



# White Horse Morris

1951-2021

<http://www.whitehorseorris.org.uk/home/4594741622>

## White Horse Morris celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> year in 2021

Most of the memories, recollections and pictures which follow were published in *The Prancing Pony* which was a newsletter that appeared weekly and then monthly during the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020-21, in an attempt to keep the members of the side together and spirits up during the lockdowns.

Due to Covid restrictions there were no WHM in Chitterne in 2020 but as the picture shows, our ancestors *were* there in 1951 !



The first article is from the website ( <http://www.whitehorseorris.org.uk/> ).

## A Very Brief history of White Horse Morris

White Horse Morris Men were formed in the winter of 1950/51 and were originally based in the Warminster area in Wiltshire. In 1951 they attended their first Ring meeting at Oxford and were admitted to the Morris Ring of England. For pictures and press cuttings from those early days go to the Gallery page and click the "1951-2011 The First 60 Sixty Years" tab.

As their symbol they adopted the pre-1778 Westbury White Horse, itself a survivor of prehistoric times and similar to that carved above the hills of Uffington in Oxfordshire. The symbol formed part of the original kit with the White Horse badge central to the baldrick (crossed bands of fabric) of which the colours represented the home area of Wiltshire, with green for Salisbury Plain, white for the chalk hills and blue for the sky.



Over the years White Horse Morris Men developed a reputation as an excellent dance side offering dances from a range of mainly Cotswold traditions. They have toured extensively in the United Kingdom, for example to the Isle of Wight, Cheshire, Devon and Oxfordshire as well as in Europe, notably to France and Germany.

From the time of the side's formation to the present, numbers have fluctuated and the average age of the side increased so in September 2011 it was decided to make the side mixed, thus becoming White Horse Morris, so that we can now offer mixed and single sex Border and Cotswold Morris Dances, thus allowing us to carry on our long tradition for excellent dancing.

Numbers are now flourishing and the style and energy that have always characterised White Horse have been maintained for the continuance of Morris Dancing in this area.

### Our Dances

White Horse Morris perform a range of Border and Cotswold dances from:

- |                   |            |                |
|-------------------|------------|----------------|
| Adderbury         | Bampton    | Bleddington    |
| Brackley          | Fieldtown  | Lichfield      |
| Upton upon Severn | Shropshire | Worcestershire |
| "Medup"           |            |                |

Our dances are performed energetically with our own interpretation of traditional themes.

## White Horse Morris Goes Mixed

Just as we started to look forward to celebrating our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Morris side, Mike & Liz Dixon thought it was also time to recognise our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a mixed side.

January 2011 saw the introduction of a cohort of new members. Previously, White Horse Morris Men had for 60 years been an entertaining all-male side dancing a variety of Morris traditions with their particular spin on them but sadly practice and dance outs were struggling with numbers. Knowing that there was a considerable amount of interest in a mixed side the time was right to look forward and give it a go.



### Dress Rehearsal in Wylde Village Hall

With so many new members, thirteen in all, the majority of whom had no experience of Morris dancing the challenge was set high with the intention of the new side 'White Horse Morris' dancing on St George's day outside The Bell in Wylde. In the limited time we had, new border dances were learnt by all and some of the simpler Cotswold dances were taught to the newbies. This led to some fairly intensive practice sessions on both Tuesdays and Wednesdays both inside the hall and on the village playground to build confidence dancing outside.



Alongside learning the dances there was the need to look at the kit. A bone of contention if ever there was one! The aim was for the traditional all white Cotswold style to remain but with the introduction of border dances it was decided to have the contrast of an all- black outfit. Our famous Rag Coats with green and blue rags would unite the two and the addition of black top hats individually styled certainly made an impression on our audiences.

Since then there have been some memorable occasions: A joint Winter Solstice celebration with Beltane at Stonehenge followed by a spectacular flaming torch dance outside The Bell afterwards. The regular dance outs in the local pubs with three sets up to dance – not quite up to Hammersmith Morris but quite an achievement!!

The camaraderie and fun that come from being part of a Festival Line up – Weymouth, Chippenham, Upton upon



Severn and Bovey Tracy (where we met Beltane!)

In the last 10 years White Horse Morris has seen dancers and musicians come and go but as former members have discovered - once a 'White Horse' always a 'White Horse'

### The first dance out

Mike later added some clarification. He added: further research reveals we did not dance outside The Bell on St George's Day in 2011. Looking at the 2011 programme the first dance out, outside The Bell, was in fact on 20<sup>th</sup> April – the advert below was placed in the Parish magazine – there was no going back! We cannot find any pictures of this auspicious event and think we might have danced in Warminster on St Georges day 2011 in the park?



**White Horse Morris – Wed 20 Apr 2011 at The Bell Wylde**

To celebrate becoming a mixed side and having recruited several new dancers from the Wylde Valley, White Horse Morris will dance, for the first time in public, outside the Bell, Wylde from 7:45 – 8:30 pm on Wed 20 Apr 11.



©Open Morris by Marc Vyvyan-Jones

## Morris dancing is fun - apparently

The Wiltshire Life pictures taken outside the Bell, (see below) we think were taken on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May. The article which follows is from 2011, reprinted with kind permission of "Wiltshire Life". The pictures reflect our ever changing personnel, some contemporary faces and others who have moved on. Pete Hewitt can be seen with a grey beard!



# Morris dancing *is* fun

So say White Horse Morris. Pull the other one, it's got bells on it! Rose Eva tries to join in.

**Y**OU SHOULD make a point of trying every experience once, excepting incest and folk dancing," wrote the composer Sir Arnold Bax.

Many people feel the same about folk dancing in this country, but why? Every Barcelona schoolchild knows the Catalan folk dance, the Sardana, and is thrilled to perform it, and Scottish country dancing has an enthusiastic following across the British Isles, with punters vigorously Stripping the Willow in town halls from St Andrews to St Mawes. But morris dancing? Some of the public seem to say: "No, thank you!"

A posting on the internet declares that it is: "Sad to see the state of English culture and heritage reduced to a number of old folks doing these dances" and the *Daily Telegraph* has predicted the demise of morris within the next 20 years. *The Daily Telegraph* might have got it wrong though, as it seems to be in a pretty healthy state at the moment, with events like the 5,000 Morris Dancers Weekend at the

Southbank in London last year attracting lots of attention. Morris is breaking out all over the world, as far afield as Hong Kong and Helsinki and, of course, we have it in Wiltshire.

**‘Morris is not just for ageing, sandal-wearers’**

I decided to find out more. When a man strolled past, jingling slightly, wearing a top hat stuffed with pheasant feathers and a jerkin covered with odd strips of material, I knew I was in the right place: the White Horse Morris was performing outside the Royal Oak pub in Great Wishford.

This morris side (as a team, or troupe, is known) was formed in 1951, and thrived during the hippy folk revival of the 1960s.

Ten years ago, however, the side was in slight decline, and by three years ago it was struggling. The decision was made to admit women and from January this year, the White Horse Morris became a mixed side. In morris circles this is not a decision to be taken lightly: a mixed side is anathema to many in the morris world but, as Mike Dixon of the White Horse side asserts, the men-only ethos is a Victorian attitude that doesn't sit comfortably in the 21st century.

Advertisements were placed, articles were penned and, like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the White Horse of Westbury Morris side was reborn. From struggling with about 10 members, the side now boasts three times that number, with 34 people performing when the side first danced out earlier this year.

They are an odd-looking bunch, with most of the men wearing white under their ragged coats but other men, and all the women,

**Above: Coats of rags, lacy tights and boots? White Horse Morris newcomers show they are not fusty**

PHOTO BY DOMINIC PARKES, WWW.DOMINICPARKES.COM

## CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

wearing black, with blue scarves around their toppers – or, in one case, a plastic sunflower – instead of feathers. The women were sporting short skirts, lacy stockings and chunky boots: not what one might expect.

There is a melding of two traditions here: the white outfits and waving handkerchiefs of the Cotswold tribe, and the black garb, rag coats and top hats of the Border. Border sides, originally from the borders of England and Wales, sometimes black their faces, the tradition apparently arising from poor labourers disguising themselves as they tried to supplement their income with a spot of dancing and begging. The hazel sticks are vigorously toted by both sexes and traditions in the White Horse side: it sounds much more fun to whack at your dance partner than wave a hankie at him.

Many of the White Horse side have been dancing for years. Mike Dixon was looking for a hobby in 1982 and, while most of us last barely a few months with a new enthusiasm, he is clearly still entranced. Mike Perry, the squire (one of the three officers of a morris side, the others being the bagman and the treasurer) has been dancing for more than 30 years.

Others are of an age where clubbing would normally refer to what one does of an evening, rather than what one does with a hazel stick. Rosie joined when she was 16, and has been dancing since she was 10, declaring that morris is the reason her parents were married, while Rowan, 17, was so enthusiastic he persuaded his mother to take up the habit.

So why on earth do they do it? Why are they so keen to tie bells on their knees and hop about

to the general ridicule of other Englishmen? And they do all seem to love it. Part of the attraction must be the camaraderie of the side. Donna Cook, Mandy Alexander and Nicky Docking agree that after a hard day's work, bashing a man with a stout stick is excellent therapy: what more could you want?

The music is jolly, with squeezeboxes, fiddles and drums to accompany the dancers. Tim, the drummer, has a background in jazz and world music, an environment in which morris music fits rather snugly.

Morris dancers tend to attract an appreciative audience, rather giving the lie to the idea that most of us would rather watch paint dry: we might find it odd, or quaint, but it is entertaining. The punters at the Royal Oak came out to watch, and clearly enjoyed the display. One local enthused that it was "Absolutely fantastic – you can't make it up!"

We English are keen on eccentricity, and like to celebrate rather than ridicule it, and morris dancing is nothing if not English, and eccentric.

The criticism that morris is only for sad, ageing, sandal-wearing traditionalists doesn't wash with the White Horse side. There seems nothing sad or old about these cheerful men and women, with not a sandal in sight. In their top hats and rag coats, and other less traditional attire, they are clearly having a blast: those fishnets and biker boots make for a marvellously eccentric, very English tradition.

Top right: Willow Lamont Jiggins, four, with squire Mike Perry; Fiddler Alison Dike; Below: The men of the White Horse Morris side get down to business



## **“White Horse Morris and Me”**

Following the AGM 2020, a historical first for the side as it was conducted using “video-conferencing” by Zoom, the Squire wrote to everyone *ex cathedra* requesting responses to these questions:

- What first got you interested in Morris dancing?
- How did you come to join White Horse?
- What do you like (most) about White Horse?
- What are your top six memories or experiences with White Horse?
- If you were given autocratic decision-making powers, what change would you make to the current White Horse kit?

These were published in the weekly and later monthly editions of *The Prancing Pony*. Quite a few other articles were also received with memories, recollections and potted histories of the side.

## **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 head-master 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 mummers 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 Dommett 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.

### **Bob later continued his story**

- I first joined Gloucestershire Morris about 1970 +/- - as an apprentice at Dowty in Cheltenham. One of my bosses turned out to be the squire (Pat Snelling if my memory serves me) - I also joined Herga Morris when doing the university 6 months of my sandwich course at Brunel (Acton and then Uxbridge).. Somewhere along the line I fell in with White Horse, then struggling, and ready to hand the staff back to the Ring, so White Horse Colts was formed, with black breeches under the tutelage of Nigel Bonnalack (??)...
- Abiding memories are of the Devon tours with other Morris dancers joining us, e.g, John Watcham from Chingford, Tiny Gibbons on accordion and many others - sleeping in the village hall at Seaton (??)
- The White Horse Christmas walks organised by Pat McGovern and others - not forgetting the walking tours.
- Mendip Ales - Keep Turning Right we'll get there eventually.
- Boxing Day at various venues, Salisbury, Bath Arms and later the Weymouth Arms in Warminster
- Twinning with Westbury at Soisy sur Seine, where Richard Baker threw a wobbly with John (???) the optician
- Our 50 year party at Sutton Veny - good to see old long lost members such as Julian Lucket on his fiddle...
- Kit?? I still have my hat and armbands, I did have Ioan Jenkins' top hat and waistcoat - the former I think went to Knotty and the latter to John Dipper (who still plays Ioan's 'Warwick' violin) - I also have a tatter jacket from days when some of us also did Mumming Plays.
- AND where is the White Horse Drum??? Brass body, white rope tensioners and blue and red hoops.... Where did it go???
- I also still have the WHMM brand I made for the sticks, the badges and belt buckle I made for myself (Richard and Calvin also had buckles as thanks for their help when building my first house) - John & Sue Holman made the belts. Mine no longer fits; my slim 32" waist has expanded to 40" and trousers no longer have 2" belt loops - they are all 1½" or less.



## 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!

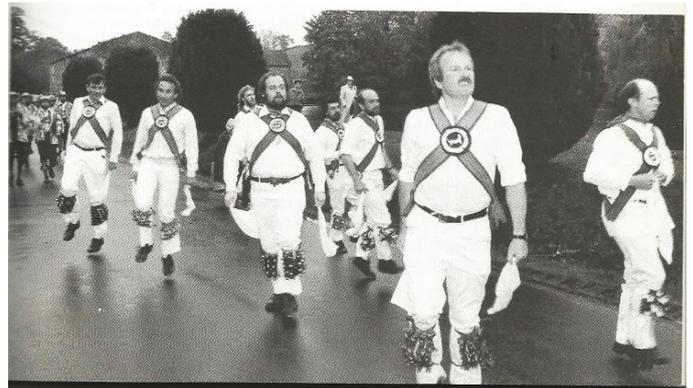
We practised in those days in a little community centre on Pound Row in Warminster. It did not have much heat, if any, and as the evening wore on, sweaty Morris men used to steam. Afterwards, to the Weymouth Arms to put some liquid back. The landlord of the time used to say, “Do you have any jokes for 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.

Right: 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.

Right: 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)

### Graham later added more

- I saw Winchester Morris in Sutton Scotney around the Coronation year, 1953. I was about 5. I thought I'd give it a go one day, and did.
- I joined White Horse Morris around 1982, around the same time as Robin Marshall-Ball, through friendship with member Peter Pike, of noble memory.
- I like most, the ethos of 'once a White Horse Morris Dancer, always one'. As a retired member it means a lot to me.
- Top six memories: our own Ring Meeting; annual Chalice Morris Christmas Ales; the annual exchange visits with Horwich; Coventry Ring Meeting; Ashmore Filly Loo; Ansty May Day. In no particular ranking.
- Kit? Arm Bands!!! (An 'in' joke for the oldies!).



### Knotty Ash remembers

- Working in my Fathers shop in Westbury in 1964/65, hearing music up the road and going to see what it was all about.
- I was kidnapped by Bill Bush, who forced me kicking and screaming into a lifetime's dancing.
- The comradeship and support over many years.
- The South Devon tours (very early days for me). Tours to Horwich, France, Germany, etc. The music, singing, and dancing that I have so enjoyed over the years.
- Bring back arm bands, or not, you decide.
- I think that we should elect Donald J.Trump. as Squire of the Morris Ring.

### Knotty continued 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.

### Alison Packer and the Singing Horse

- I first became interested in Morris when I brought David Kent along to practice: he'd had a cataract operation and didn't feel comfortable driving at night. Initially I sat with the musicians and watched and sketched. Then one evening someone told me to come and dance – and I did!
- I enjoy being with the Morris as they're a lovely group of people, pretty laid back and not taking themselves too seriously. If I'm feeling low, one dance and I'm happier and re-energised. I like being involved in such a traditional activity and making a small contribution to preserving tradition. It's a good all-round fitness session too.
- A highlight has been being Hobnob. It's hard physically but great fun connecting with the public, especially children. People show interest in the origins of Hobnob, and one can of course be cheeky in disguise! Some very young children really believe in the talking horse. At one Filly Loo a group of them took me over and walked me around on a leading rein. In this equine persona I have been asked to sing 'Happy Birthday' to a toddler.....no problem.





- Attending Filly Loo and Ansty May Day have been my Morris highlights. It's so magical when that strange piping music begins, the girls in white appear and the stags begin their leaping dance.....I also loved Wassailing.
- I'm very taken with Reuben's hat on May Day, covered in blossom. And who can forget Llad's top hat (Llad was the collie before Indie) which David made for him, and he wore with such dignity.
- One very poignant memory for me: the Morris coming to David's care home just before Christmas 2019 and delighting everyone. David's hands were playing an invisible melodeon!



Ali

Dave Kent very sadly passed away in February 2021 after suffering a chest infection following a broken hip, having caught Covid in the autumn. By profession he had been an aeronautical engineer, and was in the process of constructing a small aeroplane in his workshop (upstairs in his home at Dilton Marsh).

**Nic Jones controversially speaks out on WHM kit**

- I like dancing, and Morris dancing doesn't require me to bring a dance partner. Also dancing at different pubs has a benefit.
- Saw you dancing on Tisbury High Street and joined that winter.
- It is a mixed side that dances together.
- ...Eermm, difficult. Dancing in front of Westbury White Horse at the village pump festival. Weymouth dance outs. Playing boules (?) in Semley. Dancing for Dave last year. General – seeing children get involved, before they become too self-conscious/scared to dance.
- Kit? No Comment – too much of a contentious issue.



Nic

**Heather Crisp blames sons**

- My sons started dancing first and I enjoyed seeing them dance out but never imagined that I would do it myself.
- I agreed to go along to the first practice when the side decided to accept women dancers. I really only went to keep my sons happy, I thought I would go once and then reclaim my quiet Wednesday evenings in, in command of the remote control. I was surprised to find that I enjoyed the dancing and have been dancing ever since.
- White Horse are a friendly bunch and I have made some good friends over the last ten years.
- My first memory, which is perhaps the strongest, is the complete terror that I felt at our first dance out in Warminster Park. I tried to think through the dance (Not for Joe) and found that I couldn't remember anything. I now try not to think in advance as I am no good at it. The dances come into my head as the music plays and we set off.
- I have good memories of dancing at Stonehenge, Bovey Tracey and a few Wassails .



Heather



**Reuben Chappell and the lure of beer**

- Hey Mike, Here are my answers to the first three bullet points. I can't do any more this evening, it's all too emotional.
- The short story of how I became a Morris Dancer and joined White Horse is that, as a schoolboy I was groomed by a group of my male teachers. Hypnotised by their strange droning music and subliminal messages flashed in an ancient form of monotone semaphore, I was coerced into joining their quasi-religious organisation with the promise of beer and the future life as an untouchable mystic. My purpose would be to confuse and embarrass passing strangers by reminding them of their forgotten culture.
- My mother had a longer tale. On her death bed she told me about our family Saturday shopping trips to Salisbury. On most Saturdays she would get on the No. 24 Wilts and Dorset to go shopping. My father was working or in the pub, so my brother and I had to go along with her. It was difficult to get some quality browsing

with two young sons dragging and squabbling through the aisles of Marks and Spencer so she had to get rid of us. My brother was easy. He was older than me and predictable, so she let him wander off on his own. She probably knew that he wouldn't go much further than the army surplus shops. I was more of a problem, younger and more inquisitive than my seven years older brother. Then, on a glorious May morning in 1968 her salvation came with the sounds of ancient music and the sight of unusual characters, possibly clowns or heroes from a comic strip. These warriors were leaping ten feet off the ground and weaving mesmerizing patterns in the air with crisp white bedsheets. I was clearly entranced and wouldn't leave the spot, so Mum took advantage of the situation and nipped into Pringles to buy a new head scarf.

- From then on that was it. Every Saturday she would seek out the Morris Men and dump me there while she checked out the new fashions.
- I know now that it must have been The White Horse as there were no other Morris sides in existence at that time. The movement had just begun. Little did my mother know that I had been spotted and singled out as a future disciple of the cause. The strange and distorted image of an ancient horselike God had been lodged deep into my inner workings, ready to leap up and kick any sense out of me the moment when I next heard *The Shepherd's Hey*. That would be the moment I knew I would become a White Horse Morrisman. I heard that tune in the corridors of Durrington comprehensive school, the rest as they say, is history.
- The thing I like most about White Horse Morris is the strange and distorted image of an ancient and horse like God leaping over the green downs, under a blue sky.

That was like writing a confession.

Left two three hop, right two three hop.

Reuben

## **Chris Hall wrote from Northumbria**

- Well, back in 1979 a couple of friends went along to practise with Ouse William Morris in Norfolk. OWM were later to become Ouse Washes Molly. They enthused about it so much that I felt I had to go along and try it. The rest is history, and I've danced in England, Wales, Hong Kong and New Zealand. However, the first time I experienced anything on my teens when I used to made an announcement to unassuming guy walked Northumberland and those that champion name had just been added table and danced the to find out more and get class, it was just filed until September when I started learning some hornpipe steps over Zoom. I don't think I'll ever make a champion clog dancer!
- 
- When I moved down to Wiltshire back in 1999, I started to look for a side to join. I decided that, although I liked the people, Sarum Morris wasn't for me as I didn't like their style of dance at the time. The Bristol Sides were just a bit too far away and I just couldn't see myself in the one red, one green leg of the Pig Sty kit at the time. So I was resigned to not dancing locally. I still had Bunnies, HK Morris and still occasionally 'gusted' with Eryri in Wales and with anyone else who asked. At a Boxing Day dance out at Stourhead I got talking to John Wippell and he mentioned that WHM were about to launch a mixed side. I was very excited, this was just what I wanted. A local side. First practice - I was there.
  - What I liked most about White Horse were that they were friendly and welcoming.
  - My top memories with White Horse? Summer Solstice at Stonehenge, and Winter Solstice at Stonehenge. Dancing in the Co-op in Tisbury. Our workshop day with Mel, going with newbies to their first 'outside' workshop. Dancing at Weymouth festival.
  - If you were given autocratic decision-making powers, what change would you make to the current White Horse kit?
  - You know my views, but here goes: EVERYONE, in the same kit, white shirt, black trousers, baldricks for Cotswold and rag coats for Border. Personally I hate dancing in a hat but I know others like them. And .....No arm bands ☺

Love Chris



### From Cliff Skey

Well I went to a pub, rugby songs, great fun, took on to a folk club, learnt lots of chorus songs, Morris men said, come out with us and sing 😊 now dance 😊 never looked back 👍 met White Horse men at sessions Warminster, split between Wessex and WH, moved over, liked the bolshi bollocks of the side 😊 fertility not fancy footing and perfect kit 😊 so here I am 😊 I was happy to go along with the women, and change, and need no worries 👍

Cliff - the one-man mummers play St George's Day 2002.



## Sticky Trousers and a Bump on the Head - an introduction to Morris dancing – John Wippell recalls

John 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 Man could in fact have been Bill Bush.*

### John Wippell remembers Bill Bush

One Saturday evening in the summer of 1972 Carol and I were standing on the road out of Westbury. I had my thumb out in classic hitch-hiker pose. We were trying to get a lift to Bratton Village Hall where my brother-in-law was playing for a barn dance. A car stopped and an elderly man (71, same age as me now) wound the window down. “Is that a type-writer you've got in that case?” he asked. “No, it's not, it's a type of squeeze box, actually,” I replied.

“Thought so. Jump in!” he instructed. And that was how we met Bill Bush, one of the founder members of White Horse Morris.



Bill had tremendous drive, energy and charm, coupled with a fiery temper. He was the most persuasive money collector White Horse has ever had. He could charm the birds out of the trees and the pound notes from people's pockets. His unique collection receptacle was an orange plastic bucket.

Bill only took up Morris dancing because it was less dangerous than playing football, which he was still doing at the age of 50. "What convinced you to give up?" I asked him. "Well, I was playing centre forward and I took a shot just as the full-back tackled me and I thought, wow, that hurt. I nearly had to go off. I didn't want to tell my wife so I went to bed without saying anything but that night it was hurting a bit so I went downstairs and turned the light on and my leg had gone black from my knee down to my toe, so I had to admit my footballing days were over. My friend Roger Pinnegar (first squire) suggested I take up Morris dancing."



As a teenager Bill used to deliver milk by horse and cart round Westbury and out to some of the villages. In the quiet country lanes, rather than sit on the cart, Bill liked to ride on the horse's back. Many years later, Michael Coward, another WH man got married and the conveyance from church was a horse and cart. The horse wasn't comfortable with the crowds of well-wishers standing round and was getting rather jittery. Bill clambered up on the horse's back, took the reins and guided the horse just as he had done all those years before.

Bill told me that one hot summer when it hadn't rained for weeks, he noticed that the grass round the White Horse at Edington had dried and gone brown in certain places. He was convinced that you could see the ghostly outlines of the old Saxon dragon's tail and horns around the chalk horse. Bill lived into his late eighties and his enthusiasm for Morris and folk dancing remained till the end.

This picture shows him in Salisbury on Boxing Day 1965. I also have a picture in my mind of Bill at Ashmore Filly Loo, car window wound down, Bill sitting in the evening sun watching the proceedings with a wonderful serene smile on his face. Eventually, Bill suffered a stroke and had to go into a nursing home where the White Horse summer tour visited him. When he heard the music and the jingling bells he showed his delight in once more being part of the Morris that was so much part of his life.

John Wippell

### **From back in the past – Richard Baker remembers**

*Richard Baker now lives in New Zealand. He is Bob Burgess' brother-in-law having married Bob's sister Sara. Many of you will know Richard from his time with White Horse and also from when he was present at the 60th celebrations. Note what he says about our 70th anniversary below.]* This picture shows the guard of honour and Mike and Liz Dixon's marriage. Richard Baker is fourth from the right.

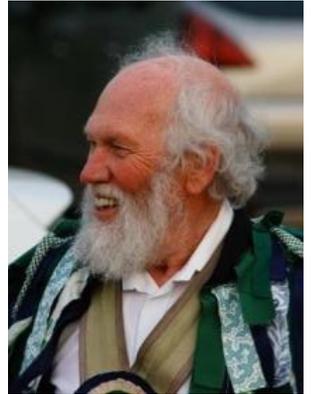
I joined White Horse in the early 70s. It is interesting to note that at that time I was attempting to learn the Banjo; I had met Bob Burgess at a Folk Club and he offered to give me some lessons once a week. He always left quite early because he had to go to a meeting. After a while I asked him where he went to every week and he answered Morris practice and would I like to come? At that time I had no idea what Morris was and being a leather jacketed Rocker, it was quite a culture shock to see these guys dancing with handkerchiefs and thinking, at the time, there's no way they are getting me to do that but I did like the music so I was persuaded to join. A bit later in the piece I was absent from an AGM finding out the next day that in my absence I had been voted in as Bagman and I remained in that position for the next fourteen years.



Morris and all things attached to it have been in my blood from the start and will remain there for the rest of my life. White Horse was part of my family until I left the UK for New Zealand in 1991. I am now part of the New Zealand Morris Family but still wear my White Horse gear with pride. I have quite a few memories of my time with the team and I will try to share some of them with you all. If you are going to hold some kind of celebration/reunion for the 70th, God willing, Sara and I will be there. Stay safe.

### **Pete Hewitt recalls how he got started with WH**

- So, it was like this.....Sally was teaching at the Avenue School in Warminster when, in 1972, John (Wippell) came down from London to join the staff – and that’s how we met. John, who had been dancing with Hammersmith, knew that there was a local Morris side which he was thinking of joining. (I don’t know how he had found that out as there was no internet in those days). Maybe it was the Morris underground? It could have been just the fame of White Horse. I was already aware of White Horse because I had had a teacher who danced with them – one eyed John (Satchmo) Smith. I had also seen the side dancing in Brixham, probably in 1960, when I was on holiday. It must have been a White Horse Summer Tour.
- John asked if I would be interested in going along to practise with him. I thought it would be a way of getting some exercise during the winter months. At that time practices were held in the back room of The George in Codford. And so it came to pass.
- The first practice that winter was an interesting experience. The side didn’t have a dedicated musician. They had dancers who could play, or was it musicians who could dance? One evening this very tall, elderly chap turned up. He didn’t say much and part way through the practice he picked up a stick and started banging it against a metal cabinet. Everything we were doing was too fast and the musicians should be in time with him. This was Roger Pinnegar, a founder member and, I think, the first squire. He was certainly the Squire in 1954 when White Horse hosted their first Ring Meeting based in Salisbury.



- That year’s AGM was another memorable event. Bill Bush was the Bagman and turned up in his trademark Morris kit – a straw hat and smock. People I’d never seen before at practice turned up for the occasion, including one chap in full medieval costume with a funny hat. (Martin Westlake). A very strange lot, I thought. Bill knew how to run the AGM. Beer and sandwiches were provided from the bag. He ran through the meeting and the programme while everyone had their mouths full – there were no objections raised to Bill’s plans.



- And, finally, the main hook that kept me with White Horse was a Saturday night session at The Compasses, with music and singing. The pub was absolutely packed and this was something I’d never experienced before; it was so good.
- White Horse has never been main stream, always a bit to one side where participation in the group is mainly for fun and enjoyment. The dancing and music are the glue, but the side is much more than that. It has always attracted a great bunch of people. It still does, and that is what counts.
- Kit change? Please don’t take uniformity and conformity too seriously. We have a distinctive appearance and should work to keep it.

### **Mike Perry also looks back**

As a child growing up in Gosport, Napoli and Southampton I didn’t know that there was a thing called Morris Dancing. As a young adult in Southampton and Bath I didn’t know there was a thing called Morris Dancing. After I met Val in Bath we started going to folk clubs and THEN something called Morris Dancing appeared in the streets of Bath.

For a few years we wended our way from Bath to Daventry and then back to the SOUTH and lived in Shipton Bellinger whilst working at the secondary school in Durrington. On the day I started at the school so did one Patrick McGovern. We were a different breed of teacher for the school and area and became firm friends. A short while after, one Robin Marshall-Ball also joined the school. Pat and Robin knew each other already from times in Reading and both started dancing with the then, White Horse Morris Men, in Warminster.

For a school revue we decided to have a Morris dance sketch in which we enlisted teachers and sixth formers dressed in white lab coats and wellies! From this triumph Woodhenge Morris was formed from sixth formers at the school. This mixed side did a few gigs and even met the Duke of Edinburgh at a Duke of Edinburgh’s Award event. Times moved on and so did the students and Woodhenge Morris was no more! You might spot some people you know here - Reuben, Mike P, Pat, Robin.



We eventually moved to Warminster and I was “encouraged” by Pat and Robin to go to practice and see if I liked it – I am still here so make you own mind up! During my time with White Horse we have had some great experiences – trips across the country and abroad as well as the important local stuff. A few of the many highlights are:

Our ring meetings. This from 1983. Obvious ones are Calvin Eales, Pat McGovern, Colin Shaw, Alan Harrison.

Dancing in front of several thousand people in Germany and the trips to Flers and Alençon. Colin Shaw, Cliff Skey, Mike P, Boots Weallans, Reuben Chappell with Colin Dipper on concertina performing Alençon in 1987.



in

The magic of Stourhead on ice on Boxing Day.

The glory of a Filly Loo on a summer’s evening  
Dancing in the sun at Weymouth

Mendip Ales – there was a time when Robin M-B replaced the mincemeat in mince pies with Branston pickle and Knotty acquired a whole Stilton cheese under his top hat. This was the time of the infamous White Horse Flying wedge!



Of course there was also Mike and Liz’s wedding (and the Officers’ Mess) as well as Kate’s (and of course the resulting Rufus). However, the most important thing for me is and always has been the people.



Obviously the superb and whacky people that have been part of the WHM story but also those people who have shown an interest and a joy in what we do.

It’s great to look back but I also want to look beyond 2020 and COVID-19 and think of the things that White Horse will achieve in the future - great dancing and music and incredible friendship all done in Morris kit (undefined).

Buona fortuna a tutti.

Michelino



### **From Bride to Dancer – Kate Brooks explains**

Back in the heady planning our Morris dancing lived in Lower had made the Wippell, so asked be available. We was confirmed. The fantastic sunny men (as they were gave a stupendous display of skill and athleticism, ably supported by the musicians and HobNob. The proceedings ended with me being hoicked (sorry, gracefully lifted) onto their shoulders at the end of [please insert name of dance and deduct house-point from Brooks]. This was a slightly nervous moment for the bride and groom, as a few days earlier we'd found that I was pregnant, but all was well and we managed not to giggle when Mike then announced that [name of dance] is a fertility dance – bit late for that!



days of 2009 Jon and I were wedding and hoped that could be part of the day. Jon Woodford at the time and acquaintance of John John whether his side might were delighted when this day dawned and it was a September day, the Morris then) were cheerful, despite having to dance on grass, and



A few years later I saw that White Horse were looking for new members and decided to give it a go. Friends had described my (non-Morris) dancing style as 'disorientated spider' and I'm knock-kneed and unco-ordinated, so was half expecting to be laughed out of the village hall that first evening. But you're a lovely bunch of folk and were welcoming and encouraging, and from then on I've been a proud member of White Horse Morris. I've enjoyed all our practices and outings but particularly the two weddings I've danced at, which have brought back such happy memories.

Kate Brooks

### **Kate Brooks makes exciting kit-change offer**



- I hope everyone is keeping well. I was fine, until I saw the Donald Trump picture in the latest issue of Prancing Pony. I've been feeling quite unwell since.
- What first got me interested in Morris dancing? Going along to the 'Morris: A Life with Bells On' premiere in Tisbury and watching WHM dance outside.
- How did I come to join White Horse? One October I saw that WHM were looking for new members and decided to give it a bash.
- What do I like (most) about White Horse? The people.

- My top memories or experiences with White Horse? My first Filly Loo. The Seymour Arms at Witham Friary. Dave's care home visit last year. The Village Pump. Upton-upon-Severn. Wednesday evenings at Wylde.
- If I were given autocratic decision-making powers, White Horse kit? I am happy to wear pretty much anything (within reason).



Thanks, Kate xx

### **"Finding Morris"-A Hinge of History, ex-Squire Pat McGovern remembers**

Monday, 16th April 1979 was Easter Bank Holiday Monday that year and was also one of those hinges of history when life changes forever! We had gone, for a family day out, to Stourhead. As we made our way down from the car park to the gardens, we could hear the unanticipated and magnetic sound of melodeons, drums and bells.



Outside the Spread Eagle Pub, the sight that met our eyes was pure awe and wonder; I had never seen anything like it before! We stood in complete amazement, lost in the spectacle of movement, music and magic.

We watched a couple of dances before I recognised one of the team but couldn't remember his name or where I had met him. It took a walk around the whole of the Stourhead Gardens, with the brain cells working overtime, before it dawned on me who he was and where we had met. It had been in a Remand Home and I hadn't seen him since 1975. I should add quickly that we were both *working* there, he as a Child Care Officer and me as a Teacher. His name was Arthur Goring and I couldn't believe it was him, dressed in his kit, dancing and taking turns to collect from the crowd. I waited until he wasn't doing anything and went over to say hello. He had to do a double take before he recognised me. The last time we had seen each other was at my leaving do in a pub on the Goldhawk Rd, Shepherds Bush, West London. After a quick catch up on how we had both made our way to Wiltshire, I had to ask him what all this music, celebrating, dancing and pure street theatre was all about. Arthur said it was the best thing he had ever come across and I should join!



I just loved the whole idea and agreed to meet Arthur outside Warminster Post Office on the following Wednesday evening to go with him to practice in the Pound Street Hall. What an experience! I knew nothing about Morris Dancing but the welcome was amazing. After a short time watching, I was up and learning a dance - Shepherd's Hey, I thought it was brilliant! The Foreman was Glen (from Barnstaple), the Squire was Calvin Eales and the Bagman was Richard Baker. I can remember that on that evening, 41 years ago, there was a goodly number in the side and at that practice: Knotty, Pete Hewitt, Pete Thomas, John Wippell, Bob Burgess, Arthur Goring, Pip Potter, Alan Harrison, Keith (mate of Pete Thomas, can't remember his surname), John Pearson, John Allard, Pete Warren, Tony Tutton, Rob Price, Ian Petts, Brian Dempsey, Sid Hemsley and someone called Bicycle Clips (or Prof) whose name I never found out.

It turned out that Keith and I lived near each other in Trowbridge and Alan Harrison, who drove down from Chippenham, offered to pick us up and bring us over to practice on Wednesdays. And so it began! Wednesdays took on a whole new perspective as the focal point of the week and I first danced out on Crofton Beam Engine Day, Spring Bank Holiday, May 28th, 1979. The side danced outside the Royal Oak, Marlborough, the Red Lion, Avebury and Crofton Beam Engine – a truly great day out! Mike and Val Perry with their two boys met up with our family, that day at Crofton.. Mike and I worked together at Durrington and a little while later when they moved to Warminster, Mike joined the side too.



Morris Dancing became such a big part of our family's life until we left for Cornwall in 1987. It has given me a wealth of wonderful memories and special friendships which will never be forgotten. Keep well, keep safe and keep going!

Pat McGovern

(Team member 1979-88; Squire of WHMM, 1983/84)

**Another picture from the annals**

Reuben Chappell, Robin Marshall-Ball, Ian Petts, Calvin Eales, Boxing Day 1988.



Salisbury's Guildhall Square was alive with music and bells on Boxing Day. After the Wilton Hunt had moved off Morris men took over for their annual display. 27115

**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.



A pair of photographs of White Horse and German dancers.

The 2 photos are from when Tanzkreis Wunstorf visited us and were at Stonehenge and Stourhead. Can anyone name the date and the other major side with us?

### Keeping our promises?

This refers back to an ambition to dance in every village in Wiltshire, which our forefathers the White Horse Morris Men apparently set themselves back in 1951.

A newspaper cutting has come to light thanks to research by Garry Gibbons among the pages of the Wiltshire Times where he found a number of references to WHMM, which he then forwarded to Mike Dixon – who he perspicaciously assumed must be our archivist.



**A bold aim indeed.** With the benefit of Wikipedia you can now see, at the drop of a top hat, that there are over 400 villages in Wiltshire, and one wonders whether back in the middle of the last century, when as well as not having access to Wikipedia, GoogleMaps or GPS as internet download speeds were so slow and there were no satellites! many if not most of those original WHMM would not have had a tv, or car or home

telephone either. Did they know how big a county Wiltshire was??

A telling indictment of the neglect of successive Squires over the years, in not fulfilling this bold ambition from 1951? Therefore in addition to an Archivist, we are also recruiting for a Logistics Strategist, to draft a plan for which villages to visit and in which order in order to assist the Bagman in putting together the 2021-2 programmes. Dancing five days a week, 2-3 villages per outing, with time off for good behaviour, two years should be enough. The key to success, according to former Downing Street adviser Dominic Cummings, is a three-word slogan: **Get Wiltshire Done!**

### Generations

Within the loose theme of “Generations”, we tried to run a picture competition and received several items of historical interest .

We start with some pictures from Bob Hill

White Horse went mixed in 2011 and made the new kit at Wylve Village Hall. The first is from the early stage of WHM regeneration. The WHM sewers (pronounced SOWers) – Val, Dave, Steve Wyre (deceased), Heather, Nicky, Chris Hall? Others - I don't remember names -Vicky Benson (pale blue top) and her son Tim (deceased).





This month's winner is Dick Vader and his dad, July 2010 Pete and Richard Pike, with Phil Harding of Time Team in shot in the background at Salisbury Museum. This was celebrating The Festival of British Archaeology in July 2010.

The Summer Solstice at Stonehenge 2000, filmed by CNN. John W, Bob, Reuben, Mike D, I think.



At the Solstice 2014 the sun rose on time and proved it sometimes can be seen.. No WHM in the pic as they were behind the camera.

Not so much jumping but flying: the Wunstorfers Aug 2001 [Veronika (who sadly died at a young age), Prof Appelbee, Calvin, Ian Bowden and Knotty (I think). We twinned for a few years with Tanzkreis Wunstorf from a town near Hanover.



Christmas past. Cliff on shovel, Dave and Kip on brooms, John Byfleet and John Wippell on the risk-assessment. A really icy Boxing Day 2010 at Stourhead.

## From the Archive

15 June 1951 – A report on the Wiltshire Festival of Dancing, held in the grounds of Wilton House, 9 June 1951.

**June 15, 1951**

THE hands of the clock, it seemed, were turned back 60 years in the spacious grounds of Wilton House on Saturday afternoon as men and women in traditional dance dress circled, jigged and tapped their way through a four-hour programme of traditional English dances, celebrating a county folk dance festival.

The only reminders that the occasion was but a revival of a commonplace sight on the village green in the 19th century were the 1951 fashions of the large crowd who came to watch, for the picturesque costumes of the dancers were as near to traditional as possible. There were the men in their hand-worked waistcoats of many colours, white flannels and be-ribboned hats; the women in their dazzling flaired skirts and contrasting hem-line binding; the sprightly fiddlers, the string orchestra and, of course, the prancing hobby horse and fool. The latter, with pig's bladder and stick, kept the crowd amused with his tumbling and efforts at impersonation. Bursts of sunshine accentuated the charm and grace of the many solo and team dances and, no doubt, persuaded many spectators to leave their ringside seats and join in the general dancing periods. In the centre of the lawn arena stood a maypole festooned with multi-coloured ribbons and at its top, overlooking the festivities, hung a floral garland.

### 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 Wylve 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>





**Wedding at Pentridge Summer 2019**

Last summer we danced at a lovely wedding reception in Pentridge, in quintessentially English garden party style; and we all got a free pair of turquoise sunglasses. The assembled guests joined in a mass *Not for Joe* with great gusto, and at the very moment when the bride was lifted aloft, a bi-plane flew overhead trailing a good luck banner. More pictures can be seen on the website gallery page:



<http://www.whitehorsemorris.org.uk/gallery/4594741624>

**Knotty and HobNob – the early years**

Although I am no longer dancing (retired hurt), I am still almost as keen as I ever was. In 1965, I lived in Westbury and worked in a shop with my father. I heard music coming from up the road and went to investigate. I saw all these men leaping around and making a lot of noise in a car park up the road, so, having nothing else to do I stopped and watched and became fascinated by what was going on. I talked to some of the chaps who were there and met a character called Bill Bush, and in typical Bush style I was caught hook, line, and sinker.

Come the next winter practice session he was there at my door to take me to my first Morris practice. That was in the George Hotel in Codford and that was that.



Time went on and I was cured of my two left feet (but it did take a long time) and I was allowed to dance out. A couple of years went by and I was invited to come on the "South Devon Tour". This I later discovered was a mark of great favour from Bill Bush, I had become a protégé of his whether I liked it or not. It was here that I first met Hob Nob and first impressions were not good. He was a very rough and tatty beast and not held in great favour by anybody except Pip Potter who although a lovely guy was a bit rough and tatty himself. Being the junior member of the group I was put into Hob Nob and I soon found out that if you worked him hard and interacted with the crowd you could get a wonderful reaction from them and I became more and more attached to him. This is all I can do at the moment, but there may be another instalment at another time.

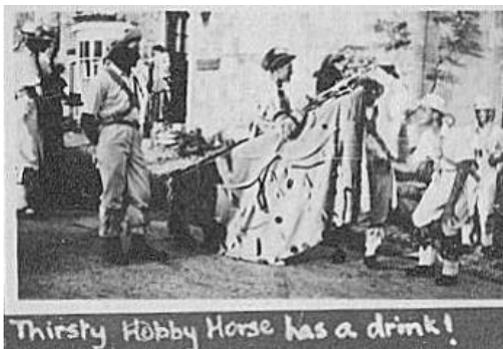
Knotty

**From Foal to Fantasy?**

Is Hob Nob male, female, gender neutral, declaring as .....? Calvin Eales also recalls some early days with Hobnob. "Hobnob lived in Manor Road, Mere in the sixties with Pip and Di Potter. I seem to recall Pip doing some refurb then, although, maybe, it was around balancing issues and adding weight to the rear end. At the time I can remember travelling from Mere to Warminster over Mere Down in Pip's Renault Rancho, not many around these days, any way the Horse was in the back and Pip never got out of second gear I'll never ever forget it." .....to be continued



Calvin



**Origins of HobNob – the story continues – Liz Pike**

"The Salisbury Giant and Hob-Nob were first mentioned in 1570 and 1572 respectively, in records from the Salisbury Guild of Tailors but it is probable he existed by the 1400s. Originally used by the Salisbury Guild of Tailors on the eve of the feast of St John (Midsummer's Day), they have been a part of processions and festivals in Salisbury, originally to mark the eve of St John the Baptist's Day (June 23rd) and the eve of the feast of St Osmund's translation (July 15th), but later to be paraded for special occasions, such as royal weddings and jubilees.

Hob-Nob's purpose in celebrations and parades was to clear the way for the Giant – he is smaller, and horse-like, with jaws fitted with hob-nails to snap at members of the crowd if they were in the way. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there were reports of the hobby horse chasing people and ripping their clothes with his teeth as a result of people throwing things at him. The Giant and Hob-Nob could each be supported by one man holding the frame.

Similarly, it has been argued that Hob-Nob has links with the spring festival of St George. Indeed, there were records of the dragon being fought by St George in the company of St Christopher in 1455. Thus Hob-Nob may have earlier belonged to the Guild of St George in Salisbury (a merchant's guild)." This exert is from, Julie Davis, County Local Studies Librarian.



### White Horse HobNob

At some point in the early formation of White Horse in the 50's a replica Hob-Nob was adopted as its mascot. Who made it is probably now lost in time\*. It was refurbished in the 70's by Margery Thomas, a white horse widow, married to Pete Thomas. (He would have been 70 last week). She is a talented needle woman and refashioned the skirt and head piece. She did an excellent job as it still in good shape and has survived the washing machine this week. I assume the head must have had a make-over at this time as well.

My best memory of HobNob is taking him and the giant with a few White Horse men to *Dance England* in Derby in a hired van. Following the display the tired hungry White Horse ensemble decided a curry was the answer. Imagine the surprise on the Indian waiter's face when asked "Can we bring in our horse?!"

Liz Pike

\* Page 82 of the White Horse First Scrapbook 1951-69 records that HobNob was made by Mr Denis Grant King-Cheverell and his first outing was in 1954.

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QCBUIIx\\_uft7bGwLJIN-nCmVdlMH5Sz](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QCBUIIx_uft7bGwLJIN-nCmVdlMH5Sz)



### Hob Nob



Mari Booker says:

*Hi John, Thank you so much for the photo you shared. That's my dad, Ioan Jenkins, playing the fiddle and the lovely hobby oss, which lived for many years in our garage. I used to play with it.*

*I also remember being under the Padstow horse at The Golden Lion pub, and on May Day in 1965. Dad, a headteacher, took me out of school for the day to go to Padstow. He felt that was an important part of my education. So sad that celebrations can't take place this year.*

*Many thanks, Mari*

This picture features HobNob and Fool, from The Winchester Journal c 1960.



### **Hob Nob – the story continues**

During 2020 we received several further gems from *Mari Booker*].

A couple of nights ago, I had a dream about being in a museum dedicated to Morris dancing. In my dream I said to the curator that when I was a child, we had a hobby horse in our garage. The curator said that was ridiculous, no-one had a hobby horse in their garage.

I shouted at him, “I did!”.

Yesterday, I tried to find a photograph of the White Horse hobby horse from the early 1950s, which was indeed in our garage. Can you imagine how delighted I was to find a black and white photograph on your website of my dad, Ioan Jenkins, playing his fiddle? It would have been his birthday today. The photograph is the one outside the Trowbridge Co-op. Do you know the date or who took it?



I think my dad was the first musician for WH. I remember many of the dancers - Len White, Harry Ross and Bill Bush, who all lived in Westbury, plus Jack Sleeman from Warminster. I couldn't find any photographs of the early hobby horse on your website, which was made of black cloth. We used to transport it on our roof rack. I wish I could find some photographs of it from the early 1950s.

I do hope everyone in White Horse is well and safe during these challenging times. Regards,

Mari (née Jenkins)

### **More Memories from Mari Booker**

Bill Bush was the registrar in Westbury. He signed my birth certificate in February 1950. I wonder if that was the first time my mam and dad (Bet and Ioan Jenkins) met him? Or more likely, dad met him at the pub near where they both lived.

We lived with an old Spanish shepherd called Alphonso, who escaped from Franco. He refused to have running water or electricity in the house, so dad had to go up to the well every day which was just outside the pub. I have some photographs of me with David Bush, Bill's son in 1951. Len (also WH) and Pearl White, lived in the same terrace as Bill Bush.

Mari

## Mari Booker remembers Maud Karpeles

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.



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.

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

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.

## Mari Booker and some early Hob Nob pics

I am still very much in touch with John Dipper. I go and hear him play if he's down in Sussex and he comes to stay with us, sometimes bringing friends.

I was so delighted that he mentions my dad's name on his CD covers. My dad would be so delighted to know that his fiddle is being played. Dad made many instruments on courses in West Dean. I still have his trapezoidal fiddle and his Welsh harp - we were convinced he had taken this with him when he died!

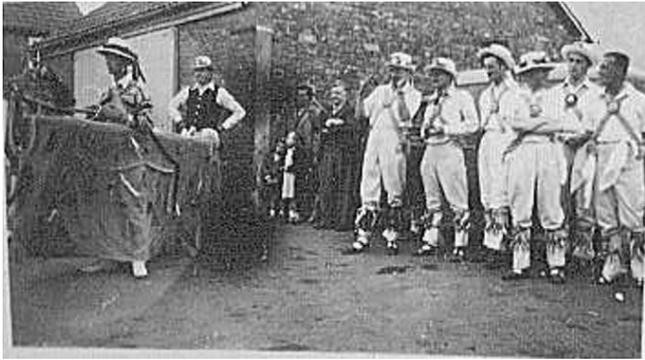
The balalaika and mandolin he made are now with a singer songwriter, Dave Nachmanoff in California. He has them in his recording studio and musicians can play them.

I have some photographs of me in Harry Ross's garden in 1952 (see p2). Some have Peter Ross and David Bush (Bill Bush's son) in them. There's also one of Bill Bush and my mam. Colour films were difficult to get in 1952, especially slide films. We had a visit from the American folk singer, Jean Ritchie, who gave him this film. Dad organised a trip to Marshfield. <https://folkways.si.edu/field-trip-england/celtic-world/music/album/smithsonian>



## Mari Booker adds

When I saw the title 'Mayor of Casterbridge' it reminded me that my dad, Ioan Jenkins, played for the BBC radio version of the play in 1968. He was allowed to look through Thomas Hardy's grandfather's book of tunes in Dorchester Museum to choose which tunes to play. No, I can't remember which tunes he played, I was living in Denmark at the time.



White Horse and Hob Nob on 6 July 1951 in Shrewton.



Hob Nob at Horningsham 1951

**Mari Booker contacts the EFDSS Library**

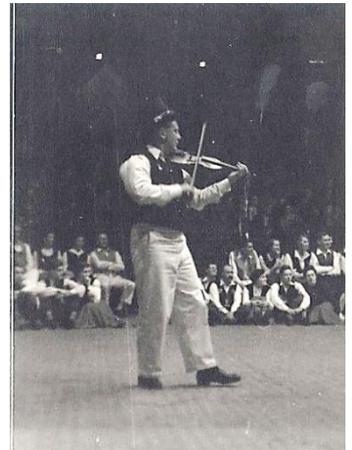
At last I got around to emailing the EFDSS librarian and here is his reply. I have made a donation to thank them. I will forward any results. He later added that they have some recordings of 'The Moonrakers', one of dad's bands. In the early 1950s, I can remember going out for Morris dancing on a Saturday afternoon and then on to a dance in the evenings. Sometimes it was hobby horse on the car roof and then later a double bass - never both at the same time.

Dear Mari,

Thank you for your email. We would certainly be interested in your memories and a look at the photographs. We certainly feel that it is important to get people's reminiscences of various parts of the folk scene written down, especially as a lot of the people involved are not as well or young as they used to be. It is also useful to get a flavour of the times as well as information about specific events. At present we are mainly working from home so we don't have access to all of our resources (we would like to check old copies of our magazine, for instance).

However, we do have a picture of your father at the Royal Albert Hall in 1954, as well as six photos of the White Horse Morris Men from the 1950s and 1960s, and a programme for a dance event featuring them from 1952. A member of the library staff often goes in to Cecil Sharp House on a Thursday so we could dig these out if you want. Peter Kennedy was seconded to the BBC where he made many excellent field recordings (we have many of these), some of which are available on the British Library Sound Archive website (<https://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditionalmusic/Peter-Kennedy-Collection>).

Mari



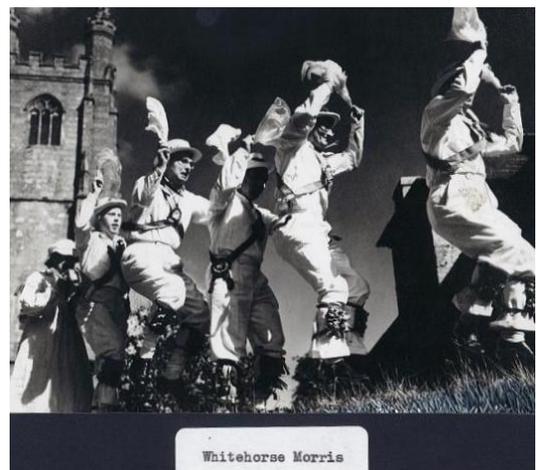
Best wishes, Nicholas Wall

Dear Mari,

My colleague passed your query on to me as I am in the building today and I was able to dig up four photos of the White Horse Morris Men over some years along with the photo of your father at the Albert Hall. They are all attached to the bottom of this email. And thank you for the photo, it really did brighten up my day here in a rather cold Cecil Sharp House! Thank you again for your memories which we shall save in the archive and certainly welcome any others! Wishing you all the very best,

Alex Burton EFDSS Library

This picture might be from 1965 and we think the church might be Widecombe-in-the-Moor.



**Ioan Jenkins on fiddle**



Ioan Jenkins, possibly in a pub in Warminster – in the days when pubs had pianos and men wore ties and jackets to go to the pub. Mari Booker thinks it was probably taken in the early 1950s. She says, “It shows Molly Dale playing the piano and Doug Lakey singing.

“Molly Dale and her husband Bert ran the bike, pram and toy shop on Silver Street in Warminster. Doug Lakey ran the newsagent, also on Silver Street. At first I thought the photograph was taken in our house, but on closer inspection, our piano did not have candle sticks. I wish I knew what they were playing and singing.

“On a slightly different note, I remember Bob Burgess recording dad playing Morris tunes on a reel to reel tape recorder. He once told me they were somewhere safe in his home. I think that when I gave him dad’s waistcoat and top hat that he wore when playing for the Morris.”

**Hob Nob is cast away on a different desert island**

Why me? The young Squire said if we didn’t have any new material for this week’s Prancing Pony – ‘cos the buggers can’t write, and would prefer to leave it to a bloody horse! – would I like to share some personal / equine thoughts about the whole White Horse Morris experience?

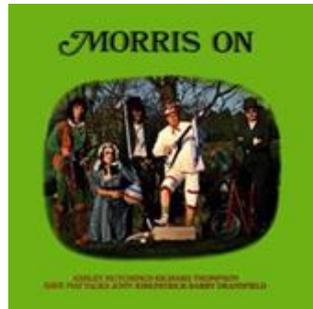


Well, to start with, most of the year I live on a shelf in a shed or someone’s garage, as little Mari Booker (left) has already mentioned. I am nearly 70, and just recovering from some cosmetic surgery at the hands of young Pete Hewitt, so am writing this on the hoof. I believe you modern people call it a makeover? Not for me the exuberant gyrating and twirling of the Padstow Obby Osses, I have always preferred to be much more stately and sedate. Nevertheless it has always been a great joy to be paraded out in the open air several times a year. I have had some lovely handlers over the years, most recently Ali and Liz. My job has been to interact

with the crowd, to distract them from having to watch that god-awful dancing they do; and chiefly to frighten small children!

**Morris-on Tony**

Have you ever had a secret always been Morris eight when I saw my first them ever since. Every folk standing on the sidelines. It Beltane Border Morris. dancing. No way.”



desire to do something? Well, for some reason, for me it’s dancing. My Mum said I stood transfixed at the age of about dancers and Tony has been trying to drag me away from festival, every May Fayre I would be found wistfully got worse whenever we visited Dartmoor where I stalked Tony’s response to my heartfelt pleas - “I’m not morris

Fast forward fifteen years attack and is issued a stark coincided with a trip to Barrington Court for their “Day of Morris”. On the way home Tony conceded that dancing would, indeed, be good cardiac exercise. I didn’t need any further encouragement and the very next week we went along to WHM where we received a very warm welcome.

and I’m still mad on Morris. Tony is recovering from a heart warning, “Do some cardiac exercise or else.” This warning

Our first dance out at Stourhead was, for me, so exciting. We love the music, the dancing, the costumes and the folk heritage. But most of all we love the banter. You’re a great bunch of people and until we can meet again I will make sure that Tony will “Morris-on”. Stay safe everybody.

Sharon x

## White Horse Prances Again – July 2020

18 weeks earlier ago we decided that we needed to stop meeting as a side due to the growing severity of the spread of COVID-19. During that time all the side has been training hard in their personal gyms following videos on YouTube such as

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBMk30rjy0o>  
and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeGrTqW5lek>



As a result, when the opportunity came to dance at Bishopstrow on the 5th July, super fit athletes took the village by storm. All that practice really paid off with not a single mistake made by anyone and nobody even broke into a sweat.

It was fantastic to be able to do something after all this time and the modifications made to the dances ensured safe distancing. Thanks to the following people who made it

happen: John, Mark, Andy, Mike P, Helen, Ali, Kate, Nic; Bob; Reuben; Cliff; Maggie

We hope to do some more dancing over the summer but in the meantime here are some comments from Sunday:

- Thank you so much for organising the dancing today. It was lovely to see Morris people again and I felt refreshed and energised afterwards. Love Ali X
- Hi Mike, Great to be back out performing. More importantly to see good friends. All done in a safe environment. Thanks for organizing Andy
- Socially distanced Litchfield heys are hard work! Nic
- Hi there, What a lovely get together - so good to see you all! Wonderful to get out from shielding to such an occasion!! The chap who did the sound did such a great job too !! Was excellent!! Till next time. Maggie
- I agree with Maggie. John
- Hi Mike, Would love to be have been at Bishopstrow on Sunday.
- Bishopstrow on a Sunday lunch time just after so called “super Saturday” dancing on grass in a field as part of an illegal gathering where social isolation had slipped to 1.0m+ so what more can one say. Most interesting element for me was the mid to late 19th Century \* prefabricated cricket pavilion with its cast iron brackets to the front of what would originally have been a veranda – pity they have filled it in. Bob



\* \*Bob, you were partly right. The pavilion was offered to the men of Bishopstrow in about 1879! It was never a shed with a veranda, just a hut. The snooker players moved an outside wall many years ago to allow the use of normal length cues.

## What I enjoy about Morris – and how I got involved with it – Mark Mikurenda

The tunes. They are accessible, (mostly) memorable and hummable and have come down through history by people listening to them, humming them and learning to play them. The colour: when the sun is shining and a side is in full kit, hats decorated with flowers, white hankies going up and down, in time to the music and in unison, what a colourful spectacle? Life: Associated with the natural cycles of spring, summer and winter, the Morris is essentially a celebration of life and is a cheery celebration of that which brings a smile to the faces of children and adults alike.

History: Morris is rooted in the past, though there is plenty of scope for erudite disagreement about the details. Morris and Moresco? Moorish, Matachin? Costume and coloured faces for disguise? A tradition of

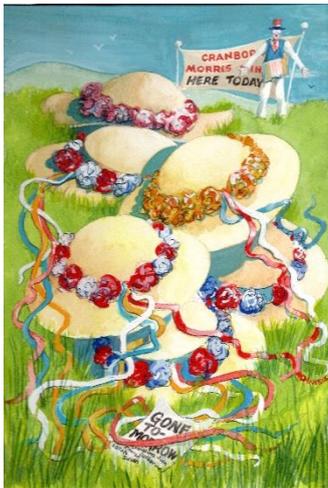


a shared community, something which ordinary people did because that is what they did. It was traditional, and there is something quaintly reassuring about knowing that what we do today has its roots way back in time. It was also a bit subversive. Ashley Hutchings' "Rattlebone and Ploughjack" recordings of 1976 refer to stories about the ploughboys ploughing up the lawns of the greater and good if they didn't donate.

English: A bit of traditional folk culture which is distinctly English but has much in common with the traditional folk cultures of many other countries, and so at the same time international. Being involved with Morris has led me to enjoy many great cultural experiences through folk festivals and traditional events. Seeing Saddleworth Morris and the Britannia Coconut Dancers, The Padstowe Mayday, The Helston Furry Dance, the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance and our own local Ansty Maypole all have been great privileges. Camaraderie: Morris is fun and "good craic" as the Irish say. This has been my universal experience. When I was out with the side I used to belong to in Suffolk - "The Morris Men of Little Egypt" - we would come back from an evening or weekend outing, and someone would always say, "Another shit day with the Morris", with heavy irony as we had all had a great time.

Humour: We do this for our own amusement - no-one else finds it funny, but we still do it. Long may it continue.

My first involvement dates back to 1983 when I started my teaching career at Oakfield Middle School in Frome. I was queuing up for lunch when I mentioned to a colleague that I had always wondered about Morris dancing. She told me to talk to John Yeo another teacher on the staff as he danced with Wells Morris. Two weeks later and I attended my first practice. John played the melodeon and made me a tape of the Albion Band's Morris On and Plain Capers which started my fascination with the music. I danced out the following spring and a year later bought my first melodeon. Wells did a tour of the city every Whit Monday, starting at about 8am, going from garden to garden, and most of the pubs, and finishing about 8 in the evening in the manner of Bampton. It was great. I was hooked. When I moved to work at Cranborne in Dorset I continued to dance with Wells whenever I could and the following summer was persuaded to start a Morris dance "team" for the children at school. As is the way with school children, personnel changed as they grew, but I had a really good side a few years later, who performed at local events and danced at Wimborne, Chippenham and Sidmouth folk festivals. Mums made baldricks and other kit for the children and were very supportive. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmemTx7-heI>



As I became more competent on the melodeon, I also played for the Wessex Woods Cloggies in Poole, and Button Belles a children's team which grew out of Dorset Buttons. During that time, I did not have any time to play cricket! Then I moved to Suffolk and started the Clare Middle School Morris Minors side at my new school there, shortly after joining the Morris Men of Little Egypt in Glemsford. The children even made an appearance on TV and invented a dance in workshop that the MMLE still do - after a fashion.

When I moved back to this area, I rediscovered cricket fairly on such was the desperation of my local club, and Morris took a real back seat. My first speaking encounters with White Horse were when I met John and Carol Wippell in a fancy Indian restaurant in Salisbury and he said I ought to come along to a practice and also with Calvin Eales at the Filly Loo where he said the same. My first outing where I played was at Stourhead in 2010 I think, when there was snow on the ground. I suppose I was wary about overcommitting myself having had ten years off from regular Morris activity, but I started to come along to practices, and like everyone else, got lured in by the friendly ambience. I now add ballast to the band and succeeded Bob Hill as Treasurer a couple of years ago, and in March 2020 started editing the *Prancing Pony* "newsletter". My favourite things with WH? Stourhead on Boxing Day, the procession at Wimborne Folk Festival in 2019, the Filly Loo and Ansty MayDay, and just enjoying being out with such a nice bunch of folk!

Mark Mikurenda

### **Ian Paul 1931-2021 Former Square of WHMM**

Dear Bagman,

It is with great sadness that I announce the passing of Ian Paul on 24 February. As you may know, he was a regular participant in White Horse Devon tours from c.1959, later a regular member of the side from 1963-67, and Squire from 1966-67. Ian continued to attend White Horse tours with his family until obligations with the newly-formed Peterborough Morris (where he had moved in 1973) took precedence in 1980.

Ian always spoke very fondly of his time with White Horse, especially the tours to Devon and later the New Forest. Together with his daughter, Maria Leel, I recorded many of his memories from a long Morris career. I have provided you with a copy of the transcript for your club archive. You may also wish to include excerpts in your newsletter or 70th anniversary publication. With best wishes,

Matt Simons, On behalf of Peterborough Morris

*[The full transcript below provides interesting reading and contains several recognisable truisms about the character of White Horse. For a fuller obituary, go to <https://www.peterboroughmorris.co.uk/obit.html> ]*

### **Dancing with White Horse Morris Men c 1959-1979**

I have been a member of Winchester, Offley, White Horse, Cambridge and Peterborough. However, in the past I also had strong links with Bedford, White Rose, Chanctonbury Ring, Martlets and Leicester. On many occasions at Ring Meetings, I would often attend with one side but filled in for many other sides if needed.

My initial contact with White Horse was as a guest on their Devon tours around 1959 while at RAF Henlow when I was dancing with Offley (and Bedford who were short of men at the time). I was then posted to RAF Laarbruch in late 1961 after a whirlwind summer of dancing before Morris exile in Germany. I used to come back on leave and dance myself to a standstill when I had the opportunity.

### **Devon Tours**

White Horse had barely started in about 1952 when they did their first Devon tour. With no experience they looked at a map covering a pretty large area, and plotted a number of desirable places to visit. I think somebody clocked up something like two thousand miles by the end of that first tour, so they restricted their radius very considerably after that.

I think it was in the summer of 1959 that I first went on a White Horse tour down in Devon. I knew Bill Bush and John Burgess from the Dinton folk dance weekends, and so I was invited to join a tour. A large number of quite illustrious names went on White Horse tours in the early days. We used to have indoor camping at Kings Kerswell, and they went on for many years.

I particularly used to like the first evening, on the Saturday we would arrive and have tea, we would have a quick rehearsal to remind people of some of the peculiarities of the side. White Horse did certain things in certain ways, which weren't necessarily completely standard. We would then go down into Torquay, arriving there at the sort of time when people used to get high tea. There were swarms of people just starting their holiday, just wandering around ready to be entertained. And wherever you started dancing, you would have hundreds of people around you just like that.

### **RAF Upavon**

After meeting and marrying Vera at Laarbruch (the wedding took place at Peterborough Cathedral in February 1964) I was then posted to HQ Transport Command at RAF Upavon in Wiltshire. Having duly 'arrived' at my new station, the first thing I did after dinner in the Mess was to drive over to Westbury to report to Bill Bush for duty with White Horse. Morris Sunderland once said that my posting to RAF Upavon was, in fact, a compassionate posting to White Horse to compensate for the years of Morris exile in Germany!

I was a regular member of White Horse, and in 1966 I was elected Squire. By the time of the next AGM in early 1967, I was coming to the end of my two and a half years at Upavon and due to be posted. They asked me to continue as Squire, so I explained my situation and said I was willing to carry on. The following week, I said, "Sorry chaps, got my posting: Philadelphia in about three weeks' time". I was posted to Philadelphia as part of the



engineering team at Boeing Vertol for the original Chinook purchase. We worked like crazy on the Chinook project for nine months and then it was cancelled. I was then sent to St Louis, Missouri as part of the joint RN/RAF team on the Phantom project. Both Vera and I had had enough of being messed around by the RAF and I took the opportunity to retire at the end of 1969.

Initially I got a job in Cambridge and was dancing with Cambridge and Offley but nevertheless joined White Horse for the Devon Tour.

I particularly remember leading the 1971 decimalization tour when the bag shot up because of people's unfamiliarity with the new coinage! For years, the bag for the week had typically been about £150, but that year it shot up to £250. We had a wicker wooden horse, which kids liked feeding, and were previously given ha'pennies to do it. But the new coins were too small for small fingers, and the most suitable one — the



one which was more or less the size of the old ha'penny — was, I think, 2p. That was the equivalent of 4.8 old pence, against half an old penny: a nine-fold increase!

### **New Forest Tours**

Later, somebody queered the pitch of Morris dancing in the Torbay area, I don't know quite why. We moved to Peterborough in 1973 following my redundancy in 1972. I found work at Perkins Engines. The Devon Tours ceased at some point in the early 70s and Martin Westlake, who was I think Squire at the time, started the New Forest tours. The original Devon ones were all male, with indoor camping. The Westlake family owned Sandy Balls, a large estate where they had caravans and camping, so thereafter the tours were based in the New Forest and became family affairs. With no Morris side in Peterborough at that time my dancing reduced to the Offley annual Derbyshire Tour and the White Horse Tours which provided our family holiday at a time when we were very short of money.

When Maria started at secondary school in September 1976, we had just done our first New Forest tour. She was asked to write an essay about what she had done on her summer holiday... She proceeded, at age eleven, to list all the pubs that had been visited during that week. Quite what the teacher made of this we don't know!

A spot of informal competition happened on one of the New Forest White Horse tours. Adrian Langford was one of Peter Boyce's boys at Weston-super-Mare, and I think he danced with Coventry at one stage. When I first met him in the 1960s, he was about sixteen. He was spotted as a really promising dancer, and Bill Bush invited him to the White Horse tour in Devon. For some reason, Adrian didn't fancy it, and John Burgess took him on one side and said, "It's quite an honour to be invited onto the White Horse tour". Although White Horse was what I would call an ordinary side, which accepted anybody who came to them, the guests invited on tour were outstanding dancers. Anyhow, Adrian was persuaded, and I think he went on every single White Horse tour thereafter. I'd never come across anybody who could leap higher in Bucknell split jump than Adrian. He really could jump every bit as high as I could, and I've never known anybody able to leap higher than that. I always used to like to dance opposite him.

The first time Queen's Delight was called on this tour I positioned myself opposite Adrian and there was a slight delay, and Adrian was talking to a young chap from Lutterworth called Hal, who was on his first White Horse tour. I couldn't hear what they were saying but I suspect the conversation went something like, "If you can leap higher than Ian, I'll buy your beer for the rest of the tour". Adrian gave up his place to Hal, and we danced Queen's Delight. When we got to the split jumps he produced an extremely good leap with very good style, but I'll never forget the look of sheer astonishment on his upturned face or his, "Bloody hell!"

Anyhow, on the second jump he got a bit higher, and thereafter whenever Queen's Delight was called for the rest of the tour, anybody who was on the opposite corner to me was unceremoniously booted off it. I was quite sure what Adrian said to Hal after the dance was, "The offer still stands". And for the rest of the tour, he tried like anything, and he *nearly* got there, I was really pulling all the stops out to keep ahead of him. He never realised that he could leap anything like as high as he ended up doing at the end of that week.

We attended all the tours from 1976 – 79 when, unfortunately, a change in school term dates made it impossible to attend for the full week. However, Peterborough Morris (established in October 1979) began to dance regularly at Expo Steam in the 1980s so this became the new tradition for the August Bank Holiday. This, sadly, was the end of my links with White Horse.

## Peter “Knotty” Ash

Mike Perry writes:

Peter “Knotty” Ash sadly passed away on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2021. He has left a huge hole in my heart and I know also in that of White Horse Morris. The photo really sums him up for me. As a young, newcomer to the side in the early 1980s, Knotty was a constant, a stalwart, a great friend, a wonderful singer, a Morris Dancer and the renovator and jockey for Hob Nob – what was there not to like?



Knotty was a larger than life character and tales of him abound. We will re-tell some of these at a later date as many of you will have your own personal memories.



We know we will never forget this amazing man and every time we hear “*Farmer’s Boy*” or “*The Old Dun Cow*” we might weep a tear.

Farewell old friend from all the White Horse Morris Family. We will celebrate his life on 30 July and dance and sing in his memory.

(below) Knotty riding Hob Nob in Alençon, France.



### Knotty’s last contribution to Prancing Pony #29 ~

#### Knotty says Hello

Hi Mike,

Being a senior member who has not danced for some years and having been rather poorly for the past few months I thought I would put in an appearance at the Weymouth Arms on Wednesday, I was very gratified by the reception Liz & I received. Everybody came and made themselves known old friends and new, I think that White Horse Morris is one of the most friendly sides that I have known. After the dancing we all went into the pub courtyard and I thoroughly enjoyed the singing and the music. Having been poorly, I could not stay until the end, because I still tire easily but I will remember that evening for a good long time. Well done White Horse Morris.

Knotty (“Stilton”) Ash



**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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

## **Episode 2 from Robin Marshall-Ball**

### **Commuting and its Consequences**

Durrington Comprehensive School in 1978; headmaster Tom Spruce, famed for encountering a boy waiting outside his office, dragging him in and caning him, only to discover that he was not a miscreant and did not even attend his school, but had been sent as a messenger, delivering a letter from the neighbouring comprehensive school in Amesbury!

For the first eighteen months at the school I rented an officer's married quarters near Bulford – barely a mile away from school, but house prices on that side of Salisbury Plain had a ‘military premium’ – too expensive for me and my young family. We had to ‘look west’. Houses in Trowbridge, Frome, Warminster and Westbury were much more affordable. The prospect of a 40-mile round trip to work each day was daunting, but I then discovered that a group of the younger generation of teachers at Durrington had already settled in the far west and shared transport for the commute – an ideal solution! Nick Pash (modern languages) in Frome, Mike Pratt (English) at Crockerton, Pat McGovern (special needs) in Trowbridge – he then moved to Warminster, and Mike Perry (chemistry) at Bishopstrow, picking up Huw Jenkins (languages) at Chitterne on the way. I bought a house in Westbury and joined the ‘Westbound Stage’.



This is when the real ‘Morris’ indoctrination began! A bit of background needed here - a guitar player and singer in a rock group (we didn't call them ‘bands’ in those days) from the age of 13 in West Wales, there were so few of us around that by the time I was in sixth- form we had supported the Kinks, Hollies, Billy J Kramer, Manfred Mann and others when they played Aberystwyth. I had often shared the mic with Andy Fairweather-Lowe in our ‘sister group’ from Swansea – Amen Corner. But then, when in Swansea College I ‘went folkie’ – you know the scene - wearing the obligatory fisherman's smock or black polo-necked sweater, with a finger stuck in an ear singing *Wild Rover*, *Liverpool Judies*, *Martin*, and *Byker Hill* etc!

That, I thought after a ten-year break, was well behind me. . . . until the daily commute with Pat McGovern in the car! We often ran two cars – going in separately if we had an after-school activity, and there were six of us when Val Perry joined the ‘syndicate’ in the mid 80's. Music was an important part of our commute – cassette tapes of Frank Zappa or Lynyrd Skynyrd in Mike Perry's car, Elvis Presley's Greatest Hits in Mike Pratt's large estate, constant Jethro Tull when it was my turn to drive, and Chieftains/Dubliners/De Danaan in Pat's car. BUT! Whichever car we were in, whenever there was a pause to change tapes, the McGovern harmonica would burst into ‘Highland Mary’, ‘Shooting Adderbury’ ‘Not for Joe’ and others! Just occasionally when space allowed (and very often when it didn't) Pat would produce his bodhran – allegedly made from the stretched skin of the very last Antediluvian Aardvark that survived in a post-glacial Sligo bog! Though a shooter and angler, I had a bit of ‘conservation concern’, after all, Aardvark never hurt anyone!

In the car we all thrilled to the bodhran accompaniment to such folk ditties as *All shook up*, *Jailhouse Rock*, and even *Freebird*, *Stairway to Heaven*, *Locomotive Breath* and others, but he was really stymied by Dave Brubeck's *Take Five* and *Un-square Dance*!

Memorable commuter moments . . . . .

The McGovern Parrot. . . . . an unsuspecting kestrel perched on a roadside post was positively identified, with absolute certainty by Pat, as a parrot! Even now, whenever I see this elegant little bird of prey hovering by a roadside, I pronounce to all within hearing that it is a McGovern Parrot!



The puppy. . . . . One of our westbound stage team, Nick, had acquired a 7-seater Peugeot estate which would accommodate us all. At the same time he also gained a 'Staffie' puppy which couldn't be left at home all day – both Nick and his French wife Annie were working full-time. Thus the puppy came with us on the commute to Durrington.

[Pictured: Knotty Ash / Brian Dempsey / Graham Lever / Richard Baker (Bagman) / 'Old' Lord Bath? / Alan Harrison (Squire) / John Allard / Peter Pike / Colin Shaw / Pat McGovern Seated, Robin Marshall-Ball and John Wippell. . . . . missing from photo - Ian Petts / Pete Hewitt / Bob Burgess / Calvin Eales / A N Other?]



Over the course of about four weeks, the little and bored canine systematically ate the car from the inside! Beginning with the carpets, then the upholstered seats and even the headlining – I can remember sitting on the metal frame and coil springs of a rear passenger seat for a journey home – all the coverings were either shredded or in the dog's stomach

'Three wheels on my wagon'. . . . mine was always the most ancient of the cars we had. On one homeward journey, just as I had turned onto the Chitterne road out of Shrewton, the car gave a gentle lurch and came to a stop. . . . . but heroically, the nearside front wheel continued on its journey! Val was astute in her

observations – "You've lost a wheel Robin!" . . . . we got home, eventually!

After all the indoctrination I was guardedly curious as to what this 'Morris dancing' was all about. Pat lived in Trowbridge, and to get to the weekly Morris practice in Warminster he passed through Westbury. He frequently offered to pick me up on his way through, and finally I succumbed.

In a small dimly-lit hall in the back streets of Warminster I was introduced to the leader (Squire in Morris parlance) Alan Harrison – at first meeting, a somewhat taciturn and thoughtful individual who seemed to dedicate his life to 'the dance', and his second-in-command, the Bagman, Richard 'Cannonball' Baker. . . . his opening and challenging greeting to me was, "'ere, you're a teacher, what's the last thing that goes through a bumble bee's brain when he hits your windscreen?'" . . ."His arse!" I replied. He smiled and offered his hand in greeting "You'll be OK, welcome!"

I was taken aside to be taught the standard steps while the rest assembled to practise a dance – a handkerchief dance called 'Highland Mary' in the Bampton tradition (whatever that was!). The reader of these lines will perhaps forgive me for becoming a little emotional / mystical here - up till that moment my vision of Morris dancing was summed up by a 'bunch of effete middle-class folkies waving hankies around as an excuse to drink beer'.

I watched the team dance Highland Mary, and I was awestruck. With Calvin Eales and Colin Shaw as the front two, there was a sheer power and masculinity in the dance that I had only ever witnessed before on a rugby pitch! This wasn't just 'waving hankies around' – this was harnessing the human spirit and the power of raw Nature.

(Calvin Eales back left, crouching, Pat McGovern back right standing, Colin Shaw airborne right in The Mighty WHMM show dance at the 1990 Ring Meeting).

I wanted to be a Morris Dancer!

Robin Marshall-Ball



**Epistle Part Three. . . . . the continuing sago and foresworn testicle of a Morris Dancer (Retired).**

**By Robin Marshall-Ball**

**THE MENDIP ALE!**

The traditional Yuletide gathering of all respectable and reputable Morris sides in the Westcountry – Mendip, Taunton Deane, Bathampton, Priston Mill, and so many others. Even Sides from such far-flung outposts of the Empire as South Dorset or even the Forest of Dean, gravitated one dark winter's evening each year, to a remote village hall somewhere just below the snow line on the Mendips. There to quaff ale, feast on Nature's (or at least the local supermarket's) bounty, and to impress all with their dancing prowess - each side had their own 'exhibition dance' to wow the unsuspecting onlookers.

White Horse Morris Men (bear in mind that this was in a 'men-only' era when women had yet to be invented) were NEVER invited to the Mendip Ale.. . . . yet we always went anyway! No, I tell a lie. . . .we **were** invited on one occasion, and that was the only year when we refused to attend. Perhaps it's an age thing, but my memories of the Mendip Ale are now quite fuzzy round the edges, but there are a number of vignettes which stand out. . . . .



**“The Pepperami Incident “**

It was the last day of the Christmas term, and school closed at 1.00pm. All the staff piled into the Rose & Crown in Bulford where, quite uncharacteristically, the Head had placed a large tab in the bar. As I wasn't driving that day, with no thought for my personal safety, I heroically took it upon myself to drink loads of beer for and on behalf of the others. In late afternoon we were reminded that it was the night of the Mendip Ale and we headed over the Plain, me stopping off in Warminster at Pete and Liz Pike's to change out of 'school kit' and into White Horse ceremonial regalia.

At the appointed time we all piled into our armoured personnel carrier (oh! OK, a hired minibus) on the raiding mission. In-flight briefing was given by our driver, Richard Baker (in later years he fled the country and is now reportedly living in Australia (actually NZ –ed.) in a place called Didjbringabeeralong). We stopped at a pub on the route, for most of the side to wet their whistles and get into the swing of things, but for me it was merely to top up my alcohol level. It was then that I realised that I hadn't eaten anything all day, so scanning the bar for a 'solid filler' my eyes lit upon a pack of Pepperami. Stripping the foil off the delicacy I started eating, only to realise by the myriad faces reflected in the large mirror behind the bar, that lots of people were shouting at me! “bugger them” I thought, and continued my private meal. Thereupon Bob Hill grasped me by my shoulders and swung me round to face him. For the first time since I had known him, I actually understood what he said. . . . .”You are supposed to take the bloody plastic covering off as well before eating it!” he shouted!

**“The Grand minibus Hijack”**

As one Mendip Ale drew to its late night close, tired Morris sides sauntered back to their respective minibuses, happy and replete with their ale and feasting, satisfied with their dancing, and looking forward to the Yuletide. White Horse were often among the last to leave. On this particular evening we were scanning the tables for any remaining

edibles to 'liberate' when a very worried Frome Valley man ran into the hall, announcing that there was a problem and he was in need of WHMM assistance. Apparently when they had said their farewells and were boarding their minibus, they encountered a figure clutching a hazel stick slumped and asleep on the back seat. Unidentified in the darkness, their attempts to rouse the sleeper only resulted in wild waving of the said weapon and shouts of "Get out of my minibus". On one wild sweep of the stick the hijacker's coat fell open to reveal he was wearing White Horse colours. . . . .it took us some time to persuade Pete Pike that the minibus he had boarded wasn't really ours, and please would he let the other side have it back?

**" Stilton? What Stilton?"**

Picture this – a main hall where everybody gathered, there to respond to the call for a massed dance, each side dancing the said dance slightly differently and in their own style, and at other times to watch and critically appraise the 'exhibition dance' of each side.

All the sides were in the main hall, . . . . except White Horse. We gravitated to the annexe to the main hall, wherein small tables bowed their spindly legs under the weight of various real ale barrels, and along the wall trestle tables sagged with the myriad platters of cheeses, cocktail sausages and pineapple onna stick, cheese wedges, highly suspicious dips, really nasty sticks of celery and all manner of other 'feasty-type' things. (Oh that reminds me, we once performed 'Shooting Adderbury' at the Ale using celery sticks!)

Now, on one of these trestle tables the centrepiece was a full round 1.5kg Stilton Cheese. Early in the evening it had mysteriously disappeared, much to the consternation of the hosts. As suspicion seemed to naturally fall upon us, we spent the rest of the night in the main hall, dancing and singing as appropriate, yet even by the end of the evening the Stilton had not re-appeared. For those of us who know and appreciate the elegance and grace of Knotty's normal dancing, on this particular evening his deportment while dancing was even more exemplary – we were all sooooo impressed.

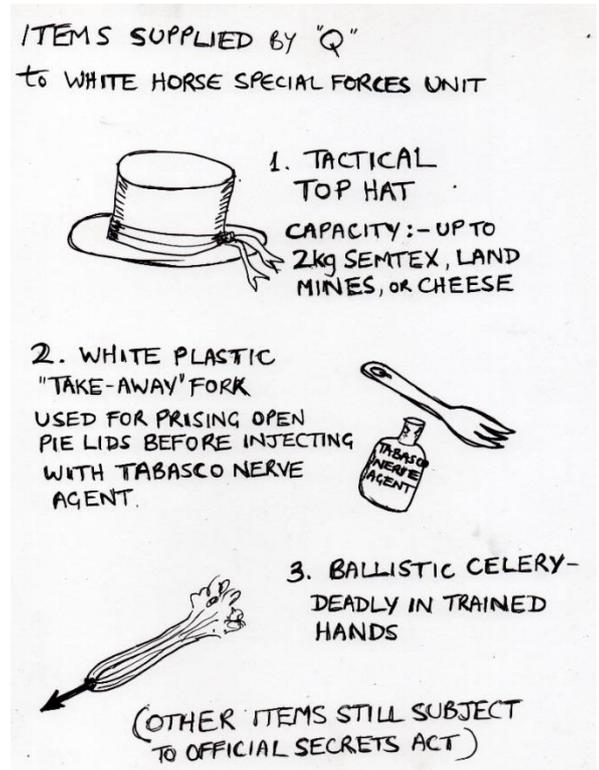
It was only when we were boarding our transport for the journey home when someone casually asked to the rest of us "What really did happen to that Stilton?" Knotty took an elegant step forward – "What Stilton? Do you mean this one?" He raised his top hat, and above many layers of serviettes shielding it from his head was a perfectly undamaged large round cheese. . . .he had been dancing with it under his hat all evening!

**"Who's the Squire Now?"**

Pat McGovern assumed the Squirehood of White Horse Morris. In true egalitarian spirit Pat led the side to great things, such as hosting a Ring Meeting and other important events, but for the Mendip Ale his leadership only served to enhance our reputation as the 'provisional wing' of the Morris Ring of England. He had one particular technique of totally exasperating the Mendip appointed Master of Ceremonies at the Ale. Emanating the importance that such a rank and title bestows, the MC would approach us with the barked question "Who is the Squire here?" Pat would gather us round in a circle, and pointing to each in turn would utter the immortal words "Eeny – Meeny – Miney – Moh. . . ." and so on until one of us was 'It'.

**"The Drowning Man"**

It was Ed's first Mendip Ale. A novice dancer at the time, he joined in with many of the massed dances – not necessarily with the WH side, but it did seem to sow confusion among the other sides! In addition he took his cue from the more senior members and became really adept in the 'Pete Hewitt technique' of surreptitiously slipping a dose of hot chilli pickle into a mince pie before carefully replacing the pie lid and putting it back on the plate. We, of course, had removed mince pies for WH consumption to another 'marked' plate on the table. There were a number of other sabotage techniques perfected by Calvin Eales and Richard Baker which were quickly learned by our 'newbies'. On his first exposure to the pressures of a Mendip Ale, one thing Ed hadn't learned concerned the consumption of beer. Throughout the evening he seemed determined to perfect a new technique of 'mass internal storage' – perhaps for scientific research purposes as he was after all a college lecturer? The end result took me back to an imagined night gas attack on the Somme. He sat, or to be more accurate, was slumped, on the seat behind me in the minibus for the journey home. I thought he was drowning. Clutching the back of my coat collar, the miles were punctuated by loud choking, gasping, totally incoherent garbled sounds and the occasional squeak – I dared not turn



round to help, indeed I couldn't as his hold on my coat, and sometimes my throat, prevented all thoughts of assistance.

In retrospect, yes, we had the enviable reputation of being a 'terrorist organisation' among the Morris sides in the Westcountry. In subsequent years, whenever I meet another Morris dancer from any part of the country and declare that I was with White Horse Morris, the most frequent response is an awestruck "Bloody Hell! You weren't with them were you?" We were young, we got up to all sorts of pranks and tended to treat 'serious' Morris sides with grave suspicion, but when the chips were down we were bloody good dancers – our 'exhibition dance' – 'The Lass from Richmond Hill' was danced with precision and beat all-comers. White Horse Morris – simply the Best!

Robin

### **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](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

**From the Warminster Journal 11 June 2021**

FRIDAY, 11th JUNE, 2021

# White Horse Morris Dance in Warminster

These traditional dancers have been performing to the delight of an appreciative audience at a popular local pub.

During the 1970s and 1980s White Horse Morris used to practice in a hall in Pound Street and would then retire to The Weymouth Arms for chat, music and a drink.

The Weymouth Arms became the home pub for the Morris side and was even featured as part of a huge national celebration of Morris Dancing at the 200th Meeting of the Morris Ring of England in 1983 based in Warminster.

Since the Covid-19 lockdown has eased, White Horse Morris has been able once again to perform in public and in its 70th anniversary year were invited by Nat and Shane of The Weymouth Arms to dance there.

On Wednesday of last week, to an enthusiastic crowd, the dancers and musicians performed until they dropped and the sun started to set. However, the performance then continued with a music session in the pub garden, much to the pleasure of the crowd.

The dance club continue through the summer and the programme can be seen on the White Horse Morris website.



The dancers perform outside the Weymouth Arms



Morris dancing is a time honoured tradition



The performance was appreciated by the spectators.

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