



REMEMBER REMEMBER

In 2001 a small number of god crazy fruit loops flew aircraft into prominent buildings in America. That day the yanks joined an all too big, and growing, club of countries that have had to put up with people who can't keep their massive invisible friend their own business and are willing to kill and die to let people know how forgiving and lovely he is. That day people said that America 'lost its innocence' and wrote moving and hand wringing articles asking if it would ever be the same again.

What they forget is that as terrible as an event like that is (and it was a grotesque and unspeakable act) that humans move on, eventually, and this is a good thing. In England, we've been celebrating a (albeit failed) act of terrorism by religious extremists for over 400 years.

Guy Fawkes is now remembered in mask form as a reference to *Alan Moore's* sublime bit of storytelling made into a surprisingly watchable movie now used by the *Anonymous* movement to symbolise rebellion and protest. But its worth noting that *Guy Fawkes* was a pro-catholic looking to re-establish a strict religious rule in a country that regards all organised religion as a bit silly and definitely not something to talk about in public. You could say that *Guy Fawkes* is a very early example of antisestablishmentarianism, but only if you've been waiting ten or so years to crowbar the word into a conversation*.

We celebrated by torturing and killing him, throwing him on a fire, and then getting drunk. And then every year after by burning wicker effigies and letting off fireworks. Which goes to show that not only did we not want Catholicism in England, but actually would probably just prefer to have the druids back so we could dance naked under the moon and be done with it.

Scratch the surface of any British citizen and you'll find a screaming pagan bastard waiting to drink, fight, and try to hump anything that wiggles in a 100 yard radius. Although recently the shadow of this glimpses through when a dad with too much whisky in his hot chocolate decides that he can get his moneys worth out of dud firework by throwing it on the bonfire.

When I think of bonfire night a rush of sensory information overwhelms me. The feeling of being wrapped up tight and warm against the crisp new winter air. The colours of the fireworks burnt onto my retinas as the sounds of 'ooohs' and 'ahhhhs' spring forth with no irony from everyone there. The taste of hot chocolate in plastic mugs and burnt baked potatoes that no one really eats because the same tippy dad reminds everyone that they look like one of the hedgehogs he didn't bother checking the kindling for. And the weird feeling of one half of your body having first degree burns because your standing too close to the fire, while the other is freezing cold.

Birmingham used to hold several public bonfires but due to cut backs only the *Pype Hayes event* remains. So other than the flashy theme park organised events we're going to have to go back to holding them ourselves, yes they're smelly, dangerous, and an affront to our beautiful Ground Force inspired back gardens. But it's a connection to our historical roots, shadows of our pagan past and a chance to make new connections with our local community. So get planning and please don't forget to check the leaves for those idiot hedgehogs, if only to spare the kids of the mental image of the distraught faces while one slowly screams itself to death before the fumes take it.

*Do forgive the indulgence. DS