

Ascott Pantomime

On the 8th December the annual Ascott-under-Wychwood panto enjoyed its 5th outing. Another 30 or 40 years of this and it will be in danger of becoming a regular event on the village calendar. What began as an annual 'private' gathering in someone's living-room, organized and performed by the now-defunct local Discussion Group, has acquired a life of its own.



again, the kind of performance you have to experience to believe. I urge you, the reader, to note down in your December 2013 diary: *must see Ascott Panto (in order to believe it)*. The plot can be summarized with one word: confusing. But in the best possible way. The audience thoroughly enjoyed it, as did the cast. And in the end, the dragon/dinosaur was slain, as expected, by St George, this year played by the author himself! As usual, Father Christmas made a not altogether surprising appearance.

Part of Christmas

Some things have not changed: it is still written by local bard Fred Russell. It is still performed with enthusiasm and verve (that far outstrips their talent) by local villagers. Everyone still performs with script in hand. But now there is an audience of about 100 in Tiddy Hall, and free food and drinks are provided. And it forms part of an evening of Christmas entertainment.

This year, the evening began with music from local singer-songwriter Mark Pidgeon, ably assisted by David Menday. Next there was a poetry recital from and by local historian extraordinaire Wendy Pearse, an entertaining tale of Old Eldridge who correctly predicted his own death - several times. My favourite quote: "The times were bad, in good old days." Finally, as a curtain-raiser to the eagerly anticipated interval (food and drink, remember?), came this year's pantomime, called 'Wot Dinah Saw'. It was, once

You Really, Really Want to See it!

After the interval the programme continued with a delightful poetry recital by Fred Russell from some of his own work. The image of Father Christmas with a certain part of his anatomy on fire will stay with the audience for a long time.

The evening was made complete by a spirited Christmas sing-along, led by Mark and Dave. I am convinced that all those who attended this evening left Tiddy Hall feeling warm and Christmassy, with a smile on their faces. Oh, and we collected £325 at the door, in aid of the Village Charity and *The Grapevine*.

If you want to see the panto, if you *really* want to see it, go to youtube and search for 'ascott panto 2012'. But you do not have to. Honestly.

Harry Kappen