

Dinton Bonfire Boys

History of the Dinton Bonfire Boys

The earliest known record of the Dinton Bonfire Boys is the photograph with the original banner dated Nov.5th 1890, held in the village archives.



In Dinton, the celebration of the defeat of the Gunpowder Plot, which until 1859 was compulsory in England, took the form of a procession, which gathered at the railway station. Coincidentally, this was also the location of the original Wyndham Arms pub.

Everyone would be dressed in costume, mainly as clowns and would walk first to Dinton House (now known as Philipps House in Dinton Park) and then to Hurdcott House between Dinton and Barford St Martin. At both houses, refreshments would be served which led to much merry making and many pranks. The procession then walked back to the school grounds to light a massive bonfire and let off fireworks and crackers. Large quantities of beer and cider were consumed.

Even then, when times were much harder, there was a charitable element to the proceedings. Money raised from the collecting boxes was donated to Salisbury Infirmary.

The society was very active in the early part of the 20th century but from around 1930 until 1945 the 'Boys' appear to have been largely dormant. Given the economic and political situation during those years it is not surprising. During the 1970's the village hall committee ran the fireworks.

In 1981, the village hall committee decided it was no longer viable to continue with the firework display, which was held in the field opposite the old village hall. Not willing to let the event die too easily, Richard Crouch approached Michael Glover and suggested they continue the tradition. Michael had many connections within the firework industry so the new group was formed. They continued to put on a show in the field opposite the hall until they decided to celebrate the centenary year in 1990. The National Trust agreed to the use of Dinton Park. This transformed the event and up to 2000 people regularly attended on dry bonfire nights.

A banner has always been a part of the society. The original from 1890 is long lost but the next one from 1912 was found in the early 1980's, underneath the old village hall, in a poor condition and put into safe storage. It was refurbished in 2005 with a lottery grant and is on permanent display in the village hall. A new one, a combination of the first two was commissioned in 1990 carrying the dates 1890 and 1981

The tradition of charitable giving continued, with in excess of £20,000 donated to local good causes. For the final show in 2009, a single charity, Help for Heroes, was selected to receive all the profits and a total of £5636 was donated.

Michael Glover

