

Charles Whitlock



An Icknield Way MM Perspective

The passing of Charles Whitlock was greeted with much sadness by the members of Icknield Way MM who remember the enormous contribution Charles made to the team in the 1980s.

Although Charles was already a loyal supporter of sides nearer to his Hertfordshire home, his position with the Science & Engineering Research Council saw him in Oxfordshire/Wiltshire during the week. From 1980, Charles was engaged with SERC work at the Appleton Laboratory (and later the Rutherford Lab.) and also worked at Polaris House, Swindon where he met men whom he encouraged to join IWMM.

Charles started dancing when up at Oxford where he met fellow lifelong dancing friends Peter Lund and Roy Judge. Charles, a great traditionalist, continued attending Oxford May Morning (with IWMM) until ladies teams were invited, when he stopped, never to return.

When he joined IWMM on 17th November 1981 he already had a reputation for his dancing quality and extensive knowledge, his authority being emphasised by his appearance on the cover of Hugh Rippon's "Discovering English Folk Dance" (2nd. Edn. Shire Publications 1981). We were fortunate indeed that Charles chose IWMM for his mid-week morris. His experience was an enormous asset and he naturally took the Foreman's position, also serving two years as Squire from 1984 to 1986.

As Foreman his style was meticulous only concentrating on a small number of traditions at one time and drilling the essential features into us. Ever the gentleman, Charles's harshest term of admonishment was "Gentlemen, that is just not good enough!" (said with a frown). He diligently always thanked landlords for their hospitality, and was courteous towards dancers even when their performance was below standard. He was particularly inspirational to beginners, and did much to integrate IWMM into more Ring activities through his contact with other teams.

He had some quirky inclinations. Dancing at a pub with a willow tree meant it was essential to dance The Willow Tree; or a pub called The Bell dictated that we must dance The Bell, etc. Charles was not one for excessive libation but we have fond memories of a tour in Cornwall when, following a pint of "Spingo"(8%) at the Blue Anchor (Helston), a more than merry Charles had us dancing "Over the Water to Charlie" either side of a water filled culvert outside the pub. He was always keen to dance regardless of the weather if dancing had been announced. Rain did not deter him but he confessed that he had a special waterproof vest so that although his shirt got wet, it penetrated no further!

However, it was Charles's love of the morris tradition we shall remember, and the standards he set us for public performance, that we still aspire to. Rarely is there a practice night without someone saying "Charles used to say....." Even our present Foreman (Graham Hubbard, only in his thirties) learned at the hands of the master when Charles did instruction sessions for the Ring.

Charles Whitlock, sadly missed, never forgotten.

Sem Seaborne
IWMM
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