

White Horse Morris, Warminster, Wiltshire (UK)

Year founded: 1951 *Gender:* Mixed *Organization(s):* Open Morris *Web Site:*

<http://www.whitehorsemorris.org.uk/> or

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/White-Horse-Morris/78112557218> *Dance type(s):* Cotswold morris, border morris, mumming *Tradition(s) / style(s):* Bampton, Bledington, Fieldtown, Litchfield, Headington, etc. *Kit/Livery:* All white costume of trousers and shirt with black shoes, with crossed baldrics (green/blue/green - to reflect the river Wylye between the Wiltshire Downs and Salisbury Plain) with a central rosette front and back showing the old (pre-1760) Westbury White Horse (white) on a green hillside under a blue sky with a ruff of green white and blue.

Primary contact: Bob Hill (Tel.: +44 (0)1985 248437; Email: hillbeild@ndirect.co.uk) *Practice Day & time:* Wylye Village Hall every Wednesday at 20 -22.00 hr (Winter only, please see our website for details of our summer dancing schedule)

A Brief History of WHM: White Horse Morris Men were formed in the winter of 1950/51 and were originally based in the Warminster, Wiltshire area. In 1951 they attended their first ring meeting at Oxford and were admitted to the Morris Ring of England.

As their symbol they adopted the pre 1778 Westbury White Horse, itself a survivor of prehistoric times and similar to that carved above the hills of Uffington in Oxfordshire. The symbol formed part of the original kit with the White Horse badge central to the baldrick (crossed bands of fabric) of which the colours represented the area of Wiltshire, with green for Salisbury Plain, white for the chalk hills and blue for the sky.

Over the years White Horse Morris Men developed a reputation as an excellent dance side offering dances from a range of mainly Cotswold traditions.

They have toured extensively in the United Kingdom, for example to the Isle of Wight, Cheshire, Devon and Oxfordshire as well as in Europe, notably to France and Germany.

From the time of the side's formation to the present, numbers have fluctuated and the age of the side has increased so in September 2011 it was decided to make the side mixed, thus becoming White Horse Morris, so that we can now offer mixed and single sex Border and Cotswold Morris Dances, thus allowing us to carry on our long tradition for excellent dancing.

Numbers are now flourishing and the style and energy that has always characterised White Horse has been maintained for the continuance of Morris Dancing in this area.

Notable Appearances: The side have been featured on BBC television and radio for 2 years in a row for their performances at the summer solstice celebrations at Stonehenge, to which they have become accustomed to dancing in front of a crowd of thousands.

Miscellany: We dance mostly Cotswold, but have very catholic tastes in what we do and how we do it. We consider that the enjoyment is the most important thing about what we do - whether this is by those watching or those dancing. A lot of energy is put into our dancing and we have always had a reputation for the vigour that we exhibit dancing, eating or drinking. The dance truly comes alive with White Horse - prowess is noted through out the country.

We dance widely across west and south Wiltshire and into north Dorset. Our members are a diverse and eclectic lot ranging from quarry men through the inevitable teachers, valuers, army officers, council officers, retired engineers, surveyors, plumbers, electrical engineers, professional anglers, farmers, printers and many others. We are always keen to welcome new members whether they are dancers or beginners.

A good article about us can be found on www.bbc.co.uk/wiltshire/villages/morris.shtml. This demonstrates the power of our dancing and we are always willing to provide personal exhibitions or consultations on request or by appointment. Unfortunately we are a shy side and the BBC did not have any pictures of us, so they adorned the article with a whole rag bag of other lesser sides.

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