

Penzance Guizing and Montol Festival

These are notes based on research undertaken for a thesis on Cornish Folk traditions. Information is drawn from participant observation and conversation with organisers 21st December 2008 and 2010. This is an evolving event, for more information visit www.cornishculture.co.uk

Summary

The Lord of Misrule is chosen by casting lots (in the form of beans) at the steps of St Johns at 5.45 pm approximately. Dress is vaguely mock posh with as much black as possible and Venetian style masks, many of which were made at an earlier workshop.



The Lord of Misrule then leads the procession leads from St Johns Hall to Lescudjack Hill Fort at 6pm. A beacon is lit followed by a dance lead by the Turkey Rhubarb Guizers.



The guizing parties return to the area around Chapel Street, some performances take place in the pubs and some outside.

At about 10pm Pen Glas is brought out on to Chapel street and processes down to the Harbour side accompanied by Bagas Torchen the torch bearers to complete

the event with a circular "candle" dance.

Conversation with Simon Reed one of the event organisers 21st Dec 2010

Montol is the Cornish word for the Midwinter Solstice. According to Edward Lhuyd in his 1700 also translates Montol as "balance". To the organisers of the festival both interpretations are important: firstly the Montol festival is a balance to the ever popular

Golowan festival, secondly it is also the celebration of the Cornish Midwinter and revival of its ancient customs.



The Lord of Misrule has a special costume and mask made for the occasion disguising the features of the occupant of the office completely. Montol has had 3 Lords of Misrule in its history 2 ladies and one man. During the festival you will see the Lord of Misrule lighting the beacons, leading the processions and taking part of the ceremonies. This role is

similar in some ways to the Mock Mayors of Cornish tradition but different in that the Lord of Misrule is chosen completely by random by the casting of lots, in this case coloured beans. The Lord of Misrule has many titles, including the Abbot of Unreason and the King of the Bean.



To be considered for the honour of Lord of Misrule you must be dressed in full Montol Costume (see costume guide) and mask. Present yourself to the Master of Revels at 5.45pm on the evening of Montol Eve at St John's Hall steps. Take a bean from the Master of Revels if it is red you will have the honour of serving as lead guiser for the nights celebrations. We will never reveal your identity.