

2018 Mid-summer Bonfires

Callington OCS







Redruth OCS

Redruth Old Cornwall Society Midsummer Bonfire was held at Pencoose Farm, Stithians, courtesy of Paul Gluyas and family. As usual our annual event was well attended on a beautiful evening. Whilst awaiting the ceremony the assembled crowd were entertained with a grand selection of Cornish songs by "Singing Seagulls" whilst pasties, tea, coffee & biscuits were served. As the sun set over the brow of the hill the ceremony began with ROCS President Vanessa Moyle welcoming everyone in Cornish and English and explained the Cornish tradition of midsummer bonfires. Ray Chubb read a blessing in Cornish, followed by the Captain of Redruth Salvation Army with the blessing in English. Lady of the flowers Elowenn Jenkin looking lovely in her head dress performed her part in Cornish & English and cast the bouquet of herbs "both ill and good " onto the heaped up herbage gathered from the farm pruning's etc. before Ronnie Moyle " set the pyre at once on fire " and judging by the size of fire it certainly shone in several parishes. As part of "Speak Cornish Week" a grand rendition of Bro Goth Agan Tasow was sung adding an extra little something to finish off another lovely traditional ceremony.

Liskeard OCS

“This year's Midsummer's Eve Bonfire was attended by a mixed age audience of nearly 70. Cornish parts were by Rod Sheaff, English by Father Gilmour of Liskeard RC Church, former Mayor Sue Pike lit the pyre and the Flowers were cast by Ruth Breen, Lily Barrett and Megan Thomas. Music, song and drama was provided by the multi-talented Caradon Youth. Our thanks to Farmer James Moon, all the participants and spectators, as well as for the glorious weather and wonderful location of Bolitho Farm.” Brian.





St Columb OCS

Midsummer Bonfire at Castle an Dinas

On Saturday 23rd June 2018, St Columb Old Cornwall Society continued the Ancient Tradition of lighting a Bonfire on Midsummer's Eve which also celebrates the Eve of St John. The Bonfire was lit at the top of Castle an Dinas, courtesy of Cornwall Heritage Trust. The history of the Midsummer Bonfire seems to date back to Pagan Times when bonfires were lit to protect against evil spirits. At this time the Church could either suppress these Pagan rituals or embrace them. It chose the latter and the fires were allowed to continue but to occur on the Eve of the Feast Day of John the Baptist.

There were more than 160 spectators at the bonfire and among them members of other Old Cornwall Societies, Cornwall Heritage Trust and several Bards of the Cornish Gorsedd.

Much of the organisation was down to the committee with a tremendous input from Phil Ellery who with his sister Yvonne built the bonfire using last year's Christmas Trees from St Columb Church Christmas Tree Festival. At the start there were hot pasties and cups of tea served by Hazel and Sharon. Following a welcome from Phil Ellery the ceremony continued in Cornish and English with Peter Wyper reading the Cornish. The prayers were spoken by the Reverend Helen Barber. The fire was lit by Derek Lindsay. Alison Dawe was the Lady of the Flowers and after speaking in Cornish, she cast her flowers onto the fire. The flowers and herbs she chose are presumed to have 'good' and 'bad' properties.

Within minutes the fire was ablaze. People gathered around it and joined in the singing which was led by the Red River Singers. As the fire faded, the sun began to set leaving the sky ablaze with many shades of red. John Bennallick gave a vote of thanks at the finale. There was no doubt that everyone enjoyed the evening. A collection raised £117 for the Air Ambulance. The St Columb Old Cornwall Society were pleased to see that so many attended and are grateful to all those involved in making the evening such a success.









St Ives OCS

Midsummer's Eve Bonfire. Carnstabba Hill, Halsetown, St Ives
Saturday 23rd June

At 8.00pm on the evening of Saturday 23rd June 2018 St Ives Old Cornwall held their annual Midsummer's Eve Bonfire on Carnstabba Hill, Halsetown, St Ives. This annual event is recreated throughout Cornwall by Old Cornwall Societies so that a beacon of fires blaze from hilltops throughout the County.

The bonfire was set and managed by Vaughan and Tristan Bennett from Penhalwyn Trekking Stables who had kindly allowed the use of their hill for the event. Car parking at the foot of the hill was provided by the Halsetown Inn who offered the use of their facilities for anyone who had need of them. The weather was calm and still with warm sunshine as about 50 people, both locals and visitors, climbed the hill to witness this ancient ritual. The St Ives Old Cornwall was especially lucky to have the company of Priscilla Oates, the President of the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies present to join in with our celebration.

Community singing was the introduction to the event with songs such as Trelawney and Little Lize sung by those present. At 8.30 freshly baked pasties were delivered by Ferrell's Bakery to enjoy prior to the main reason for the gathering which is the lighting of the bonfire. Brian and Margaret Stevens led the event with Mick Paynter, a Cornish Bard, speaking traditional Cornish words. Suzanne Tanner, the Mayor, ably spoke before she lit the bonfire. The Lady of the Flowers, Margaret Sidey, carrying a bunch of specially selected flowers and herbs bound with coloured ribbons symbolic of strength, knowledge, love, sacrifice and the sun tossed the bouquet onto the blazing fire to be consumed by the flames.

Some visitors from Sydney, Australia were delighted to have witnessed a spectacle which was in practice when their forefathers lived in the area: for the roots of this Midsummer, or Golowan, Old Cornwall celebration are ancient. In 1929 a revival of the old tradition took place when a chain of bonfires was organised throughout the county by the Old Cornwall movement. The first fire lit was on Chapel Carn Brea, overlooking Land's End, followed by others at Castle-an-Dinas and Rosewall Hill until a fiery chain ran on through the length of the Cornish peninsular. Folk dancing, singing and a pasty supper are preliminaries to the fire itself.

And the fire on Carnstabba Hill was indeed splendid. Vaughan and Tristan Bennett were well equipped to keep it under control so the spectators could enjoy the evening which was crowned by a most amazing sunset. The whole sky became suffused with red, orange, yellow and pink giving a truly memorable end to this traditional Cornish Celebration.



Left to right –
Suzanne Tanner, Mayor of St Ives, Mick Paynter,
Margaret Stevens, Brian Stevens and Vaughan Bennett.





St Just & Pendeen OCS



