



The Prancing Pony

The Official Newsletter of White Horse Morris

Issue #23

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17 December 2020

Prancing Pony wishes readers a happy Christmas and Yuletide



In this month's 8-pager there is plenty to read and a wide variety. We have several more chapters in the "White Horse and Me" saga, Liz Pike on the Quidhampton Mummers, Shirley Rutter on the Radio 4 series *Albion*, live footage of otters in Salisbury and plenty of pictures loosely related to this month's arbitrary theme of "Generations".



The Government's "rule of six" has made all the Lichfield Morris dances

illegal but this has led to imaginative variations. For example the Squire's training regime has paid off as White Horse Women took advantage of the rule of six to practise their lines ready for Boxing Day 2021. The men, however, took to weights for ensuring their fitness (L to R: Cliff, Reuben, Mike D, John and their personal trainer, Fabio, pictured in the store-room at Sutton Veny village hall).

Do send in your pictures for January, when the theme will be "Winter".

White Horse Morris - the first dance out

Mike Dixon raises questions of factual accuracy in his own article last month. He writes:

We wonder if anyone spotted it in the piece on the side going mixed, but 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 20th April – this →→→ was placed in the Parish magazine – there was no going back! We cannot find any pictures of this auspicious event perhaps someone can help? We think we danced in Warminster on St Georges day on 2011 in the park?

The Wiltshire Life pictures taken outside the Bell, one of which was in the last PP, we think were taken on the 25th of May?

Only 10 years ago but already the facts are fading into the mists of time....

Quidhampton Mummers – Liz Pike

Mummers plays are a form of early pantomime, the origins go back a thousand years and they are probably England's oldest surviving Christmas custom. The play loosely depicts King George and the Dragon. It represents the forces of good triumphing over evil, King George representing good, fighting one or more characters representing evil.

There is usually lots of sword play before one or more characters is defeated and falls down dead. Cue for the



White Horse Morris – Wed 20 Apr 2011 at The Bell Wylfe

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



©Open Morris by Marc Vyvyan-Jones

doctor to enter who miraculously raises the fighters from the dead, symbolizing earth reawakening from its long winter slumber. The last character to appear is Jonny Jack whose role is to beg for money and or beer. He frequently wears rag dolls on his back to elicit sympathy from would-be benefactors, with his "In comes I, Johnny Jack, with my wife and family on my back. Out of eleven I have but seven as three of them have gone to heaven, one to the workhouse he is gone; the rest will go when I get home". Father Christmas usually acts as narrator and most troupes sing a selection of songs at the end of the performance.



A side wearing tatters

Traditionally actors wore tatters which are costumes made of rags; the object of this was for disguise as employers may not have been happy with their employees begging. Rags were also cheap to make.

Mummer plays were common in villages in England. The story line of surviving plays is similar but fighters and words may vary. Many Plays have survived and are still performed around Christmas time in many venues including several sides still performing in Wiltshire.

Many members of White Horse have been involved with the Quidhampton Mummers play over the years. The Quidhampton play was collected by Edith Oliver and it was last performed by the village in 1913 with the First World War bringing its demise. The play had been passed down verbally through the generations. Edith collected the words from the remaining players many of whom only knew their own part. They told her that they had to recite as they had heard them without any attempt to alter words, unlike the ad-libbing of players today. She published the play in a Wiltshire WI publication in 1941.

In 1974 Steve Dunford's (ex-White Horse Man) mother showed the play to Steve when he was looking for an activity for Salisbury Folk Club's Christmas party. The folk club was held at The Rising Sun, Castle Street, Salisbury. It was meant to be a one off performance but has been performed every year since but sadly unlikely to be this year unless we can sort out sword fights on Zoom. Can you recognise anyone in the photo from 1974?



The current players wear costumes rather than rags taking their cue from the opening lines "we are not one of the ragged crowd". The fighters include Turkish Knight, Bold Soldier and Cut the Dash. The play is principally performed at pubs along the Wylye Valley from Salisbury to Warminster during the week preceding Christmas.



You might find recognising players a bit easier in this one. Don't they look young?

The Quidhampton Mummers have so far raised over £3000 for local charities. However, several now suffer from Morris knees and where as they used to fight for the fighting parts, they now try and avoid them as the getting up when being "raised from the dead" has become increasingly difficult. So they would welcome new blood to share the load if you would like to join.

Photo 1: Peter Pike and John Pearson (Whitehorse man in the 70's). Photo 2: Graham Lever, Knotty, Peter Pike and Bob Hill. Sorry Reuben, I could not find one depicting you.

Liz Pike

"White Horse Morris and Me"

Following the AGM, 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?

A rare missive from Pete Hewitt.

- 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.



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.



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



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 in Alençon in 1987.



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

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 Wylke.

- 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.

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 practise 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)

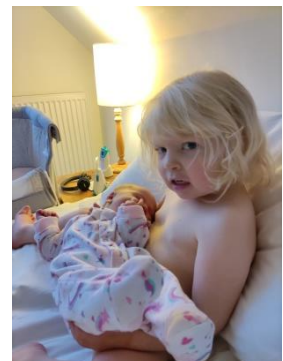
Another picture from the annals



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

New arrival

Hi All, I thought WHM might like to know that Matilda Jane Farewell arrived 11th November at 18.11 weighing 8 lbs 4oz.



Everything went smoothly and Anna is loving being a big sister.

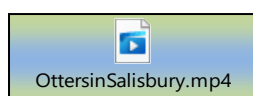
Best wishes, Emily

Protocol for the establishment of cribs for Christmas 2020 – from <https://forums.catholic.com/t/protocol-for-the-establishment-of-cribs-for-christmas-2020/633660>

1. A maximum of 4 shepherds will be permitted in the crib.
2. Everyone will have to wear a mask and observe social distancing.
3. Joseph, Mary, and Baby Jesus will be able to stay together as they form part of a family bubble.
4. The donkey and the ox will have to obtain a declaration of non-contamination certified by the Department of Agriculture.
5. The Three Wise Men will be subject to a 15-day quarantine, regardless of whether or not they have tested negative for Covid-19 as they come from a non-Schengen Area.
6. The straw, moss, palm branches and other decorations must be disinfected with alcohol.
7. The angel flying over the crib will not be allowed due to the aerosol effect produced by the batting of his wings.
8. The choir will be restricted to one person because of the risk of contamination.
9. No shepherd shall be more than 65 yrs old or in a vulnerable category.
10. All non-essential participants (Romans, sinners...) are forbidden.
11. Pilate will explain to all authorised participants how to wash their hands.

Otters in Salisbury

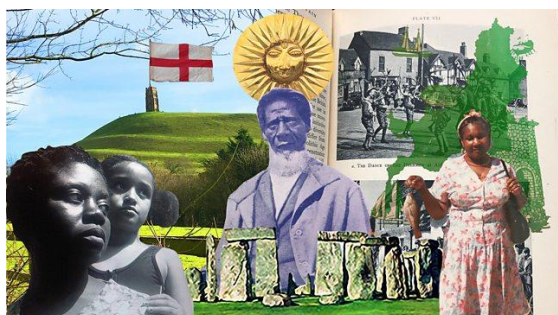
Otters provided an entertaining diversion for crowds of shoppers in Salisbury earlier this month who stopped to enjoy the rare sight of watching the wild otters swimming. The picture is from Clipart, but this video clip was taken by wildlife photographer shopper Beth Trowbridge.



My Albion

Some of you may be aware that the BBC has been running a series of programmes under the title My Albion on Radio 4. (See links to the four programmes below). Shirley first brought our attention to it and is very keen that people think of the implications within the programmes. I have copied her comments below, which she wrote in stages after hearing each programme but of course some of you may have listened to some the episodes and it would be worth hearing about your views in future editions of *The Prancing Pony*.

Mike



- Link to episode 1 The Cuckoo”
[My Albion - The Cuckoo - BBC Sounds](#)

This R4 programme link above, "My Albion" presented by Zakia Sewell is about the tension in her background / roots of being mixed race Caribbean / British and being stirred by the song *The Cuckoo* by Pentangle. It explores British folk music and the character and evolution of Morris with a visit to Boss Morris a women's Cotswold side. It includes a visit to the amazing ancient church of Kilpeck in South Herefordshire which I have visited, which is covered in amazing gargoyles including the *sheelagh na gig*, a female fertility symbol. It's interesting stuff. It looks briefly at face blacking too and the murky, mysterious origins of Morris dancing. The second programme in the series explores the idea of Albion in Wales.

I think English folk is a much-maligned art form of course; we know that I reckon.

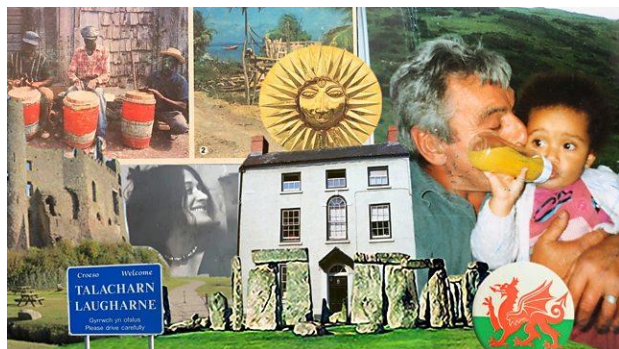
Isn't that partly to do with *British i.e. English colonialism*? (I know many of the colonisers were Scots/Welsh/Irish but they came from brutalised populations as well so they can appreciate *their* folk music more? Whereas the seat of power/oppression is still in Westminster/Eton.) Is it to do with the arrogance of colonising other peoples, exploiting other people and having power over them? Just as the working, ordinary/common people of England have been oppressed for a long time.

Isn't it then a link that needs to be explored between past colonised peoples e.g., Caribbean-British *and* English folk musicians and artists, their culture and followers?...I think Zakiah Sewell is probably quite new to appreciating English folk (which is an expression of ordinary, hardworking, sometimes downtrodden people) but it is a good starting place to have made the program at all. Clearly it needs expanding upon!

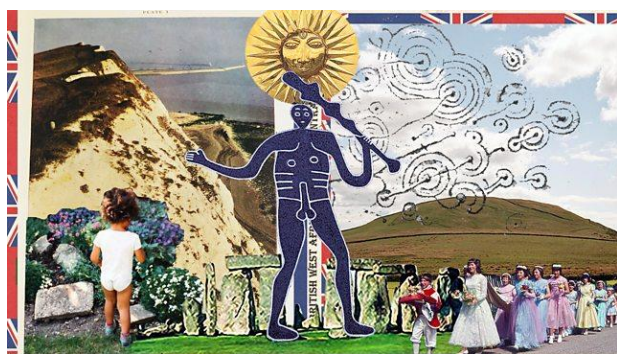
I've just listened to episode 3 and the points I made above are all there in her third program, *400 Years*. This episode (**listen to it I urge you!!**) is about British roots whether you are of any colour, going back 100's of years and how common people have been shut out of their connection with the land by elites. It connects slavery with the Enclosures of Common Land and compensation money paid to slavers' families used to snap up land that had just been enclosed, making it "private, keep out" to ordinary people who were dispossessed of their access to land. The programme explores the idea of belonging.

It includes and folk musician Nick Hart, I think (I must investigate his music), and snatches of Sam Lee singing "Old Wow" which we were entranced by when we had the privilege of seeing him live with several other musicians at Bristol last winter. In answer to the question "Who does the land actually belong to?" Nick Hayes – author and illustrator of *The*

Book of Trespass – replies “very few people” and goes on to discuss the distinction between belonging to the land and having that land belong to you.



- Link to episode 2 “Red Dragon: White Dragon”
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000pmwg>
- Link to episode 3 “400 Years”
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000pffx>
- Link to episode 4 “New Myths”
[BBC Radio 4 - My Albion, New Myths](#)



The programmes explore the sense of nation and belonging and raise lots of questions.

What’s *your* Albion?

101 other uses for Morris Kit

In a creative mood while trying to stave off lockdown blue, Andy Sanderson turned his hand to handkerchief origami and came up with this attractive elf hat.



He challenges you to contribute your ideas for “101 other uses for Morris kit” for this new chapter. ☺



A Mulled Cider Recipe

- Pour 1 litre of apple cider into a large pan and stir in 4 table-spoons of honey together with 5 cloves, 2 cinnamon sticks halved and 1 star anise.
- Simmer for 10 minutes (without boiling). Add 1 red apple, unpeeled but cored and thinly sliced and heat gently until the apple is tender.
- Serve and enjoy.....a nice winter warmer. Serves 4

From Helen Sanderson



Keeping our promises?

No, this section has nothing to do with Boris Johnson, but refers back to an ambition to dance in every village in



Morris Men Coming
THE team of **White Horse Morris** Men, which was formed six months ago, have set themselves the hard task of dancing in every village in Wiltshire

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!**



Picture Time

Within the loose theme of “Generations”.
We start with some pictures from Bob Hill



White Horse went mixed in 2011 and made the new kit at Wylde 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.

Despite the adrenaline produced by a White Horse display, some people always seem to doze off after an event - Mike Perry and John Wippell.



...And like the poor, the one-man mummings play is always with us. St George's Day 2002.



Finally, Seasonal Greetings from Afi and Amma Perry and their descendants.

All items for the next *Prancing Pony* to Mike Perry by Friday 15 January, and preferably sooner.