

BONFIRE NIGHT

A BURNING TRADITION

En noviembre, Gran Bretaña celebra una de las noches más tradicionales: la de *Guy Fawkes*. Por todo el país arden hogueras recordando un atentado fallido.

This month, British children sing "Remember! Remember! The Fifth of November!" Why is this date important? It's Guy Fawkes Night or simply Bonfire¹ Night: a celebration of the capture of Guy Fawkes.

Fawkes was a Catholic rebel. In 1605 he attempted to dynamite the House of Lords and kill King James I in the infamous Gunpowder Plot.

there were often riots⁹. The effigy that people burnt on their bonfires was Pope Paul, not Guy Fawkes. By the early 19th century no-one celebrated the night anymore. However, Catholic emancipation in Britain became a strong movement and there were protests around the country. Bonfire nights became popular again, especially in Lewes – once more the scene of dangerous riots.

Fortunately, today there is a carnival atmosphere in Lewes on Bonfire Night; the entire city closes for the spectacular parades, music and banners¹⁰.

GLOSSARY

- 1 BONFIRE: hoguera
- 2 GUY: imagen, figura
- 3 SMUGGLER: contrabandista
- 4 BURNING TORCH: antorcha encendida
- 5 THROUGHOUT BRITAIN: por toda Gran Bretaña
- 6 FIREWORKS: fuegos artificiales
- 7 TO BE BURN AT THE STAKE: ser quemado en la hoguera (Stake: estaca, palo)
- 8 TO REFUSE: negarse
- 9 RIOT: disturbio
- 10 BANNER: estandarte
- 11 TO BLOW UP: hacer volar
- 12 CELLAR: sótano

THE POPE!

The most spectacular Bonfire Night celebrations take place in Lewes, Sussex, in south-east England. In most places around Britain people burn an effigy or 'guy'² that represents Guy Fawkes. In Lewes they burn an effigy of Pope Paul VI. There are six Bonfire Societies in the town. They parade through the streets dressed as smugglers³ and pio-

neers with burning torches⁴. They carry effigies of Pope Paul V, Guy Fawkes and modern-day figures like Bin Laden and George Bush, to six enormous bonfires.

A PENNY FOR THE GUY

Bonfire night is celebrated throughout Britain⁵. Children make a 'guy', then carry it around their town and ask people for money to buy fireworks⁶ or sweets: "A penny for the guy!" they shout. On Bonfire Night they put the guy on top of the bonfire and burn it, while fireworks explode in the sky.

Why is November 5th so important in Lewes? In 1553 Mary became Queen of England. She wanted to restore the Catholic Church to England. Lewes people still commemorate the 17 Protestant martyrs Queen Mary burnt at the stake⁷ because they refused⁸ to renounce the Protestant faith.

PROTEST MOVEMENT

Bonfire Night was originally an angry anti-Catholic protest and

The Gunpowder Plot

Guy Fawkes was a soldier and a member of a group of Catholic extremists who wanted to restore Catholicism to England. They planned to blow up¹¹ the Houses of Parliament during a government session with King James I in 1605. They put 36 barrels of dynamite in the cellars¹² below the building and waited for the King to arrive. One of the conspirators, however, warned a friend in the government not to attend the session



and the plot was discovered. The King's guards broke into the cellars and arrested

Guy Fawkes and his friends. They were tortured and executed.

What is a Bonfire?

It is a large, outdoor fire. The word 'bonfire' is a contraction of 'bone fire'. It originates from the Celtic festival of Samhain in which animal bones are burnt to protect a community from evil spirits. The

practice is still common in Ireland where bonfires are lit at Halloween and Midsummer. Britain's Guy Fawkes Night probably replaced similar celebrations in many parts of the country.