

A new take on the Castleton Garland Ceremony

On the 15 November 2018, Castleton Historical Society held its final meeting of the year, in the Village Hall. What a fantastic evening it turned out to be. Frank Parker, a CHS member, introduced his film about the Castleton Garland Ceremony to an expectant audience of more than 60, several of whom had participated in the Garland Ceremony over many years. The film was entitled "The Castleton Garland Ceremony: Origins and Survival" and was the product of several years detailed and painstaking research by Frank and Kay Harrison.

The film began with a general introduction to Castleton and the background to the ceremony, noting the various names of Oak Apple Day, Royal Oak Day and Restoration Day for the 29th May which is the day of the ceremony. Frank then went back in time to explore the possible ancient origin of the ceremony relating it to Mam Tor and the Castleton Stone Head, (which can be seen in the Castleton Museum), and the festivities often associated with the arrival of spring e.g. Church Ale and the Lord of Misrule events. Many of these local festivities came to end under Oliver Cromwell and it was not until the Restoration of Charles II that activities were revived. The ceremony is often associated with the king hiding in an oak tree.

During the 18thC the Jacobite Uprising, the coronation of George III and the change in the calendar may all have had an influence on the Garland ceremony. Frank also visited other areas e.g. St Neots, Knutsford, Deptford and Abbotsbury looking at their traditions and relating these back to Castleton.

The coming of the railway to the Hope Valley and with it mass tourism in the late 19thC together with the celebrations around the Queen Victoria's Jubilee saw a rebranding exercise for the Garland with girl dancers. Then there were other changes, a new stop at Doctors Corner, the maypole dancing and ultimately the handing over of the organization of the Garland from the "ringers" to a local committee. A big change took place in 1956 when the consort, Tommy Liversedge retired and Jean Abbott (now Jean Bowman, present in the audience) became the first woman consort, and a year later she got a brand new costume in a Stuart design.

Frank concluded with some thought provoking speculations on what the future may hold for the Garland ceremony..

If you missed the film or want to watch again at leisure it will be on "Youtube" for a short while, just google "Castleton Garland origins and survival" - it's in three short parts and makes enjoyable watching.

