



The Prancing Pony

The Official Newsletter of White Horse Morris

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WHM Squire leads Bishopstrovians in a merry dance

.... as they show their support for key workers (excluding Messrs Johnson and Cummings) with an impromptu Anglo Scots Fusion Morris on Tour. More pictures can be seen by following this link <https://photos.app.goo.gl/FjXmsqC8Q2yCVqjJ6> and for video go to <https://photos.app.goo.gl/in7HyYeWVWGLv2Hx5> This week White Horse should have been performing in Corsley Heath, but didn't. However in this week's PP, we have letters from Sarah and Kate, while John Wippell and Knotty Ash reminisce. (There are few men who look so good in a smock).

Sticky Trousers and a Bump on the Head - an introduction to Morris dancing

Another tale from WHM's own bon viveur, wit and raconteur John Wippell, who adds, "Apologies to all those whom I have previously bored with this story". [That goes without saying, John.]

Every summer in the 1950s we would make the four hour train journey from Waterloo down to Exmouth to spend three weeks staying with our grandparents. My grandmother was keen to introduce us to cultural experiences in the local area and one afternoon in 1953 we all squeezed into grandfather's Austin and motored over to Sidmouth.



Five year old me was happy to do this because an afternoon jaunt invariably involved a visit to the tearooms, and that meant scones, strawberry jam and clotted cream. However, on this occasion, I found to my dismay that we were heading to the gardens at the west end of the esplanade to see a display of 'Folk Dancing'.

We stood and watched as some men dressed in white, bells attached to their legs, skipped about waving hankies and from time to time were whacked on the bottom by a man holding a bladder attached to a stick. It was all very underwhelming for a sophisticated London boy, such as myself who had already been to the Festival Hall to see Cossacks leaping about waving swords surrounded by beautiful Russian maidens holding garlands of flowers and singing.

Looking for something more entertaining to occupy my valuable time I wandered over to a recently-felled fir tree, found a comfortable seat on the stump and settled down to survey the scene. After a few minutes, this too began to pall so I leapt athletically

from my perch. To my utter consternation there was a loud ripping sound and a large section of my grey flannel short trousers was left sticking to the resinous fir tree. The rest of the afternoon is hazy in my memory apart from one vivid moment of outrage when I was whacked on the head by the nasty Bladder Man for doing precisely nothing at all.

This first encounter with Morris dancing had entirely vanished from my recollection until I, now aged nineteen, and a proud member of Hammersmith Morris Men, paraded along the Sidmouth esplanade and into the same gardens. Bells ringing, handkerchiefs waving, we danced past the strangely-familiar stump of a fir tree, although of the shred of grey flannel there was no sign.

And it has only just occurred to me while writing this piece that it's perfectly conceivable that the Morris team I saw in 1953 was in fact, White Horse, on their second summer tour of Devon. And the nasty Bladder Mancould in fact have been Bill Bush.

Hobby Horse Manure?



I have attached a photo; Sam and Holly went to get 23 bags of fresh manure from the White

Horse. Apparently, it's a rare as hobby horse poo, strong stuff, arguably a little too strong for one small hatchback. Thought you might like to do a PP on it ☺

Take care, Sarah xx

Please send items for the next Prancing Pony to Mike Perry by Monday 8 June.

From our Chilmark Correspondent

Thanks Mike, another fine edition. Dreadful photo of me though - not surprising, I have one of those faces that breaks the camera!

It was my 45th birthday yesterday, so off I went for a day trip to Barnard Castle with my husband and son, as you do. I was born there, by the way. I'd have preferred to be out Morrissing.

Take care, Kate

White Horse and Morris Ring

In July 1983 White Horse Morris Men hosted the 200th meeting of the Morris Ring of England. The event was based in Warminster and The Journal used a double page spread with the banner "Two Hundred Morris Men Muster to Dance Rings Round Warminster"



This article was made into a poster which can be seen in Wylde Village Hall. How many of the members of the time do you recognise?

Sides from all over the country attended – Horwich, Lancashire; Wath upon Dearne, Yorkshire; Mayflower, Essex; Chalice, Avon: Chapel-en-le Frith, Derbyshire; Exeter, Devon; Ravensbourne, Kent; Wilmington, Sussex. Tours were arranged to Trowbridge, Devizes, Lacock, Avebury, Salisbury, Hindon, East Knoyle and Mere followed by mass dancing in George Street, Warminster. A feast was held at the Assembly Hall and sides were accommodated at Warminster School. On the Sunday a service was held at The Minster for those wanting or able to attend.

Videos and more information can be found on the website <http://www.whitehorsemorris.org.uk/links-to-pictures/4594743389>

Knotty Ash continues his story.....

I will try to pick up the saga in the middle to late 60s:

White Horse Morris in 65/66 was a shadow of its former self and even with the new blood it was nowhere near strong enough to survive, but Bill Bush was a very stubborn man and wouldn't let go so he badgered an awful lot of people until it was agreed to

form "The White Horse Colts". Under his eye he persuaded the likes of Pip Potter, John Smith a teacher from Trowbridge, and a chap called Nigel Bonallick to teach and front the side, but he was still in charge.



We met all winter in what is now Clarendon School in Trowbridge, it was then called Nelson Haden School. It turned out that Nigel Bonallick became the first squire/ bagman and he got us through the winter season. There is in the archive a photo, cut from The Wiltshire Times of Bob Burgess, Robin Scard and me, doing some singing at a function/ dance that we put on to raise funds. Come the summer we danced out and we were doing 5 or 6 stops in an evening. We need

the funds said Nigel but he was always very cagey when we asked him why. So this went on for most of the summer, until, we were dancing at Holt outside Trowbridge and we'd all had enough; a big row developed and we all broke up. That was the end of The White Horse Colts. We had discovered that. Nigel was trying to fund the first 'Lacock Festival' off our backs. We were not happy little Morris men. It was actually a lot nastier than that, but I don't want to rake up too many bad things. I will leave the story there and do some more at a later date.

Knotty.

Answers to last week's Quiz Questions

- 2) On what date was the first ever, ever *Prancing Pony* published? 26 March 2020
- 3) Foodstuff Morris wives advised *not* to feed to their partners? Burnt Porridge
- 4) Squire of WHMM 1983-84? Pat McGovern
- 5) HobNob was made by Mr Denis Grant King-Cheverell 1954
- 6) Wedding reception where WHM "entertained" was in the village of Pentridge
- 7) 3 words on Holly's poster- RISE ABOVE IT
- 8) Squire Perry became a grandad on Sat 25 April
- 9) Castaway Bob's "Book of Choice": "Untravelled England" by James John Hissey.
- 10) Nuptial photos were of Mike and Val Dixon and Kate Brooks
- 11) A machete is Helen Sanderson's luxury item.
- 12) John Wippell got wet in PP #06
- 13) Reuben Chappell spotted swifts and orchids in Duncliffe Woods
- 14) Gentleman readers were advised not to leave pencil sharpenings all over the floor.
- 15) Bill Bush gave John Wippell a lift in 1972
- 16) Proud allotment holders are Sharon and Tony
- 17) The current WHM Squire, Mike gave Parmigiano as his favourite food.