



The Prancing Pony

The Official Newsletter of White Horse Morris

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Looking back

This week White Horse should have been performing at a “location to be confirmed”, but won’t be. Instead, we have reminiscences from two of WH’s most distinguished former dancers – Bob Burgess and Graham Lever, who look back on fun times in the last millennium and show what a rich heritage we are all part of. Looking forward, there is the possibility of WHM dancing out as early as next weekend in Bishopstrow, and then who knows?

Castaway Ted

For those who don’t know him. Ted is a small bear who has been stowing away during the lockdown in the Sandersons’ camper van.



Music Tracks:

Teddy Bears Picnic – Henry Hall and his Orchestra
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZANKFxrckU>

Teddy Bears Picnic – Bing Crosby
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrvkHAXnjzI>

Let me be your Teddy Bear – Elvis Presley
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jf9Wg2OkSbE>

Bear Dance – played on everyone’s favourite instrument - the melodeon
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-I8qYG4jGM>

Paddington Bear theme tune
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOOgb-mZqJU>

Rupert the Bear – Jackie Lee and Pan’s People
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Csc6DPGnuzk>

The Bare Necessities of Life – Baloo & Mowgli
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6e3ITsjLRI>

Food: Honey and Marmalade sandwiches

Book: *Bear Grylls Adventure Annual 2019*

Luxury Item a hat, obviously

Favourite Morris Tune/Dance: Ring o’Bears

Where and When Was It?

Answers to last week’s pictorial quiz

1) Stonehenge, Summer Solstice 2000, the year it re-opened



2) The Horseshoe at Ebbesbourne Wake 2017



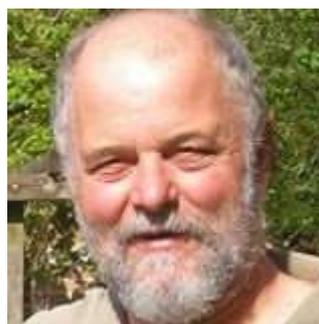
3) WHM 60th anniversary party 2011



Folke off and all tooled up...

Reminiscences of my life in folk (so far) from Bob Burgess....

Mike P asked me to write a few words for the WH newsletter, so while working outside earlier today, I wondered where the best to start would be; so



probably the beginning... I was born, and have lived most of my life, in and around Warminster. I went to the Minster School, and my headmaster was Ioan Jenkins - I studied violin with him for about a month, and then gave up (something I later regretted). I passed

the 11+ and chose to go to Frome Grammar School. because my best friend Andy Gaskell went there... At around the age of 14 Andy bought a guitar, and learned to play, and he also found me one and taught me a few chords. Our first gig was playing jazz for his sister, Elizabeth's, 21st - Andy and I on guitar, with local musicians Trevor Marsh on piano and Robin

Miles on drums... That led to me to start playing folk music, and blues. There was a boy in my year called Andy Jappy who was a brilliant blues guitarist. Later I also joined the school rock band, *The 4 Runners*, and had a Watkins Rapier 22 guitar and a Bird 15 watt amp... I was pretty rubbish but the lead guitarist, a chap called Andy Levy, was brilliant. Andy and I went to Halsway Manor with the local youth club for a 'folk weekend', and played guitar until our fingers bled.

When I was in the 6th form my parents moved from Warminster to Heytesbury, where there was a flourishing youth club in the Raymond Hall. There I met, and started a lifelong friendship, with Colin Dipper and Robin Scard. Some friends had an old Hohner pokerwork 2 row melodeon in D&A, which I borrowed and learnt to play. Colin and his brother Drew were both good musicians, and also made their own instruments. At this time we had no knowledge of Morris, but did a lot of country dancing and often played for the local EFDSS country dance group, run by Miss Williams (who also had the village shop). After A levels I started a student apprenticeship with Dowty's in Cheltenham, and Brunel University at Acton and Uxbridge - 6 months at each, with most weekends at home in the village. Colin Dipper was also at college in London, doing furniture design and living in Chelsea, so we met up regularly when I was at university, and started going to the Herga Folk Club in Pinner. Whilst working in Cheltenham I mentioned to a colleague that I was interested in Morris dancing, and she told me that her boss, Pat Snelling (??) was squire of Gloucestershire Morris, so began my love affair with dancing. At around this time Herga also started a Morris side, with Hugh Rippon as foreman, so for six months I danced with Gloucestershire, and the other six months with Herga. We also had weekend sessions in Heytesbury, or the Kings Arms folk club in Weymouth Street in Warminster, and somehow I met up again with my old headmaster, Ioan Jenkins, who was the musician for White Horse... Thus Colin, Robin and I, together with Pete (Knotty) Ash, joined WHMM.

At this time the old team, Roger Pinnegar, Bill Bush, Martin Westlake and a few others whose names I can't remember, were dancing less and had more or less decided to leave the Ring and hand their staff back, However the 'young' Nigel Bonallock persuaded them to give us youngsters a chance, and White Horse Colts was born, dancing in black breeches, rather than whites... Nigel was the driving force behind the first Lacock & Chippenham folk festival - shortly thereafter he absconded, sorry emigrated, to the antipodes.

Whilst at university I joined the Kensington and Chelsea Morris, started by Doug Sherrif and Jim Reynolds, together with Colin and John Holman, also Dave (Daisy) Armitage and Dave (Buttercup)

Robinson (an offshoot of that was *England's Green and Pleasant Band*, with Colin, John, Doug with other ad-hoc musicians (a piano player called Tom, a flute player called Willie and tuba player called Pete).

Back in Cheltenham I was also founder member of Gloucester Old Spot Morris, so at that time I had four sets of kit - fortunately by that time the Colts had been adsorbed back into White Horse and I only needed one set of whites.... At that time I was mostly playing anglo concertina, a superb Jefferies that I bought off Colin, for the princely sum of £30.



After university I did a PGCE and ended up teaching at Matravers School in Westbury (where Colin Shaw later became my Head of Department) so I concentrated on dancing with White Horse. Around this time I also had a short-lived team based in Heytesbury -, Wylve Valley Morris - with yellow baldricks and green and brown rosettes, and also Heytesbury longsword, as well as a mummings side in the winter. (Somewhere I have an old tape of Fred Perrier, the last Shrewton mummer, recorded by Pete Ash and myself in the Catherine Wheel, in Shrewton, and another of Ioan Jenkins playing some tunes from one of Cecil Sharp's Morris Books).

The early 1970's also saw the formation of the White Horse Band, with John & Carol Wippell, myself and Pete Warren (who also danced with WH for a few years) with Pete Hewitt as the caller. In those early days White Horse was often down to a small cadre of dancers and musicians, and often we struggled to get a side up to dance, but somehow we survived. I was both squire and foreman for many years, and Richard Baker was elected bagman, often in his absence and despite his apparent unwillingness to want the job.

Memories abound of various ring meetings (a certain person drinking so much that when he fell off his Lilo in the middle of the night couldn't climb back on it), the WH flying wedge for food, an excess of profiteroles, the annual summer tour of Devon with the old side plus guests (such as John Watcham, the concertina player from Chingford Morris), Mendip Ales (keep turning right, we'll get there in the end), and instructional days with Roy Dommatt or Hugh Rippon.

And so it went on until for a combination of reasons Morris became less important, and collecting old tools became my primary interest. Due to very 'dodgy' knees my dancing days are over, and my whites and baldricks no longer fit, but I still enjoy coming out to play when I can.....

Bob Burgess.

Please send items for the next *Prancing Pony* to Mike Perry by Monday 29 June.

White Horse Morris in the 1980s – Graham Lever remembers

I joined the side in the early 80s and was active for the decade. In the years since, I have always been made to feel welcome when I have turned out to support, to the point of being invited to play the music, and even dance. “Once a Morris dancer, always a Morris dancer”. White Horse Morris has given me long lasting friendships, not least with the Pike family. I remain on the mailing list and enjoy *The Prancing Pony*. Hats off to all those who invented it and produce it. 

I was fortunate, joining at the time I did, to have met founder members Billy Bush and Martin Westlake, and dance in the side with founder-member Ian Petts, who I remember with affection. The Lord Bath of the day was an honorary member - never came to practice, though!

We practised in those days in a little community centre on Pound Row in Warminster. It did not have much heat, if any, and as the evening wore on, sweaty Morris men used to steam. Afterwards, to the Weymouth Arms to put some liquid back. The landlord of the time used to say, “Do you have any jokes for me?”, and he had a few of his own. I don’t remember any, but I suspect they were non-pc by today’s standards. He was that kind of bloke, (nudge, wink, and sexual innuendo, but with it a certain urbane aplomb). The Weymouth Arms also hosted regular Sunday music sessions, once a month. Not exclusively a White Horse event, as I recall, but well attended by the White Horse Morris of the time. Perhaps the biggest event of my time with the side, was the Ring Meeting which we hosted, around 1983. I recall that we based ourselves with indoor camping in Warminster School. The Sunday service was at the Minster Church of St. Denys. We danced in the Church! I imagine some of the regular churchgoers must have thought they had been invaded by the cast of *The Wicker Man*.

So many other memories of dancing out are at venues which are still part of the White Horse calendar today: Stourhead, Ansty Maypole, Ashmore Filly-loo, Gold Hill Fair. One thing that does not happen now, is the Boxing Day Meet of the Hunt in Salisbury. After the hunt moved off, the Morris moved in, and ‘kicking shit’ became more than a metaphor.

After one Ansty Maypole, (1988), we found ourselves in a book called ‘Travelling Cat’. Some punter wrote a book about his travels in the West Country with his van and his cat and was blessed with an encounter with White Horse Morris. The maypole was of legendary height in those days, reportedly the highest in Europe. And they had a pub.



From ‘Travelling Cat’. Muggins nearside line, second from front. Typical May Day weather!

And the ‘Horwich Twinning’! Boy did I enjoy those encounters! Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men and White Horse Morris used to have an exchange visit annually, one year in Horwich, the next in Warminster, turn-and-turn-about. They would take us to dance at interesting places in the Bolton area. (I’ve often wondered if we were seen by the young Peter Kay). We would take Horwich dancing in our locality the year in between. Horwich had a memorable character called Tommy. He was a dustman in Wigan, or, as he preferred to be called, a garbologist. We never knew his surname. Peter Pike said he didn’t need one, because he was such a character that you could send a letter addressed to “Tommy, Wigan” and it would find him.

Muggins, out of breath, out of step and barely off the ground. Weymouth Arms, with Horwich, mid 80s)).

That’s about it, really. Kind regards to all. Looking forward to our next encounter.



Graham Lever, White Horse Morris (retired)

