

The Toft Spring Feast

Years ago, the Toft Spring Feast was held on the feast of Saint Andrew (to whom Toft Church is dedicated), 30 November, but its revival in this century was deemed to best take place in combination with the village's May weekend festivities. The Spring Feast now occurs regularly on the first weekend in May. It brings together various community organisations (The Church in Toft, Toft Choir, Toft Session musicians, The Social Club, The Brownies) in the planning and holding of events such as Maypole Dancing, Village Walk and Picnic, Well-Dressing, etc.

The Toft Mayday Garlands recalled

"The children went from door to door with their garlands, made out of two hoops decorated with flowers, pagles* and bluebells. I don't think they used garden flowers, they used flowers they'd got from the hedgerows and meadows." (May Tebbit, 1970) *dialect name for cowslips

"Well the garland was two hoops, one put that way, and one put that way. And they was decorated with cowslips, commonly called pagles. And they was all tied round these hoops, these little branches and other flowers if they'd got any and then little ribbons in between, and they used to cover that over with a white cloth, and they came up to the door and start singing May ... the first of May is garland day, and if they didn't give them anything they didn't let you see the doll in the middle of the garland you see. And if they give them tuppence, they'd take the cloth off and you could have a look at it. ... They'd share the money once out. There were a lot of children, schoolchildren what used to do it." (Percy Rogers, 1970)

"The first of May is garland day. Please remember the garland. It only comes but once a year, so please remember the garland" (The garland-chant, recounted by Percy Rogers in 1970)

For a selection of Spring Feast programmes, see the end of this document. Here are some photographs of recent Spring Feast activities.



Spectators and dancers (The Brownies) gather on Toft village green for the Maypole 2005



Drawing water from the well 2010



Sunday village tea-party 2009



Maypole dancing 2015



Making Spring Feast Garlands, Marion Read's garden 2009



Carrying the Toft Garland to St Andrew's Church 2011



Toft Session musicians play for the Maypole dance, with the Toft Garland in the background, 1st May 2011



Sunday village tea-party Toft Manor 2011



Ceilidh, People's Hall, Spring Feast 2010



Getting ready for the village walk 2015



Village picnic Frog's Hall (John & Margaret Quenby) 2015



Ceilidh 2015

Spring Feast programmes (selection): next pages

SATURDAY 4TH MAY

This year's Spring Feast kicks off with the official opening of the new children's playground. Come along and see it, bring the kids to try it out, then walk up to the People's Hall for the rest of the afternoon's events.

TIME	EVENT	PLACE
1.30pm	Children's Playground Toft Parish Council invites all residents of Toft to the official opening of the upgraded play area on the Recreation Ground. Come and see the Super Nova in action!	Recreation Ground, High Street
2.00pm-4.30pm	Toft Social Club/ Toft IW Exhibition and Tea-party: Toft in Words and Music Come and browse what Toft people have written: books, articles, essays, poems. With occasional readings and music (honesty box for contributions to teas, snacks and cakes; proceeds to the People's Hall improvement fund)	People's Hall
8.00pm	Toft Social Club/Toft People's Hall Open Evening Please come and help celebrate the completion of the new Toft People's Hall extension. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the fundraising by inviting you to come and see the improved, extended facilities. Enjoy an evening of meeting new friends, listening to music and enjoying a drink. Snack refreshments provided. If you're not yet a Social Club Member please come along and find out what it's like! All welcome.	People's Hall

SUNDAY 5TH MAY

For the last 16 years the **Church in Toft** has celebrated Rogationtide/May day and we plan to do it again this year. **Toft Choir** and **Toft Session** will be providing music at the various events.

TIME	EVENT	PLACE
11.30am	Gather outside the Methodist Church for a short outdoor service prior to the Parish Walk	Methodist Church, High Street
11.45am	Parish Walk and picnic Walk along the footpaths, come rain or shine, for about 35 minutes to Frog's Hall to eat your picnic lunch. Soup will be provided. Loos available. We are invited indoors if the weather is not good. Our thanks to our hosts John and Margaret Quenby	Assemble at the Methodist Church Frog's Hall farmhouse
1.30pm	Leave Frog's Hall to return to the village by a different route.	
2.00pm	Maypole dancing by Toft Brownies and anyone else who'd like to try!	Village Green
3.00pm (approx.)	Walk to Saint Andrew's Church for the Well-dressing Ceremony	Village well at Saint Andrew's church
3.30pm (approx.)	Service of Thanksgiving followed by: Parish Tea (proceeds to CBM UK; thanks to David and Sally Taylor for the use of the Manor grounds).	Saint Andrew's Toft Manor garden (next to the church)
8.00pm	Toft Social Club Quiz Night : join a team or form your own (max. 6 people per team)	People's Hall



Erecting the Toft Maypole on the village green, when Maypole-dancing was revived in the village in 1994.



The Maypole has been a feature of English village life since at least Elizabethan times. It was danced in Toft in the past. Muriel Peach, born in Toft in 1915, who died in 2012, recalled Maypole dancing on Toft Village Green when she was a little girl.



Toft Spring Feast 3rd – 4th May 2014

“Toft in Food and drink”

Programme of events

**Come and join in
two days of fun
and celebration**

With thanks to the many willing
volunteers who help to make
Toft Spring Feast a success.



Toft Spring Festival: a date for your diary (2012)

Put the weekend of Friday-Sunday 30 April – 2 May in your diary now! Toft invites you to a weekend of celebrating the spring. Here are some of the great events for adults and children and all the family.

Friday evening 30 April, 8pm, Toft Social Club: A taste of Bali. 🎵 Live Gamelan orchestra music from the Cambridge University Gamelan Orchestra. Gamelan is lovely Indonesian music played on instruments such as xylophones, drums and gongs, bamboo flutes and stringed instruments. Free admission with Asian snacks available.

Saturday afternoon, 1 May, 2.30pm-5.30pm, Toft Social Club: Music workshops 🎵 Folk music workshops for budding musicians of all ages and all (portable!) instruments, run by Hazel Fairbairn and Briony Lemon, two talented local musicians. Bring your instruments and all the family and learn a folk tune we can all play together. There will be a nominal charge.

Saturday afternoon, 1 May, 2.30pm-5.30pm, (venue to be confirmed): Maypole dancing workshop. Barbara Preece invites you to come along with your kids and learn to dance the Maypole ready for Sunday afternoon (see below). Also come and join the *Village Well-Dressing* at Saint Andrew's church (time to be confirmed) – decorate the village well ready for Sunday (see below).

Saturday evening, 1 May, 8pm, Toft Social Club: FOLK MUSIC CONCERT 🎭 with The Ceili All-Stars. Come and enjoy a cabaret-concert of traditional folk tunes while you chat with friends and enjoy a drink. Hazel Fairbairn (Kingston) and her band guarantee a great musical evening. The Saturday afternoon workshop musicians will also feature! Tickets £6 (or pay at the door); includes food.

Sunday morning, 2 May: Join the traditional village walk 🏡 to Frog's Hall farm. Look out for further details of time and place of assembly in this newsletter.

Sunday afternoon, 2pm, Toft village green: Village Maypole. 🏰 Come and watch the children dancing, enjoy the live music and then all join in! Then stroll down to Saint Andrew's Church and join in the traditional ceremony and short service to celebrate the village well. 🍵 After that, come and have tea on the lawn at Toft Manor.

