

PRESS RELEASE

Date: 30th October 2012

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for immediate release

England's Mistletoe Capital prepares for a season of berry kisses

Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire really comes alive in late November, with a programme of seasonal events in the run up to Christmas and New Year. But this bustling country town has a close association with the magic, myth and mystery of the mistletoe plant that makes it unique.

A key date in the local calendar is Saturday 1st December – National Mistletoe Day – when the history of Christmas and Druid traditions are celebrated with a musical procession, a Ceremony of Peace and Thanksgiving to honour the mistletoe . . . and a ghost story.

Festival Project Manager, Caroline Palethorpe, explains;-

“ *The Legend of the Mistletoe Bough* is a ghost story that first appeared as a poem nearly 200 years ago and many believe it to be true. Numerous mansions, castles and stately homes claim this gruesome tale to be their own, but we have adapted it with a much happier ending to celebrate Christmas and mistletoe as a ‘giver of life’. This will be the first ever performance of *The Mistletoe Bride* “.

The story begins at the Rose and Crown in Burford at 2pm and then the Mistletoe Foundation procession travels across the Teme Bridge into Tenbury Wells, led by the Bang On! Drummers. This is followed by a colourful ceremony that includes the crowning of the Head Girl from Tenbury High School as the Mistletoe Queen and the Head Boy as her Holly Prince. After a street performance of *The Mistletoe Bride*, the beautiful Queen then walks to the riverside to cast a bough of mistletoe into the water. This is a traditional offering as a thank you for the harvest and to celebrate love, peace, truth and the mystical healing powers of mistletoe.

Local school pupils, Tenbury Drama Club and other participants will all gather outside the newly refurbished Regal Theatre to take part in a ceremony of dance and music, before moving on to the Pump Rooms for a musical end to the story performed by Tenbury Library Choir. Local shop windows will be dressed for the celebrations, mistletoe will be on sale and the town's Christmas lights will add the finishing touches.

M. / f . . .

Caroline Palethorpe continues;-

“ This is a traditional story and an event for all to enjoy. It would be lovely if visitors could dress their children in brightly coloured clothes and ribbons so that they really feel involved in the seasonal celebrations. We want to see everyone dancing into town “.

The celebrations will be preceded by a silent film version of “The Mistletoe Bride”, starting at 12.30pm at the Regal Theatre. Songs of nature, myth and magic will also be performed in the evening by Damh the Bard; a musician, poet and storyteller from the Druid tradition.

Other events are planned for Tenbury throughout December, including a Santa Parade, storytelling and live music.

More information can be found on the website – www.tenbury-mistletoe-festival.co.uk

ENDS

WORD COUNT: 490



Attached image shows: 2011 Mistletoe Queen Anna Gunther – Head Girl at Tenbury High School

Additional Information

Mistletoe was considered sacred by Celtic Druids and for many centuries it has been suspended over doorways and in rooms, as a symbol of good will and peace to all who visited. Although poisonous, mistletoe means “all-heal” in the Celtic language and in medieval times it was believed to repel evil spirits.

The common name for mistletoe is derived from bird droppings! “Mistel” is the Anglo-Saxon word for ‘dung’ and “tan” is the word for ‘twig’ . . . so mistletoe means “*Dung on a twig*”!!

The procession, ceremonies and parades are all free, with plenty of local parking available, details can be found at www.tenbury-mistletoe-festival.co.uk Other events charge a fee for entry.

Although the celebrations observe Druid traditions, they are multi-faith ceremonies, to which all are welcome.

This is one of a series of events in Tenbury Wells that are supported by Malvern Hills District Council.

As England’s Mistletoe Capital, Tenbury Wells also hosts a series of wholesale Mistletoe and Holly auctions during November and December that are attended by traders from across the United Kingdom, as well as international buyers.

Notes to Editors

**For further information, jpeg images or interviews, please contact the M partnership
Mandi Doyle - mandi@tmpartners.co.uk or Guy Boardman - guy@tmpartners.co.uk or
by calling 01584 881 651**