

2011 Reports

Bells In The Fells Weekend July 2011



Friday Night, by Anne Hajnrych

After months of planning and preparation Crook swung into action like a well-oiled machine to make the John Ruskin School into a venue fit for the purpose of celebrating 30 years of Crook Morris. Rooms were cleared for camping, the main hall decorated, gazebos erected, tables shifted, BBQs primed and the Band and sound engineers turning up on the dot, just like clockwork.

The one thing we couldn't plan was the weather, how blessed were we that after a week of deluge the sun came out and proceeded to shine for the whole weekend.

Breaking with tradition Friday night was 'feed yourself night', and most guests made full use of the BBQs. Friday night was also in the hands of the side's youngest members. These beautifully attired Crookites, in smart dark suits and pretty frocks served a tasty selection of cocktails such as Pimms, Kir Royale, Moscow Mule and a fruit punch to the assembled to get the party going with a swing.

Evie Jackson, Crook's youngest member, wowed us with her confidence and personality as she compared the evening's entertainment like an old stager and introduced us to the The New Rope String Band. They entertained us in good style and the next couple of hours went down a storm.

The evening was rounded off by opportunity knocking for six old lags dancing Three Jolly Sheepskins, the men and women swapped their clothes and then proceeded to shed them ... all in time to the music. Sam and Dan Mason melded together to become Monsieur Oeuf, a kind of gang show Masterchef. Finally, there's no show without Ryknild Rabble who in their own inimitable style

As always, the unofficial party drifted on into the night ... er early morning ... where do Morris Dancers get their stamina from? What a cracking start to the weekend.

The Cocktail Party, by Tim Wilson

Cocktails are usually a combination of the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic, mix well together, are suave and sophisticated and help make the drinkers happy. Luckily all this applied to the Cocktail Crew as well!

The Crew (Dan J, Dan M, Evie, Lynne, Rosie, Sam and Tim), suitably attired in their finery, gathered together as the BBQ was starting and asked "Does anyone know what is going on?" quickly followed by "Does anyone know how to make a cocktail?"

Luckily there was a plan and a list of cocktails (Thanks Simon and Martyn) and so we went out on mass to serve our guests.

We were greeted by the sounds of "oooohhhhh" and "aaaaahhhh" and "that looks tasty" and that was before people even saw the cocktails.

The gift of a free cocktail worked well, and the guests really appreciated it. Some even paid for seconds! Thanks must be given to the bar staff for taking over giving free cocktails to any late-comers.

The only slight improvements which could be made would be to have more jugs made up to meet the initial demand and to have cocktail menus available for guests to peruse.

All-in-all it was good to greet our guests and give them something special as part of the initial get-together.

Barbecue Area, by Dave Rochell

We'd never done it before, so apart from personal barbecues, Crook had nothing to work with. We scouted all our contacts, but nothing was forthcoming.

It seems a lot of people have gone 'modern' and now use gas versions, which begs the question "Why bother? If you can't taste the charcoal and smoke you might just as well cook it on the cooker".

With the help of the local blacksmith we converted an oil drum into two excellent barbecues for the flesh eaters, and used personal barbecues for the pescatarians and veggies (sorry folks, these were gas!).

We're not used to inclement weather in the Lake District, but we had to make sure that our guests really enjoyed themselves. So just in case it did happen to rain, we erected gazebos and an awning (fire proof?) over the barbecues.

Chairs and tables from the school, bunting and balloons made the 'yard' into a real picnic/party area. All we needed was a pool.....

I was a real joy to see so many friends cooking, eating and generally making merry as the sun set over Coniston Old Man at the start of a glorious weekend.

If we didn't have to leave the school so early on the Sunday morning, we could have left these erected all weekend and I'm sure that they would have been the scene of many a reunion or gathering.

Would we do it again? I think so, and I hate barbecues.

Saturday, by Martyn Harvey

How lucky are Crook ? - Very lucky indeed !

The Saturday dawned with blue sky, a little breeze and just a few clouds to give all the walkers some sun protection.

The high level walk was very well subscribed, and it was good that Crook had 4 guides. There was even a dance on top of Coniston Old Man (Dave R ?) 'Getting Upstairs' Headington with Dave R, Sally L, Juliet, Maggie, Lynne K and Gilly (Pecsætan) and music magnificently sung and deeded by the rest of the party! Hats off to all of them and have a look on You Tube if you don't believe me - in fact have a look anyway. [Here it is](#)

The mid-level walk was just right. Stunning views, a good leg stretch without it hurting too much and a chance to mingle and chat with other sides. Again a good smattering of Crook amongst all the walkers and everyone arrived at Coniston Hall a 16th Century farm house with the most mighty Lake District style chimneys in good time to claim their bun, or two!, collect their instruments and pick up their Morris sticks all ferried there by the Mason brothers. We all got sorted with a well-earned drink or two in Coniston Sailing Club and could then relax on the shore frontage with boats sailing up and down their sails flapping in the breeze.

The third walk proved extremely popular. A gentle half hour stroll along the lake side to Coniston Hall to join up with the mid-level walk. Perhaps some people had slightly over enjoyed the Friday night choice of ales but there were certainly a good few of these walkers who were distinctly strolling at their own pace!

The dancing started and almost all our guests put up a side and relaxed into performing in mufti. There were even some general public out walking who stopped to watch and enjoy.

Then it was back to the school for a couple of hours of chill time and games for those with the inclination and the energy. Overall, a resounding success of a day

thoroughly enjoyed by our guests and as importantly by Crook!

Cheers, Martyn

Coniston Old Man Walk, by Sally Lee

Saturday dawned bright and sunny and a group of 23 (including Juliet, Dave Rochel, Maggie S, Lynne and Sally from Crook) set off to climb Coniston Old Man.

We soon spread out on the ascent through the Mines, but we stopped regularly to let everyone catch up, put on or take off layers of clothing and have something to eat or drink.

We ate our lunch by the summit cairn, and then six of us found the energy (and risked sprained ankles) to dance Getting Upstairs, using dog-poo bags or kitchen roll instead of hankies.

From there we walked on along the ridge to Swirl How.

The weather had by then become cloudy and windy, and rain clouds were threatening to head pour way from the Scafells. Fortunately they passed us by, and we made our descent in the dry via Prison Band, Swirl Hause and Coppermines Valley.

Medium Walk, by Gary Lightfoot

Maggy and I set off around 7:00am to mark out the walk with flour. On leaving the main path up the Coppermines valley it became clear that the bracken had grown much too long to mark the trail and we were soaked from the thighs down after a short while, so we made an executive decision to miss this section and short cut up the main path from the bridge. The delay meant that we didn't have time to mark out the second section, so we came back to the centre and prepared to "live hare" this bit.

It took a long time to get enough people together to leave on the full walk, which I led, leaving around 9:45. Maggy stayed around for a bit to lead the second section option.

The walk was absolutely glorious, with sunshine most of the time. The two groups met at the caravan site where we got ice creams and stayed together after that.

Naturally Maggy and I had a dip in the lake on the way back to Coniston Hall, but nobody else was interested. It was glorious!

All arrived back at the Hall in good time for the dancing and the walk had been a great success, thanks to Claire's careful planning.

Sunday, by Claire Duplock

The day dawned bright and clear as I set off for Kendal to do some early preparation for the day of Dance.

How lucky we were with the weather!

Everything went well in Kendal Town Centre: the deputy Mayor gave a short, witty speech to start proceedings off, and all our guest sides had large appreciative crowds to watch their performances.

As we gathered together in the Market Place to dance our final dance, sing our farewell songs and bid each other emotional goodbyes, all of the past year's hard work was forgotten in the buzz of knowing that WE had made this very special event happen.