

2012 Reports

Wassail Day 14th January



This year saw the fourth Crook Morris Wassailing event in the Lyth Valley, near Kendal. This ancient custom was revived by Crook member Judy Malkin, with the help of local farmers and damson growers Mr and Mrs Walker of The Row. The event is becoming well known, both locally and further afield (there were guests from as far as Shropshire this year), and we hope it is helping to raise the profile of the local damson producers. Wassailing is a folk tradition that aims to promote the fertility of the crops, and usually involves singing, dancing, drinking, dancing, more singing, more drinking, some dancing, drinking..... and general merriment and celebration.

Crook Morris, along with a motley collection of friends and visitors, assembled at the Lyth Valley Hotel at 1pm, and then walked up to Mr and Mrs Walker's house at the Row. We saluted our hosts with some traditional wassailing songs, and then sang in praise of the Wren (the "King of all birds"!). Simon, our Master of Ceremonies, then led the procession up to the orchard, with everyone following making as much noise as possible (and it was a LOT of noise!) to scare any evil spirits away. We all gathered around our "own" damson tree and sang in praise of its fine appearance and abundant harvest last year.

Mark from Crook Morris had brewed a wassail cup made from damsons from our tree (very potent!), and

we all dipped a piece of toast in the cup, and then hung the toast on the tree. Each person drank from the cup then passed it around until everyone had sampled it, some several times. We also had damson cake made by Judy, and fortunately there was enough for us, and for all of our guests and visitors.

After some more singing, we went back to the Walker's and performed some Morris dances for them. We were blessed with perfect blue skies and sunshine, although there was a frosty bite to the air. After we finished at The Row, we all went on to one of our favourite local pubs, The Hare and Hounds at Bowland Bridge, where Crook performed their traditional Mummer's Play and did some more Morris dancing. We were lucky to be joined by our friends from Legs Levens, the local Appalachian team, who did two of their dances. We then went inside the pub, where a session of singing, more dancing, more Mumming, drinking, eating, Rapper dancing, more singing etc. lasted until we were thrown out at closing time! All the members of Crook were presented with individual bottles of Damson Gin, which Judy and Jen from Crook Morris had made from our own damsons!

What a fabulous day we had, many thanks to: Mr. and Mrs. Walker, Mark, Judy, Jenny, Legs Levens, the staff at the Lyth Valley Hotel, the landlady and all the staff at The Hare and Hounds, all of Crook Morris, and all our friends who came to support us.