



2018 – 2019

SEASON

“OUR 60TH”



ICKNIELD WAY MORRIS MEN 60th YEAR - 2019 PROGRAMME

www.icknieldwaymorrismen.org.uk



APRIL

Tuesday 23rd St George's Day -
Fox & Hounds, Uffington, 8pm

MAY

Wednesday 1st May Day - Oxford, 6am &
Wantage, 12.30pm
Saturday 4th Highworth May Fair, 11am
Wednesday 8th Blue Boar, Aldbourne, 8pm
Thursday 16th The Fox, Denchworth, 8pm
with Cry Havoc
Wednesday 22nd The Plough, Finstock, 8pm
with Ilmington, Charlbury & Adderbury
Saturday 25th Chippenham Folk Festival
Monday 27th Whit Monday, Bampton, 5pm
as Stanton Harcourt Morris
Wednesday 29th New Calley Arms, Wanborough

JUNE

Wednesday 5th The Bell, Grove, 8pm
with Cornucopia Apalachian & British Clog
Friday 7th Pop up Pub, Childrey, 8pm
Wednesday 12th The Bell, Aldworth, 8pm
with Kennet Morris Men

Wednesday 29th Ferryman, Bablock Hythe, 8pm
as Stanton Harcourt, with Eynsham & Kirtlington
Wednesday 5th Stanton Harcourt Fete, 1pm
as Stanton Harcourt
Childrey Fete, 3.45pm
The Bell, 8pm & The Folly,
9pm, Faringdon

Friday 7th
Wednesday 12th

JULY

Wednesday 3rd The Chequers,
with Vale Islanders Charney Basset, 8pm
The Horse & Jockey,
Stanford in the Vale, 9pm
Day of Dance, Reading
Saturday 6th guests of Kennet Morris Men
Wednesday 10th The Prince of Wales,
Shrivenham, 8pm
Saturday 20th Tour of the Cotswolds,
celebrating our 60th year!
Plum Pudding, Milton, 8pm
Wednesday 31st
with Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers

AUGUST

Wednesday 7th The Fox, Denchworth, 8pm
with our German Twinning friends
Thursday 15th Boars Head, Ardington
with Old Speckled Hen North West Morris

Saturday 17th White Horse Folk Festival/
with invited guests 60th Day of Dance
see whitehorsefolkfestival.co.uk
Thursday 22nd Rose & Crown, Ashbury, 8pm
Monday 26th White Horse Show, Uffington
Wednesday 28th King & Queen, Longcot, 8pm
Saturday 31st Wallingford BunkFest

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 4th Beginners night, 8.15pm.
All welcome! Grove Scout Hut
Saturday 7th OctoberWest - West Berkshire
Brewery, Yattendon
Sunday 22nd Crofton Beam Engines Steam
Gala, Great Bedwyn

DECEMBER

Friday 6th Dickensian Evening, Wantage,
7.30pm
Wednesday 18th Carols in the King Alfred's
Head, Wantage, 9pm
Thursday 26th The Wantage Mummings
Faringdon, 10am
Wantage, 12 noon
Childrey, 1.15pm
see more at wantagemummings.org.uk





Men

<i>Pete Abel</i>	<i>Len Ash</i>	<i>Clive Blunt</i>	<i>Sem Seaborne</i>
<i>Ian Weedon</i>	<i>Simon Weston</i>	<i>Jonathan Marriot</i>	<i>Jim Birch</i>
<i>Pete McLoughlin</i>	<i>Pete Ambidge</i>	<i>Dafydd Jones</i>	<i>Steve Dagnall</i>
<i>Graham Hubbard</i>	<i>Paul Gilman</i>	<i>Jon Ambidge</i>	<i>Matt Gerring</i>
<i>Pete Bradley</i>	<i>Richard Browning</i>	<i>Steve Trinder</i>	

And Richard Stevens when he is not in the Phillippines

September to May
The Practice Season



Dickensian Evening

7 December 2018



And we managed to fit into the pub for a few beers



Carols at Alfred's Head



A reasonable turn out for our usual Christmas event

Wantage Mummers Boxing Day 2018



Special business led to "Bob" getting a walk-on



There really is nothing which can be decently said about this Molly.

Unlike King Alf who is just being bold before setting about a "gilet jeune"





They fight (King Alf's enthusiastic performance left him wounded in the knee and he was not seen at IW practices for some weeks)



Same old jokes



All went as normal until Beau Slasher was killed when a dispute broke out over whether The Doctor should LEAVE or REMAIN. To settle this Father Christmas stopped the action and called a referendum in which he was assisted by "Bob" (a representative of the Electoral Commission who happened to be watching). Unfortunately, the referendum result was then disputed and a tug of war over The Doctor ensued.



This was ended by Molly getting the play back on track by sweeping the protagonists off and calling on Jack Vinney



Happy Jack then asked for the usual donations



And OFB gave us a few wise words



Collected £1679

This was added to WM Book sales of
£110 and a gift of £210.57 from
Icknield Way MM

The total was donated to:

Helen & Douglas House £1750

Young Epilepsy £250



This photo was on The Guardian website as one of the best pictures of Boxing Day

Museum Wassail – 5 Jan 2018



Here
we come a
Wassailing!

Join the Icknield Way Morris Men as they lead us through the wassail ceremony to usher in the new year. Join in with traditional old English customs at this free family event. Craft activities start at 10.30am and ceremony begins at 12 noon.

Saturday 5 January
10.30am - 12.30pm

Vale & Downland Museum
Church Street, Wantage OX12 8BL
T 01235 771447 E vale.downland@gmail.com
Open Mon - Sat 9.30am - 4pm



Vale & Downland Museum
Wantage

V&D Museum asked us to run a Wassail to ensure the good health of their recently planted apple trees. For a first-off it was reasonably attended and the museum staff were suitably grateful.



Processing to the trees on the top terrace



The Butler and the Lady (holding cider and toast) in full voice – assisted by the Men – with a few dances to follow.



The toasted tree – long way to go to full size!



TWIGS Wassail – 12 Jan 2018



This year not only a Butler but
a very impressive Green Man





Newspaper reporters looking younger all the time

There were good pictures and video on Swindon Advertiser website

TWIGS were very grateful for our input to a successful event. They made over £500, a 70% increase over last year



Kennet Ale
16 February 2019



There were about 100 present – usual selection of sides which included Victory and a side which featured two tapdancers





As ever it was pickled eggs followed by chilli



14 Club
11 March 2019



Enthusiastic dancing enthusiastically received



It's that song again

St Georges Day
Fox & Hounds – Uffington



A bit of a grey evening for the opening of the season but a decent show was put on. The Squire (mind my back) managed his first dancing for seven weeks. This was also the first night on which the Man of the Match (a Jon Ambidge inspiration) was awarded – to Pete Bradley. Sarnies in the pub accompanied a good session.

May Morning



A bit of a grey start but it brightened up during the day. Working the Oxpens ticket machine was a bit fraught – we thought we were helping Ian until he said “I know what my car number is, it’s the buttons I can’t read” and after Graham had given the button a swipe he said “Oh, it’s a real one”

Numbers were down on previous years, although BBC reckoned it was 13,000, and there were also fewer morris, Teddy Hall was only half full for breakfast. The Fool was interviewed by Radio Oxford and a photo of us was on the BBC website. We did a good spot at Charlton School – the kids were delighted to see all their teachers doing Bonny Green. Wantage Market was as usual very quiet and we ended up at The Bear for a session. We had previously arranged with Kings Arms to go there – but when we turned up he said he was shut and didn’t open until 14.00!





Article from BBC Website

Thousands attend May morning celebration in Oxford



More than 13,000 people attended this year's event

Thousands of people gathered in the centre of Oxford for the city's traditional May morning celebration.

The annual event celebrating spring dates back centuries and sees crowds congregate outside Magdalen College at 06:00 BST. Bells rung out across the city for about 20 minutes after choristers sang Hymnus Eucharisticus from the Great

Tower of the college. Oxford City Council said more than 13,000 people had attended.



Media Many believe the origins of the May morning celebration date from around 1505 when the Great Tower at Magdalen College was completed and the college chose to sing in the spring. The event has taken place each year in its current form since the 17th Century when Hymnus Eucharisticus - the song sung by the choir - was written by Benjamin Rogers. This year also saw the choir sing the Wizard of Oz classic, Somewhere over the Rainbow.

The May morning celebration continued with Morris dancing and folk singing in Radcliffe Square, Catte Street and Broad Street before roads reopened at 09:00.

Many students choose to stay up all night prior to the celebration and numerous pubs, cafes, and restaurants opened early to provide breakfast and refreshments.



ncing continued after the ringing of the bells

Highworth Fayre

4 May 2019



After waiting for Calamity Jane to get through her act (show running 20 mins late after only an hour!) we got on to wake the audience up in the Square. After lunch it was an even tighter than usual performance outside the King & Queen.



The Blue Boar – Aldbourne

8 May 2019



A dark evening but a warm welcome



The Fox – Denchworth – 16 May 2019

With Cry Havoc



Cry Havoc brought along a couple of dancers from Australia – Belswagger Morris based in Brisbane



The Plough – Finstock – 22 May 2019
With Charlebury, Ilmington & Adderbury



Many morrismen expanded the population of Finstock as we had four sides out. A fine evening with a good session in an hospitable pub.



Charlebury



Ilmington



Adderbury



And us

Chippenham Folk Festival

26 May 2019



Persuaded the bar to open – but no time for lunch in our schedule



IW supporting action on plastic



Welsh dancers- including the Sweyn's Ey man who taught the Fool to dance





Graham, Greg and Ben R put in an appearance



Bampton
Whit Monday 2019



Our first visit since 2014 when we also appeared as SH but with the other side. This time we had better weather but a bit less well organised tour and session. The only other side dancing with TBMD was Thames Valley. We were a bit thin on fit men but put on a decent show – big hand for the less experienced SH dancers who came good.





The hosts dancing at the Town Hall and SH doing Maid of the Mill with Mat's mum



We had a session in The Talbot which was basically us plus Paul Smith and another Bampton muso, only a couple of Bampton onlookers and a boisterous crowd of locals (some well drunk). This did not look promising but a couple of tunes were well received and then silly songs went down well. The drunks performed Wild Rover (twice) and a song in which not one comprehensible word got out of their mouths. So that's how the session went on – a couple of good tunes and then some audience participation. Then halfway through a couple of old boys came in – ratting caps, keepers tweeds and sticks. Appears they were from Stanton Harcourt and the one with massive watchchain offered a song – a fine rendition of Joe the Carter's Lad. He sung a couple of others during the evening – including an animated performance of the Galloping Major. So in a funny old way it was a good night.

New Calley Arms – Wanborough

29 May 2019



A massive turnout for a grey night at the Bagman's local. Note presence of David Andrews even though there was no food on offer (just free beer from an hospitable landlord). We were supported by an Owlswick duo.



The Bell – Grove – 5 June 2019

With Cornucopia



Another grey evening but spirited dancing (occasionally) and a good pub session.



Childrey Pop-Up Pub

7 June 2019



Yet another grey evening but a large audience, free beer and pizza and a spirited session.

The Bell – Aldworth – 12 June 2019

With Kennett MM



Kennett make their traditional start (aided by an IW brolly holder)



IW respond as the incessant drizzle falls. Despite the weather a good night with the usual hospitality from the landlord.

The Ferryman – Bablock Hythe

19 June 2019

Stanton Harcourt with Kirtlington and Eynsham



The hosts



Eynsham



Kirtlington (assisted by Pete North)



A lucky hat passed on
to SH by Kirtlington

**Stanton Harcourt Fete
And Childrey Fete
22 June 2019**



Our traditional double header fete day



The Bell and The Folly - Faringdon

26 June 2019



Faringdon was full of purple bikes!

It was not full of people- cos it was grey and cold but a few brave souls came out. This included the mayor who was given a 60th badge as a reward for civic duty.





Ah, there they are

Where is every body



The Lucky Hat passed to us by Stanton Harcourt

Getting ready to go on at The Folly



The usual Folly session

The Chequers, Charney Basset and The Horse & Jockey, Stamford in the Vale

3 July 2019

With Vale Islanders



Satisfactory billing



IW vigour contrasts
with Islanders more
sedate approach





The traditional Rose Tree round the war memorial



In gathering gloom at the Horse and Jockey





But inside was all sweetness and light as usual and we were treated to a blast on an uncommon instrument



Kennet Day of Dance

6 July 2019



The hosts do their traditional starting dance



First stop the Town Hall with Windsor Morris



Next stop Broad Street West with Borderline (note presence of a split personality)



Followed by lunch and a session




Back to Broad Street West with Berkshire Bedlam





Then Broad Street East with Basingclog

And finally back to the Three Guineas where we did Jockey to the Fair (SH) as a show dance. We also passed the Lucky Hat onto Kennet.



THE KENNET MORRIS MEN


WILL PERFORM
TRADITIONAL MORRIS DANCES
KENNET DAY OF DANCE

READING TOWN CENTRE- 6TH JULY 2019

The seven morris sides meet outside the Three Guineas at 10:30am - Kennet may even do a dance to start the day. Dancing starts at 11:00am (full schedule below) and carries on to our Massed Dancing at 4pm on Station Hill, next to Reading Railway Station. We will all do a couple of show dances, some massed dances and then retire to the Hope Tap (JD Wetherspoon). There may be an opportunity for music and dance outside afterwards.

Time	Town Hall Square	Broad Street East	Broad Street West
11:00	Icknield Way	Kennet	Borderline
	Windsor	Berkshire Bedlam	Yateley
		Basingclog	
12:00	Berkshire Bedlam	Basingclog	Icknield Way
	Yateley	Windsor	Borderline
			Kennet
14:00	Basingclog	Windsor	Berkshire Bedlam
	Borderline	Kennet	Icknield Way
		Yateley	
15:00		Basingclog	Borderline
	Kennet	Yateley	Windsor
		Icknield Way	Berkshire Bedlam
16:00	Show Dances and Massed Dances outside Reading Railway Station.		
18:00	Retire to the Hope Tap (JD Wetherspoon) pub		

WWW.KENNETMORRISMEN.CO.UK



The

The Prince of Wales - Shrivenham

10 July 2019



A decent audience and a good session inside and outside the hospitable pub



The 60th Anniversary Cotswold Tour
with Kennet Morris Men
20 July 2019



Current Side and Middling Men went on tour with our friends Kennet





It had poured with rain the day before but the sun was out as we waited for the coach in Grove



First stop was Burford where we danced at The Tolsey



And by The Mermaid



Next up was Bourton-on-the-Water dancing at Kingsbridge



And on The Green (Icknield)



And ditto (Kennet)



When they were not at the pub



Much collecting was done all day by our "main man", Pete Abel, and Kennet's Chris Hutchinson



Then to Stow-on-the-Wold Festival where IW started with a two set Bampton



Followed turn-about with Kennet



Until we finished with a massed Vandals and then went to The Bell for lunch.
(Our collection at this venue, ~£50, was donated to the charities the festival supports)



After a snooze on the bus we danced in Woodstock Market Place.....



....with concertinas for Bampton....



.....viewed with critical eyes...



.....and with Kennet still going strong



Finally (by permission of the Duke of Marlborough) dancing on Church Green, Witney



Where what passes for youth



.....put on a vigorous display

Once back in Wantage we adjourned to The Bear for the feast



60th Participants

Blue Team	Yellow Team
Pete Ambidge – Team Lead	Clive Blunt – Team Lead
Sem Seaborne	Graham Hubbard
Paul Smith	Simon Weston
Steve Dagnall	Len Ash
Matt Gerring	Jonathan Marriott
Ben Higgs	Pete Smith
Pete Bradley	Jim Birch
Pete McLoughlin	Pete Abel
Steve Trinder	David Andrews
Greg Abel	Richard Browning
Harry Abel	Steve Coad
Ray Springthorpe	Ian Weeden
Ben Robinson	Martin Foster
	Alastair Hutchison

Plus Richard Stevens who attended the feast and Bob Helm who dropped in briefly

As guests there were fourteen Kennet Morris Men

.....

The Middling Men



The Bens (Higgs & Robinson)



Martin Forster



Greg & Harry Abel



Ali Hutchinson



Ray Springthorpe



David Andrews



Steve Coad






Pete Smith



Paul Smith



The limited edition 60th badge

<p style="text-align: center;">MORRIS DANCING IN WANTAGE</p> <p>Churchwarden's records indicate that morris dancing took place in Wantage between the years 1550-1650 with payments being made for bells, costumes, and musicians. There was a brief resurgence in 1885 for the Lockinge Revels but the main revival began during the 1950's and was due to Mary Shunn, the Deputy Head Teacher of Icknield School. She was a member of the Oxford branch of the EFDSS through which she met many people associated with morris dancing around Oxfordshire & Berkshire. She was a close friend of Charlie Kimber at Headington, (William's cousin), and had helped to maintain the Whitsun dancing in Headington during the War.</p> <p>She taught country dancing and morris but as a staunch traditionalist only taught boys the latter skill. One evening in September 1958 some ex-schoolboys from Icknield decided to ask Mary to start an evening club for morris and the team has met on Wednesday nights ever since. Mary would not play for their dancing outside the classroom and when they started touring she asked male musicians from other sides to play for them, notably Ian Dunmur (Kennet), John White (Abingdon), and Bob Weaver (Oxford City). The first permanent IWMM musician was Joe Marnes joining in 1967.</p> <p>The lads who created IWMM were local Wantagians but many men who moved into the area from other regions for work and business reasons were drawn to their ranks, particularly engineers and scientists. Nevertheless one of those original men, Bob Hart, remained a supporter and latterly President of the team until his death in 2017. The team was supported by The Morris Ring from the early 60's and formally joined at the Stratford meeting in 1975.</p> <p>We have maintained a close relationship with Kennet MM over 60 years, with a joint tour of France, Germany & Switzerland in 2011, meeting at least once a year, joint members, and in 2007 being united in marriage when Allister Hutchinson of Kennet married Sarah Foster the daughter of the IWMM Squire Martin Foster.</p> 	  <p style="text-align: center;">60th Anniversary</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cotswold Tour</p> <p style="text-align: center;">With Kennet Morris Men</p> <p style="text-align: center;">20th July 2019</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">TODAY'S DANCING & DRINKING STOPS</p> <p>BURFORD We shall be dancing at the Mermaid and The Tolsey as 2 separate groups. Please do not obstruct the pedestrian walkways. The Mermaid is open from 10 am.</p> <p>Historically there was a Burford morris team that danced at Sherborne Manor in the 1700's and when the Duke of Marlborough entered Burford in a coach, in 1753, he was preceded by a "long train" including morris dancers. (Jackson's Oxford Journal). The Rissington team regularly danced at the Burford Hiring Fairs in the mid-19th C. (September) and the renowned Sherborne morris dancer and mummer, Thos. Pill played melodeon and sung at the Hiring Fairs in the 1790's when there was an indigenous Burford side.</p> <p>BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER Dancing today will be close to the Kingsbridge Pub but on the hard standing near the Riverside Café and not on the Green as the council are worried about the survival of the grass after last year!</p> <p>There are no records of a local Bourton morris team but Bourton is notable for 2 events. Lots of visiting teams from Rissington, Wyck and Stow used to dance at the Manor and Sherborne and Northleach used to visit. The infamous Sherborne piper (and drinker) Jim "The Laddie" Simpson (James Simpson MacDonald) died in Bourton on a tour of club feasts in 1856 – "he became so drunk that he died from the effects of it." Musos please take it easy today.</p> <p>STOW-on-the-WOLD Today we are participating in the Cotswold Festival. We need to walk to the Market Square from the bus drop-off. All the action centres on Stow's atmospheric Square – which witnessed a key historical event. At the ancient Market Cross, the leader of the Royalist troops surrendered to the Parliamentarians at the 1646 Battle of Stow, the last major skirmish in the First English Civil War. There will of course be all the usual craft stalls and razzmatazz.</p> <p>A team of Stow morris dancers danced in Bourton in the 1700's, and in 1730 a Stow minister criticised "the evil and pernicious consequences of Whitsun Ales and recreations at such events, buffoonery and morris dancing – nothing else but reliques of paganism! Records show that Longborough visited Stow and Stow was believed to be a possible site for the elimination contest determining which morris team would be selected to dance on Dover's Hill for the annual games (Cotswold Olympics). (1840's). In 1865 a side performed in Stow with "grotesque movements" creating great amusement. Feel free Kennet!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TODAY'S DANCING & DRINKING STOPS</p> <p>LUNCH – THE BELL, STOW After our Market Square performance we shall be having a lunch break at the ancient Bell Inn. Retrace your steps to the Mangersbury road and head east past the Porch House. The Bell is opposite the main coach park.</p> <p>WOODSTOCK We're back in Oxfordshire and the bus will drop us at the Market Place and outside the Star.</p> <p>In 1705 3 teams danced in Woodstock to mark the laying of the foundation stones for Blenheim Palace. The teams were described as one of young fellows, one of maidens and one of olde beldames. Well we can be a bunch of old women at times so...</p> <p>Woodstock was a popular place for Whitsun Ales, much patronised by the Duke of Marlborough. An advertisement in 1789 said "an ale will be held by the youths of the Towne". It was also reported in 1800. The final Ale took place in 1851. In 1790 there was a procession through the streets of Woodstock that included "an excellent and well attired company of morris dancers." They were marching to Blenheim Palace to celebrate "the glorious victory of 1st June in the war with the French." In 1837 Woodstock boasted the finest May Pole ever seen with rural sports, the tabor, pipe and fiddle and an excellent set of morris dancers.</p> <p>WITNEY The bus will drop us the Lees to walk through to Church Green and the Fleece.</p> <p>The first recorded morris dancing in Witney was in 1646, by some "6 or 7 country fellows with Napkins and Scarves and Ribbons tied about them, and bells at their knees, according to the manner of that sport, and with them a Mayd Marian, and two foolies, who fell a dancing and capering." This was entertainment for visiting Cavaliers at the Witney Wakes. In 1852 morris dancers were the "leading actors" in the Whitsuntide activities and the legendary musician, John Potter of Stanton Harcourt was known to accompany the dancing here.</p> <p>Witney was the central town for the festivities and celebrations for the Whit Hunt in Wychwood Forest (much bigger in those days) involving villagers and dancers from Ducklington, Brize Norton, Finstock, Leafield (Fieldtown), Bampton, etc. Money was collected in Witney to fund the local village Ales particularly in Ducklington.</p>
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Wedding Reception in Hook

27 July 2019



We had a good turn-out and our efforts were appreciated.



The Plum Pudding - Milton

30 July



A smart set



The Fox – Denchworth – 7 August 2019
Performing for German Twins



IW put on a show for the party from Seesen. Who responded with a bit of yodelling.



The Boars Head – Ardington – 15 August 2019
With OSH



A fine evening with the usual hospitality from the landlady

WHFF – The 60th Day of Dance

19 August 2019



10:30 - 11:15

All teams dance next to the Horse (except Ridgeway but with Cry Havoc))

11:15 – 11:45

Bear Forecourt

Ridgeway

11:30 – 12:00

Fox & Hounds

IWMM

12:00 - 12:30

Bear Forecourt
King Alfred's head

Rose Hips & Owlswick
Garston Gallopers & Ridgeway

13:30 - 14:00

Bear Forecourt
King Alfred's Head

IWMM & Garston Gallopers
Ridgeway, Owlswick & Rose Hips

15:00 – 15:30

Bay Tree, Grove
Volunteer, Grove

IWMM, Owlswick & Summertown
Garston Gallopers, Rose Hips & Ridgeway

16:00 – 16:30

Bay Tree, Grove
Volunteer, Grove

Garston Gallopers, Rose Hips & Ridgeway
IWMM, Owlswick & Summertown

17:00 – 17:30

The Bell, Grove

All teams final dance(s)

18:00 – 19:30

Old Mill Hall, Grove

Cheese, bread, pickle or bring your own take away
Licensed bar from 6pm, music/song session.....

20:00 – 23:30

Ceilidh Old Mill Hall; Cock & Bull Band, spot from James Findlay



High speed drizzle
greeted the dancers
on White Horse Hill





Followed by sunny intervals





Lunch at the Fox & Hounds for IWMM



Followed by dancing at The Bear with Garston Gallopers





The Originals
(Graham Pearce,
Derek Hunt, Tony
Wykeham, Colin
Pearce, Ian Hermon)
discuss dances with
the Squire

Ian Hermon
appears on
behalf of The
Originals

And we finish
with a massed
Bonney Green





At the Bay Tree we danced with Owlswick

Where Original Man
Dickie Evans joined us



We were joined
by Summertown
at The Volunteer



A side which includes Joe Marns' grand-daughter



And finally everybody danced at The Bell





Where Garston Gallopers
gave us a 60th birthday card



Old and Young (!) and forever Icknield Way



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facebook.com/oxfordmail



Follow us
@theoxfordmail

▲ Morris Men hit heights for anniversary dance



Dancers gathered on White Horse Hill ahead of visiting different venues for the White Horse Folk Festival.

Picture: Ed Nix

DANCERS graced one of the county's highest spots for a feast of folk music.

The annual White Horse Folk Festival, at Uffington, near Wantage, was a particularly

significant occasion for Wantage's Icknield Way Morris Men, who celebrated 60 years since their formation with a day of dancing around the local area.

After performing on the hill –

where they were joined by Owlswick, Ridgeway Clog, Rose Hips, Cry Havoc and Summertown morris dancing sides – they had a walking tour of Wantage and Grove, before an evening supper

followed by a ceilidh. Six of the side's original dancers performed.

Treasurer Sem Seaborne said: "There was a big finish at the Bell public house in Grove with all the teams dancing together."

Oxford Mail: Right Event – Wrong Side

(There were more photos on Mail's website)

The Rose & Crown - Ashbury

22 August 2019



We enjoyed the usual warm welcome and hospitality

White Horse Show

25 August 2019

It's White Horse Show so it's ...



...meet at the beer tent...



...dance here....



...dance there.....



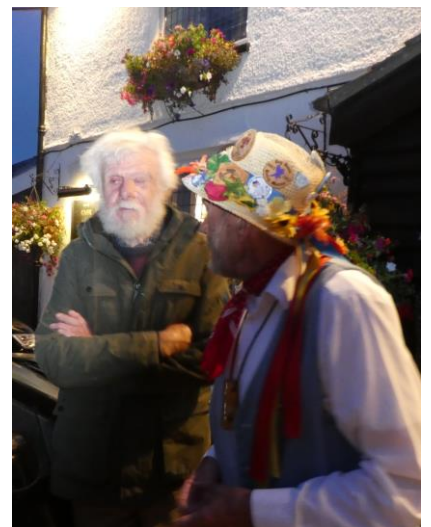
...then back to the beer tent for a last dance before going to Simon's BBQ

King & Queen - Longcot

28 August 2019



The last of the season dance-out played under floodlights. We had a good reception at a pub we had not danced at for decades and had the pleasure of talking to Old Boy Keith (now 88?) who presented Sem with his original set of bells



Bunkfest – 31 August 2019



We started in the Market Place with Chiltern Hundreds (cos Wicket Brood was a no-show)

Then in Kinecroft with Enigma





After lunch it was The Dolphin with Seven Champions
Which included IW countryman Graham Lee (who did "signposts" with us)

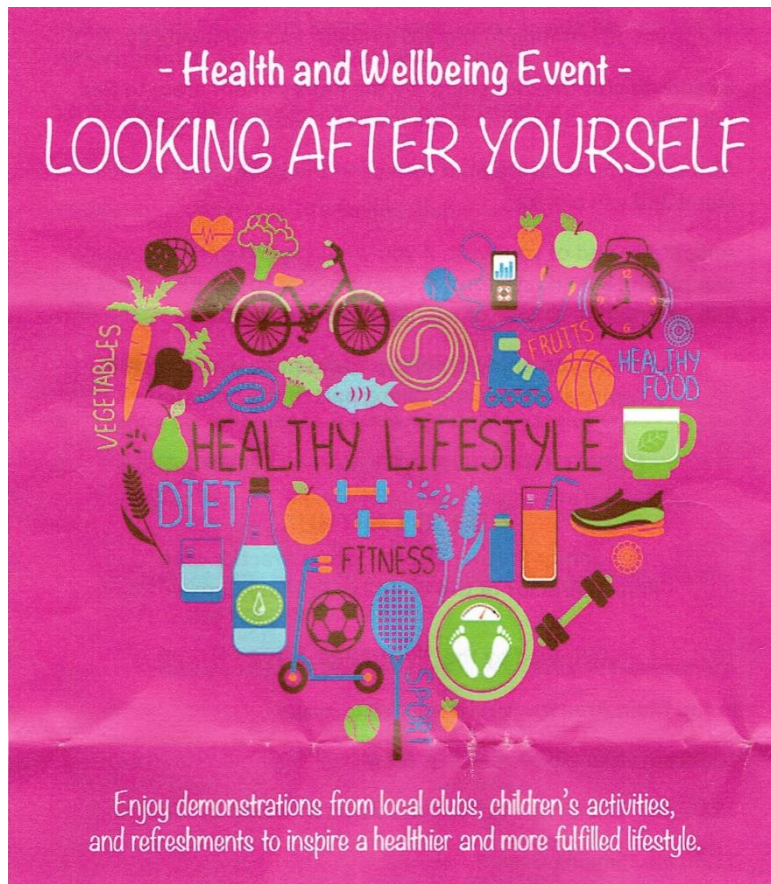




Finally we danced in a tent at the railway with Aldbrickham Clog

Health Centre Wellbeing

21 Sept 2019



Apart from attending an Uffington birthday party that was the end of the season. Our usual appearances at WBB Octoberwest and Crofton Beam Engine having fallen through

So it was back to the Scout Hut for winter practice



MISCELLANEOUS



Sometimes I sits and thinks and sometimes I just sits

Anniversary Song

Oh list, oh list, an historical rhyme,
When back in nineteen fifty nine,
Some lads were wondering how to spend
their time,
And it led to morris dancing.

They stood around the Market Place feeling
blue,
It was Wantage Town, there was nothing to
do,
What happened next is totally true,
They said "How about morris dancing?"

'Cos at Icknield School they'd had a lotta fun,
So they went to see old Mary Shunn,
To see if she would show 'em how it should
be done
And learn about morris dancing.

They went to see her on a Wednesday night,
And she showed them how to do it right,
Those lads they made such a wonderful sight,
With their skills at morris dancing.

The lads enjoyed their morris treats,
They said the world should see our feats,
We should take our dancing out in the streets,
And show off our morris dancing.

But Mary said "Don't go too soon,
'Cos I'm the one who plays the tune,
And I can't get my piano.... out of this room,
To play for your morris dancing."

But the lads said "It's not as bad as it seems,
We'll get help from other teams,
Old Ian at Kennet will deliver our dreams,
And play for our morris dancing."

So they got help from another side,
And soon they were touring the countryside,
And their fame then grew both far and wide,
For their skills at morris dancing.

Then came the answer to their qualms,
An accordion player called Jolly Joe Marns,
Would play for them in pubs and barns,
And accompany their morris dancing.

Joe thought morris an important thing,
And he taught the lads to dance and sing,
And in seventy five we joined the Ring,
To learn about morris dancing.

Over the years men moved away,
But more men came who could sing and play,
And the team grew stronger day by day,
And so did our morris dancing.

So we've had a few fights and there's been a
few tears,
But we've had a few laughs and drunk a few
beers,
But we never thought the bloody thing would
last for SIXTY YEARS,
That's the power of morris dancing.

So now kind friends I'll bid you adieu,
No more with history I'll bore you,
'Cos we've got songs and tunes for you,
From sixty years of morris dancing.

Sem Seaborne 2019

Tune "I'll Go Enlist", Traditional

Book Review: 'In Comes I: Forty Years of the Wantage Mummers'

The Wantage Mummers started in 1975, and perform every Boxing Day in the open at three locations in and around Wantage, Oxfordshire (formerly Berkshire). Their play is a typical hero-combat play, based on a version from Steventon, with the addition of local hero King Alfred and topical variations. The Mummers play to large audiences, who wait eagerly for the end of the play when Old Father Beelzebub recites a long piece of doggerel. This comprises satirical verses summarising the key events, national and local, from the foregoing year. Most of this book is an anthology of these verses from 1989 onwards.

Doggerel (their word) accurately describes the poetic quality of the verses, but it is just the ticket for this type of humour, which I feel is above average. To give you a flavour, here is a verse from the 2015 speech that should remain topical for a few years yet:

Now, politics answer to Forest Gump,
Coming soon, Donald Trump;
Extreme views that shouldn't be said,
And a ginger cat stuck on his head.

There are explanatory footnotes for each year to help those readers who are too young to remember the event covered, and those of us are old enough to have forgotten them.

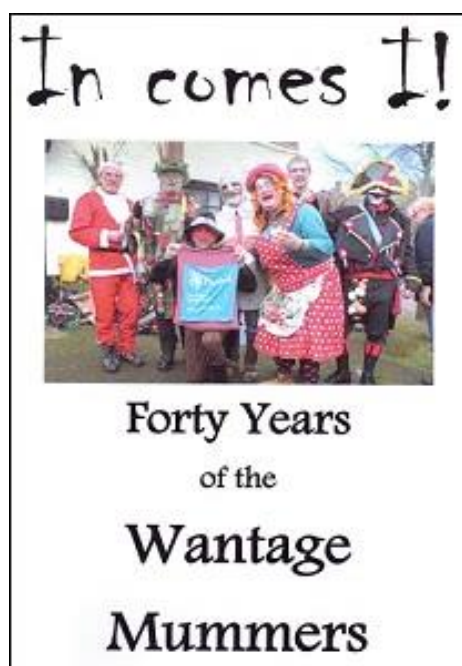
The book starts with a brief introduction to mummers' and guisers' plays in general, and Oxfordshire plays in particular. This is one of the best I have seen - factually sound and readable. It is followed by a slightly longer history of Wantage Mummers' 40 years which is similarly informative and entertainingly written, and this is accompanied by a selection of photographs of the group taken over the years.

The book meant as a bit of fun, but also has a serious purpose. It is being sold in aid of several charities, listed in the book, and is available from:

<http://shop.icknielldwaymorrismen.org.uk/in-comes-i.html>. Snap one up while stocks last and prepare yourself for a good chortle.

Peter Millington

From Master Mummers website



I be the nawble Dr Squires.....

THE INFALLIBLE DOCTOR.



1
From France, from Spain, from Rome I come,
And from all Parts of Christendom,
For to cure all strange diseases,
Come take physick he that pleases:
Come ye broken Maids that scatter,
And can never hold your water,
I can teach you to keep;
And other things are very meet,
As, groaning backward in your sleep.....

2
Come an ugly dirty whore,
That is at best Throglow or more,
Whose face and nose stands all awry,
As if you'd fear to pass her by;
I can make her plump and young,
Lusty lively and also strong,
Honest, active, fit to wed,
And can recall her Maiden head:
All this is done as soon as said.

3
If any man has got a Wife,
That makes him weary of his Life,
With scolding, yoking in the house,
As tho' the Devil was turn'd loose;
Let him but repair to me,
I can cure her presently
With one Pill I'll make her civil,
And rid her Husband of that evil,
Or send her headlong to the Devil.....

4
The Pox, the Palsy, and the Gout,
Pains within, and Aches without,
There is no disease but I
Can find a present remedy:
Broken Legs and Arms, I'm sure,
For the worst Wounds I cure:
Now more than that I will maintain,
Break your Neck, I'll set it again,
Or give you nothing for my pain.....

5
Or if any man do chide,
To vent a blow to fight against Trade,
I'll put him in one, if he be willing,
Shall make him fight out no fear killing
Or any one that has been dead,
Seven long years and buried;
I can him to life restore,
And make him merry as he was before,
Else let him never trust me more.....

6
If any man desire to live
A thousand age, let him give
Me a thousand pounds, and I
Will warrant him Life while he do:
Now more I'll teach him a better trick,
Shall keep him well, if he ne'er be sick:
But if I ne'er say so,
And he with sickness troubled be,
Then he may thank himself not me.....



Printed and Sold by Sutton Nicholls against y^e George Inn in Aldersgate St. ret.

This broadsheet of 1740 contains the lines

The pox, the palsy and the gout

Pains within and pains without

THE BAGMANS CUP



A “man of the match” award instituted by Jonny Ambidge for the most deserving dancer on a Wednesday dance-out

Jolly Joe Marns

Icknield created a dance to commemorate Joe Marns, long time president, foreman, musician and dancer who died in 1998. That was before the electronic archive so it is reproduced below to ensure a digital record is kept.

Song:

*In the Vale of White Horse there's a man they all know,
For his music in pubs and in barns;
He taught us the dances we have in our show,
We're dancing for Jolly Joe Marns*

Dance:

*(Left Foot Start)
Foot Up Twice
DF
Cross Over Belly to Belly
DF
Back-to-Back and into line
DF
Whole Rounds*

DF (Distinctive Figure)

*Sidestep left, sidestep right, caper and clap twice
advance x1ds, jump and signpost,
x2 backsteps to place and jump*





Arthur Wright

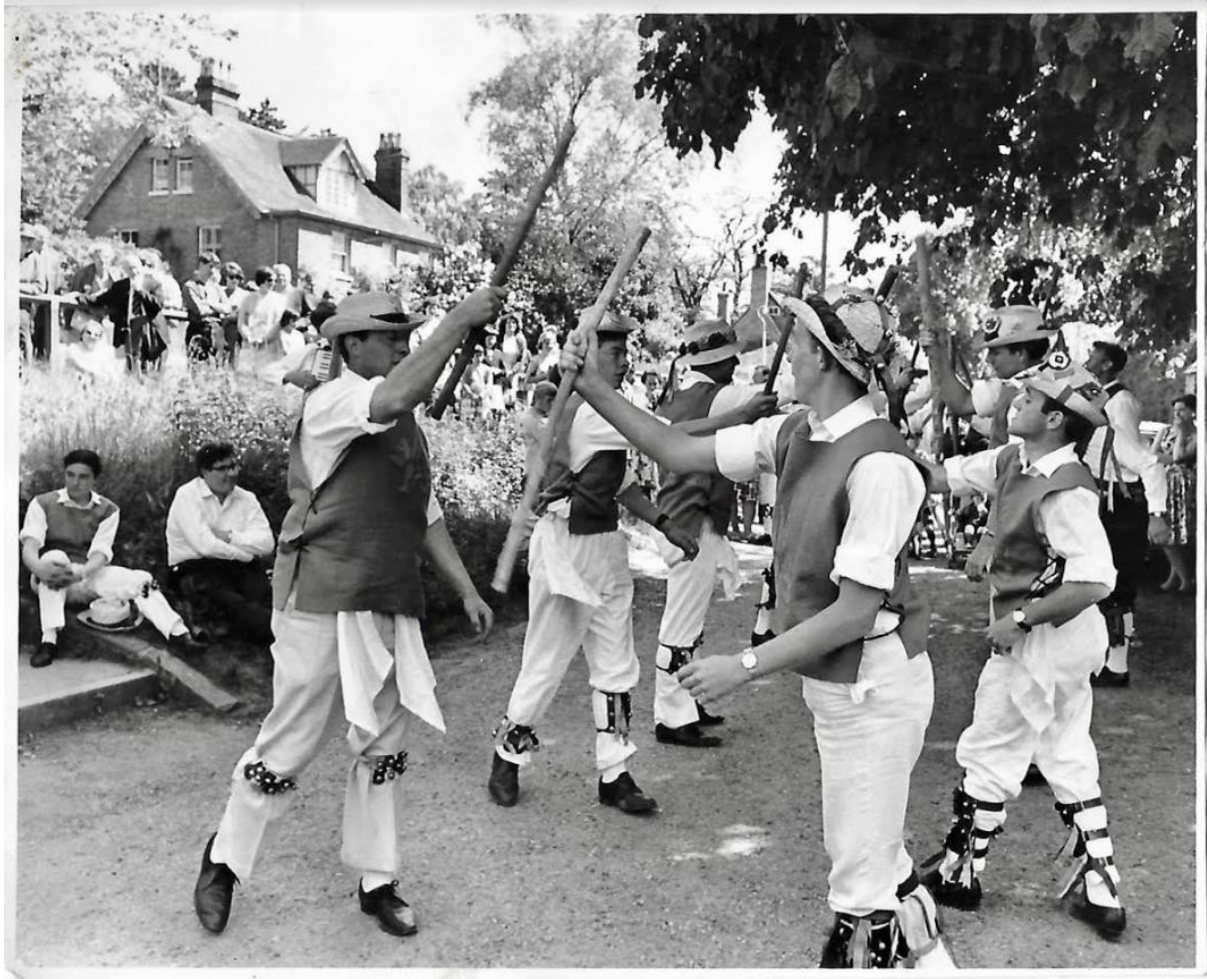
Ickniel Way Old Boy

Died June 2019

R I P

The Ian Hermon Collection

Ian, one of The Originals, has presented the side with a collection of photographs and other memorabilia from the early days of Icknield Way



1996: Seated Colin Pearce, Jim Lyne. Dancing- left front to back Reg Hart, Bryan Wickham, Graham Pearce, right front to back Ian Hermon, Dickie Evans, ?



1966: IW dormobile outside The Cottage, Denchworth Rd



1966: Barn dance at Buckland Village Hall

Above left Graham Pearce, right Ian Hermon

Below left Ian Hermon, centre Graham Pearce, right Reg Hart





Report in local paper

Left to right- Tony Paddock, Graham Pearce, Bob Hart, Ian Hermon, Colin Pearce, Brian (Dickie) Evans, Fool is Derek Hunt



1967: left to right – Colin Pearce, Bryan Wickham, Alan Glaysher, Tony Archer, Brian (Dickie) Evans, Tony Wickham, Tony Paddock, Ian Hermon, Graham Pearce



1967: Left to right- back row Tony Archer, Bryan Wickham, Bob Hart, Graham Pearce, Ian Hermon, Tony Wickham: front row Colin Pearce, Alan Glaysher, Brian (Dickie) Evans



1969 Whit Monday: Ian Hermon in full flight (Joe Marns playing)

There's nothing fluffy about these Morris men from Wantage

WITH handkerchiefs flopping and bells on their knees, the Morris dancers leap out in early summer like seasonal flowers.

And almost, some people think, as prettily.

This week and next there could be, according to the English Folk Dance and Song Society, as many as 500 teams, hopping and prancing in their colourful costumes on English village greens.

They are often to be found near a pub because dancing the "Trunkles," "Swaggering Boney," "Step and Fetch Her" and "Lumps of Plum Pudding," to name but a few, can be thirsty work.

But is it a man's work? Well, women are not considered sufficiently magical to take part.

Morris dancing is associated throughout the centuries with fertility and virility. It is not surprising that Women's Lib has made an impact on this lively rite in recent centuries.

Fluffy

There have been a few women's sides who have performed what the folk experts call "fluffy Morris." But it is generally left to men to master the intricacies of such steps as the beetle crusher, hockeback, crossback and twizzle.

There is certainly nothing fluffy about the Icknield Way Morris Men, a seven-year-old side comprised of former pupils, now mostly in their mid-twenties, of Icknield Secondary County School, Wantage.

Although one member is 46, and another a schoolboy of 16.

The former deputy head of the school, Miss Mary Shunn, now retired, has passed on her enthusiasm for folk and barn dancing to her old pupils. She used to take dancing classes even during lunch hours.

So most of the Icknield Way dancers learned their first steps as schoolboys. A few of them had a chat in a pub one evening and talked over the idea of taking to the road.

That is how their side began. And they are still open to recruit a few more fit men.

The leader is called "the squire." Ian Hermon, a 26-year-old estate agent, and an ex-squire himself, recalling the pagan origins of Morris dancing, described the grim fate that was the destiny of another key man, the fool.

"Going back, they used to torment the fool and get him drunk. Then, at the end of the day, they ran their swords through him."



Members of the Icknield Morris Men at their practice night at the VC Gallery, Wantage.

The present Icknield fool, Ian Castle, 21, a hairdresser, of East Hendred, has won cups for old time dancing and has no intention of meeting the same end.

Fool

"I get out there and give them as good as they give me," he said.

And he has to perform a special fool's dance, to give the rest of the side a break. He also mixes with the audience and belts them with an inflated pig's bladder, another Morris tradition.

The current squire, Tony Paddock, a 24-year-old bricklayer's foreman, has special duties while dancing with his team.

"I call out 'foot up, half-jip or half-hay,'" he said.

These and other calls are obeyed by his dancers who go through whatever movements the dance demands. And the effects can be striking.

But Morris dancers have their critics.

"The younger generation think we're a load of pansies with bells on," said the squire.

"They don't know what they're missing."

Any other voluntary organisation has its hon. secretary. The Morris

dancers each pay £1 subscription to their bagman, Colin Pearce, a 27-year-old assembly worker who builds sports cars at Abingdon.

His workmates pulled his leg about Morris dancing, but he and another assembly line worker, also a Morris dancer found a way of silencing them. They danced without music during a tea-break, against a background of incomplete MGs.

"We got two pieces of muttoncloth and gave a demonstration," the bagman said. "They could see that Morris dancing is tougher than they thought."

That shut them up.

The man who wears a battered top hat and makes the Icknield men's music is a councillor, 46-year-old Joe Marns, a Londoner by origin and a librarian at Harwell.

Mr Marns, 46, learned the Morris music from Miss Shunn.

"She had a collection. I borrowed them, copied them and learned them. It was a fair amount of homework."

He knows about 40 tunes — two of his favourites are "Black Joke" and "Queen's Delight."

The mystery of why some men go Morris dancing can be explained.

"Some people go fishing or playing tennis," Mr Marns said. "This is a unique ac-

much of the refuse was put into a trailer by the traders, one of whom then took it away for the council to dispose of.

Man collapses and dies

Mr Ivor William Wordley, 60, of White House, Bishop's Cannings, near Devizes, collapsed and died in a garden shed at his home last Wednesday night.

tivity that requires a good deal of practice and skill."

When he sees some of the dancing in pop shows on television he is not impressed.

"It doesn't have anything like the vigour and interest of Morris dancing, which has its own beauty."

The heavyweight of the team, Bob Hart, a 14st. 30-year-old steel press operator, confessed: "Dancing on grass is hardest. You use more energy to get off the ground."

But what does he get out of it? There is, of course, keeping a tradition alive.

"It's enjoyment," he added. "It keeps you fit, you meet a lot of people, there's drinking and it's festive."



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1974: Downs School

Above left to right Bob Hart, Graham Pearce, Brian (Dickie) Evans, Alan Glaysher, Ian Hermon

Below left to right Bob Hart, Tony Paddock, Ian Hermon, Alan Glaysher





The Old Boys who became the new Morris Men

IT IS STRANGE how many since the original West Morris Men gave their first public display in the quiet village of Chalfont.

The performance was a large affair, and it was held in the open air, with a large crowd of spectators. The men, dressed in traditional Morris dance attire, were seen in various poses, some with their arms raised.

The men, who were all over 40 years old, were dressed in traditional Morris dance attire, including hats, vests, and trousers. They were seen in various poses, some with their arms raised.

There were, of course, some who were not in the traditional attire, but they were all over 40 years old. The men were seen in various poses, some with their arms raised.

The first Morris dance was held in the village of Chalfont, and it was a large affair.

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year old Tony Haddock, a local man, was seen in various poses, some with their arms raised.

He has spent many years dancing with his team.

"I can't tell you how many times I have danced with my team," he said. "I have danced with my team for many years."

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SCOPE

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The first Morris dance was held in the village of Chalfont, and it was a large affair.



Dancing along the gallery



**Do you
remember
when..?**

REMEMBER when Ian Hermon (left), who is now in charge of the Fire Brigade at Wantage, and Tony Paddock, along with other members of the Icknield Way Morris Men, performed in the old Victoria Cross Gallery.

W.G. & H 18/11/82

Nostalgia Article 1982



1960s Following the IW van up Newbury St.

Left to right – Bob Hart, Brian (Dickie) Evans, Colin Pierce, Joyce Evans (later Hermon), Ian Hermon, Bryan Wickham



Icknield School's Longsword Side

More Old Boys



Steve and his dad Max Williams (around 1980)

From our Northern Correspondent



Martin & Lynne,
37 Cartmel Rd,
Redcar,
TS104JT.
07979676133.

Dear Sam & Bridget,

Hi! we very much enjoyed seeing you all at the 60th!
I enjoyed the tour as did Ali and Lynne and both girls
found the food very much to their liking! well done all
those involved!

Last Sunday Richmond on Swaledale supported by
some members of ~~Black~~ Black Diamond Morris went on a
tour of upper Teessdale, starting at the Langdon Beck hotel
this place is almost 2 hours drive from
home. on entering the bar area I
noted a pile of magazines on the
window sill and I had a "where's
wally moment" as I looked at the
front cover there I was looking back
at myself!. You cant go anywhere....
I thought it may amuse you!
I looked inside and there's wally
again!



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all the very best to
yourselves and my other
chums down in the deep
South
Martin

Oxford Art Week

2019



A painting by Barbara Payne of Cry Havoc given a prominent position at Peachcroft Farm this week.

Sweet Jenny Jones

The Adderbury Morris tune with words
from a broadside in the Bodleian Library; Firth b.25(158).

The musical score is written on four staves in treble clef, 2/4 time. The melody is simple and folk-like. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The lyrics are: My name's Ed-ward Mor-gan, I live at Llan-go-llen, from the Vale of Saint Taf-fy, the flow'r of North Wales. My fa-ther and mo-ther too live at Llan-go-llen; good truth, I was born in the sweet-est of vales. Yes in-deed, and all coun-tries so for eign and - beau-ti-ful, - that lit-tle - val-ley I - prize - far a - - bove. For-in-deed in my heart I do love that Llan-go-llen, and Sweet Jen-nie Jones too in truth I do love.

Alun Holsdon, Jun 2017

1
My name's Edward Morgan, I live at Llangollen,
from the Vale of Saint Taffy, the flower of North Wales.
My father and mother too live at Llangollen;
good truth I was born in the sweetest of vales.
Yes indeed, and all countries so foreign and beautiful,
that little valley I prize far above.
For indeed in my heart I do love that Llangollen,
and sweet Jenny Jones too in truth I do love.

2
For twenty long years I have plough'd the salt seas
And serv'd my full time in a man-o'-war ship;
And 'deed, goodness knows, we had bloody engagements
And many a dark storm on the pitiless deep;
And I've seen all the lands that are famous in story,
And many fair damsels to gain me have strove;
But I said in my heart I do love that Llangollen,
And sweet Jenny Jones too in truth I do love.

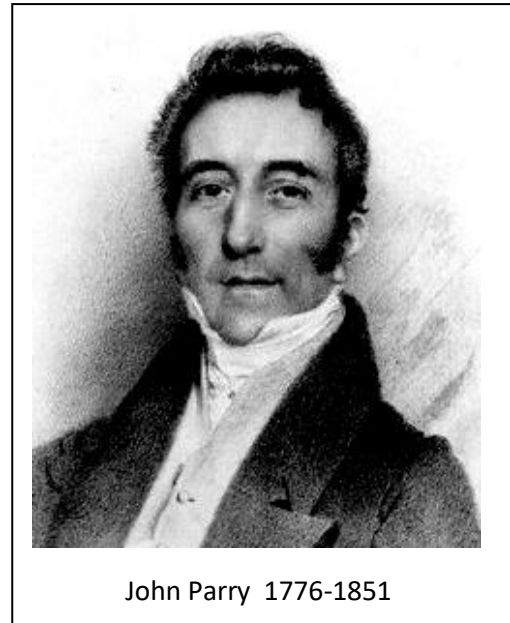
3
I've seen Queen Victoria and the Lord Mayor of London,
With kings of far countries and many a queen,
The great Pope of Rome and the Duchess of Angoulême [d'Angoulême].
Up from King George to Sir Watkin I've seen;
But no, not princesses, kings, dukes, nor commissioners,
No, goodness knows it, my envy could move;
For indeed in my heart I do love that Llangollen,
And sweet Jenny Jones too, in truth I do love.

4
I parted a lad from the vale of my fathers
And left Jenny Jones then a coquet young lass;
But now I'm returned a storm-beaten old mariner.
Jenny from Jones into Morgan shall pass;
And we'll live on our cheese and our ale in contentment,
And so thro' our dear native valley shall rove;
For indeed in our hearts we both love that Llangollen,
And sweet Jenny Morgan with truth will I love.

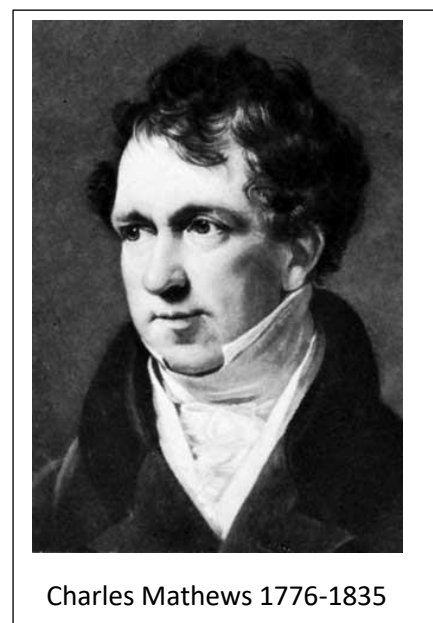
Charles Mathews, who wrote the words, claimed that he based the ballad on the story of Jenny Jones, a milkmaid, and David Morgan, a ploughman, both of whom worked at a farm at Pontblyddyn near Mold where Mathews was staying while working as an architect in north-east Wales during 1825-1826. He set the words to a tune which he heard played by a harper at an inn in Llangollen. The music was composed by John Parry (Bardd Alaw) 1776-1851 (do not confuse with Blind John Parry 1710-1782) who, according to Mathews, won an Eisteddfod prize for it in 1804, naming it 'Cader Idris'.

Mathew's performed the ballad in his burletta 'He would be an actor' in London in 1826 and it immediately became very popular. The words were published on many broadsheets, in collections of songs and as sheet music. The Sir Watkin in verse 3 is probably Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, the largest landowner in N Wales.

It is not clear why he was architecting, he had been a successful comic actor manager for years. Or the entire story could all be made up because by 1826 John Parry was a successful music director and composer who occasionally worked in London and could have worked on it with Matthews there.



John Parry 1776-1851



Charles Mathews 1776-1835

Cader Idris on the harp is at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6OHM1oyCpo

No published version of Sweet Jenny appears to have the words which are sung for the dance. Nor do those words appear in the (possible to get confused with) song "Maid of Llangollen" which was published in 1826 with an unrelated tune (www.flutetunes.com/tunes/the-maid-of-llangollen-duet.mp3) by James C Clarke

www.flutetunes.com

The Maid of Llangollen James C. Clarke

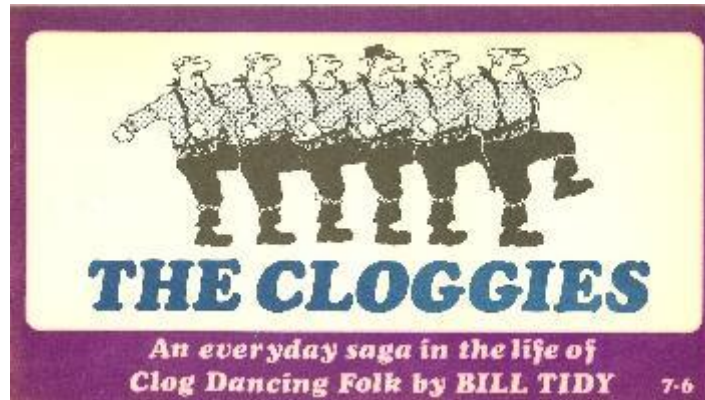
Moderato (♩ = 100)

Maid of Llangollen.

THOUGH lowly my cot,
And though poor my estate,
I see without envy,
The wealthy and great,
Contented and proud,
A poor shepherd to be,
While the Maid of Llangollen,
Smiles sweetly on me.
While the maid, &c.

My way o'er the mountain,
I cheerfully take,
In the morn when the song birds
Their melody wake,
And at eve I return,
With a heart full of glee,
For the maid of Llangollen,
Smiles sweetly on me.
When the maid, &c.

Glenarvon's rich lord passes
Scornfully by,
But wealth can ne'er make him,
As happy as I;
Then prouder than ever,
The proudest I'll be,
While the maid of Llangollen,
Smiles sweetly on me.
While the maid, &c.
Swindells, Printer, Manchester.



These cartoons ran in *Private Eye* 1967-1981 and then in *The Listener* 1985-1986 although the original one-off was in *Punch*. To the Archivist's surprise a local connection has surfaced:

The Cloggies of University Hall, Buckland



The 1968 Cloggies team at Buckland

Although other dancers have more recently appropriated the name, The Cloggies originally took on a real life of their own in 1968 when a group of students at University Hall, Buckland, Oxon became so inspired by the cartoon characters' pub-oriented career that they formed their own squad.

Photographs from the period show the team in the following order: Stan (Pete Metcalfe), Wally (Gwyn Ellis), Neville (John Barton), Arnold (Iain Murray), Ted (Andy Carr) and Albert (Al Guyver). The shady-looking character is the manager, Morris (Mike Fernie). Arthur (Nigel Brewis), was later named as reserve boot in case of injury or hangover. Bill Tidy personally wrote to the team to officially endorse and encourage them, delighted that "all those years spent labouring on Spam have produced a debased art form".



The lads limber up with a Single Leg Arkwright, pursued by Morris with a contract

The Cloggies performed uninvited and to mixed receptions at several college discos, offering terrifying moves such as *The Forward Lunge with Curse*, but their big breakthrough came when asked by producer Martin Pennock to take on the country-dancing roles in the closing scenes of John Milton's *Comus*. Buckland was the smallest ever college (120 students) to enter the *Sunday Times* / NUS Drama competition. The preliminary round took place at Lord Faringdon's private theatre, whose stage was just wide enough to accommodate six Cloggies dancing abreast. As the play was about to start, the lights failed so everyone settled in the pub until the power-cut ended. The adjudicator seemed much more enthusiastic two hours and several pints later, but there was a serious delay in getting the Cloggies from the bar and back on stage. Their performance was hampered by a spread of fruit and milk underfoot from the previous orgy scene and most spectators felt it was a disaster.

Buckland was one of eight chosen from sixty universities and colleges to travel to Southampton University for the Student Drama Festival Finals in the winter of 1970/71. After sitting through several other productions, the audience went wild when the Cloggies hit the stage at the end of *Comus*. The *Southern Arts Review* praised the 'boisterous rustic dancing Cloggies', while French radio covered the event, describing them as "un groupe de danseurs folkloriques" and playing a recording of them dancing to the strains of *Fairport Convention's Lark in the Morning* – the boots, the bells, the yells. ¹Nicholas de Jongh, drama correspondent of *The Guardian*, wrote that the play was '... degraded into a cheap grotesque pantomime', adding that, 'the late appearance from the dancing Cloggies underlined the cheapness of the conception.' ² This was seen by the lads as a complete vindication of all they had stood for.

The team's swansong was as dancing shepherds in the British premiere of the medieval French fable *Aucassin and Nicolette*, translated by Alex Kerr and produced by Pennock in the college grounds on 27 June 1971. The use of a full beer crate as a prop did not interfere with the narrative.

Archivists Note – they sound like they were our sort of people, pity we never danced with them

BBC4 Documentary Broadcast April 2019

The production team approached the Ring which decided to cooperate – to the extent that the crew filmed the AGM which decided to admit female dancers.

Guardian article by Richard Macer before the showing of his film 1 April 2019

How a gender war sent the morris dancing world hopping mad

Facing extinction, the world's oldest morris dancing group voted to admit women to their ranks. A welcome step forward – or a slight to a harmless expression of masculinity?

My mouth was dry, my heart pounded furiously. I had two silk sashes crossed over my chest and was being led towards my first public morris dance by a bunch of elderly men who jangled like a herd of exotic cows. On a drizzle-soaked pavement outside the Church Inn in Mossley, Greater Manchester, we took our places like Lancastrian matadors, brandishing wooden sticks instead of swords. I had been building up to this moment for six months.

I had been asked to make a documentary about the crisis sweeping the morris dancing world. The oldest morris organisation, [the Morris Ring](#), had stuck to its men-only tradition for nearly 100 years. But numbers were dwindling and some teams were facing extinction. Perhaps the way to resolve the problem was to invite women to join. A vote was called and a near century-old constitution was overturned.

To some purists, this was a kind of sacrilege. One of the folk world's staunchest defenders of male-only morris, Barry Care from [Moulton Morris Men](#), told me that female dancers had been doing "pound-shop copies" of the traditional male performance. He believes the aesthetic of men dancing is different from that of women dancing; that a man's centre of gravity is different from a woman's. For Barry, male morris dancing is like a high art, on a par with ballet, and shouldn't be diluted by mixed sides where the ambition is simply to enjoy the experience of dance rather than make the audience gasp in appreciation.

Is Barry right? I met an all-women side who told me proudly they could out-dance any male side in the country, then drink them under the table. [Windsor Morris women's team](#) are, to my mind, on a par with Barry's Moulton for sheer vitality and technical ability – though we never went to the pub.

I fear both teams would have made mincemeat of my local side, which I had observed performing outside pubs near my home on a few occasions. The Manchester Morris men had an average age of 70 and owed much of their longevity to the NHS. I could see instantly how this side would benefit enormously from the introduction of women, but they were reluctant to change.

At first, I watched from the sidelines with a pint. But it wasn't long before a man with flowers in his hat offered me hankies and showed me how to wave them around. I soon put my camera aside and joined in. Within a week, I was beneath the forensically harsh lighting of Stretford church hall, Manchester, and under the tutelage of Little George (as he's affectionately known) who was teaching me the steps to Constant Billy, a morris classic. They go 1-2-hop, 1-2-hop, hop, hop, feet together, jump. I found it impossible.

"I'm sorry," I gasped to George as he pressed stop for the umpteenth time on the CD player, emptying the cavernous hall of the sound of melodeons and penny whistles. "Take a minute," said George, "you sound like you could do with a break."

There's an infant-like beauty to morris steps – folk dance involves a lot of waving and hopping and skipping. But the nursery-rhyme simplicity is highly deceptive. Getting the hopping right is a challenge equivalent pointe technique in ballet. Not enough spring in your step and you are simply walking; too much lift and you find yourself skipping. Somewhere in between exists that rarest and almost indefinable thing – the perfect hop. I watched in awe at practice nights as Bruce, the team's oldest member, seemed to achieve weightlessness, levitating ever so slightly above the ground. He has had both hips replaced: maybe there's a connection.

Three months after the Morris Ring vote, only one side had changed its policy on women. Pete Simpson, the incoming squire of the Ring, had told me about a West Country team that had taken on a woman, but clammed up when I asked which one it was. I was further intrigued by the side that had actually proposed the motion inviting women to join. Leicester Morris Men's "bagman", Charlie Corcoran, describes himself as a "reformed misogynist" and it was his idea to bring women into the Ring. But his side was choosing to stay men-only, which struck me as odd, as if Emmeline Pankhurst had chosen not to vote after campaigning so hard to get universal suffrage for all women.

But the more time I spent with my teammates in Manchester, the more I noticed the important role morris plays in the lives of men. It offers a different version of masculinity from the standard ones. Of course, there is nothing wrong with men dancing together without women. I think you also have to consider that it's deeply incongruous to see men attired with bells and hankies but much less so for women. When you watch an athletic masculine side, like Barry's Moulton Morris, smash their sticks to smithereens, you get an insight into the real essence of what male morris is. The discordancy of effeminate details with brute force is what makes it so engrossing. I was never lucky enough to see a young Frank Bruno dressed up as a panto dame, but perhaps the effect would have been similar.

More than that, there is an earthiness to morris that fights the comic stereotype of pot-bellied, bearded men with hankies and bells. At different points in history, it's even been a rebellious counterculture. I had a strange moment during one festival when I was swept along on a tide of flower-waving folkies processing towards a church for a

sacrilegious solar rite. For a moment, each face seemed to beam back at me with love and adoration while the morris sea carried me up the hill towards the steeple. I felt like Edward Woodward being led inescapably on his joyous musical journey to meet [the Wicker Man](#).

Which is why it was such a relief to be making my public dance debut with the solidly down-to-earth Manchester team. I had grown a real affection for this taciturn group of morris vets over the last six months. Men's morris dancing might be on the endangered list. But perhaps that's a risk worth taking for those who wish the form to remain male only. They aren't really excluding women; they're just choosing to be men only together. And men need a place to be men in a place that isn't a football terrace or a sports field.

Certainly, it's a skill that requires the time to forge a relationship with your team. When I look back at the film of my first public performance outside the Church Inn, I see a tall, ungainly man dressed in high red socks, a black cummerbund and gold and red sashes crossing his chest. He's holding two sticks and looks nervous. When the music starts, he begins the steps alongside his five team-mates. He's just about keeping time but something's not quite right. On closer inspection, I notice the man is not hopping. He's skipping.

Letter from Film Crew after release

Dear Morris Community

A huge thank you to everyone for watching and engaging with the film.

The programme has received fantastic reviews and, overall, seems to have gone down well both with general audiences and the Morris community.

If you, or anyone you know, hasn't watched the programme yet or wishes to watch it again (especially if you've only watched the signed version) I do urge you to catch up on BBC iPlayer in the next few days as that will count towards the viewing figures. This is important as the more people who watch it, the more likely the BBC, and other broadcasters, are to commission future programmes in this vein. For those living outside the UK, we are looking into some options so you can view it too and should have news about that soon.

I've enjoyed reading the varied responses and providing some further insights into the filmmaking process as we are very aware that we've had to leave out a lot of detail due to the limitations of making a one hour documentary. We really care that the Morris community doesn't feel we made fun of Morris dancing, that we presented a balanced view and celebrated the tradition.

We hope there's an appetite for this type of content in a wider audience as we'd love to make more films about Morris dancing. We've received a whole spectrum of feedback, the common threads are clear, the Morris community would like to see more diverse representations of all types of Morris Dancers and forms of Morris (especially Border) with a section explaining the various kinds of Morris and far more scenes featuring Barry Care throughout, if not even him presenting the next film!

We're aware the documentary does focus on the more conservative elements of the Morris world but given the outcome of the vote, perhaps, those elements aren't so conservative as originally perceived. We did try our best to give context to a wider world outside of the Ring, something which many picked up on and others have missed. It's hard to be all things to all people but the focus of the film was to tell a compelling narrative in a balanced and celebratory way. We hope the overall picture is

representative of themes found throughout the world of Morris such as team spirit, enjoyment of dance and offering an alternative form of masculinity and femininity, even if some of the details aren't included.

Whilst, it's only a documentary that passes an hour, it could have some future importance as a time capsule, bottling a historic moment of change for the Ring and it might also effect society's wider view of Morris. It probably doesn't change much within the community but I do hope it's a force for good and if that's the case then that gives it importance.

I've been made aware of a Border side from the Midlands and a Cotswold side in the North West that welcomed a couple of new recruits who'd watched the programme and decided to turn up. Hopefully, that trend will continue nationally and those new recruits will stick at it!

We'd like to thank all the sides and individuals who kindly let us film them over the year, especially The Manchester Morris Men, as without them we couldn't have come up with the idea and for their patience when teaching Richard to dance. We're also very grateful to The Fed and Open for their support, friendliness and help throughout the process too.

We'd like to apologies to all who didn't feature but wanted to and I'm very sorry to those who felt they should have featured more but didn't... funnily enough this is feedback I've received from pretty much everyone in the film, including Barry.

Finally I'd also like to publicly acknowledge Eddie Worrall, past Squire of the Ring, for believing in us when we pitched the idea of documenting the vote and for guiding us throughout the filming process. Many were initially against filming and it was the last thing he needed whilst organising the historic ARM meeting and dealing with a family bereavement. Eddie and all the other officers of the Ring were very welcoming, as were many of the members, once persuaded that our intentions were good. I hope we've repaid that trust by producing a balanced, rounded but also critical view of the Morris Ring and I hope the wider Morris community can also appreciate those elements too, even if their particular view or their way of the Morris isn't represented as much or as fully as they would have liked.

If you have any additional feedback, please do email us here morris@libratelevision.com

We're all converts now and maybe we'll see some of you at future Morris events.

Best

David and the team

Film turned out better than its apocalyptic BBC advertising. It was a very reasonable account of the women in the Ring affair and of the morris generally. The presenter was not a natural talent so footage of his practicing showed that morris dancing is a skill that has more to it than waving hankies. The programme came to a broadly sympathetic conclusion.

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Prior to the documentary being broadcast there was a bit of media jumping on the band waggon – generally not in a helpful way as evidenced by this piece in *The Times*.

Morris men out of step over women

Harry Shukman



The Morris Ring, an association of traditional dance groups, voted to allow women to join

It is a quaint dance performed around maypoles and at village fêtes but in the past year the morris dancing scene has been torn over its future. A decision last year by the Morris Ring, an association of traditional dance groups, to allow women to join led to objections from men-only clubs. Despite most members voting for the decision amid falling memberships, only 10 per cent of clubs have opened their ranks for women to join, according to *The Sunday Telegraph*.

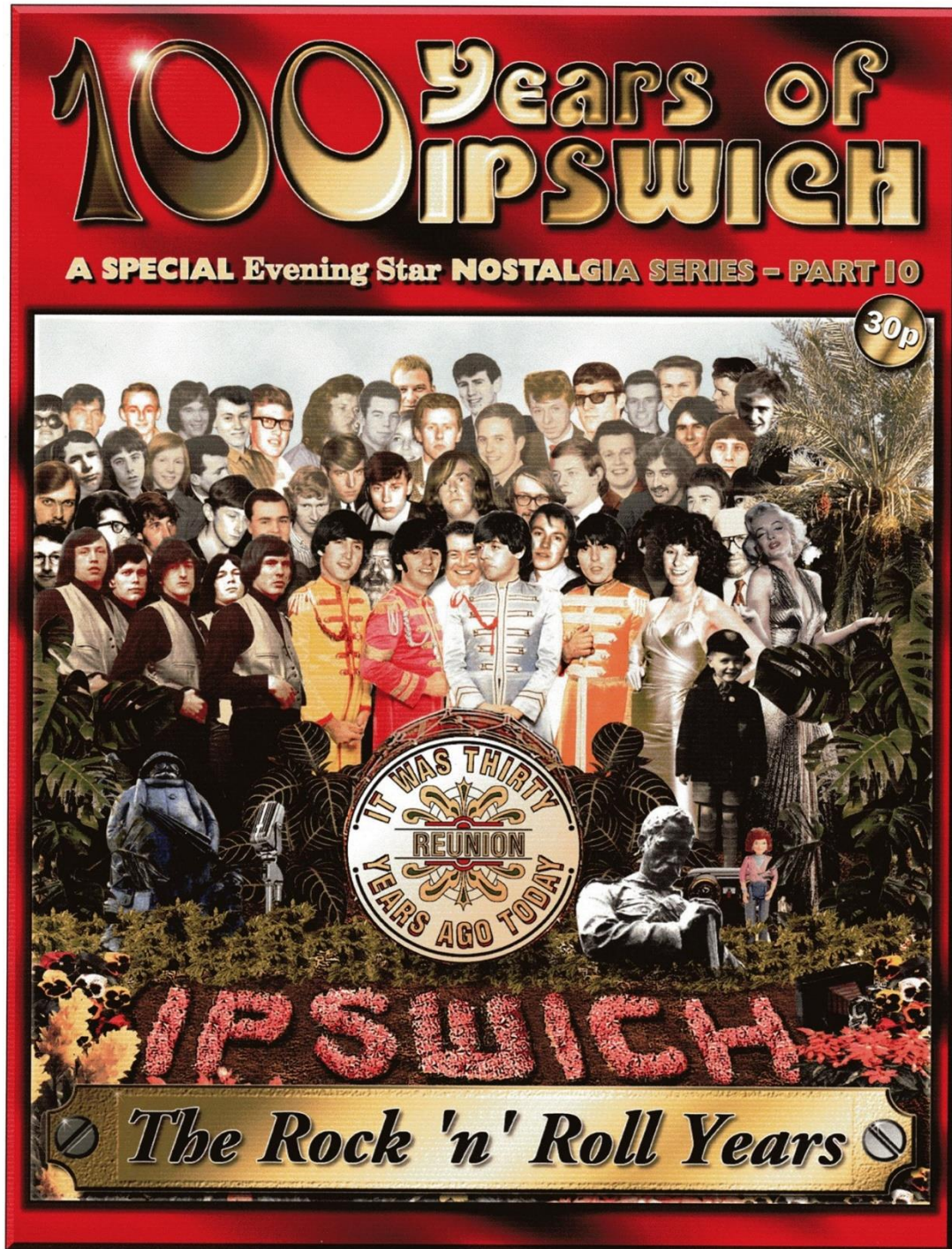
Jon Ambidge, 30, bagman — or secretary — of the Icknield Way Morris Men in Wantage, south Oxfordshire, told *The Times*: “I’m a firm believer in tradition and male activity. I personally don’t see the appeal. I’ve been raised in a male-oriented morris dancing environment. It seems more natural.” He said that allowing women to join was “a PC thing”, adding: “A female dancing to me is odd, it’s obscure, it’s not the norm.”

Dan Kells, 65, bagman for the Bristol Morris Men, said that his team’s view was “pretty unanimous” about banning women from joining. He said: “If you have a set of six people and you’re randomly interspersing men and women, it doesn’t make for the best spectacle. It’s purely on that, it’s not for sexist or philosophical reasons.”

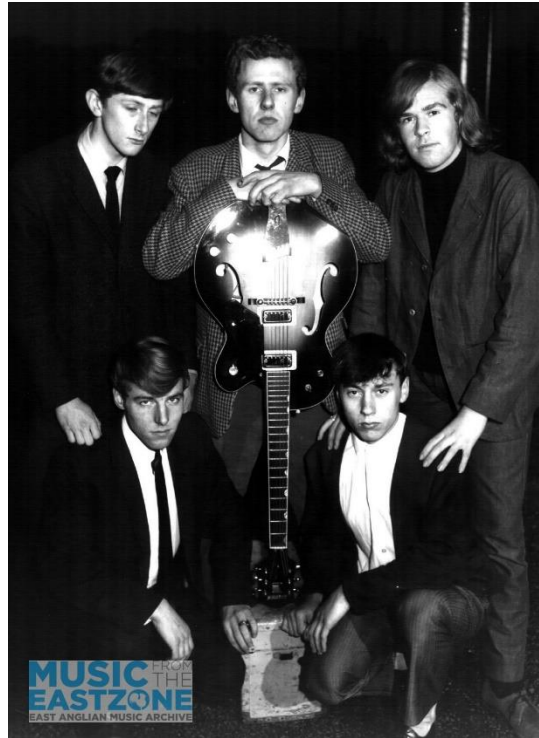
Archivist note – this was all that reporter chose to use out of a 40 minute interview with Jon

A Blast From The Past

The Ipswich local paper printed the illustration below as part of a nostalgia series – see if you can spot a young (non-bearded) Sem Seaborne.



If you failed take a look at the next photo to see how the beardless wonder looked




The Nite Sect (Sem is far left)

The beard had appeared by the time Sem joined his next band



Cool School (formed 1968 – Sem is far right)

The Lucky Hat



Kirtlington Morris

Dear Morris Team

This attractive and practical St Patrick's Day hat was won by a member of Rivington Morris in a raffle at Kirtlington Lamb Ale on 15 June 2019. Tragically the lucky winner left the hat behind. We would like to restore the hat to its rightful owner using the services of Morris Teams along the way. The hat is expected to bring joy and good humour to all who take on its temporary care. We ask that you take the hat, and pass it on to another morris side when convenient. Eventually it will find its way to Rivington Morris, but there is no hurry. Imaginative and creative routes are preferred.

We'd like to keep a track of the hat's journey, so if you feel like it please send a message to Lucky Hat-Track, Kirtlington Morris, via our website <https://kirtlington-morris.org.uk/contact/>. Pictures of the hat on its travels would be lovely too.

Thank you

Bob Dunlop, Secretary, Kirtlington Morris

Custodians of the lucky hat

Name of Morris side	Date
Kirklington	15/6/2019
Stanton Harcourt	19/6/2019
Ischnield Way	26/6/2019

Kirklington are trying to get a prize hat back to Rivington via as many sides as possible. SH were the start of the chain. These photos were sent to Kirtlington who are keeping a website record of the Hat's travels. IW passed the Hat to Kennet Morris Men on 6 July 2019.

