



The Prancing Pony

The Official Newsletter of White Horse Morris

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Spring is coiled and ready tospring

Last month Reuben the Baker informed us with his article about bread. He posed a question, the answer to which is No.5 as this loaf was the only loaf made with white flour and also with a sliced top. Reuben will be awarding a hug to those who successfully submitted a correct answer, subject to a rigorous risk assessment, obviously. This month Calvin Eales publishes his illustrated empirical study of the “No Dig” approach to vegetable husbandry for peer review. As May approaches, Graham Lever looks back on his time at The Hastings Jack-in-the-Green festival a few years ago. We also feature a post-Trump “letter from America” from Rachel Roy of *Wake Robin Morris* who recalls their tour in 2015, and an article from Robin Marshall-Ball which explains how Morris led him to dance for Prince Philip. The Squire reviews the rhythmic symmetry of our first practices and looks forward to dancing out again. All, all, all this and more in the April Spring Prancing Pony.

Recollections of Hastings Jack-in-the-Green, Mayday 2017

Mayday 2017 was a Monday, and Jane and Graham Lever were fortunate to join in the Jack-in-the-Green festivities with our Kent family-connection. First, we needed to be in town for the Copper Family’s concert, on Sunday evening at the church in the Old Town.



These days Bob Copper’s son and daughter, Jill and John, are augmented by their junior generation, including cousins, partners, and even Jill’s tiny grandchildren, who were toddling around the audience. At the finale, (‘Thousands or More’), John Copper raised a glass, looked upwards, and said “For you, Dad”. There was a brief, reverent silence.



in attendance, including the host side, Mad Jack’s Morris.

Next morning, we were on the East Hill in time for the dawn Morris dancing. Several sides were

At the crack of dawn, a light was sent up, and the Morris began. There did not seem to be too many punters in attendance, until ‘Bonny Green’ was called. The resident and guest sides lined up, and the public, “as many as will”, followed on as everyone danced round the hill in an exceptionally long procession.



Dawn Morris on Castle Hill Down in the Old Town, after breakfast, time was approaching to break out Jack-in-the-green, and the first team of drummers strike up.

“Jack’s free!” Festival Procession begins, featuring giants, fire-eaters, drummers, Morris dancers, Bogies (don’t ask!) and hosts of green-dressed pagans. (See Jack in the Green, Hastings, May Day 2017 – YouTube.)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWfJHa_AKN8

All lead Jack to the top of the castle hill, where he is ceremonially slain. His crown is sliced off and his foliage is thrown to the crowds. Everyone scrambles to catch a piece to keep for good luck. Hastings is the biggest of the various Jacks-in-the-Green Festivals and must be by far the most energetically charged. I’ve



never felt so 'heady' without booze (that came later). Part 'Wicker Man Summerisle', part 'Regency Pleasure Gardens'. I felt lucky to escape unsacrificed and with my virginity.

Graham Lever

Back in the 20th century, Monty Python also looked at England's May Day traditions. <https://youtu.be/ImQOOhSjtlYg>

No Dig Gardening Brings Results

Several of our members have been working hard in their gardens and allotments during the lockdown. At least two, Calvin and Pete have been using the No Dig Philosophy to produce some stunning results. Here is an account of some of Calvin's success. You, as a Morris reader, have to find an appropriate dance to go with each part but *Bean Setting* (voted #1 as the side's most popular dance out last year) is not allowed as it is too obvious. An adaptation of a Headington dance might work but which one?

Calvin "Greenfingers Eales" says:

It has been an excellent year in the garden for me with promising results from the Charles Dowding organic no dig system [No Dig Organic Gardening - Charles Dowding | No Dig](#)

In my opinion the compost bins are the secret to success with no dig. The only downside are moles which are being dealt with. I suppose the worms generated by the system are the attraction.



I am very pleased with my white sprouting broccoli.



The plants were set in mid-August 2020 from the seeds that were sown in June 2020.

My purple sprouting broccoli was also a success but was harvested in March (look at the soil's surface as an example of the no dig approach).

Autumn King Carrots were sown in mid-August in a raised bed using the no dig method and using homemade compost. I managed to avoid any carrot fly attack. They were harvested as bunched carrots from November to January and we even had some on Christmas Day.



Another success has been my Turnip Purple top Milan, a name that perked up the Squire's interest. The Squire added that in Italy turnip tops are eaten as a green vegetable. A Neapolitan variety is sautéed in olive oil with garlic and chilli and served with sausages. In Italian it is called *Salsicce e Friarielli*. In Napoli it is permitted to have this on a pizza, unlike ananas.

[Salsicce e friarielli: la ricetta tipica napoletana dal gusto unico \(cookist.it\)](#)



Of course Covid-19 knows no seasons and this year's growth and plans are emerging. Broad beans Aquadulce, early pea Meteor, spring cabbage Duncan F1 and garlic large white are on the way and under the fleece. Winter Density lettuce and mixed salad leaves which include mustards and mizuma (Japanese mustard greens) are also on the way.



Please send in all of your gardening questions before the next edition and we will get Calvin to answer them.

Counterfeit tarts

Derbyshire C.I.D. reported the arrest of a gang who had been making counterfeit Mr Kipling Bakewell tarts. A police spokesman said they were exceedingly good fakes.

Congratulations to Kip and Heather, who have just become grand-parents, and of course to Ben and Vicky as parents on the birth of Baby Crisp (Henry Tobias Octavian) .

What's in a flag – an opinion piece. Mike Perry has been thinking....

The recent flurry of non-news about patriotism and the Union flag has got me thinking. It seems particularly relevant as we head towards St. George's Day and all that does and doesn't go with it.

Don't get me wrong but I think the United Kingdom and its separate nations is a great place to live but like all countries it has its flaws. I am glad that I have the freedom to state publicly what I think are issues in our country, even though current planned legislation may well limit this drastically. A question that arises is whether I am patriotic or not? I suppose this depends on the definition of patriotism and how it relates to jingoism,

chauvinism and nationalism.

I still cringe when I see Trump hugging the American flag but to some this is an example of patriotism.

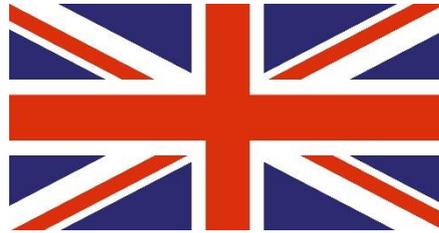


The desire of the government to make the Union Flag flown on all public buildings is an interesting bit of political theatre at an interesting time with elections about to take place in England and Scotland. Just what would the national flag look like if Scotland became independent? The one here (right) has been suggested but it does look a bit like the English flag of St. George.



This brings me to St George's Day and the English flag: As Morris dancers we are happy to celebrate Saint George as the patron saint of England but as an English population it is only really

celebrated if it falls on a weekend. We happily wave the flags and bunting but is it an act of patriotism or merely having a good time? We have no English national dress and often denigrate our traditions. For many, the problem with the English flag is that it has been hijacked by the far right and football hooligans. Its association with patriotism is, for many, not tenable and is seen more in terms of a narrow nationalism which is not reflective of the majority of English people.



So this flag waving business – political opportunism? Patriotism? Chauvinism? Nationalism?

Competition #1
Happy St George's Day – when is it this year? Is it on its normal date?



Mike Perry

Robin Marshall-Ball looks back on "traditional" teaching methods of the 1970's, some troublesome students and his induction into WHM - October 1972.

An 'Assistant teacher of Geography and Games' into the second year of my teaching career in Stoneham Bilateral Boys' School in Reading. So far, it had been a quite surreal experience. Qualifying as a secondary school teacher in July 1970, I had spent the summer holidays as a toy car tester in the Mettoy factory in Swansea, and despite numerous applications, was still without a teaching job to go to.

Then a telegram arrived on 1st September, summoning me to a school in Reading on the following day. I arrived in a state of some haste and confusion and ill-prepared for the anticipated formal interview. My confusion was compounded when greeted by the Deputy Head – "Ah, you must be Mr Marshall-Ball" he said, "This is your teaching timetable, and we start the term day after tomorrow. . . . would you like me to show you where your classroom is?" A few nights 'sleeping rough' in my ancient Riley 1.5 before I found a bed-sit to house my meagre belongings, but three weeks later I thought my teaching career had come to an abrupt end.

I was approached in the staffroom by Ted, the Senior Teacher – "Robin, I've put you down to cover an art class in your free period, as their teacher is on a course," he explained, "It's a rough 4th year Leavers' class and there could be trouble. . . . their ringleader is a boy called Peter M – stamp on him hard at the start of the lesson and you'll be ok."

Picture the scene – a hot September day, the art room on the ground floor and its windows – the type that swing open with half out and half inside the room, and a gang of hostile youths eyeing the greenhorn teacher entering the room. "Which one of you is Peter M?" I asked. "Me, why you askin?" . . . "Come and sit down at the front – I want to talk to you about forming a youth club"

He sauntered down the room and flopped onto a chair nearby. When I began describing the work set for the lesson he made some, to my mind, unwise remark and gesture. My Welsh rugby training came to the fore – “Get the retaliation in first!!” lifting him up by the



lapels and while shaking him and exhorting him to not interrupt while I was speaking, as his head flew back it seems I accidentally put his head through the glass of the open window! He

was unscathed, and he and his cronies even helped to clear the glass shards away.

At the end of the lesson I sought out the Senior Teacher. “Ted, you know you advised me to stamp on him hard if Peter M stepped out of line?” I reminded him, “Well, in the process of chastising him I accidentally put his head through a pane of glass”. He visibly stiffened, and I thought it was curtains for me. “Cane ‘em! Cane ‘em by all means” he thundered, “But don’t do no fancy punishments they teach you at college these days!”

Apologies for the digression. what the hell has this got to do with WHM? Back to October 1972. I was approached by George B, the Head of Geography and my immediate boss. “Robin,” he announced, “You seem to be fairly well established now. . . .” (he didn’t know that I had subtle methods of ‘correcting’ those who behaved badly in my class when we met on the rugby pitch!) “We’ve been asked to take on a geography student from Bulmershe College for his six-week teaching practice – would you look after him?” filled with the glorious vision of more free periods while the poor unsuspecting victim was thrown to the wolves filled my mind – “Yes of course” I replied, “I’ll show him the ropes”.

To be fair, my conscience got the better of me and he was given a mix of easy and tough classes, and I was determined to monitor and help whenever needed. One morning the student arrived – full of enthusiasm, a bright smile, a vague tinge of an Irish accent, sporting a full head of dark hair and a shock of red beard. Yes, I thought, he’ll be ok. Oh, his name was Patrick McGovern.

Roll the clock on to September 1978 – after some promotions in Reading and Lincolnshire, I arrived in darkest Wiltshire to lead the Geography department. Entering the staffroom on that first morning, I was greeted with the words “Robin, Be-Jesus it’s you!” My ‘student’ Pat, now already well-established and a welcome familiar face among a crowd of strangers. Over the twelve years I was at the school he infected so many of us with his new-found love – Morris Dancing. A staff Morris team for the Christmas party, a sixth form mixed Morris Team called Woodhenge Morris (we even danced for Prince Philip on one occasion!), and where would WHM be now without the then Head

of Chemistry, Mike Perry, and one of my most challenging 6th form students Reuben Chappell?

OK, Prancing Pony, this is enough for the first instalment memories have come flooding back of the many escapades which caused WHM to be dubbed the ‘Terrorist Arm’ of the Morris Ring of England, so there’ll be more exposés to come!

Robin Marshall-Ball

Competition #2 time

Can you find the squire, Pat McGovern and Robin in the picture below. This was a staff football team at what was then Durrington School, now Avon Valley College. (Date unknown, but looking at the length of the shorts and the hair, probably post 1960’s).



The 2020-2021 season has started – nearly.

After a year of world beating false dawns it looks like we might be dancing again soon. With this in mind and as a way of reminding ourselves what Morris Dancing is, we have started practicing again.



It all began in Bishopstrow on Wednesday 7th April under The Olde 150 year old Oake Tree with a gallant

bunch of masochists who loved the cold and thought it was better than watching the crap on TV.

Notice the lines and complete symmetry! Apart from talking a lot, some of the old dances were re-visited and guaranteed Covid-19 secure. No hand holding, swinging (Nic – I think you call this cuddling) or stick sharing. Sanitising gel and coffee were available. The alcohol in both worked a treat. It continued on Wednesday 14th April at the now famous Fonthill Park Cricket Club, with its superb views and a bar. It was a shame that the cricketers had to be there though.



Eagle-eyed readers will have spotted last year's leaves on the trees. This is because due to the editorial

deadline this picture was taken last September 2020.

The programme is ready though still with a few ?'s but we will soon be dancing out with our first gig at The Bell, Wylde on Wednesday 19th May.

<http://www.whitehorsemorris.org.uk/programme/4594741625>

Competition #3 Limited letters Crossword

Use ONLY the letters D R T V E I O

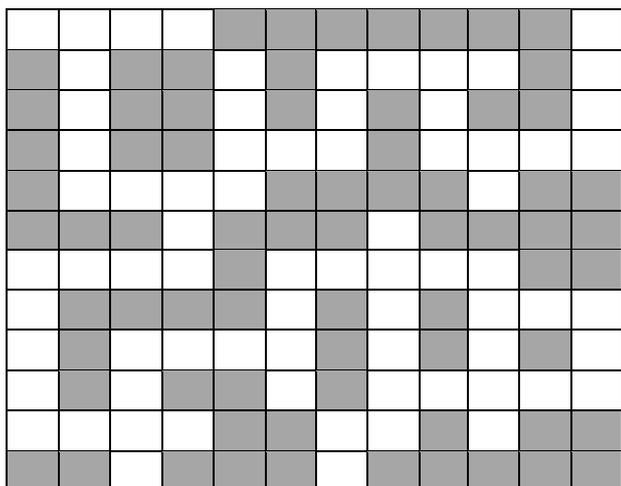
Clue across

- Line 1 - 6 balls in cricket
- Line 2 - Ritual tradition
- Line 4 – Henry II wanted to get xxx of Thomas Becket, correct mistakes in writing
- Line 5 – stylish jump into water
- Line 7 – What you eat, tested in court
- Line 8 – Aussie wicket-keeper and QPR star 1970's
- Line 9 – wear out
- Line 10 – for joining metals together
- Line 11 – travel on horseback, neutral pronoun

Clues down

- Column 1 – frogman
- Column 2 – having participated in a ballot
- Column 3 – lunar gravitational effect on ocean
- Column 4 – Dr Doolittle?
- Column 5 – describing bad consequences
- Column 6 - layer of wedding cake
- Column 7 – Donald Trump's tie? identification
- Column 8 – send traffic a different way
- Column 9 – what you do to make a bow?
- Column 10 – to make, to use a wooden golf club
- Column 12 – filth, Eastend Cotton

Bonus: killed the radio star? - - - - -



A Letter from America - Wake Robin recall their visit in 2015

In July 2015, Wake Robin Morris added England as our farthest distance travelled (3,333 miles from Amherst MA, where we are based, to Heathrow, where we landed) to go on a tour. It was a trip that was many years in the making. We started preparations in earnest in 2013, and had several fundraisers and planning committee meetings in the months to follow. Those of us who had England connections reached out to teams we'd toured with to see if we could meet up during our time there. Heidi Eide, daughter of Dudley Laufman, remembered meeting with White Horse Morris on a trip with her father: "I first met White Horse Morris in 1975 when I went to England with my father Dudley and stepmother, Patty. We were in Chippenham for the Spring Bank holiday festival. Johnny Wippell and Poppa struck up a friendship. The team even invited me to do a dance with them!

Later that night was a dance where they invited Poppa to call a few. The dance was packed with all ages and the dances leaned more towards western squares Afterwards was singing at a pub. Great memories."



And so, with Heidi leading the way, we began the planning with Mike Perry to come and stay near them in Wiltshire (and Dorset). When I asked folks for their memories of being around the members of White Horse, we had two main recollections that were shared. The first, for me, was a highlight of our entire ten-day trip. We had decided to go to Stonehenge, and had gotten permission to dance down at the Welcome Center (sic). But when we arrived, we realized how far the center was from the Stones, and we wondered if we could dance closer to the monument itself. A few members of White Horse met us there, including Johnny Wippell, who volunteered with the National Trust. We asked him his advice on who to ask for permission to dance. He wisely advocated not to ask anyone official-looking, down at the welcome center, but instead hold off until we were up by the sacred stones themselves and find a cheerful looking volunteer there to ask. Once at the stone circle, he found a jolly looking woman, and we asked her if we could dance off to the side, where some tourists were picnicking and she happily agreed, even looking excited at the prospect! We donned our bells, vests, and hankies, and performed one of our signature dances, "Nutting Girl for all who will" which was about 16 of us in a circle, doing the jig. You can check it out on YouTube here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Spy_ykvmsg

The other key memory of this section of our tour was meeting for a night in Tisbury with White Horse (and I think a border team was there too) [Editor: no that was us too in our rag coats!] We started at the bottom of a fairly steep hill, and wondered about finding level ground. It turns out, we were just going to climb up the hill and dance on the street, sometimes on an angle, and sometimes in an intersection. We were not used to the cars actually stopping for us and were rather quick to clear the street at the end of each dance. So, we were surprised when a few motorists waiting in line got out of their vehicles to get a better view and some pictures of the dancing. At the top of the hill, we decided to use the downhill to our advantage and perform “Lass of Richmond Hill”, ending in leapers (headed down the hill for extra height!). We finished off the evening with a lovely pub sing-song.

Various other memories include going to Salisbury Cathedral (including seeing the world’s oldest working clock), the grounds at Old Sarum, and a visit to a chalk horse in the area, recounted from Helene’s journal here:

“We met up with White Horse Morris. They took us to see their White Horse as we had missed the other. The “ah-hah” in Raine’s utterance was delightful. We went for a ramble through the field. The wooden stiles to get out were the tidiest and best I’d ever seen.”



Of note to me, the photographer of the trip, was that we got our only group shots of the whole trip while visiting with you. Two were at Stonehenge, and one was by our final stop on the tour, across from the Boot Inn.

Also, very important to me was



that I’d underprepared with my camera, and had run out of battery and hadn’t brought a charger, so among our other stops in Salisbury was a very good camera shop that Mike Perry brought me to, so that the second portion of our trip could still be recorded!

That practice of dancing in traffic is being revived now, as due to Covid, we are having to find outdoor spaces such as parking lots



and underground garages to practise while our normal spot is on hold. We are eagerly awaiting May Day, most of the team should be vaccinated by then. So, we hope to meet up at Mt. Pollux in South Amherst, to dance the sun up at the top of a hill with a 360°

view. A few people met and danced there last year, and our 2019 May Day had one of the best sunrises in our nearly 40-year history. We hope that you too are able to rejoice in the return of summer this year, and we will raise our champagne and strawberry filled wine flutes to all the teams we’ve danced with over the years, including our friends from White Horse.



Rachel Roy

For Sale

One garden spade, Contact Calvin Eales.

New Kit

The “New Kit Working Party” has reported back and the radical new proposals will be modelled by Mike and Helen at The Bell next month, with “Johnny Wippell” on guitar - if he can find some thigh-length black boots.....



All items for the next Prancing Pony to Mike Perry by Friday 7 May and preferably sooner.