



# The New Year in Brittany

By Jane Revell



A "galette des rois," photo supplied by Jane Revell

**Brittany at Christmas is an interesting mix of Celtic and Catholic tradition. A Breton legend tells of dolmens and menhirs walking to the sea to have a drink on Christmas Eve, leaving the treasure buried beneath them unguarded.**

People would search for this treasure in their absence, but they had to make sure they got away from the ancient sites before the twelfth stroke of midnight, or the great stones would return and they would be done for!

Nowadays many Bretons go to evening mass on 24 December before coming home to open their presents that same evening. Then they sit down to a Christmas dinner which tends to go on into the early hours of Christmas Day. Foie gras, then seafood (oysters, crayfish, lobster and scallops are all specialities of this region), often followed by turkey with chestnuts, or lamb, with a chocolate yule log for dessert. The courses go on and on, every one washed down with wonderful wine or champagne. In the past, families would often lay an extra place at table in case a poor person or traveller passed by and knocked on their door, but that charming custom seems to have vanished in recent years.

## Twelfth Night

What has not vanished, is the celebration of Twelfth Night: the Feast of the Kings or Wise Men

A special cake, the *galette des rois* is baked for the occasion and a charm is hidden inside it. The person who gets the slice with the charm is 'king' (or queen) and must then choose their 'queen' (or king) for the evening. And who decides who gets which piece of cake? The smallest member of the family, who hides under the table! (With thanks to my Breton friends Genevieve Georgelin and Alain Mouden who helped to provide this information.)

# Play it again Simon

**Sixteen-year-old Simon Hoare of Cherry Tree Road, East Finchley, recently won a trip to the USA in a rather unusual way. Here is what Simon, a sixth form student at Woodhouse College, has written about it for *THE ARCHER*.**

The prize was to go and live the American dream for one week. I played my clarinet live on BBC Radio London down the phone line at 12.30 one night. Then I was in the final six in front of two judges at a London hotel, which ended up with me on a trip to America.

Over in the US I attended High School in Delaware for three days and played in their marching band. This was all in preparation for the Philadelphia Thanksgiving Day Parade, which was a great success. It was amazing how all the kids drove to school and the school itself was so similar to those in the movies. I also travelled up



Photo supplied by Simon Hoare (centre) with new American friends.

to Washington DC and had a look around; the White House is huge.

After spending the week in Delaware and having a great time, I travelled up to New York City where we went shopping, sight seeing and had a black limo tour. Some of the best sights were Times Square at night, which was totally spectacular and the Christmas tree in the Rockefeller Centre, which was

ridiculously big. Brooklyn Bridge was beautiful with all its white lights, and when we saw the Einstein action figures up for sale in the market that did make me laugh.

Sadly I returned on 28 November from one of the best experiences of my life. Now I am waiting for the Delaware High School marching band to visit London to play in the New Year's Day Parade where I will rejoin them.

# New Year in Australia

By Brian Timms

**Australia cements its reputation as the New Year hanger centre of the World with the usual early run on the celebratory grog and Sydney Harbour bridge fireworks, watched and listened to internationally by 600 million people, most still in their pyjamas.**

Down Under it is of course essential to show true mateship by keeping going until the entire 20million population has gone past midnight and into 2005, so with the western side three hours behind the eastern side of 'this Grate Nashun' one is fairly smashed by the end of the event.

We mostly spend New Year's Eve in big hats and fly nets, throwing prawns on the barbie, knocking back a coldie, chatting up a bloke or sheila, or musing whether the Poms will ever beat us at cricket.

There are nostalgic fly-free pub refuges in some major cities where warm Old English beers are served to the deserving over-60 Finchley gang in Oz - Shirley Crane, Don and Carol Carnie, Hazel Astley, Pat Chick, Mary Hall and Brian Timms - des-

perate for an end-of-the-year nostalgia inducer.

We wistfully muse on the New Years 'back home' - the trolleybuses; coal yard by the station; United Dairies' horse-drawn milk carts; Mrs Pacey at the newsagents; The Rex cinema; coats for goalposts in Cherry Tree Wood.

And even when the sun comes up on 2005, and we lie under umbrellas on deserted beaches, the nostalgia never wears off. We blame *THE ARCHER*.

For those with relatives in Oz, and wishing to check the environment, try the live radio internet site [www.abc.net.au/](http://www.abc.net.au/) or the Sydney radio station [www.2UE.com](http://www.2UE.com) which also broadcasts the Sydney New Year's Eve celebrations.

# Feliz Año Nuevo!!

By Irene Zevallos

**New Year should last two days at least... to enable us to plan what to do or where to go, wait for midnight hour to play superstitious fun games... like eating black beans for money, twelve grapes, twelve wishes, kissing someone nice, to keep doing it the rest of the year, running around the block, carrying a suitcase, to travel during the year and drinking champagne ... for the pleasure of it.**

The night will end with dancing, having tasty food and running to the beach the next morning for a sunny swimming session, for even though the peak tourist season runs from June to August (driest season in the highlands) you will always find great swimming and surfing along our Peruvian coast, from December to April.

## Land of variety

That is New Year in Peru, with our tropical weather on the east coast and dry desert in the west, from temperate to frigid

## Same wishes

Remembering my spectacular time in London and being aware of the tangible differences our countries have, at the end of the day, the warmth of our hearts and our willingness to enjoy life are there and will hopefully remain forever. Whether the top and bottom of the world, we each wish for better years to come and great things for each other in 2005!

# Local history group

**The inaugural meeting of the Local History Group recently set up by The Finchley Society will take place in Avenue House, East End Road N3 at 8 pm on Thursday 10 February. Entry is free and non-members are welcome.**

There will be talks by the two Borough of Barnet archivists: Yasmine Webb will speak on the Barnet archives and Hugh Petrie on national archives and their relevance to Finchley.

The Finchley Society's own archives will be described by

Maggie Ferguson, the society's vice chairman and archives custodian. A discussion on the group's future activities will follow if time permits.

Information on The Finchley Society and how to join from 020 8883 2633 and [www.finchleysociety.org.uk](http://www.finchleysociety.org.uk).

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