

2024 Reports

Wassailing

13th January



According to Anglo-Saxon tradition, at the beginning of the New Year, the lord of the manor would greet his assembled people with the toast *was hael* or 'be well'. Several more toasts were almost certainly had and much merriment ensued. Wassailing has developed over the years and now usually involves wassailing or blessing fruit trees in the hope they will produce a bountiful harvest in the Autumn. Crook is pleased to carry on this tradition and on Saturday 13th January, we held our annual Wassail Day.

We gathered around 'our' damson tree in an Orchard in the Lyth Valley and Dan as the Lord of Misrule explained the history of Wassailing to the assembled crowd and then told the story of how the Wren became the king of the birds. The Kendal Revellers sang several Wassail songs and all the participants were invited to take a drink of special Wassail beer brewed by Mark and eat a piece of delicious damson cake baked by Judy. We then soaked our pieces of toast in the beer and hung them on the tree along with ribbons to bring luck and a good harvest for the coming year. Beer was poured on the roots of the tree to 'feed' it and pots and pans were banged to scare off any evil spirits.

Crook then did several dances and were joined by a Border Morris side, Stone the Crows. It was good to keep moving as the day was very cold but at least it wasn't raining! We then retired to The Black Labrador at Underbarrow for more dancing and also a mummings play. Diane stepping in at short notice was an excellent Turkish Knight and Dan a worryingly attractive Princess Sabra in high heeled boots! There was a lot of laughter and appreciation from the onlookers.

We carried on the celebrations at the Underbarrow Institute with some delicious food and more singing and dancing. The Revellers sang again and there were also turns from the amazingly talented Gillow Family, Eskrigg singers, Crook's rapper side, with a couple of new dancers making their debut and everyone joined in with some ceilidh dancing and of course more Morris.

The hall was decorated by Juliet, Judy and others and looked really festive and the wood burners kept us all warm and toasty.

It was a fantastic day all round. A collection was taken during the day, 50% of which will go to local charities.

A huge thanks to Juliet who did most of the organisation of the event, the day really couldn't have gone any better. Also, thanks to everyone that helped either with decorating or clearing up, helping on the bar, calling dances or playing music and a special thanks to the Walker family to whom we are indebted for 'our' tree which makes the whole day possible.

Link to photos by Andrew Allan

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/157916544@N05/albums/72177720314028360/>