.

May Day traditions in southern England ___ 10 the Hobby Horses that still rampage through the towns of Dunster and Minehead in Somerset, and Padstow in Cornwall. The horse or the Oss, as it is

normally called is a local person dressed in flowing robes wearing a mask with a grotesque, but colourful, caricature of a horse.

In Oxford, May Day morning is celebrated from the top of Magdalen College Tower by the ___ 11 of a Latin hymn, or carol, of thanksgiving. After this the college bells signal the start of the Morris Dancing in the streets below.

Further north in Castleton, Derbyshire, Oak Apple Day takes place on 29th May, commemorating the restoration of Charles II to throne. Followers within the procession carry sprigs of oak, recalling the story that in exile King Charles hid in an oak tree to ___ 12 capture by his enemies.

It is important to remember that without 'The Merry Monarch' May Day celebrations might have come to a premature end in 1660.

- A) SINGING B) THOUGHT C) SUBJECTS D) LARGEST
E) SENTENCED F) INCLUDE G) WISHED
H) OBJECTS I) CUSTOMS J) TOOK K) AVOID
L) BANNED M) CIRCULATED N) ASSOCIATED
O) SIGNIFICANCE