

8th September 0217

Back To School

Never mind January. At school, September is surely the month of new beginnings. New school shirts so crisp they still bear creases. Scuff-free school shoes that are blacker than the night sky. Nursery girls striding purposefully from the car park, ready to learn, to play, and to make new friends. Homework planners with fresh pages ready to be filled with dazzling plans and ideas and pencil cases packed with an army of new stationery. Nothing says back to school like an evening spent labelling regimented rows of felt tips and colouring pencils.

In France, there is the tradition of *la rentrée* – which literally means “the return” – wherein chic Parisiennes finish the last of the brie on the train back from Provence and head back to the cities (no doubt with a suntan) to start anew. We may not be within shouting distance of the Champs-Élysées when in Llandaff, but for all of us September is a good time to make a new year's resolution, when the season is changing but the mornings are still light and there's a crisp-new-notebook feeling of potential for change. In my dreams, I go for a daily run, read a chapter of my book every night, and never eat cereal for dinner. Past experience tells me I won't last the distance with many of these, so I'll settle for a chapter of a novel, and keep saving for a summer on the Cote d'Azur.

Welcome back to Howell's for the new school year, it promises to be a good one!