

Christmas Rapping

Everyone knows a morris side when they see one, but would you recognise a rapper sword dance, or a mummer's play, or a Court Leet ale-tasting? Be thine answer 'yeah' or 'nay', there will be many chances to witness these various traditions in this area over the coming festive season - courtesy of King Stone Rapper.

King Stone Rapper was founded in Chipping Norton some three years ago.

The King Stone

The team takes its name from the solitary King Stone at the local Rollright Stone Circle. A rapper sword dance requires five dancers, five rapper swords, a musician or two and a tiny amount of wooden or stone floor space, tarmac at a pinch; a ceiling allowing the tallest dancer to raise 'the knot' above his head at certain times is desirable, but not essential. Rapper can be danced virtually anywhere (although it must be said that it would be pointless on grass), but the experience of this particular rapper team has shown that Cotswold inns and alehouses are very suitable venues. Although rapper sword dancing is King Stone Rapper's eponymous principal activity, they have branched out into the older customs of ale-tasting and mumming. While rapper and ale-tasting can be performed year round, the Mummer's Play is a Christmas tradition. There are many variations on this ancient form of drama, but the theme is always to do with death and rebirth. Ale-tasting, by contrast, is based on historical fact and is



a re-enactment of the procedure by which former elected officials would attest to the good quality and fair price of ale - a sort of early Customs & Excise body. Unscheduled departures from both plot and script, ad-libbing and utter nonsense are all guaranteed, but the

essential aim is to keep alive significant traditions and, hopefully, to entertain others at the same time. King Stone Rapper perform across Oxfordshire throughout the year, but the run-up to Christmas is a frantically busy time. Venues confirmed to date are:

**Chipping Norton Town Hall,
Thursday 6th Dec. at 5:45pm**
**The Bell, Charlbury,
Thursday 6th Dec. at 6:30pm**
**The Fox Hotel, Chipping Norton Folk
Club, Monday 10th Dec. at 8pm**
**Chipping Norton Farmers' Market,
Saturday 15th Dec. 10 and 11am**
**Woodstock Town Hall,
Saturday 15th Dec. 12:30 and 1:30pm**
**The Bell, Charlbury
Thursday 20th Dec. from 6:30pm**
**Killingworth Castle, Wootton,
Tuesday 1st January from 12 noon.**

Details of other venues are available from December on: 01608 642296. If you are interested in joining KSR you would be very welcome, please visit www.king-stone-morris.org.uk; or contact the editor of *The Wychwood* who will put you in touch.

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