

Wassailing (2009)

Burning the Ashen Faggot on 5 January, Old Christmas Eve...

is one traditional custom which has not died out thanks to the Curry Rivel Wassailers. The ceremony is practiced to ensure good health (from the Anglo Saxon 'waeshael') and good harvest. Its origins go back a very long time and for how long villagers in Curry Rivel have been wassailing no one can be sure. The ashen faggot is a version of the Yulelog and is made by collecting ash twigs which are bound together with willows and tied with a fastening called a rose.

Senior wassailer Bill Richards can trace his family's involvement for over 150 years. The wassailing group, which consists of approximately ten men process around the village making house calls and in exchange for singing the wassail song to the householders are given money and something to help lubricate their voices! Finally they arrive at the 'The King William' pub where to many toasts of 'Good Health' the ashen faggot is placed on the roaring fire. All money collected is donated to local charities.

That much loved ancient tradition of wassailing has benefitted Parsonage Place Community Centre. The senior wassailer, Bill Richards (left) recently handed over £270 in cash to Ron Fuller, the Social Organiser of the Parsonage Place Community Centre. Looking on are fellow wassailers (from left to right) Gary Eagle, Paul Willey and Dick Horsey.

“We’re just delighted to be able to do this” said Dick Horsey “This is money that we collected by wassailing on Twelfth Night and then burning the ashen faggot in ‘The King William’. We all decided that we would donate this money to the older members of our village.”



Ron Fuller said “This is a very generous and thoughtful gift and we’re all very grateful to the wassailers. This money will go towards the cost of coach trips to places such as Bournemouth, Weymouth, Paignton and Brixham during the coming year.”

Wassail, wassail, all over the town,
The cup it is white and the ale it is brown,
The cup it is made from the good old ashen tree,
And so's the beer from our best barley.
To you our wassail. Aye and joy come to our jolly wassail.
All here we held this [strong] ale, and pass by the ring,
Oh Master and Missus will let us all walk in,
And for to fill our wassail bowl and sail away again,
To you our wassail, aye and joy come to our jolly wassail.

Oh master and missus, we done you any harm,
Pray hold fast this door, and let us pass along,
And give us hearty thanks for the singing of our song,
To you a wassail, aye and joy come to our jolly wassail.