

Ickwell May Day



The traditional Ickwell May Day Festival involves Maypole dancing, games, refreshments and the crowning of a May Queen.

The earliest mention of the Ickwell May Day festival came in 1563 when payments are listed in the Church Wardens' accounts for the purchase of shoes for the dancers, bells for the shoes, food and drink. However, the festival likely pre-dates this and may be of pagan origin.

A permanent Maypole was erected in 1872 by the Squire John Harvey to celebrate the birth of his son. When the Squire died, he left instructions in his will for the sum of £2 and 10 shillings to be paid every year for the upkeep of the festival.

Ickwell May Day has preserved many historical traditions. Children from local schools will dance around the Maypole, while older children from the villages demonstrate their skills at Morris dancing and plaiting ribbons round the Maypole in intricate patterns. It is then the turn of the adults, known as the Old Scholars, many of whom are parents or grandparents of the children taking part, to show their skill at plaiting the ribbons round the Maypole.

Visitors can enjoy a variety of games, refreshments, contests, dances, music and other activities, including the crowning of the May Queen. If you stay until the end of the dancing, you can take part and have a dance around the maypole too!



People Say:

“A great family afternoon!
I look forward to May
Day every year.”

“It was a really lovely day; I am
so pleased to see this wonderful
tradition being honoured and
celebrated so beautifully”.

“Sometimes feels like a time machine taking
you back to a traditional, beautiful, old
England! A wonderful free afternoon that
our kids thoroughly enjoyed!”

“There are lots of things
to do and see and
stalls selling beautiful
homemade items to try
and buy.”

Action Points:

- Promote** the May Day Festival to visitors. May Day is a public holiday and there might be more tourists visiting Greensand Country.
- Visit** May Day Festival yourself so you are more familiar with activities and traditions.
- Check** the Ickwell May Day website for the programme of events and timings.
- Follow** Ickwell May Day on social media to show your support and receive updates.

Info and Resources:

Ickwell May Day Festival Website:
www.ickwellmayday.co.uk

Ickwell May Day Festival Facebook Page:
www.facebook.com/ickwellmayday