

15 YEARS OF CISPP (2009 – 2024)

The Carnivals In Somerset Promotion Project (CISPP) was formed in 2009 by a small group of carnival folk who were very concerned that the unique heritage of the Somerset Illuminated Carnivals could be lost in the future unless efforts were made to encourage more people to take part through the means of education and entertainment.

CISPP is now celebrating its 15th anniversary of successful and sustainable activities. These have been, and continue to be: the mobile exhibition van; schools' visits; creating educational, entertainment and promotional carnival DVDs; producing and disseminating an annual carnival promotional dates leaflet; and supporting carnival in general throughout the year.

CISPP aims to:

- (1) Promote the historical and contemporary importance of the unique West Country illuminated carnivals
- (2) Disseminate an interactive mobile carnival exhibition unit so that communities can experience the heritage and culture of West Country illuminated carnivals
- (3) Create educational and entertaining DVDs to portray the carnival experience
- (4) Stimulate tourism through West Country illuminated carnivals
- (5) Develop partnerships with interested groups to ensure the future of West Country illuminated carnivals

In 2009 the CISPP group successfully applied to The Heritage Lottery Fund to purchase a van for use as an exhibition vehicle which has now made over 100 school visits and has attended over 20 events and carnivals in most years since.

In 2011 CISPP organised an oral histories day where young and old talked and shared carnival experiences. In 2011 we were filmed for the BBC at Ilminster carnival for an episode of Britain's Heritage Heroes with John Craven and Jules Holland. In 2012 CISPP took part in the opening ceremony of the Olympics at Weymouth where a 10-minute film showcasing illuminated carnival was shown. In 2013 CISPP produced a DVD featuring the history and evolution of carnival carts over the years which was updated in 2017.

CISPP was awarded a second lottery grant to make another DVD 'Walking Your Way Into Carnival' depicting the history and evolution of masqueraders in carnival from 1605 to 2014. Other DVDs produced using archive footage are: 'have a cracking good carnival Christmas', 'scary carts', 'cirque de fun', 'we are the champions', 'nearly the champions' and 'best of the rest', plus a celebration of bygone clubs USB 1980s-2020s.

In 2015 CISPP obtained a third lottery grant to buy a satellite dish and to have training to run live webcasts from our carnivals which continued for several years. Also in 2015 CISPP collaborated with playwright Malcolm Martin who wrote a play set at Wells Carnival called 'Kingdom of the Ice Bear'. CISPP also created a carnival comic book with professional cartoonist Nick Roberts.

Virtual carnivals kept the spirit alive during 2020 and 2021 when the usual illuminated carnivals were unable to take place due to the pandemic.

Numerous carnivalites from across the West Country have been members of and supported CISPP over the past 15 years who we very much thank, as do we carnival clubs, committees and funding organisations that have supported us over 15 years.

See our website at www.cispp.org.uk for a range of carnival materials, information and souvenirs to purchase.

Dr Andrew Tallon, Chairman CISPP
July 2024