

Holmfirth Festival of Folk 2017

Report to Holme Valley Parish Council

Once again the Holmfirth Festival of Folk has been and gone (taking place this year from the 5th-7th of May) and once again, judging by the numbers of people who lined the streets, attended the concerts, workshops and sessions it has proved an overwhelming success.

While the weekend proved to be a very cold one and the numbers were some way short of the record crowds of 2016, Holmfirth was still the place to be for the very best in traditional music and dance leading off the festivals which stretch out through the summer months and help to make Holmfirth such an attractive place to live in or to visit. Once again hotels and guest houses reported high occupancy rates and a visit to one of the many pubs and cafes which support the festival (and host events) would provide ample evidence of the popularity of the event. Some rooms are already booked for 2018!

The highlight of the 2017 festival, as always is the parade of the dancers from the Memorial Gardens through the certain of the town, then via Hollowgate, culminating in the dance display in Victoria Park. It was this element of the festival which attracted specific funding from the Holme Valley Parish Council which ensures that we can control the traffic, allowing the procession to wind through the town in complete safety. Hundreds took part in the parade while thousands looked on and the town was buzzing.

As ever the festival continues to innovate and evolve. Three new venues in Holmfirth came on board with this year's festival and hosted acts for the first time and in the wake of the event we have had two new enquiries from businesses keen to take part and support the festival in 2018.

The young people's events such as the schools concert, for which the students prepare from January onwards, and the mass Ukelele event in Hollowgate attracted very large audiences (and large numbers of participants, not all in the first flush of youth). The festival 'fringe' also grew once again in 2017, bringing a range of impromptu performances to the streets of the town and demonstrating the wealth of talent that exists in the Holme Valley. This is a strand that we hope will continue to grow in the years to come, making use of the publicity and expertise that the parent festival can offer, but bringing an innovative new take to the proceedings.

The festival is run entirely by volunteers who deliver the event year after year in a highly professional way. The small core of the committee is supplemented over the festival weekend by roughly a hundred additional volunteers performing functions from stewarding to manning the festival office and rattling the collection buckets which help to fund the Holmfirth Festival of Folk. We're grateful to them all. We take a couple of months to take a breath now until the AGM in the autumn after which the whole process of planning the next festival will crank up once again.

Every year we invite festival goers to complete an evaluation form to help us shape this planning process and to evaluate what's working and what might be improved. The final open question invites a free response to attending and comments like the one below perhaps show the value of the Holmfirth Festival of Folk:

'Loved the whole atmosphere! We were staying in the area but didn't know the festival was on so it was a very happy coincidence. The buzz was great, dancers and music everywhere, every street had something going on. Having never visited Holmfirth before, it seemed to be a natural home for this festival. The only negative was that it was so cold ...I hope next year's festival takes place cos I'm putting a reminder in my diary to make sure we get accommodation sorted to enjoy the whole weekend! Thank you for a great experience!'

As always we are grateful to the Holme Valley Parish Council for its continuing support. See you all again next year!

Hugh Dailly
Treasurer
Holmfirth Festival of Folk
June 2017