

25. New Year's Eve in Scotland

December 31st is called New Year's Eve, the evening before the new year, but the Scots have their own word for it: Hogmanay. No one is quite sure what this old word means, but it may have French origins and come from a dialect expression, *hoginane*, meaning 'a gift for the New Year'.

Like people all over the world, the Scots stay up until midnight to 'see in' the New Year, and many of them go to a traditional party involving folk music and several energetic and entertaining folk dances. At midnight, people usually sing a song that has become one of the most famous in the world: *Auld Lang Syne*. The title means 'times long past' and the song is a nostalgic celebration of happy times and good friends in the past, so it is a very emotional way to welcome the coming year.

After midnight, there is the tradition known as 'first footing'. It is called this because it refers to the foot of the first person to enter someone's house after 12 o'clock. The person should ideally be a man who is 'tall, dark, and handsome' – but of course this isn't always possible! He should be carrying two gifts: a piece of coal*, for the fire, and a piece of cake, for the table.

coal – szén

66. Christmas

In Britain, Christmas is a very important festival. Even for people who are not particularly religious* it's a very special time. People spend it with their family and friends and there is a feeling of friendship and goodwill in the air.

Preparations for Christmas can start very early. As early as October, Christmas cards and decorations can begin to appear in the shops, unfortunately introducing a commercial* aspect into the festivities. However, also in October, families may begin preparing their Christmas puddings and Christmas cakes. These are very rich* and contain alcohol so if prepared in advance* taste even better.

Four to five weeks before Christmas people may begin to send their Christmas cards if they are sending them to distant parts of the world. It's not unusual for a family in Britain to send and receive more than a hundred of these greetings cards. It's a nice way to tell someone they are in your thoughts at this special time of the year.

religious – vallásos

commercial – üzleti

rich – tápláló; sok cukrot, tojást, tejszínt, stb. tartalmaz

in advance – előre