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Hogmanay Rituals: Scotland's New Year's Eve Celebrations

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ABSTRACT

Hogmanay, which is the name given to New Year's Eve in Scotland, is a long-standing festival with roots going far back into pagan times. However, such festivals are losing their traditions and are becoming almost generic public celebrations devoid of the original rites and rituals that originally made them unique. Using the framework of Falassi's (1987) festival rites and rituals, this chapter utilises a duoethnographic approach to examine Hogmanay traditions in contemporary Scotland and the extent to which these have been transferred to another country. The chapter reflects on the traditions which have survived and those that have been consigned to history.

Hogmanay and Paganism: Scotland's New Year's Eve Celebrations

INTRODUCTION

New Year's Eve (or Hogmanay as it is known in Scotland) is celebrated in many countries around the world, and often takes the form of a public celebration with fireworks, music and a carnival atmosphere. However, Hogmanay itself is a long-standing festival in Scotland with roots going far back into pagan times. Some of the rites and rituals associated with Hogmanay are centuries old, and the tradition of celebrating New Year Eve (as Hogmanay) on a grander scale than Christmas has been a part of Scottish life for many hundreds of years.

Whilst academic research has examined the public celebrations of New Year (e.g. Derrett 2003; Foley & McPherson 2004), less attention has been paid to the original Scottish traditions of Hogmanay. This may be because these are examples of private events, held for individuals, families and social groups (Getz 2005), with deep traditions and historical resonance. In smaller, regional centres in Scotland there are many examples of grass roots, impromptu, celebratory gatherings reflecting a sense of community. However, the nature of the events and associated festivities have changed and developed as Scotland has become a modern nation. Hogmanay is now also a time for public themed celebrations. For example, the Edinburgh New Year's Eve Party attracts 80,000 people each year to the city and is estimated to be worth more than £32 million to the Scottish economy (Smith 2012). However, locals are not ignored with tickets set aside for locals which represented 40% of tickets sales (Ross, 2003). These events do not reflect pagan, or indeed Scottish traditions but rather reflect generic New Year's Eve celebrations found anywhere around the world. While some New Year's Eve festivals appear to be major national celebrations (for example, in New York and Sydney), there has been recognition that many other festivals are under pressure to commercialise to ensure their survival. The concern is that in rushing to bow to the

commercial imperative, such festivals are losing their traditions and their heritage, becoming almost generic public celebrations, devoid of the original rites and rituals that originally made them unique. However, it may also be the case that although the history, background and pagan nature of the rites and rituals are no longer commonly understood, the actual rituals themselves are still affectionately carried out – perhaps through sheer force of custom (Taft 1994). Festivals are occasionally created that are artificial and do not reflect rituals. For example, the Hong Kong Food Festival was artificially created to promote the variety and quality of Hong Kong's 9,000 restaurants (Sofield and Sivan, 1984). This would be reminiscent of other events such as Halloween where the pagan nature of the original celebration has largely disappeared and has been replaced by commercial imperative (see, for example, e.g., Santino 1994). Thus, this chapter examines the extent to which Scotland is at risk of losing an important part of its heritage if the traditional rituals become diminished in the face of the increasing commercialism of festivals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many definitions of the term festival, from the simple – ‘a public, themed celebration’ (Getz 2013, p 36) to the more nuanced ‘irregular, one-off, annual or bi-annual event with an emphasis on celebrating, promoting or exploring some aspect of local culture’ (Gibson, Connell, Waitt & Walmsley 2011, p 4). Falassi (1987) outlines his understanding of festivals as being related to a series of social values that a community recognises as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, to its historical continuity and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what a festival celebrates. Further, Falassi defines a festival to be (amongst other things) ‘a sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances’ (1987, p 2). It is this notion of special observances that is of particular interest in this chapter.

One of the key features of a festival is that it offers people a space to behave in ways that they do not normally behave, and to do things that would normally be unacceptable. This is often referred to as the 'liminal' nature of festivals (Turner 1982). Such reversals are to be found in many traditional festivals around the world, and reflect the dichotomy between the religious and sacred on the one hand, and the profane and carnivalesque on the other (Getz 2013). Examples of such reversals include masked parades (e.g., at the Venice Carnevale or the Rio de Janeiro Carnival), all the way up to excess consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs that is evident at a number of modern festivals (e.g., at the Glastonbury Festival).

Falassi (1987) identifies a number of different ritual acts, or rites, that he considers to form part of a festival. He also draws attention to the idea of 'time out of time' (p. 4) – the notion that a festival is a special temporal dimension devoted to special activities. The key rites identified by Falassi (1987) include *the rite of valorisation* (the time or place when the festival begins); *rites of purification* (involving the actual or ceremonial cleansing of a community); *rites of passage* (the transition from one life stage to the next); *rites of reversal* (as explained above); *rites of conspicuous display* (sacred processions, public worshipping of specific deities, etc.); *rites of conspicuous consumption* (abundance or even excess of food and drink); *ritual dramas* (acting out of stories important to the community); *rites of exchange* (the exchange of information, gifts or mutual visits); *rites of competition* (including athletic or sporting competitions, but also music and dance); and the *rite of devalorization* (to mark the end of the festival time and the return to normal time and space).

Not all festivals need to display every one of these characteristics, yet most traditional festivals do include many of the components identified by Falassi (1987). On the other hand, many contemporary festivals do not reflect these rites or rituals; instead, many festivals are created and designed with very different aims in mind. As Picard and Robinson (2006) point out, there have been ever-increasing numbers of festivals appearing on the events calendars

of destinations around the world since the 1960s. Many of these have been developed in order to address social, political, demographic and economic issues among communities, and often the aim of these new festivals is to bring in tourists and maximise positive economic impact (Getz 2013). Recent research into the supply side of cultural events festivals has also considered the increased commercialization of such events (see for example Anderton 2008; Caves, 2000; Finkel 2009; Frew & Ali-Knight, 2010; Richards & Wilson 2006). In addition, Finkel (2010) notes that many not for profit contemporary arts festivals in the United Kingdom may be seen as commercial entities since they create financial gain for places, communities or individuals, and some are increasingly associated with commercial enterprises and commercial practices. Similarly, Anderton (2008) found outdoor music festivals in Britain have now transformed into a reliable, attractive, and an increasingly mainstream lifestyle commodity that can be purchased by festival goers with less fear or risk than ever before. He explains that for festival goers, professionalization and media coverage have meant that such festivals have become more attractive and predictable in their quality, with better facilities and infrastructure, top-name artists, and more varied attractions

In these newer festivals, it is often difficult to perceive any traditional rites that Falassi associates with festival activities – with the key motivation for attending being identified as enjoyment and fun (see, for example, Nicholson & Pearce 2001). Further, even when traditional or ritual elements are present, they may not be recognised as such by attendees – examples might be Halloween celebrations where any pagan elements have been sanitised over time (Santino 1994). However, it is important to bear in mind that at least some of the traditional rites identified by Falassi (1987) do persist in many newer festivals, particularly those around consumption of food and drink.

Another significant factor in the rise of festivals across the globe is the desire amongst diasporic populations to maintain and promote their culture and history. For example, the

Notting Hill Carnival was created as a community event to promote West Indian culture and identity, and as a protest against racism (Frost & Laing 2013). There is also a range of religious and secular festivals that take place in many countries of the world that reflect the various cultures and traditions of Indian peoples living abroad – the Edinburgh Mela is an example of this. Finally, the Celtic diasporas have helped develop and support the rise of St Patrick’s Day events, and the numerous Highland Games that take place in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Ruting & Li 2011). Little research has considered the impact of the Scottish diaspora on traditional festivals, although research by Sim and Leitch (2013) on diaspora tourism suggests that much of the association felt by the diasporic population to the ‘homeland’ is based on learned knowledge of past events and traditions, rather than their own felt experience. For these festivals, traditions and rituals are more important, as they form part of the community, national, cultural or religious identity being represented by the festivals. As such, these festivals often demonstrate many aspects of the traditional rites proposed by Falassi (1987).

Case Study – Scottish Hogmanay

This chapter focuses on one particular event – Hogmanay – and will consider how its pagan roots represent many of the facets of festivals identified by Falassi (1987), yet at the same time will consider how Hogmanay has spread around the world. Hogmanay is the Scottish word used to describe the 31st December, the last day of the year and the associated New Year’s Eve celebrations in Scotland (Robinson 1985). Hogmanay is an interesting example as it retains many of its rites and rituals in Scotland, yet is celebrated (as New Year’s Eve) in many countries around the world as nothing more than a huge party. Of course, we acknowledge that there are rituals associated with New Year in other countries, such as setting New Year’s resolutions, but there appears to be little evidence that these were ever part of the traditional Scottish Hogmanay. Further, while it is common around the world to

sing Auld Lang Syne at New Year's Eve, in Scotland this tradition is generally associated only with public organised events, rather than any private celebrations.

The celebration of Hogmanay undoubtedly has pagan origins and can be traced back to pre-Christian times, and according to Douglas (1999) is as old as life itself – a celebration of the passing of the darkest days of winter. Although Hogmanay is the best known name for this celebration, it used to be known as Cake Day (in the north of England), Singing E'en (evening), and Yule (in the Shetland isles). These names all indicate different parts of the tradition, namely: giving and receiving of food; singing and celebration; and, close ties with the winter solstice and later Christmas traditions (Douglas 1999). The derivation of the word 'Hogmanay' itself is far from clear, but it may originate from the old French expression '*auguillaneuf*' or '*Au gui l'an neuf*', referring both to mistletoe (*gui*) and New Year (*l'an neuf*) (Kirkpatrick 2005).

The original celebrations of Hogmanay took place at the winter solstice – 21st December – a hugely important marker of the passage of time in Europe, as the day with the least amount of daylight. The winter solstice represents the beginning of the end of winter, and as such has been celebrated (particularly in Northern Europe) for centuries (McNeill 1956). This turning point was celebrated with feasting, drinking and special rites to bring good fortune and ensure the return of the sun (Douglas 1999), and even after Christianity became the most prevalent religion in Scotland, this celebration of the sun remained an important part of the calendar. Ancient superstitions involving mistletoe and evergreens were constantly re-enacted and fires were lit across the land (Douglas 1999). Despite protestations from the Scottish Kirk (Church of Scotland) these pagan celebrations continued down the ages, but in time and in order to placate the church and allow celebrations of Christmas to take precedence, the date of the Hogmanay rituals was moved from the solstice to the 31st of December each year (McNeill 1956).

The main rituals associated with Hogmanay in Scotland remain commonplace in homes across the country today. It has always been considered bad luck to 'see in' the New Year with a dirty or untidy house, and so traditionally houses were scrubbed, pantries emptied of anything old and the fireplace completely emptied of ashes ready for the first open fire of the New Year. A further, and perhaps better known tradition is that of 'first footing' – the first person to cross the threshold after the stroke of midnight brings luck with them for the year ahead, good or bad. In order to ensure good luck for the house, tradition dictates that the 'first foot' should be a tall, dark, handsome man, and that he must not arrive empty handed.

Whilst many of the traditional rites take place at home, it became the custom over the years to gather at a convenient central point such as a town square or mercat cross, in order to bring in the New Year as a community. In times past, people then returned home from the community celebration either to act as hosts for the first foot, or to be a first foot themselves. However, the modern interpretation of Hogmanay appears to be losing the tradition of returning home for the first footing, with many celebrations in towns and cities being in public spaces in the open air, without the trappings of the traditional celebrations. On the other hand the most famous New Year's Eve celebrations in the UK are in Edinburgh but the event has become less popular over the years with the event possibly being a victim of its own success (Ross, 2007). When Edinburgh's New Year's Eve party became a formal part of the city calendar in 1992–93, police records reported that over 25 000 revellers attended. By 1996 the event had grown to 350, 000 people in the city celebrating at midnight. In 1997 the event became a ticketed event due to crowd safety and congestion concerns (Hughes, 1999). In that year (namely, the year 2000) 180,000 celebrated the millennium in Princes Street (Ross 2007) but the number of revellers has dropped further with to just 80,000 in 2012 (Smith, 2012).

METHODS

This study used a duoethnographic approach to gather the data. Duoethnography involves two peers collaborating to exchange reflections about a mutually agreed upon cultural topic. Storytelling is used to simultaneously generate, interpret and articulate data. The stories are then reported and interrogated in a collegial conversation. During the conversation the two individuals compare their experiences with each other. In effect, the authors are both the researcher and the researched (Norris, 2008; Spencer, & Paisley, 2013). As such, duoethnography examines how different individuals give both similar and different meanings to a shared phenomenon and looks to the margins to create a range of meanings (Norris and Sawyer 2012).

This duoethnographic approach allowed us to examine the rites and rituals associated with Hogmanay from personal perspectives. In this project, we considered the traditions of Hogmanay experienced throughout our lives and reflected on our similar and different approaches to Hogmanay, how we acquired these beliefs and how this may have influenced our actions and the meanings they gave to these New Year's Eve related activities.

We met formally and laid out the parameters of the discussion. We agreed to discuss our memories of Hogmanay and our individual involvement in related activities during key periods of our lives namely: early and primary school years; whilst at secondary school; during early adulthood (when we both were students at Scottish universities in urban centres); in adulthood; before and after emigrating to Australia; and, before and after having children. The conversation lasted just over an hour (1hr, 6 mins) with only one part of the conversation moving away from Hogmanay traditions when we discussed the related tradition of superstitions in Scotland.

We found similarities and differences in our experiences of Hogmanay. Some of the similarities reflected our common semi-rural upbringing in small villages and country towns in Scotland; with one of us growing up in the rural west of Scotland while the other grew up in the rural north-east of Scotland. Both of us were children in the 1970s and 1980s and therefore our recollections refer to the traditions and rituals carried out at that time. Both of us spent our primary and secondary school years living in towns with populations of between 5,000 and 8,000 people (namely Kirriemuir in the county of Angus and Dunoon in the county of Argyll respectively), each town having particular strong traditions associated with Hogmanay. As we discussed our experiences, actions and attitudes towards Hogmanay and the associated traditions, it became apparent that the similar Hogmanay traditions that we experienced were related to engaging in interactions with family and friends and shared hospitality via particular food and drink with stronger traditions being experienced in rural Scotland than in the major cities.

We found that the recollection of Hogmanays past and present was an emotional experience, recalling good times and good memories as well as reflecting on family and friends who had formed part of these memories but who had since passed away. However, differences were also recalled since one family avoided entertaining on Hogmanay which compared to experience of strong family ties related to Hogmanay for the other family in her local home town. These differences support Norris (2008) who suggests that the purpose of duoethnography is to explore how the life histories of different individuals affect the meanings they give to experiences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study will initially be discussed in relation to both the rites and ritual elements that were present during Hogmanay as remembered from childhood. Falassi (1987)

identified a number of rites that formed key parts of festivals. Of particular relevance to this study are rites of purification; rites of passage; rites of conspicuous display; rites of conspicuous consumption; rites of reversal; rites of exchange; and rites of devalorization. The findings will then move on to consider how Hogmanay and its related celebrations have changed during our lifetimes, and will conclude with reflections on the place of Hogmanay as a festival in the 21st Century.

Rites of purification

'One of the things I remember my Gran saying, was cleaning the house on New Year's Eve... you weren't supposed to bring in the New Year with a dirty house. Her mother, we're talking my great grandmother here, actually stripped the house, chucking stuff out of the cupboards, scrubbing the decks, you couldn't see the New Year in with a dirty house'.

There appeared to be a strong element of cleaning or purification associated with Hogmanay in Scotland. This tradition goes back a long way, and while neither of us particularly remembered any other rituals concerning cleansing the house, McNeill (1956) makes reference to the idea that even the fire was extinguished in the hearth on Hogmanay, so that the ills of the previous year would leave the house, and the New Year would start afresh and bring good luck. However, the fact that neither of us spends much time on this ritual in our own homes, nor do we know anyone who does, suggests that this part of the Hogmanay tradition may have been consigned to history.

Rites of Passage

The movement of one state to another due to a festival (as per Falassi 1987) is reflected in the memories of family members becoming very emotional on New Year's Eve and crying about the fact that another year was over:

'My dad's parents were from Shetland and...they would cry on New Year's Eve.

Yeah... my sister-in-law's mother used to bawl the place down on New Year's Eve. It was awful. I hated it.

Well why?

She spent the time thinking of all the things that had happened in the year. Thinking of how another year has passed, and I don't know if it was another year closer to the grave, or whether it was just that things had happened and you'll never... your daughter will never be four again. I don't know. But I found that quite distressing. And I know that... my sister-in-law, she used to find it a bit of a strain as well. She would say "Oh, I'm just going down to see my Mum. She'll be crying again'.

We also reflected on the images we associated with Hogmanay as representing a crucial time in a person's life and the passage of time;

"Cause my Mum used to go on about the image of New Year's Eve ... is an old man, do you remember this? It's an image of an old man, like death...

It's like Old Father Time'.

Rites of Conspicuous Display

Falassi (1987) explains the rites of conspicuous display as being of important symbolic value – being seen, involving festive decorations, and even being almost a space of pilgrimage. Hogmanay does reflect this notion of place (Douglas 1999) and for many Scots, these

associations are very strong: *'I think that if you speak to someone from Scotland, wherever they are now, they'd still be able to tell you where you went at the bells [at midnight] in their home town'*. We could both clearly recall the place for Hogmanay in our own towns – *'In Kirriemuir we go to The Square, that's where you would be at midnight when the bell rang on the town hall clock'*; and *'In Dunoon we all gathered round the Jubilee Lamp – a town landmark'*; and *'Forfar had its own place for the bells - in Edinburgh, obviously, it's the Tron, you go to the Tron and its fantastic'*. This led us to reflect that places were strongly recognised by all locals as being important community spaces at that particular time: *'That's where you go for the bells...'*

Rites of conspicuous consumption

Most people who have heard of Hogmanay (in its traditional Scottish form) probably associate it with eating and drinking to excess. Indeed, for some it is a stereotype of Scotland. We both recall quite clearly that food and drink were important parts of the celebration of Hogmanay: *'So Mum would have this fantastic spread...and those parties were amazing'*, but our recollections were mostly about food and drink as generosity, rather than food and drink to excess. Indeed, there were even rituals about when you could eat the food: *'You had to sit and look at all the sweets and things sitting out and you weren't allowed to touch them until midnight!'*

In terms of drinking, Hogmanay was recognised as an opportunity to enjoy yourself and perhaps have 'one too many'. Historically, Christmas was not a public holiday in Scotland until the 1960s – it was just another working day. However, Hogmanay and New year's Day have been holidays for centuries, allowing a little indulgence on Hogmanay without the need to get up for work the next day. Interestingly, we both recall that although alcohol was extremely prevalent, the aim was to share a drink with friends and neighbours: *'My Dad*

reckons that you didn't really have that much alcohol in the house – you'd have a bottle of sherry and a bottle of whisky and that was it, and you'd have a nip of each bottle that people brought...that was it'; and 'You bought a bottle of whisky and you took it from door to door and gave people a drink out of your bottle [...] it's your bottle, you're giving a drink of it to people...it's not that you get plastered by drinking in everybody's house'. However, it must be acknowledged that there was, and still is, a strong association between Hogmanay and drinking to excess: 'alcohol and Hogmanay are indistinguishable'.

Rites of Exchange

The rite of exchange identified by Falassi (1987) appears to have relevance to Hogmanay traditions. He suggests that ritual gifts and visits may be exchanged and this is exactly what happens at Hogmanay. We each recollected slightly different versions of the tradition, but the key features were the same – at midnight people went from house to house (usually family, friends and neighbours) taking gifts of food, drink and something for the fire (usually coal), in a symbolic gesture of sharing, and *communitas*. The key message that came out of the discussions was: *'You would never go empty handed'*. This is such a strong social norm that even today, most Scots seem to be willing to give a present the first time they visit someone after Hogmanay, even if it is days afterwards. The traditional gifts were shortbread and black bun (fruit cake), but with considerable regional variations based on what was available and would make a good gift. *'Black bun [...] it's an expensive thing to make with all the dry fruit and sugar that goes in it, so these are things that people didn't make every day. I think what people did was take what they had that would represent generosity...you weren't first footing with the back end of a loaf or anything...you went with something nice'*.

The first person over your threshold after midnight on Hogmanay was known as the 'first foot' and they had traditions associated with them: *'The first person over the threshold after*

midnight - they had to be tall, dark and handsome'. For one of us, 'First footing was so important, that my boyfriend at the time had to leave our house just before midnight and wait outside during the bells so that he could first foot us – he stood outside and brought the New Year in on his own so that he could come in straight after the bells with the pre-arranged food, drink and coal'. Another reminiscence further recounted the strength of this social norm: 'My Dad told me this story, this guy came to the door and he didn't have anything to bring and so...he went to the front gate and took it off the hinges and brought the front gate to the house because he didn't want to come empty handed'.

It is interesting to consider the burden that these norms and rites placed on people (particularly women) to have a clean house, with lots of food, and plenty to drink, and to be awake and available for visitors practically all night after midnight on Hogmanay. Little wonder then, that sometimes this became a bit too much: *'I think that they had big parties in that house. I think it might...it just got too much for my Mum. That's probably why she kept it low key'.*

Rites of devalorization

The marking of the end of the festival time and the return to normal time and space regarding socialising (Falassi 1987) is also blurred with Hogmanay having no formal ending and people continuing to celebrate well after midnight, into the wee hours of the morning and for a couple of days later, reflected in the following quotes:

'I always remember... visiting Glasgow on say the 2nd and 3rd of January or something, and there were down and outs, real drunks, but still saying Happy New Year to people because they'd obviously...

They hadn't quite realised that a few days had elapsed.

But I always remember thinking that people would say Happy New Year to you for ages into [the] New Year. The first time after, on the 2nd, the 3rd, the 4th, the 5th of January, people would go Happy New Year, oh I haven't seen you since before New Year'.

Liminality

The notion of liminality suggests a space for people to behave in ways that they do not normally behave (e.g. Turner 1982; Wang 2000). We both remembered that there was an expectation that people may drink more than they would normally drink during other times of the year, and indeed behave in a way that they might not normally, as reflected in the following:

'And I remember quite clearly about how we were trying to get drunk – 'cause that's what you do on New Year's Eve - you get drunk. And you have to plan your drinking quite ahead. You've actually got to, if you want to get drunk - you have to plan it.

You have to drink before you go out for a start, 'cause it's too expensive.

But I remember going to someone's house ... to first foot them...and we get there, and what she gave us was a steak pie. And I remember I was given this piece of steak pie and I remember saying [to my friend,] "Doesn't she know how much money we've spent to get drunk this evening. I'm not eating this steak pie 'cause it's going to sober me up.

You ungrateful article!'

Changes over time

Whilst we were both able to recollect and reminisce about the rites and rituals of Hogmanay that we associated with childhood and early teens, it became clear during the discussion that many things had changed since then, both in terms of our personal circumstances, but also with regard to the way that Hogmanay is celebrated. In the first place, there is considerably more emphasis on Christmas as a holiday and a celebration than there used to be in Scotland: *'It's changing now, Christmas, with the amount of presents the kids get, no wonder they think Christmas is better than New Year'*. Also, Hogmanay, or New Year's Eve, is becoming a much bigger celebration internationally – as noted in the literature review, Edinburgh's Hogmanay attracts over 80,000 visitors. *'Tourism has changed things. In Edinburgh, Hogmanay is an event now. I'm sure there are Edinburgh locals that go to the Hogmanay [celebrations], but I'm sure there are locals that run away to another corner of the country, because it's just grim [unappealing]'*. In the face of increasing commercialisation, changes in the way Hogmanay is celebrated became clear:

Now it's ticketed and organised. It's just too full on. So we decided that we would hire a cottage somewhere in Scotland and go and have a week away with friends, we had this massive party in the house and it was amazing, but it was all about escaping from Edinburgh, from the crowds. When we started taking a cottage with friends over New Year...it was just a way of us...say there was 6 or 10 of us, just hanging out and being really good. So many silly memories!'

We both now live in Australia, and despite some of our early efforts in Australia to maintain some of the rituals from the traditional Scottish Hogmanay, it seems that these traditions are fading away:

'When we came to Australia, we started a New Year's tradition of holding a party in the house. And we would invite every single person we had every met...I'm talking like the people from the kinder group, from the school, all the neighbours, young and old. I made a point of having someone tall, dark and handsome and he had to go out round the house, and then come back in after the bells – I gave him a bowl of sweets or something to bring in with him.

Once we stopped doing the parties, we go down to Mornington Peninsula camping, and basically it's more like a family thing. It was just getting too much.

Yeah, the thing that we do here is go to the city to see the fireworks. My boys loved them – they got to stay in the city until midnight!'

One of us reflected on her father's regular visits from Scotland to Australia each year around the time of Hogmanay. If a Hogmanay party was being held, there was an expectation that he would say something as he represented 'Scottishness' and the traditions of Hogmanay:

'He'll wear like a Scottish rugby top or something, and he'll go...OK, here's the bells, we're going to have to do a big count down.. And then we'd go five, four, and then like he becomes the guru of ...Scottish... I represent...

...The Custodian of the ancient traditions.

Correct. He's the custodian of ancient traditions... everyone is like "Oh what he's going to say, this is a Scottish person, really Scottish"...

A real Scottish person.

...You can hardly understand him, and he's about to say something poignant on New Year's Eve. [and he would say] "Well thanks very much for coming" ...'

However, we felt a sense of loss, and a wish for the traditions and rituals of their childhood, and their heritage, to remain:

'But there is nothing Scottish about it [New Year today] whatsoever – no first footing, no shortbread or black bun, any of that, it was just that they got to stay up late and go into the city and that was the exciting thing. And it's fine, but it doesn't feel like New Year to me. New Year should be dark, it should have a fire, it should have lots of food and drink, it should have lots of family and friends.

Have you ever tried the first footing thing in Australia?

"No... people wouldn't understand".

CONCLUSION

The traditional Hogmanay celebration has many rites associated with it which reflect aspects of hospitality and socialising. Some of the traditions in rural Scotland have survived to the present day such as meeting in a public place to celebrate the change from one year to another at midnight. Other traditions such as the cleansing of houses are now less obvious and further, such aspects seem to have been less transferable to other countries compared to other Scottish traditions such as Scottish pipe bands and Highland gatherings which have been established in numerous countries around the world (particularly in English speaking nations such as Canada and New Zealand). It is likely that the Scottish diaspora around the world has taken aspects of Hogmanay with them and has cemented those aspects (which revolve around public celebrations) into the psyche of their new home. This may help to

explain why only some parts of the Hogmanay traditions and rituals have persisted outside Scotland. However, further research in this area is needed to investigate this proposition.

Greater commercialisation has been identified at New Year's Eve celebrations around the world where such events attract thousands of people to public places, with associated entertainment such as fireworks. However, further research is needed to establish the extent of the preservation of deep-rooted traditions of first-footing, particularly in rural and semi-rural parts of Scotland. We surmise that research in these areas would reveal very strong traditions in these remote areas but recognise the reduction in such traditions elsewhere in Scotland and overseas.

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