

## Maypole Dancing – how a local teacher kept the tradition going

By the 1980s, maypole dancing had become a thing of the past in the local area until Mrs Winnie Annan, then a teacher at Kildwick Primary School and leader of Sutton Brownies, decided to change that.

Winnie had recently met a Methodist minister's wife who had a maypole and this brought back happy childhood memories of maypole dancing when she was a pupil at Cononley School. Keen to see maypole dancing again, Winnie borrowed the maypole and did some research into dances which she taught to her Brownie pack at Sutton. They gave local performances from Silsden Moor to Skipton travelling around with the maypole tied on to the roof of her car.

As the maypole dancing was proving very popular Winnie decided to teach it to pupils at Kildwick School. In need of their own maypole, Winnie's husband Gordon made one from whatever he could find including an old television aerial which he fastened to a stand. Winnie recalls how the stand had four corners and when in use it was necessary for a child to sit on each corner to ensure it stayed upright. This was later replaced with a more sturdy maypole made by pupils at South Craven School.

The music was provided by Roger Wheatstone, husband of a fellow teacher at Kildwick school who tape recorded someone playing a piano, (possibly himself). To help ensure that the children kept in time and did the correct movements Winnie would teach one of the children to be a leader for the other children to follow.



Above: This newspaper photograph in the Craven Herald shows a performance by the children of Kildwick School in 1983.

Below: The children are performing in the grounds of Kildwick Church with an inner and outer circle of dancers.



Besides teaching Sutton brownies and Kildwick School pupils how to maypole dance, Winnie also went to Sutton Council School and Cononley Primary school to help them learn it too. Thanks to her efforts, and those of countless teachers and children since, the tradition of Maypole dancing is still very much a part of village life today and children from Kildwick School regularly perform at the annual summer fare.



### Acknowledgements

The Farnhill and Kildwick local history group would like to thank Mrs Winnie Annan for sharing her memories and photographs of maypole dancing with the history group.

Left: Mrs Annan at a Kildwick School reunion in 2009.

### What next – can you help ?

Did you take part in maypole dancing ? Do you have memories, photographs or newspaper cuttings of village pastimes or school traditions that you'd like to share ?

The Farnhill and Kildwick Local History Group would like to hear from you about this or on any topic of local interest. Please contact [history@farnhill.co.uk](mailto:history@farnhill.co.uk). Or why not join us at one of our monthly meetings – see the website for details.