

Squire's Wedding – April '09

Depending on who you ask, Graham and Laura's big day was either a wedding with a bit of morris entertainment thrown in, or a thinly disguised day of dance with a brief interlude to allow for the nuptials! With such a strong morris tradition in both families, music and dance was always going to be a feature of the day, and an excellent balance was struck, with Icknield and Ridgeway Clog providing a colourful theme to the day without detracting from The Main Event.

The day began in Abingdon where Icknield and Ridgeway boarded a Routemaster double decker bus for the short journey to Marcham, the bride's home village. The Routemaster is acknowledged as a design classic, having given decades of service – somewhat ancient now, and a bit slow and creaky once it gets moving, but nonetheless capable of a few more years if treated gently. Worth noting the synchronicity here – exactly the same has been said of many of the passengers!

Arriving in Marcham, everyone piled into The Crown for a drink or two to set us up for the day ahead, before strolling down to Church Street to form up for the procession. While we waited for the double decker to show up with the other guests/dignitaries/wedding party we took the opportunity to practice our Winsters Processional, and once the bus arrived Icknield and Ridgeway led the way to the church. As every Icknield man was carrying important things like an instrument or a pair of hankies (or in Jim's case, an umbrella?!), that left the Icknield ladies trudging alongside in the traditional wedding outfit of posh frock, posh hat, plus . . . any combination of rucksack/instrument case/stick bag/trolley.

Outside the church Icknield and Ridgeway provided music and dance to keep the guests entertained – IWMM danced Ring of Bells, Black Joke, and Woodley Waltz for 1, 2, and 3, sets respectively. David, who is shortly to become PC Andrews of HM Constabulary, got in some early practice by striding here and there telling people what to do, and generally being very important.

Into the church for the ceremony, and the Icknield choir made a strong contribution to the hymns, with big Bob prominent. Once the ceremony was complete, and the signing of the register was under way in the vestry, the congregation was entertained by a delightful song ('Somewhere along the Road') from Rosanna Murray, accompanied by Sem, and then by the Icknield Concertina Band with 'Elisabeth Claire' and 'MacGuire and Patterson' – Graham was a 'no show'!!

Mr and Mrs Hubbard left the church through an arch of Icknield sticks, and a frenzy of photos and well-wishing ensued. We danced Maid of the Mill around Laura, before herding everyone back on to the bus to return to Abingdon to meet up with ATMD at The Coach and Horses.

All three sides made their way to the Guildhall Arch where a colourful morris display drew a large crowd. Ridgeway finally had a hard surface to dance on, and put on an excellent show, along with Icknield and ATMD, and the dancing went on for over an hour. At various points during the session an unknown side invaded the pitch and gave an impromptu display of Cotswold morris – 'high spirited but lacking finesse' was the general verdict. They bore a striking resemblance to male members of the wedding party, and as the afternoon wore on their side became known as the 'Men in Suits'.

Everyone eventually moved on to the Roysse Room for a welcome glass of champagne and more mingling, before all the musos gathered in a corner and delivered a testosterone driven session, which even the groom found time to join in on.

Having made our way upstairs into the Guildhall for the wedding breakfast, several Icknield box squeezers played a tune for the happy couple, written especially for the occasion by Sem (in 3 keys!). However, it hadn't been possible to practice together as Graham had always been around, so prior to the 'live' performance the piece only existed in cyberspace as an MP3 file, and we'd all practiced it on our own. All things considered it transitioned fairly well from 'virtual' orchestra to 'live' performance, and was well received by an audience who were by this time quite mellow.

After the meal came the speeches, each one treating the audience to a different style of oratory - Martin opted for informal, while Graham tended towards functional. And finally the 'joint' best men Ally and Ben, who produced a marathon double act which even those who were there still find hard to describe! It was all high energy, knockabout stuff, delivered in a style that showed influences of both Music Hall and Laurel and Hardy, and whatever it lacked in quality it certainly made up for in quantity. Highly entertaining!

Icknield delivered their final contribution ('Happy Man', Adderbury) during the evening ceilidh, and the groom, along with a few friends from the '18 to 30 Morris', danced 'Leapfrog'.

All in all, a memorable occasion, with IWMM mustering 20 plus men (and partners) to help Mr and Mrs Hubbard celebrate their big day.

Len Ash