

Liskeard Old Cornwall Society

On Fri 1 Sep 17, courtesy of Mr James Moon of Bolitho Farm, Maudlin, the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society held the ancient ceremony of 'Crying The Neck' and in doing so captured the spirit of the harvest for the next season. Proceeding began by the singing of 'We plough the fields and scatter. The Rev Mark Pengelly (Meth), officiated bringing along his post war John Deere Model A, beautifully restored Agricultural Tractor. Readings in Cornish were conducted by Mr Mike Smith (St Cleer) and in English by Dr Kathy Lang, (Looe).

The Rev Steve Morgan, (CofE - St Martin's) gave the harvest message on how one person or one small light can influence the world, and supporting that he brought along his 2012 Olympic Torch and had been carried by him. Mr James Moon then scythed the last of the barley and Rev Mark, held the last sheaf to the North, East and South, calling out the appropriate words in Cornish, this was followed by Her Worship the Mayor of Liskeard, Cllr Christina Whitty, in English. The Lords Prayer was shared between all in both Cornish and English and in conclusion, a Celtic Blessing was given by Rev Mark. Mr Paul Pascoe (Master Baker) very kindly donated a Harvest Sheaf of Bread to the Liskeard Methodist Circuit for the forthcoming Harvest Thanksgiving, All then enjoyed tea, coffee and a Blakes Saffron Bun each provided by the Ladies of the Liskeard OCS.

Duncan Paul Matthews

Looe OCS

Photos submitted by Norma Dobinson

Looe OCS "Crying the Neck". We had a lovely evening, clear enough to glimpse the sea in the background.



L to R: Den (mandolin player), Hazel, Ken, Andrew (reaper in T-shirt), Graham, Kate, Alan, Cindy, Norma, Derek, Sandra, Roger (resting after conducting the ceremony) Jim, Iris, Penny



Roger offers the "neck" to the East, with Andrew in the background standing over the cut corn

St Ives Old Cornwall Society

Photos submitted by Frank Stevens, Vice President & Recorder

Crying the Neck on a wild, wet, windy Wednesday!

It was a wild, wet, windy Wednesday (16th August at 2 pm) when St. Ives Old Cornwall Society gathered at Trewey Farm, thanks to the generous invitation of Mr. Harry Mann, to celebrate the ancient custom of 'Crying the Neck'.

The ceremony dates from pagan times when it was believed that the success of the harvest and hence the survival of communities depended on various 'gods'. To this end ceremonies were performed at various key times of the year to please the 'gods'; similar ceremonies are to be found in various civilisations around the world.

In past years when the grain was cut using a scythe the harvest would entail hard labour over weeks. When almost all the grain had been cut and just a small strip or patch remained in the field the Crying the Neck ceremony would be performed to give thanks for the harvest; thus, it is the pagan equivalent of the modern-day Harvest Festival. Crying the Neck died out in the late 1800s but was revived in 1928 by the St. Ives Old Cornwall Society.

This year's ceremony opened with a prayer in Cornish said by Mick Paynter, a Bard of the Cornish Gorsedh. This was followed by the Mayor of St. Ives, Suzanne Tanner, reading the prayer in English. Margaret Stevens, President of St. Ives Old Cornwall Society, then invited Mr. Mann to proceed with cutting the remaining stalks of the grain which this year was Westminster Barley. Mr. Mann used a scythe to cut the remaining standing grain. When he had finished cutting the grain he put it together in bundles that were held together in the traditional way with a few stalks of grain to form 'the Neck'. The Mayor, to much applause, entered into the spirit of the ceremony when she put together the final bundle. In time-honoured fashion Mr Mann then held aloft a bundle and shouted "Yma geneff! Yma geneff! Yma geneff!" which the audience questioned in unison "Pandrus genes? Pandrus genes? Pandrus genes?" Mr. Mann replied "Pen Yar! Pen Yar! Pen Yar!" The audience then cheered "Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!". These interchanges were then repeated in triplicate in English respectively "I Hav' n!", "What have 'ee?", "A Neck!" "Hurrah!". Margaret Stevens drew the ceremony to an end by inviting those present to retire to nearby Zennor Village Hall for a Harvest Croust.



Harry Mann, the farmer, cutting the last of the barley and holding the Neck aloft



The Mayor, Suzanne Tanner, together with Mick Paynter and Harry Mann



Inside Zennor village hall for a short service, led by Brian Stevens and followed by harvest croust

St Columb Old Cornwall Society

There was a lot of doubt surrounding whether the St Columb Old Cornwall Society would be able to hold the 'Crying of the Neck' outside on Friday 8th September because the weather had been atrocious for most of the day. But in true Cornish spirit more than sixty people came, with wellies, macs and umbrellas, to Tremayne Farm, St Columb, ready to celebrate the last 'stook' of corn being cut and it did not rain. Although the tradition dates back thousands of years, it had fallen into decline, but was revived by the Old Cornwall Society in 1928. Phil Ellery welcomed everyone and explained that the ceremony was a way of giving thanks for the harvest.

Through the kindness of Mr Dick Wood, we were able to hold the ceremony in one of his fields. Peter Wyper read the prayer in Cornish followed by Reverend Helen Baber reading in English. Then Mr Dick Wood cut the corn, held it high and to the East, South and West called out three times, "I hav'ee". Then the people responded with "what hav'ee?" Followed by "a neck, a neck" and "houra, houra". Mark Hawken with his accordion accompanied everyone for the singing of 'We plough the fields and scatter'.

From the field we made our way to St Columb Parish Church for the Church Service and were greeted by the wonderful sound of the Church Bells. Reverend Baber led the Church Service and spoke of the Beauty of the Earth and Harvest.

Then to the Columba Centre for hot pasties, saffron cake, splits with butter, jam and cream and of course tea and coffee. Mark Hawken played whilst we enjoyed our food. Mike O'Connor on fiddle and Barbara Grigg with her harp, delighted us as ever with well-known tunes and some music from the Poldark series. John Bernallick, in his role as compere, kept us all well entertained with his true and not so true tales and his memories of childhood, whilst Mark

Hawken helped by Mike and Barbara led us in the Community singing. Mrs Bill Glanville thanked everyone who had taken part and the committee members for their input. Special thanks went to Lynn and Tracey for their hard work in preparing and serving the food. As a celebration of Cornish culture, this evening was a complete success.

