

WICKHAM MORRIS - MAY DAY DANCE IN AID OF WESSEX CHILDREN'S HOSPICE

TRUST APPEAL

In keeping with tradition Wickham Morris will be greeting the Spring by dancing in Wickham Square at dawn on 1st May. For those who do not rise at such unearthly hours, this occurs at 5.15am.

To encourage the dancers to get out of their warm cosy beds the men and women of Wickham Morris are aided by a special delivery to the Square. They will be pleased to accept the very first delivery of 'May Day Ale' from the side's new sponsor The Beer Seller. This should give the dancers some energy to face the long and energetic day ahead.

The Squire of the Side, Mr. John Shillitoe, will make his entrance to the Square on his trusty white horse, 'Flanagan', to take charge of the mornings events. Wickham Morris will perform traditional dances some of which can be traced back hundreds of years. The Morris rituals are based on fertility dances designed to encourage a good harvest. The bells that are worn around the legs are to ward off evil spirits. The dancers' sticks called 'cocks' are banged on the ground to wake up the sleeping soil, the dancers then leap high in the air to indicate how high the crops should grow. The 'cocks' are said to be a symbol of fertility, as Amanda Toomer the side's 'Bagman' (keeper of the sticks) found out - she is expecting her first baby in June. So perhaps there is some truth in the folklore myths after all.

The side will be performing at a more sociable time of 7pm in Wickham Square. The festivities will be officially opened by Meridian News Reader Fred Dineage, who is a supporter of The Wessex Children's Hospice Appeal. The dancing recommences with pupils of Wickham C.E. Controlled Primary School dancing around the May Pole. Wickham Morris are then joined by sides from all over Hampshire to continue the extravaganza of music and dance.

Throughout the day Wickham Morris will be collecting money which they will redonate to the Wessex Children's Hospice Appeal, a worthwhile cause to build a hospice for sick children and their families.

Amanda Toomer - 'Bagman'