

St Columb Old Cornwall Society

More than eighty adults and children came together on 23rd June to celebrate the Ancient Cornish Tradition of lighting a bonfire on Midsummer's Eve. It was hosted by St Columb Old Cornwall Society at Castle an Dinas, courtesy of Cornwall Heritage Trust. Among the spectators were members of other Old Cornwall Societies, several Bards of the Cornish Gorsedh and trustees of Cornwall Heritage Trust.

The history of the Midsummer bonfire dates back to the times of Pagan rituals. The Church had to make a decision. It could either suppress such Pagan Festivals or use them for its own purpose. It decided the latter and the fires were allowed to continue and to occur on the Feast Day of John the Baptist. The Cornish name for the Festival is 'Golowan' translated from Cornish as Gol (feast) and Jowan (John).

There were plenty of hot pasties and cups of tea served by Sheila Neale, Rosemary Coley and Jean Smith, plus a huge bonfire at the St Columb celebration. Dave Crewes, started the event by welcoming everyone. As is the custom, the Ceremony was spoken first in Cornish and then in English. Following the lighting of the bonfire at 9pm, by Peter Wyper, the Lady of the Flowers, Barbara Wyper, cast her garland of flowers into the burning fire. The garland is made up of 'good' and 'bad' herbs and tied together with ribbons of symbolic colours. The 'good' herbs have medicinal properties and the 'bad' ones are poisonous.

Then everyone gathered around the roaring fire for Community singing led by John Bennallick and aided by Mark Hawkins, playing the accordion. It was such a friendly atmosphere. There was no doubt that it was enjoyed by all.

A collection was made for the 'Help Izzy walk appeal'. The St Columb Old Cornwall Society is grateful to all those taking part and especially to our Events Secretary, Phil Ellery, for all his hard work.