

28<sup>th</sup> December 2006

## A British Christmas - Happy New Year!

Dave Hollingworth



Finally Christmas has ended! Well, in Britain anyway. Please don't misunderstand me - I love Christmas, but I'm always happy when it's over. You see, in Britain, it all starts far too early...

This year, a certain famous London department store (not mentioning any names, but it rhymes with "Farrods") set up its Christmas display in August. Yes, August! While you were probably enjoying your summer holidays, shoppers in London were putting tinsel and novelty Santas in their shopping baskets. Most likely whilst listening to Christmas music too. And when one shop does it, they all do. So with four full months before Christmas Day, many shopping centres in Britain were fully in the festive mood.

It gets worse. In July I saw signs in restaurants that said "book your Christmas meal now". In July! That's almost closer to the previous Christmas than it is to the next one!

So by the time Christmas Day actually arrives, I'm rather sick of it. Christmas Day

is great, but once Boxing Day (26<sup>th</sup> December) comes I want it all to end. That's why I'm happy it's all over now, for another few months anyway. I know that now, I live in a culture where Christmas is still in full swing, but I'm not used to that yet! For me, Boxing Day is the day when the almost half a year of Christmas draws to a close. All the advertisement breaks during the traditional James Bond film on Christmas Day are full of adverts for the Boxing Day sales...

What about the 6<sup>th</sup> of January? Well apart from the religious significance, "Twelfth night" in Britain has no real meaning. It's traditionally the time when you are supposed to take down your Christmas decorations! The Three Wise Men don't take presents to Britain. Maybe their camels can't get through quarantine...

No, now I'm looking forward to New Year. I love New Year. I always have such a feeling of optimism: the shortest day of the year has passed; days are getting longer; the Christmas muzak has stopped; the weather, although it won't noticeably improve for a while, it isn't really going to get any worse. We have the whole year ahead of us!

I think you should start the year as you mean to go on. Maybe that's why I don't quite understand the curious tradition of getting so drunk on New Year's Eve that you spend New Year's Day with the mother of all hangovers. On New Year's Day I plan to get up at first light, and go and walk up a mountain.

I hope you have a happy and a prosperous new year. And don't forget, you've only got 362 shopping days left until next Christmas...