



# The Prancing Pony

The Official Newsletter of White Horse Morris

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## Prancing Pony returns and comes of age

This is the 21<sup>st</sup> edition of The Prancing Pony. The first was published over six months ago in late March 2020 and the first twenty editions followed weekly. During the summer months the Prancing Pony and HobNob took off together - but travelling under separate names - for a well-deserved holiday in several exotic locations and have only just emerged from quarantine. As we approach the dark days of winter we aim to publish every four weeks rather than weekly and hope to include a range of high-quality, thought-provoking, informative, learned and erudite articles from our readership.

2021 will be the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of White Horse Morris, and alongside other ideas for events to celebrate this milestone, it would be great if we could put together a commemorative book with articles, thoughts and memories from White Horse members over the years. Send them to us - your recollections and ideas - and we will publish them here first. What are your first or most vivid memories of your time with White Horse? How did you first get involved with Morris? What kept you interested? If we manage to have a dance event next summer, how about combining it with a decorative cake festival to celebrate and nourish the occasion with a display of colour and taste to accompany the music and dancing? Food for thought, eh?



Our first learned and erudite offering comes from regular contributor John Wippell.

### Possible new recruit in the Woodford valley?

The gentleman in question refers to himself as Ebenezer Clodhopper, although this could well be an alias, given how evasive he was about . . . almost everything really.



To be honest, it was very hard to get him to speak at all and it was only when we had offered him a year's supply of Click and Collect groceries from Waitrose to be paid for by the Prancing Pony Editorial Board that

he grudgingly agreed to tell his story. (Don't worry about the details Mike, just set up a standing order and we'll handle all the rest from this end.)

Anyway, Ebenezer is just one of a large gang of drop-outs and ne'er-do-wells who have invaded the valley and are hanging about doing very little. Almost nothing, you could say. All at the invitation of our vicar, I might add. He claims they're here because the Harvest Festival got cancelled but I think they're on the take. You know, a lot of stuff's gone missing from the village: broom-sticks, old clothes, hats, even bales of straw. You just can't trust people these days.

Look at "Margot" for instance. Calls herself a dancer. What a floozy? Ebenezer is in some sort of heavy amorous relationship with her judging by the sounds coming from the village phone box last night. It was enough to scare the cats.



But Ebenezer reckons they'll be gone by the end of the week. I think they might be heading west, Warminster way. I must make sure I get my coat back off him before he disappears. . .

JW

## Spectacle Anglais Des danses traditionnelles

Du rythme, de la musique, de l'ambiance et du soleil, le groupe folklorique anglais «Whitehorse Morris Troop» a créé une superbe animation dans la Cité médiévale.

Le groupe a repris une tradition rurale qui, selon eux «date de 1448». En ces temps troublés (C'est la Guerre de Cent Ans entre la France et l'Angleterre), on a besoin de bonnes récoltes. Des éléments rituels de la culture celte demeurent, comme la représentation du soleil qui tourne. Les bâtons, les mouchoirs, les clochettes ou grelots symbolisent la pousse des plantes, la fertilité ou veulent éloigner les mauvais esprits.

Vus depuis la France, les Britanniques paraissent tous Anglais, dans le groupe de danseurs et musiciens, les Écossais, les Gallois et les Anglais ont fait danse com-



Des danses vieilles de six siècles reprises par «Whitehorse Morris Dancing Troop»

mune sur des rythmes endiablés. Pourtant ils aiment leurs différences.

Ironie de l'Histoire, ce spectacle s'est déroulé à l'angle de la place Du Guesclin



Danses folkloriques du groupe "White Morris Dancing Troop".

Samedi 14 avril, dans le centre-ville de Pouancé, aura lieu de 15h à 18h, un ensemble de spectacles anglais. Sont notamment prévues au programme des danses folkloriques interprétées par le "White Morris Dancing Troop" sur fond de musiques de six siècles. Ce groupe de danses folkloriques est très populaire en Angleterre. Leur but est de maintenir et transmettre les traditions qui existaient à Oxford depuis le XV<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Leur costume arborre le légendaire ruban bleu et rouge : vous ne pourrez pas le manquer samedi au centre-ville ou au parc municipal. Avec l'aide de Bill Carter, agent immobilier anglais, installé sur Pouancé, ce spectacle sera donné. Et s'il existe des liens forts entre les villes d'Oxford et de Bonn (Allemagne), Pouancé est aussi un "carrefour d'énergies" ! Sur place, frites et bar à disposition pour une ambiance assurée.

## Danses anglaises en démonstration



La "White Horse Morris Dancing Troop" place Duguesclin.

Samedi 14 avril sur la place Duguesclin, 18 personnes appartenant au "White Horse Morris Dancing Troop", dont 12 danseurs, étaient rassemblées pour une démonstration de danses folkloriques. Originaire de la partie sud-ouest de l'Angleterre, ce groupe est formé d'adeptes qui dansent depuis 25 ans ensemble, voire 35 ans pour David. Bill Carter, agent immobilier anglais et membre du comité des commerçants,

est installé sur Pouancé depuis 10 ans. Il a coordonné avec Lindsay Andrew la programmation de cet après-midi festif. Les éléments rituels s'affichent dans ces danses : « tourner dans le sens des aiguilles d'une montre pour représenter le soleil, s'accroupir et bondir pour encourager les récoltes à pousser... Toutes ces danses sont faites pour vivre la musique, c'est une manifestation très énergique ».

<b>Bar l'Exil</b> Le Bourg - La Rouaudière Menu Ouvrier 02 43 06 44 63	<b>BAR Le Duguesclin</b> Les et Sybille Gregory 12 place Duguesclin 49420 Pouancé 02 41 92 68 09	<b>Le Lagon</b> BAR - RESTAURANT Menu ouvert du Lundi au Vendredi midi 27, rue du Général de Gaulle - 49420 POUANÇÉ Tél. 02 41 92 43 75
<b>Vignoble Passion</b> P. Barbellivien 44670 Saint-Julien de-Vouvantes Tél. 02 40 55 51 42	<b>Spectacle Anglais</b> Ets COULONNIER Portes Ouvertes Les 14 et 15 Avril 2007	
<b>FAIRE TOUT MATERIAUX DECO</b> Rue de la Grand'Prée Zone Artisanale 49420 POUANÇÉ Tél. 02 41 92 66 99 Fax: 02 41 92 59 15	<b>Danse Folklorique</b> Danse et musique traditionnelle depuis 6 siècles "Whitehorse Morris Dancing Troop"	
<b>AXA ASSURANCES</b> CABINET LE BRIS et BESNEUX agents agréés 4, Place du Pèlerin - POUANÇÉ 49420 - Tél. 02 41 92 68 09 24, rue Palmer - SÈGRE 49420 - Tél. 02 41 92 68 09 16, rue de Gal de Gaulle - CUSSE 49420 - Tél. 02 41 92 68 09	<b>Pouancé ce Samedi à 15h et 18h GRATUIT</b> Frites et Bar sur place L'abus d'alcool est dangereux pour la santé, à consommer avec modération	
<b>Entreprise BLANDFORD</b> Carpeentry & Renovation Menuiserie & Agencement Les Hautes-Mais - 53390 La Rouaudière Tél. 02 43 05 42 91 Portable : 06 30 30 22 03 e-mail : blandford@wanadoo.fr Paul Blandford www.pub53.com	<b>Crédit Mutuel</b> Banque à qui parler www.cmutuel.fr 2, rue de la Porte Angevine - 49420 POUANÇÉ Tél. 02 41 21 49 49	
<b>Etis COULONNIER</b> 3, rue saget 49420 POUANÇÉ Tél. 02 41 92 43 54 Fax: 02 41 92 43 13 Fleurs funéraires Fleuriste Entretien de Jardin Pose de Piscines		
<b>CALISSON MAURICE</b> ARTISAN MAÇON 20, Rue de l'Hippodrome 49420 POUANÇÉ Tél. 02 41 92 43 13		



These press cuttings are from 2007. Top left: Alice Dike, Dave Field, Knotty Ash, John Byfield, Mike Perry, Cliff Skey. Top right and bottom right: not WHM! Bottom left: Cliff Skey, Knotty Ash, Mike Dixon, Steve Lightfoot, Peter Pike. Does anyone who was there remember it? And can they commit any of their recollections of the "Spectacle Anglais" to print for the next PP? We would love to hear from you, in English or en Français.

## Some thoughts - From Mari Booker

1. Does WHM have any details of attending the EFDSS festival at The Royal Albert Hall in 1953 or 1954? I have some of the programmes, somewhere safe. I feel sure dad is mentioned. I went to one of them, my first time at the RAH, I can remember dad playing and also mam dancing.

The next day, we went to Peter Kennedy's flat. In one corner of the room was a little old woman, I was told I could call her Aunt Maud. In the other corner of the room was this wooden box, a television. You can imagine which was more interesting, my first television.

“Aunt Maud” was Maud Karpeles, who had accompanied Cecil Sharp to collect folk music in the Appalachians (Fig 2).



Figure 2. Maud Karpeles and Cecil Sharp in Kentucky. Cecil Sharp Photograph Collection, courtesy of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, English Folk Dance and Song Society.

2. Have you any details of WHM going to Dublin for an international folk festival? Probably early 1950s. I can't find a date.

Dad used to tell me about lining up to be welcomed by the Irish president, Éamon De Valera. Someone introduced the Morris side. De Valera put his hands behind his back and refused to shake hands. The squire called out, "The fiddler is Welsh" and De Valera threw his arms around dad.

3. I remember dad going on tour with WHM in August. From memory this was to Devon. I do have some post cards that dad sent me, which he didn't do very often. I will look for them when I get home, if work doesn't overwhelm me.

4. No links with WHM, but dad did lots of work with Peter Kennedy for the BBC and EFDSS both locally and in Eire. Dad had just been appointed headteacher of The Minster School in Warminster and the Council allowed him a couple of weeks off to travel around Eire collecting music.

## Mike Perry was interviewed for a Lonely Planet article. He says:



I got into Morris dancing through folk music and some friends. I moved to the Salisbury Plain area in

1978 to teach in a secondary school and 2 of my colleagues were Morris dancers/musicians. We became friends and eventually I started going to practice and the rest is history. I have been Squire of White Horse Morris for a long time and it changed from being an all-male side (White Horse Morris Men) to a mixed side about 11 years ago. As a side we celebrate our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year.



The original side started in Westbury where there is a white horse carved into the hillside. This gave rise to the side's name and to the colours of our kit – white for the chalk landscape, green for the hillsides and blue for the sky and/or water.

There are various reasons people have for Morris Dancing; these include fitness, fun, music, oddity and of course tradition. Most countries have their own traditional dances and costumes, including Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Morris dancing fills that niche for England although it is not recognised as such.

Traditions are important as a means of connecting people to the past and as Morris dancing has a recorded history back to the 1400s it must be worth preserving.

I don't really feel a link along the Ridgeway. The Wessex Ridgeway is within 1km from my house and I walk it regularly but, certainly for WHM, it is an

accident of fate that we are a side in the area. In fact our membership extends well away from the Ridgeway. Additionally, the dances we do were traditionally danced in villages in the Cotswolds and the Welsh Borders and there are now sides all over the country and indeed the world – New Zealand, Australia, USA, Hong Kong, Holland .....

I'm sure that there are connections in some people's minds between paganism and Morris Dancing, particularly with some of the wilder Border sides. However, in my opinion, given the origins of Morris as a form of court dance, this seems more of connection trying to be made rather than existing. There is certainly a link between Morris Dancing and other folk traditions as many dances celebrated aspects of life – from life to death, from sowing to harvesting, to marriage and fertility.

There is perhaps a dichotomy within the Morris world and its future. Many of the older, all-male sides are struggling to keep going whereas younger, mixed, more lively sides have thrived. For the moment I think Morris is in rude health. WHM has a range of ages, from 11 to 70+. There are some sides in the country where all their members are in their 20s.

We are in a bit of a quandary at the moment as performances are not yet permitted by government legislation. We have been practising at a local cricket club but outside and with the evenings closing in and the weather becoming unsettled we have had to call a halt. If things improve we will look to dance out and still have in our diaries our traditional Boxing Day event at the National Trust's Stourhead.



### **Return to Practice? – Helen Sanderson reports**

The Morris Federation, acting as a National Governing Body of sorts, are looking at how a return to indoor practices and dance outs can be implemented. My understanding is they have a H&S expert who is sifting through the regulations especially around exercise / dance / performance and how these will specifically affect Morris.

Once this information has been circulated to sides it will allow us to look at how we may be able to adapt our practices and fulfil our obligations to the Wyvern Hall in Wylve for the safe use of the hall, assuming they are happy to accommodate us. I believe they are looking at dance outs too, so am feeling hopeful!



### **70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

As you all know, White Horse Morris celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. 70 years ago a band of brave men formed White Horse Morris

Men which became a legend. With the current situation we can't make detailed plans but there are a few things we can look at:

1. A day of dance with a ceilidh with invited sides with present and past members (including the NZ contingent!)
2. Everyone to make a contribution to a White Horse book about yourself and White Horse.
3. Somebody takes responsibility to check out the archive materials from the Wiltshire Archive in Chippenham and helps to produce a 70 years of White Horse Morris book/presentation/DVD ...

Please let us know what you think and volunteers will be welcome before they are appointed!

### **White Horse Morris AGM**

The AGM will take place on Wednesday 28 October using Zoom. You will be sent an invitation by email to "join the meeting" and to do this you will need follow a link to download the software, and then click on it on the day a few minutes before the meeting is due to start.

If you have not had the pleasure of meeting through Zoom before, it is very simple and you can thank the Coronavirus for this great new learning opportunity. The meeting is limited to 40 minutes in length, so reports will be sent out in advance to speed things up. If there is still talking to be done after 40 minutes, we can start again.

Please send any agenda items to Helen no later than Friday 23 October. She will issue the agenda early the following week.



### **Stop Press**

There has been speculation ahead of the publication of his report at the AGM that takings from collections may be down this year and that the Treasurer will be calling for imaginative new tin-rattling techniques to be considered when dancing resumes.

**All items for the next *Prancing Pony* to Mike Perry by Friday 13 November, and preferably sooner.**