

GUY FAWKES EPIC FAIL

In late September 2011 protestors were planning to dress as Guy Fawkes and enter Parliament House in Canberra with a fake bomb.



The plan was dropped after public outrage, but it demonstrates how the historic figure of Guy Fawkes is being reinterpreted and widely used on the internet and in movies, says Dr Warwick Frost, Senior Lecturer in the Tourism and Hospitality Research Unit.

In 1605, Guy Fawkes was arrested for attempting to blow up the English Houses of Parliament and ever since, 5 November has been commemorated as Guy Fawkes Night. The highly ritualised event involves community bonfires, fireworks, parades and the ceremonial burning of the Guy in effigy.

'Guy Fawkes night was highly popular in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s but had seemingly died out. Its sectarian meanings hardly seemed appropriate in multicultural societies.'

'A reinvented Guy Fawkes has made a big comeback in recent years and has been embraced by Generations Y and Z and he features strongly as a meme in chat rooms and other social media,' said Dr Frost.

Guy Fawkes has also starred in graphic novels and movies—such as *V for Vendetta*—and his iconic novelty mask is the disguise of choice of many young protesters.

'It's not surprising that political spin doctors have now discovered him. The new cyber Guy Fawkes has been stripped of his sectarian and religious meanings. He's now reimagined as a lone voice of common sense, acting against faceless authority. That he fails is part of his mystique.'

'The social media parlance is that he is an epic fail and the description 'epic fail Guy' has now become common in cyberspace,' says Dr Frost.

Dr Frost has been researching the rise of Guy Fawkes as part of a major project on commemorative events. Reflecting this rise in interest, Dr Frost notes that English Towns like Lewes and Battle are now staging traditional-style Guy Fawkes Nights as tourism experiences.

'Battle has long been known as the site of the Battle of Hastings, which is recreated each year. However, in its latest tourism marketing booklet, it is the village's Guy Fawkes Night that adorns the cover,' says Dr Frost.

MORE INFORMATION

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