

2011 Reports

Wassail Day 15th January (Singing in the Rain)



Despite the appalling weather conditions, the intrepid Crook Morris dancers & their guests John O'Gaunt from Lancaster went ahead with their 3rd Wassail Day at the orchard of damson grower Mr John Walker at The Row, Lyth Valley. Our chosen damson tree was duly wassailed, witnessed and celebrated by several members of the public in all manner of wet weather gear.

In our tradition we have an MC for the day, Simon Gillow, a brewer of beer, Mark Jackson, and Judy Malkin (originator of the day), who makes the damson wassail cake.

Simon addressed Mr & Mrs Walker and we all sang the Cornish Wassail Song. He then explained why we have a wren (a replica of course) in a cage. In bygone days the wren was hunted on St Stephens Day and anyone presented with a feather from the bird would hopefully have good luck for the New Year.

Everyone then processed to the orchard making as much noise as possible with whistles, pots and pans, drums etc. to ward off any evil spirits and to awaken the good spirits of the orchard.

We sang "The King" (the wren was considered king of the birds), and the cage was hung onto the tree. West

Midlands Wassail song was sung, and Mark poured some spiced damson beer onto the tree roots, and then filled the 3 handled wassail cup, which was passed around with shouts of "Wassail", (old English word for "Be of good health")

The cake followed around, then small pieces of toast were dipped by each person into the beer and placed onto the tree for the birds. Ribbons were placed on the tree to decorate.

We would have danced, weather permitting, but we finished with our farewell song Somerset Wassail to our hosts, Mr & Mrs Walker, who we thank once again for their hospitality.

We then made haste to the Hare & Hounds, Bowland Bridge, where a warm welcome awaited us by new owners Kerry & Peter. Space was made to Morris dance, perform our Mummers Play, Clog and sword Rapper dance, followed by music sessions and more singing.

Great fun was had by all, delicious food, lovely warm atmosphere, who cared about outside conditions?

We had a great day out, "Wassail!"