



Eleven

# Beer Cat Scratchings

More tales from the home of gratuitous footnotes



## Party Patrol part 2<sup>1</sup>

This is a quick résumé<sup>2</sup> about the original HOGMANAY party for all those who *weren't* there. Apparently, there are some people<sup>3</sup> whose idea of a good end of year party is one that lasts until just before the free buses run out (ie, around 2:30am). This, as anyone who has been to any of the Asylum parties<sup>4</sup> will testify, is complete wombat droppings. A good party is one that lasts until... well, it finishes. This is usually sometime after breakfast. As a result, those who have never been to a really good all night party tend to be a bit surprised when the story swapping back at work goes something like this: "Oh, I was at a really good New Year's Eve party; it didn't finish until *half past one!*" "That's nothing<sup>5</sup>, the party I was at didn't finish until *two fifteen!* How about you, Jim?"<sup>6</sup> "Oh, I went to a Hogmanay party. I arrived at nine o'clock, and left at half past" "That doesn't sound too good" "Yes, but this was the following morning". Strangely enough, they dropped the subject...

Yes, ours was that Hogmanay party. Yes, it finished some time after breakfast. Yes, we did manage to have a mini ceilidh<sup>7</sup> in a room 13 feet by 13 feet. And yes, we had a choice of Malt whisky or Malt whisky for the toast for the bells<sup>8</sup>. However, because of a lack of foresight, invitations weren't given out until many people had other commitments, so the numbers were a bit low. Still, it was not bad for a first attempt.

Having had most of those present asking when the next one was<sup>9</sup>, how could we refuse. The following year was out as Allison was working<sup>10</sup>, and so, that left the end of

1 Actually, this is just to confuse, as part one wasn't identified as such. It's a bit like calling the First World War by name before anyone had thought of a sequel.

2 I think that's where all the accents should go; but then, I never was that good at French.

3 Usually those who call Hogmanay "New Year's Eve"

4 I know they're not at the end of the year, but the principle is the same.

5 "We used to dream of..." Perhaps not.

6 The quiet one. The one that all this story swapping is meant to demoralise, because the tellers are cool and trendy and they can stay out really late and drink lots of booze and well it's just triffic...

7 Or, for those of you who remember *Marillion*, "Kayleigh"

8 And not *Bells* for the toast.

9 Including those who couldn't, in the end actually make it. You know who you are...

10 A really heavy bummer. If it hadn't been for Hitch bringing round his Andy Stewart records and also being our first foot, it would have been a really really heavy bummer. New Year is New Year.

Once again, this Beer Cats was written by Alasdair Hepburn, sometimes proof-read by Allison Ewing and ably hindered by Ruddles and Tanglefoot. Comments are welcome at 123c Chobham Rd, Stratford, London, E15 1LX. To start you off, the header and footer appears on both sides, just to confuse. Honourable mentions go to Sullivans' Lore and Pertinax for actually sending something back; Simon Amos for wanting multi-coloured letters and writing about Orangutans (or was it the other way round... and to all the rest — be bold, be daring and write in.

1993 as the big day. From time to time, people generally make rash statements, that they wish they hadn't, and such thoughts did flit across our minds, particularly when we did a rough head count of the number of people who said they might come<sup>11</sup>. The first arrivals appeared, as before around half past nine, and for a while we thought that it would be another small event<sup>12</sup>. And then, the people started arriving in earnest, and by about 11pm, there were a fair few. Things were definitely looking up. As midnight approached, people appeared out of the woodwork<sup>13 14 15</sup>, until finally, seconds before the bells, the last few arrived. This meant that, instead of turfing out the tallest person in the room, with a bit of coal and a bottle of whisky, we could have a *real* first foot. What's more, he even came prepared with his own coal!<sup>16</sup> Even more incredibly, we managed to squeeze 25 people into the living room to sing *Auld Lang Syne*, which only goes to show that TARDISes can be rented by the hour.

Two years ago, Ruddles<sup>17</sup> stole the show by successfully appearing in more photographs than anyone else. This remarkable feat was achieved because she is a shoulder cat — like Long John silver's parrot only without the feathers or the beak. This time round, she also successfully managed to be the centre of attention by being the focus of one of those party games<sup>18</sup>. This one involved passing a cat from shoulder to shoulder across a room full of people. No one worked out what to do when the music stopped, though. Tanglefoot<sup>19</sup>, being less used to people, saw the numbers rising and decided that the safest place to be was under the bed. This did not prevent people trying to coax her out. There is nothing more silly than a room full of people bending down and making what they think of as encouraging noises...

11 Like, sardines in a tin type numbers. It is only a small flat.

12 Like the captain of the *Hindenburg* thought that New Jersey would be an easy landing.

13 This is patently illogical. After all, why would anyone *want* to hide in a bit of four by two... sounds like a Really Silly Jape to me.

14 Or does RSJ actually stand for something else, like getting things down from high shelves. These things are part of life's great tapestry

15 As woven by someone or other. (Actually, this was just an excuse for three gratuitous footnotes together).

16 Who was that organised man? None other than Pat McMurray. A name to watch out for...

17 Beer Cat senior. A Russian Blue with a hole in her palette after she tried to fly...

18 Like passing an orange down a line of people without touching it; the silly type of games.

19 Beer Cat junior. A tabby who was born without one paw. It only seems that we are a home for handicapped cats...



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For reasons that are much too complicated, page 2 is like page 1<sup>20</sup>.

## Hogmanay 1.1<sup>21</sup>, the story continues

Moving swiftly on, the party did a kind of Parkinson's Law<sup>22 23</sup>, and expanded out from the living room into the kitchen<sup>24</sup>, the small room, the bedroom and finally out onto the stairwell. This was fortunate for a certain Worldcon co-chair<sup>25</sup>, since, although he did not object to the idea of cats in a kind of abstract way, his body told him that physical feline manifestations were too much and his various organs were going to be allergic.

Once the party had spread itself out a bit, it was time to put on the Music<sup>26</sup>. Having done a quick warm up of the *Gay Gordons*, not easy in a space only 6 feet wide, we proceeded to try to teach the assembled multitude how to dance. This was achieved with large amounts of hilarity, mainly because some of the players were at the "inebriated but happy" stage<sup>27</sup>, although it didn't really matter...

At around, oh, well after half past two-ish, the first of the guests felt that their stamina was running out, and also, the

<sup>20</sup> Except that this is really page 2. Confused? Good.

<sup>21</sup> Some people have wondered why this. Like all the best legends, the untrue stories are sometimes as good as the real ones, so take your pick: We were trying out a trick for Bill Gates-- a wholly new version has just a tiny change in the number (Like 3.0, 3.1, 3.11 (3.1117)); we were pretending to be from an obscure sect who worked in binary, but did not know about zero; we felt that the party was continuing in spirit after it had physically finished, and so it would be a continuation of the same event; we thought "Well, why not?"

<sup>22</sup> Stuff expands to fill the space available, or something like that.

<sup>23</sup> Or should that be Bill Gates' Law: If there's space on the Hard Drive, then add more bells and whistles to it until the disk is full.

<sup>24</sup> Where everyone made comments about the Jona Lewie song, and also how come it was even more crowded than the living room (this is because it is less than half the size!)

<sup>25</sup> Ah, you want names, do you? Well, strangely enough, both of them were there, as were large tracts of the committee. So it was just as well that there wasn't a freak earthquake or localised outbreak of a rare but incurable disease (what do you mean, you thought that all con runners had a rare incurable disease anyway...)

<sup>26</sup> Actually, there was music going on in a couple of rooms, but Music means the ~~White Leather~~ Heather Club. Or, at least it does here.

<sup>27</sup> This was probably due in some measure (double ones) to the large amount of Malt Whisky available; a final total of seven, including two single cask and one from a distillery that had been closed for nearly 20 years (guess how old that one was...)

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nearest anti-histamines were somewhere else, so they made to leave. With an extra passenger, who decided not to pass up the offer of a free lift<sup>28</sup>. When asked afterwards how they all fitted in, Nina (the extra passenger) said "I spent the journey home with my head in James Steel's lap" What was she doing "Sadly nothing", said James.

Between then and breakfast it was all a bit of a blur. I think I had passed into that realm of drunkenness where my memory decided it had had enough and was going out. Without telling the rest of my body, which carried on as if nothing had happened. I think that there were some interesting discussions which could have changed Life as We Know It<sup>29</sup>, but it could have been an urban myth. When the sun was well up over the yardarm, I felt that breakfast was in order<sup>30</sup>. I didn't feel up to doing the black pudding, and I forgot about, er...<sup>31</sup>, but made up for it with plenty of bacon butties and plenty of tattie scones<sup>32</sup>. I think the party was technically over when Steve Glover decided to try to go to the pub before closing time<sup>33</sup>. Book your floor space for the next one.

A closing quote from Avedon Carol, when asked whether she had had a good year: "I thought I was doing really well getting through 1973 without any major disasters happening". Clearly someone with a backlog of life...



<sup>28</sup> There Ain't No Such thing As A Free Lift?

<sup>29</sup> ...or perhaps not, Captain.

<sup>30</sup> Some people indicated that that was one of the main reasons why they had stayed...

<sup>31</sup> Whatever it was, I still can't remember.

<sup>32</sup> And since Dave Lally liked them so much he wanted the recipe, here it is:

First, buy some potatoes. Then forget about them until they are nearly sprouting (this is optional, but seems to be the way we do it). Then, in a fit of guilt at nearly wasting food, boil them. Having realised that you have already eaten that evening, leave them to cool, promising yourself that you'll make them into potato scones. Remember your promise, so mash up the cold potatoes with a hunk of butter, and add flour until it starts to feel like a moist dough. Think vaguely about seasoning, and throw some salt and pepper at the thought until it goes away. Pummel into roughly flat shapes, peel them off the worktop and dry fry them until light brown to seal them together. Sit back, congratulate yourself on having made your own potato scones and then wait till breakfast time. Fry them and try to serve them before you eat them all yourself. Easy, really.

<sup>33</sup> Now *that's* what I call a good party