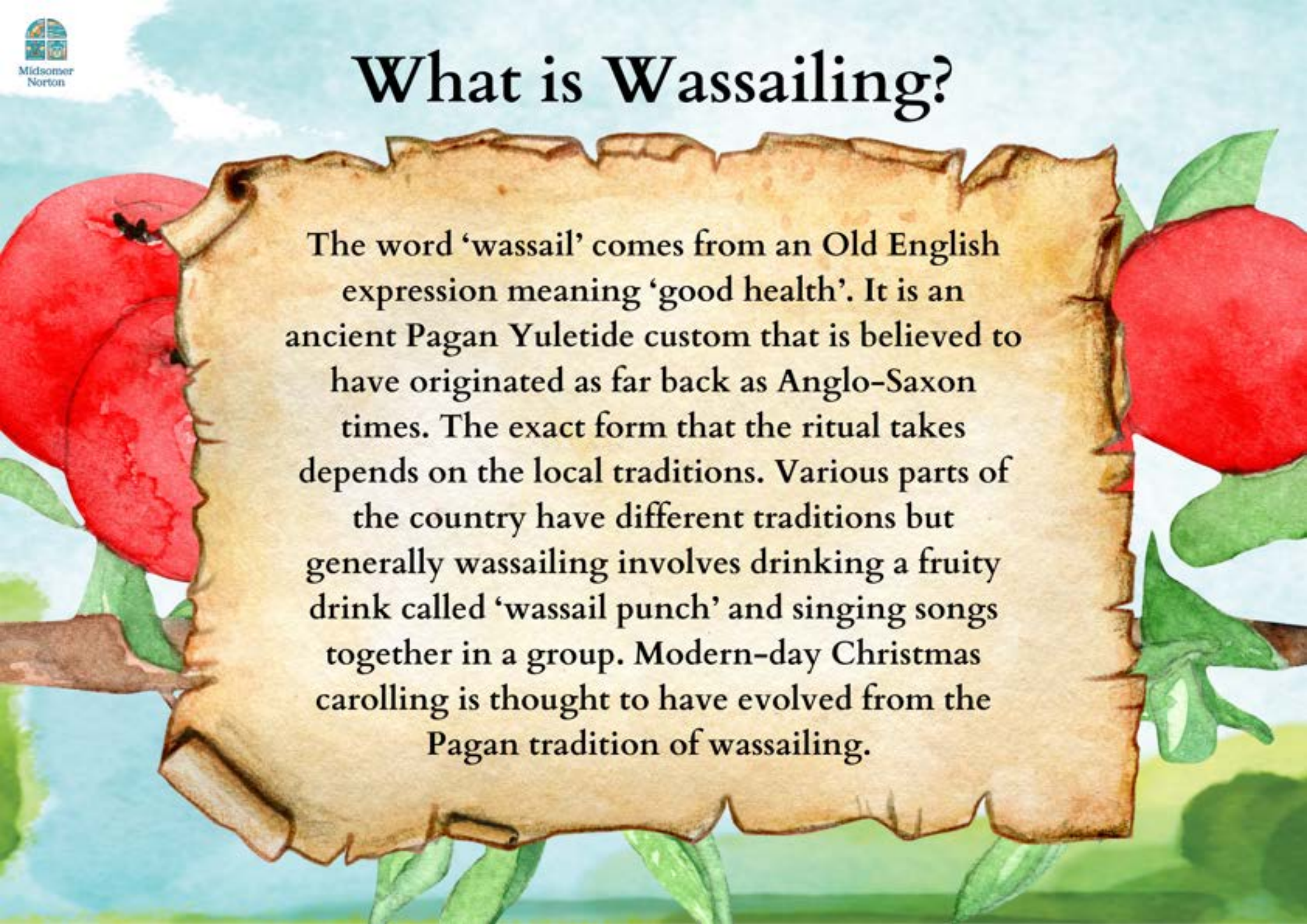
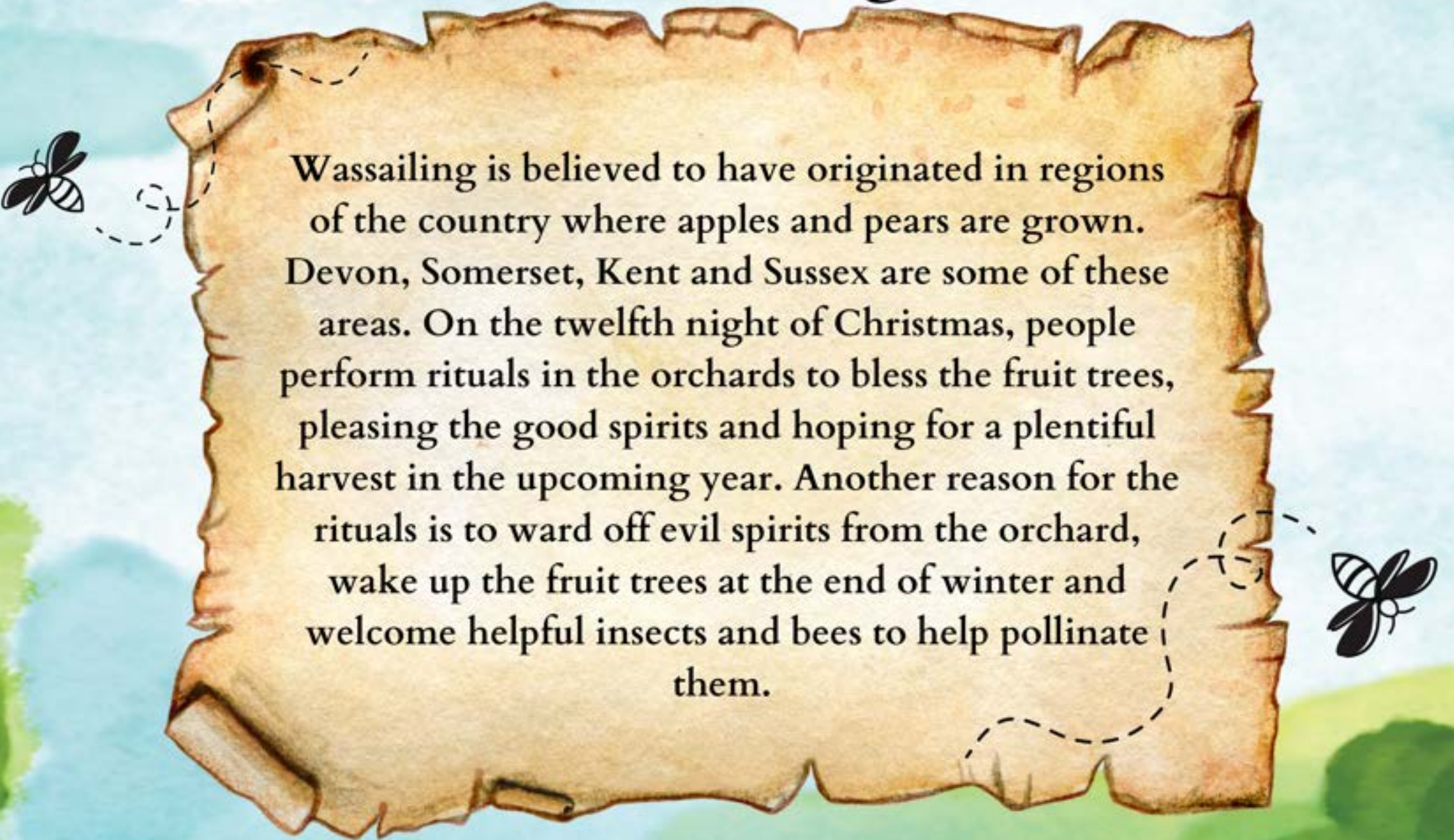


What is Wassailing?



The word 'wassail' comes from an Old English expression meaning 'good health'. It is an ancient Pagan Yuletide custom that is believed to have originated as far back as Anglo-Saxon times. The exact form that the ritual takes depends on the local traditions. Various parts of the country have different traditions but generally wassailing involves drinking a fruity drink called 'wassail punch' and singing songs together in a group. Modern-day Christmas carolling is thought to have evolved from the Pagan tradition of wassailing.

What Does Wassailing Look Like?

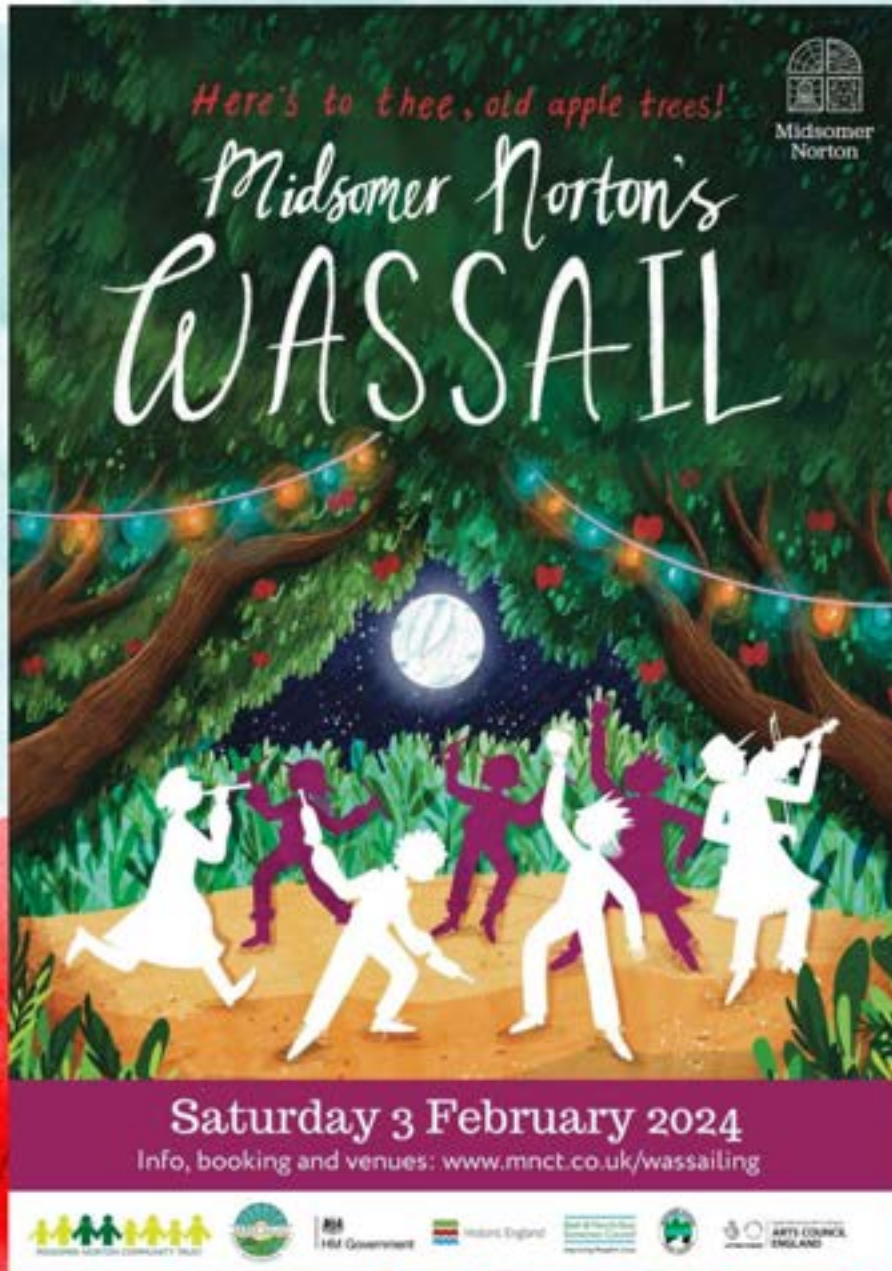


Wassailing is believed to have originated in regions of the country where apples and pears are grown. Devon, Somerset, Kent and Sussex are some of these areas. On the twelfth night of Christmas, people perform rituals in the orchards to bless the fruit trees, pleasing the good spirits and hoping for a plentiful harvest in the upcoming year. Another reason for the rituals is to ward off evil spirits from the orchard, wake up the fruit trees at the end of winter and welcome helpful insects and bees to help pollinate them.



Wassailing procession

- The procession to get to the orchard that may be led by a Wassail king and queen. There need to be lots of noise created on the way - banging pots and pans, as well as singing or chanting. Instruments can be played and whistles blown!
- Some people dress up - usually a nature theme or medieval touches.
- A warm spiced cider drink is carried in a Wassail bowl. This will be used for the trees and for Wassailers to drink.
- Once at the fruit trees, the oldest tree is surrounded first. Some 'wake up' chants may be said, praise for the tree, some singing, may be a bow. Large sticks may then be used to beat the trunk and the ground around the tree to awakening the tree. This is followed by lots of banging and noise making!



Here's to thee, old apple trees!

Midsomer Norton's
WASSAIL

Saturday 3 February 2024
Info, booking and venues: www.mnct.co.uk/wassailing

Logos at the bottom of the poster include: Midsomer Norton Community Trust, Midsomer Norton, HM Government, Midsomer Norton, Arts Council England, and Midsomer Norton.

Come to our Wassail!

So you can join the procession we would love for you to make your own wassailing crown. Follow the instructions on the next page

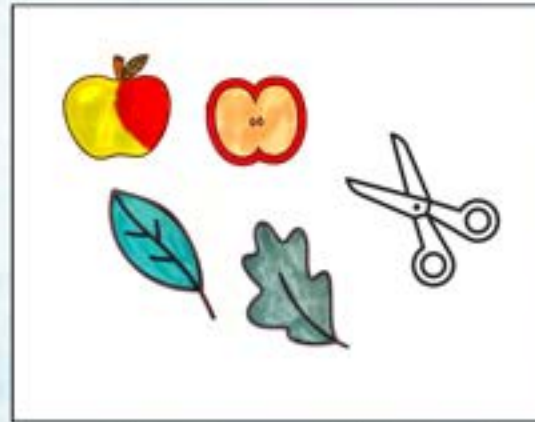


Make a wassailing crown

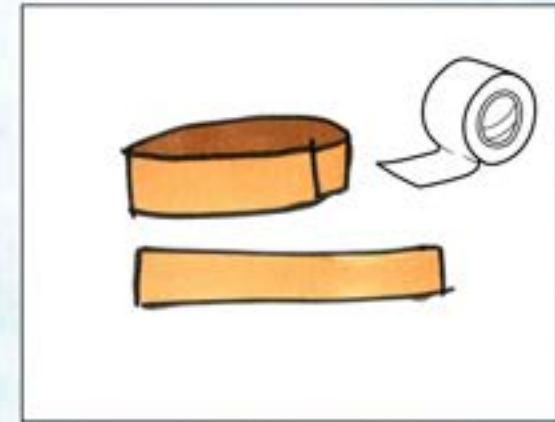
Traditionally wassailing crowns are made of natural materials like local grasses and willow. You can make our own crowns by using a variety of art techniques to recreate natural materials.



Colour in your shapes. Can you try shading?
Can you draw your own leaf shapes?



Carefully cut them out. This bit can be tricky. Take your time.



Make a cardboard crown base. Make sure it fits your head



Glue your paper shapes to your crown. Think about the 'composition'.



Are you happy with how it looks? Do you need to add any more?



Try your crown on! Can you have your own procession?

Create leaf rubbing leaves

Rubbings are considered to be the oldest form of print-making. To make a rubbing, simply place a piece of paper over something like a leaf and then rub a pencil, crayon or charcoal over it. The result is a beautifully detailed print, you can use your leaves to decorate your crown.



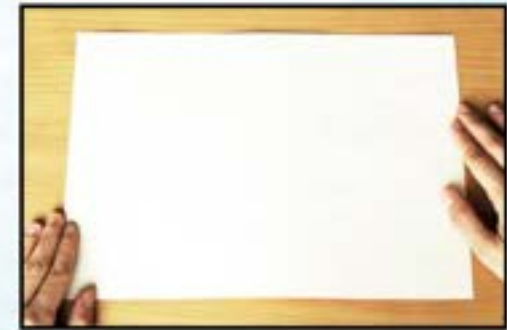
Collect leaves.

Collect leaves of various shapes and sizes. You can use fresh leaves or dried fallen ones.



Position a leaf.

Place a leaf with its bottom side facing up.



Place paper over the leaf.

Put a sheet of paper, preferably thin or lightweight, over the leaf.



Rub a crayon.

Rub the side of a crayon on the area over the leaf. As you do this, you'll see the coloured areas start to take the shape of the leaf.



Rub over the entire leaf.

Continue until you've rubbed over the entire leaf.



Remove the leaf.

Remove the leaf from under the paper. This completes the basic steps for making a leaf rubbing.

Foraged Nature Crowns

Nature crowns are probably one of the simplest ways to have fun with foraged finds



Cut strips of thin flexible card to approximately 6 cm wide and long enough to go around a person's head one and a half times and stick double sided tape along the whole length. (cereal box card works really well)



Make this into a crown by peeling back the tape and sticking it together making a hoop. It's often best to do this on the person's head who will be wearing and making the crown to get a good fit.



You can either stick to double sided tape - which works well for thin light pieces like leaves or grasses. If you have access to one, you can use a glue gun to stick down larger pieces like acorns or bark.



The crown is then ready to be decorated with whatever natural finds you have supplied. Grasses, seed heads or leaves work really well.

Tale of the Apple Man

It is said that many years ago there was a place where it was customary for the youngest rather than the oldest son to inherit the family wealth.

In one family where this happened the youngest son did not like his older brother. The older brother was hard working, thoughtful and had love of land and nature. It didn't make him rich in money, but he was rich in experiences and happiness. The younger brother was greedy and selfish and only cared about being rich. EWhen their father died, the youngest son kept all the money himself and delighted in being rich. He gave a few bits to his family and he loved feeling powerful. To his older brother he only gave an old donkey and a skinny ill Ox along with a tumbling cottage and three apple trees. The cottage was rented from the younger brother and he had to give money monthly.

The older brother didn't grumble. He looked after the animals by cutting the grass to feed the donkey and created herbal remedies to rub on the ox to help heal his sores. After being well fed and well cared for, the animals started to fatten up and were healthy. The animals lived amongst the three apple trees and the trees grew well and produced lots of apples. The more the trees thrived, the more there was to feed the animals. The animal dung was used to help the trees and in turn the trees continued to thrive. This was the cycle of nature. There were even enough apples to make cider from and the brother could sell this to make some money. However the money still wasn't enough to make all the repairs the tumble down cottage needed.



Just before the rent was due around Christmas and his brother came to him and made him an offer to reduce the rent if he could come and listen to the animals on Midwinter Night. He had heard that the donkey and ox could talk to each other only at this time and he hoped they might reveal the whereabouts of some treasure that had been buried in the area. 'Wake me before midnight' he said to his older brother. 'If you don't, I may find a new tenant for the cottage'.

It was a wet Christmas and the older brother felt a little down, but on Christmas eve he was determined to try and add some cheer. He gave the ox and donkey a little extra food, and found some cider. He mulled it with cinnamon and cloves and took it outside to the orchard. It was still raining. He went top the oldest apple tree and pulled a hard crust of bread from his pocket and dunked it in the drink, He started to sing:

‘Old apple tree, I wassail thee,
And hoping thou will bear
For the lady knows where we shall be Till apples come next year
He tipped the last of the cider on the roots and continued.
For to bear well and to bloom well
So merry let us be
Let every man take off his hat and shout to the apple tree. Hats full, caps full, three bushell bags full,
And a gurt heap under the stairs.
Hurray!’



The rain continued and the older brother just stared at the tree wondering how long it had been there and what it must have seen over the years. “Ah that were a good o’drop”, he heard a voice say. He looked around but saw nobody. He then started at the tree and saw through the gnarled bark and grin. He heard a cracking sound, and a man stepped out of the shadow of that old apple tree.

“I am the spirit of the apple tree. You have cared for and nurtured us for the past year. You understand the cycle between trees, animals, man, and the land. In the roots of my tree, you will find treasure. Take it. Use it in the best way you can. We trust you.”

The son was astonished. He quickly dug into the roots and found treasure. He cried when he realised there was enough to make the repairs and stay with the ox, the donkey, and the apple trees. The apple tree man told him to wake his brother, who did come down and stared at the Ox and donkey awaiting them to speak. The animals looked at each other knowingly as there was no secret to tell as the treasure had been found by another.

This brother had respected the land and the animals, understood the cycle of nature and was being rewarded for this. He could then continue to care for his house, orchard and animals.

So, in a wassail celebration, one of the things we are doing is thanking the trees -may be the apple tree man- for helping the trees grow well and produce apples. Through the year we continue to care for the trees and look after them, and in return the fruit and give us apples.

