

St Neot's Oak Apple Day

On Tue 29 May 2018 the annual celebrations took place at St Neot, in commemoration of King Charles 11 return to the throne from his exile in both the Netherlands and France. St Neot village celebrated by hauling an oak bough through to the village to the church where it was hoisted to the top of the tower for the following year. (The bough allegedly grown from the original oak tree that King Charles had hidden in and planted in the St Neot Church Yard). The procession was led to the Church by 'Fife and Drum', musicians in period costume and followed by the banner bearers of the neighbouring Old Cornwall Societies and Members of Cornwall Association of Local Historians (CALH). The Rector and Church Warden gave a potted history of the event and read the special 'Collect' for 'Oak Apple Day' from the Book of Common Prayer.

King Charles 1 was executed on 30 Jan 1649 outside the Palace of Whitehall, London and upon Prince Charles defeat by Oliver Cromwell's at the Battle of Worcester made his escape at one stage hiding in an Oak Tree to avoid capture, then fleeing into exile in both France and the Netherlands!

Upon the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658 he was restored to the English throne arriving back in England on his 30th Birthday, 29th May 1660 that was then declared a Public Holiday and so from that day until 1859 known and celebrated throughout the realm as 'Oak Apple Day'.

Traditionally, a sprig of the red oak apple is worn by all attending celebrants until midday then changed for a piece of 'Boy's Love'. The single girls would then sleep with that beneath their pillow and from it would have a vision of her beau in her dreams that and successive nights. Anyone found not to be wearing such a sprig were to have their legs tickled with sting-nettles!

At Liskeard, the Mayor decreed that all Councillors and Burgess's attend worship at the Parish Church wearing a new Black Cloak for the occasion.

The Bells of St Neot then rang out in celebration as they have done each year since 1660 and the village retired to the Rectory Gardens for a Barbeque and Fete

Duncan Paul Matthews