

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE OLD STAG

ris Dancing and drinking fine beer.

The other old tradition is the collection. Give generously when you can, as we donate most of this to local charities and use a small amount to help our running costs.

NB Line dancing was invented much later allowing Morris

Men to have some-



Con't from page 9 that the lads brought back from The Moors in Spain. It was a bit of a job to know what to call this type of dancing, "Moors Dancing" was possibly a start (you can see where this going can't you?). Moors Dancing, Moorish Dancing, Morris Dancing.

There you have, it the origins of Morris Dancing and the **MEN OF WIGHT**.

So when you are in the pub on a Thursday night and bunch of lads in funny outfits with bells, handkerchiefs and sticks march in and fill the bar, buying beer, before they go outside and leap around like mad march hares, have a thought of the ancient British traditions they are upholding, that of, Mor-

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body to take the rise out of !

Where to see

MEN OF WIGHT

5 July	8 pm Countryman, Brighstone
	9 pm Three Bishops Brighstone
7 July	All Saints School Freshwater
12 July	8 pm Orchards Caravan Park, Newbridge
	9 pm Prince of Wales Freshwater
19 July	8 pm Cask & Taverners Godshill
	9 pm Rookley Inn
26 July	8 pm Albion, Freshwater
	9 pm Highdown, Freshwater
2 Aug	8 pm Vernon Cottage, Shanklin
	9 pm Old Clock Tower Shanklin sea front
9 Aug	8 pm Old Comical, Sandown
	9 pm Caulkheads, Sandown
16 Aug	8 pm Wight Mouse, Chale
	9 pm Buddle Inn, Niton
23 Aug	8 pm Albion, Freshwater
	9 pm Bugle Inn, Yarmouth
25 Aug	11 am Havenstreet Steam Up
30 Aug	8 pm Mill Bay, Ventnor
	9 pm Spyglass, Ventnor
6 Sept	8 pm Sandown sea front (pier)
	9 pm Crab & Lobster, B'bridge
13 Sept	8 pm Vernon Cottage, Shanklin
	9 pm Chine Inn, Shanklin

We have held Kevin Mitchell's **Pubs Past** and Gay Baldwin's **Spirits in Pubs** until the next issue. Kevin and Gay's books are available from all good book shops.

Wightwash

Volume 2, Number 8

Newsletter of the Isle of Wight branch of CAMRA



Summer Issue 2001



ADVERTISEMENT FOR VENTNOR BREWERY

Is it farewell to the Hind's Head?



Last year Whitbread sold it's brewing operations to Interbrew and now the fate has been sealed on their pubs. How will this affect us here on the Island? See page 12

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Summer's Here

Now We Can Enjoy The Sun Again!

Hooray for village power!

After years of campaigning by villagers, councillors and CAMRA; and after a year of hard work from new licencees Dave and Rose Dempster, the Sun at Hulverstone is open for business.

Soon, it is hoped, work will start on a seventy seat restaurant which will be called Loneragans. It will be a separate room serving high quality fare enabling the rest of the pub to remain a proper village local.



New Licencee Dave Dempster taking a breather

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Time to Call Time on 2 in a Bar

It's perfectly okay for Tom and Dick to play piano and drums in the corner of the lounge bar, but as soon as Harry turns up to join in on bass, the landlord could be in serious trouble. So serious, in fact, that he could face a £20,000 fine and six months imprisonment. As a professional bass player, I do feel for the "Harrys" of this world and all the other musicians that would be able to earn a few bob entertaining in pubs if it wasn't for this ludicrous piece of legislation.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm one of the biggest fans of quiet, no music, no fruit machine pubs that you are ever likely to meet, but there is a place for pubs with live music; pubs where you can sit with a nice pint of beer and be entertained by musicians playing what ever takes your fancy. But in 95% of the pubs in this country, the ones that can't afford a public entertainment licence, it is perfectly legal to have your ears battered by a lone DJ with a five thousand watt pa system or Dirk and Sid McNasty with their tribute to The Sex Pistols. It is, however, quite against the law to have a string quartet or jazz trio.

The current legislation covering entertainment in pubs dates back to the early 60's when it would be quite reasonable to expect a 2 piece band to be, in general, quieter and much less imposing than a band of 4 or more. However, all that changed with development of larger amplifiers and more latterly, the use of synthesisers. These days, one young lad with the right electronic gear can make as much noise as the entire Portsmouth Symphonia and be twice as objectionable.

Why is this legislation still in place? One theory is that it provides the local authorities with funds. In central London, for instance, an entertainment licence can cost a pub as much as £3,000 per year. Another reason is that it gives local authorities some control

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE STEAMER INN, THE BARGEMAN'S REST AND THE SPYGLASS INN

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE TRAVELLERS JOY

Lined glasses

Wouldn't it be nice to get a pint of beer when you pay for it without having to make a fuss? The Government made noises about introducing legislation on lined glasses in the last session, maybe they will actually deliver in this one. Some Island pubs are already moving back to lined glasses, but it really needs legislation to put everyone on the same footing. We are on the publican's side on this matter, but if you encounter persistent short measures, let us know. Especially if the reaction to a polite request for a top up is begrudging or downright rude.

Try before you buy

All three of the top pubs in our Pub of the Year contest offer this service. If you are not sure whether you will like a beer, but would like to try it, you can ask for a sample at the Travellers Joy, Blacksmiths Arms or Volunteer. This enlightened policy encourages the sale of real ale and we will give publicity to any pub which practices it.

Wightwash has a website www.wightwash.org.uk

Landlords, if your pub has a website, let us know and we'll link you to ours - Free!

Join CAMRA Today

Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque (payable to CAMRA Ltd) to Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4 LW Rates are Single £14 Joint £17 OAP's £8 (Joint £11) Under 26 £8 (Joint £11)

Name.....

Address.....

.....Post code.....

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Signed.....Date.....

Hops Across the Border

There was a time when you could hardly get a decent pint in Scotland, it was mainly bland malty ales or ersatz lagers from the big national brewers. The few regionals left such as Belhaven and Maclays were not much better, although Maclays in the period before their sad demise did produce some really good beers. Now you can find excellent beers from a whole raft of small brewers, Isle of Skye, Orkney and of course the award winning Caledonian, which arose from a management buy-out of the former Lorimer & Clarkes Brewery in Edinburgh. To be fair, there were some early pioneers like Broughton, known for Greenmantle and Harviestoun, with their Schiehallion lager and Ptarmigan and more recently the superbly hoppy Bitter & Twisted.

Now it is increasingly easy to find good beer even in the most out of the way places. The Forge at Inverie is about as out of the way as you can get. This district of Knoydart has no road access from outside. You get there by boat or by a very long trek over the hills, but this excellent waterfront pub has the likes of Isle of Skye Red Cuillin, which makes that trek well worthwhile. Another Isle of Skye beer, Hebridean Gold, made with oats, is a wonderfully balanced pale beer and was recently enjoyed in the Slaters Arms in Cannich, until the cask ran out. Orkney Dark Island is a superb dark roast beer, which defies categorisation. Big Nip from Caledonian is a slightly stronger version of the excellent Deuchars IPA which has won several awards. These last three were all available in Fort William recently. There are also some unusual beers such as Fraoch, heather beer and Kelpie, a dark ale made with seaweed. These two were on draught, together with several beers from the Houston Brewery at a recent beer festival in the Clachaig Inn, a climbers haunt in Glencoe. These are just a sample of the great beers awaiting the wary Sassenach palate north of the border.

Nick Ward

Advert for the Vine

over safety aspects. They may, for instance, refuse to grant an entertainment licence unless some alterations are made to the establishment. The widening of fire exits or the provisions of extra toilets are all examples of requirements given to landlords in the recent past. But surely these improvements are either needed or not regardless of how many people are in the band.

Hopes were raised when the government produced a radical white paper on 10th April 2000 'Time for Reform', on the whole subject of licensing laws but to the disappointment of many, instead of recommending removal of this silly legislation, it recommended the creation of a new integrated "Premises Licence" and all entertainment will have to be set out in the application. There are fears that this will further reduce the number of pubs with live music.

The good news is that the Arts Council has set up a consultation group looking into all aspects of the licensing laws and the Home Office have given an undertaking to send any draft legislation to it for their consideration. The Arts Council has linked PELs (Public Entertainment Licenses) to its brief to 'tackle social exclusion'. In other words it accepts that PELs make it difficult for some communities to find space for all kinds of 'cultural life', including live music.

However, the best we can expect is a new bill, which may take effect by 2003. Lets hope it makes some sense.

Tim Marshall - Editor

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Dates for Your Diary

- Wed 25 July, **Lake Huron**, Ryde, **Business Meeting** followed by walkabout. 8.30
- 21—29 July **Rail Gala**, Havenstreet Station, (see **News** page 4)
- Wed 15 August, **Buddle**, Niton (if you can work out how to get there!), **Social**. 8.30
- Wed 19 Sept., **Bargeman's Rest**, Newport, **Business Meeting** . 8.30
- 28 Sept—7 Oct **Blacksmith's Arms** **Octoberfest** 30 different German beers

Vaguely Sunny Gig-Guide www.iowrock.net

From Paul Mattick

First of all, **Congratulations** to Chris and Kate Cole of the **White Lion**, Arreton who married recently.

The **Isle of Wight Steam Railway** is holding a Rail Gala event between 21-29 July. On the two weekends of the event, there will be a **Real Ale Bar**. The theme will be Island Ales and will feature ales from all of our local breweries plus ales from other offshore island breweries. Full details of the event can be found at the IWSR Web Site, www.iwsteamrailway.co.uk. Watch your screens this summer for TV

12's Isle of Wight Pub Quiz Challenge. The seven half hour shows, which were filmed at the **Roadside Inn**, Nettlestone, involve pubs from across the Island (including the **Volunteer**, the **Roadside Inn**, the **Lake Huron** and the **Pilot Boat**). If you can pick up a signal, you have to watch it just to see the colourful shirts Ian Mac wears! According to Meridian TV's **Ridge Riders** presenter Nick Knowles, Island brewer **Mew Langton** were the first to put beer in cans. According to Nick their IPA (which really was a **Pale Ale** especially brewed to

be sent to **India**) was shipped out to the sub-continent in screw-topped tin cans. If you want to see an example of these cans and a lot more Mew Langton memorabilia, pop in to the **Rookely Inn**.

One of Wightwash's intrepid band of distributors, **Debbie Lane** is well on the road to recovery after having a slight disagreement with her motorbike – it went one way, Debbie went the other. Unfortunately the resulting broken arm meant that Debbie was unable to deliver the last issue of Wightwash to some pubs in the Ryde area, and although we did try to deputise, some pubs fell through the net. **Sorry!**

At the time of going to print **Andy Gibb**, notorious concertina player, and his brother **Neil** were away at a music festival and unable to confirm rumours that they are about to add **The Barn**, Arreton to their **Waterside Taverns** chain. **Badger Brewery** has an assortment

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The Blacksmiths Arms

This year, via their internet web page, the Blacksmiths Arms has acquired a new chef – a German chef.

Volker Spiegel wanted to improve his English and was on the lookout for a new post that would enable this, as his 2 year contract at the prestigious Hanover Yacht and Sailing Club was drawing to an end. The Blacksmiths Arms suited his requirements perfectly, as he could move in to the flat above the pub with his wife, who helped him run the catering business at the yacht club, and their young daughter.

The moving process took several months, before all his affairs in Germany were settled and his family were able to move in.

I asked how he and his family found Britain, and the Island – the shops, people and customs. "Oh, not too different to home, but everything is much more expensive here", says Volker. I asked, again, what was the strangest thing they found here – "well, Edgar, actually" replies Volker, without any prompting.

Volker has made the kitchen his own, expanding and developing the existing reputation and menu, introducing additional German and eastern European specialities, drawing from personal experience and recipes used when cooking in such institutions as the Rockendorf Restaurant, Steinburger Hotel and the Humperdink Restaurant.

Sauerbraten (for 4 people)

- 1kg topside beef
- 0.4ltr red wine
- 0.1ltr red wine vinegar
- 100g onions
- 50g carrots
- 30g celery
- 30g parsnip, cut into slices
- 6 crushed peppercorns
- 2 crushed pimento corns
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1 crushed garlic clove
- 1 bay leaf
- 80g tomato puree
- salt, pepper, oil



Mix all the ingredients to make the marinade and place, with the meat, in a cool place for 2 – 3 days.

Take out and dry the meat, then season with salt and pepper. Separate the marinade through a sieve and set aside the solids and liquid.

Sear the meat on all sides, until brown. Also, sear the marinade solids until brown, then add the tomato puree and slowly add the marinade liquid. Cover and place in the oven, with the meat for 60 – 100 minutes, occasionally basting with the marinade. Cook until the meat is tender, then make a sauce from the marinade in a mixer, thickening with flour and water, if required.

As a variation, evaporate the red wine and add 40g sultanas, then add to the sauce with 40g almonds to create "Reinischer Sauerbraten", a specialty of Cologne.

Last year Whitbread sold its brewing operations to Interbrew and now the fate has been sealed on their pubs. Is this the end of Whitbread Pubs?

Well, not quite.

Whitbread Holdings plc still exists, owning such brand names as Marriot Hotels, Brewers Fayre, Travel Inn, Pizza Hut, TGI Fridays and David Lloyd Leisure.

The only pubs on the Island that Whitbread own will be the three Brewer's Fayres - **The Sloop**, **The Lifeboat** (the new pub on East Cowes Marina) and the one currently being constructed in Newport as part of the Travel Inn (see traffic jam for whereabouts).

After the sale of the Whitbread Breweries to Interbrew, a division of Whitbread was created called "Pubs in Line". This consisted of all the managed houses that didn't fit into any of the above categories and the leased sector. It was this division that was sold to Morgan-Grenville Private Equity for 1.65 billion pounds. Morgan-Grenville Private Equity is owned by the German financial giant Deutschebank. They, in turn, almost immediately sold 439 managed houses to Enterprise Inns including the **Vine** in Newport. Enterprise already own several Isle of Wight pubs including the **Woodmans Arms**, Wootton.

The remainder of the now Morgan Grenville owned pubs have become a company called the **Laurel Pub Company** complete with a new logo. Part of this company will contain 602 pubs, which will remain managed houses. These will include the **Hogshead**, Newport, the **Folly**, Whippingham, the **Crab**, Shanklin and the **Waterside**, Cowes (Harbour Lights - what was). A further 300 odd pubs will move over to the leased estate - none however on the Island.

As far as the rest of the Island leased pubs go - no change. They will still be Pub Partnership pubs within the **Laurel Pub Co.** The only difference will be a gradual disappearance of the familiar "hind's head" logo to be replaced by the new Laurel logo.



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of Guest Ales on for the Summer Months including Charles Wells **Summer Solstice** (4.1%) and the much admired Green King **IPA** (3.6%). Watch out for Elgoods **Pag-eant Ale**, Poole Brewery's **Bedrock Bitter** and Adnams **Fisherman's Ale** as Guest Ales until September.

From one Fisherman to another, Ex Fisherman **Colin Babbington** of the **Ocean Deck**, Sandown has transformed the property from a Café/Restaurant to a fantastic



Freehouse, and with three Badger Ales and local guest ales it is well worth a visit. **Traveller's Joy** landlord Derek Smith was full of praise for his cellarman **Andy Barnett** (pictured above) who managed to keep all of the 8 featured Isle of Wight ales in top condition for his successful Easter Beer Festival.

Yates Brewery are expected to be awarded 2nd place at the **Reading Beer festival** for **Undercliff** (4.1%). **David Yates** senior said, "At the moment, judges are adding up the votes and it could be six weeks before the final result comes through to us". There were **240** Ales in this class. A New Ale called **Holy Joe** (4.9%) has also been launched. Described as being very hoppy with a hint of Coriander, the beer has been named after a local preacher who, years ago, would en-

joy his favourite tippie while out and about in the area of the Undercliff. David added, "With orders from the mainland coming in, business is booming!"

Spare a thought for poor old John Bourne at the **Buddle Inn** who has suffered the triple whammy of a road closure, foot & mouth and the landslip that has effectively cut his pub off from Ventnor.

It's all hands on deck for **Bob and Xavier** at the moment. **Ventnor Brewery** have taken in 3 x 15 barrel fermenters. This puts the barrel capacity up by 150%, which should just about cope with the demand for the summer. Bottle sales are once again glowing, and Bob tells me that he's had his busiest month ever. Xavier, recently interviewed by **What's Brewing**, reports that **Wetherspoons** will be taking their brands nationally. Supermarket chain **Somerfield** has expressed interest in the full range of bottled beers and give the impression that the shelves will be stocked soon. As well as supplying supermarkets the Brewery are also furnishing small shops and Post Offices on the island. TV Chef Rick Stein will be offering Ventnor's **Oyster Stout** in his Cornish fish restaurant. Ventnor Brewery's new Web site

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and **Summer Lightning** this summer. That's not all. **Steve Taylor** told me that a range of **Brakespear's** are also available as well as Fullers **London Pride** and **Chiswick**.

Almost local brewers **Oakleaf** are expanding unbelievably well. **Maypole Mild** (3.8%) was a success. **India Pale Ale** (5.5%) looks to be popular in the future. "We are distributing as far afield as Perth in Scotland," said Head Brewer **Ed Anderson**. They are also distributing as far a field as **The Hole in the Wall, The Village Inn** and **The So-**

has more information than ever before and is worth a visit www.ventnorbrewery.co.uk **Goddards** have taken delivery of 100 new casks to keep up with demand for the summer. Head Brewer **Chris Coleman** tells us that following their award for CAMRA beer of the year, a successful party was held to celebrate the achievement. Boss **Anthony Goddard** was astonished that Chris really can organise a P**s up in a Brewery! **Travellers Joy** took a special consignment of **Pallance Pride**, a mix of Special/Fuggle. Rumour has it the 4 casks were supped over one weekend. **The Wishing Well** is doing well (try saying that 3 times after a few pints of Fuggle!)

Island Ales now have regular access to a number of Scottish and Irish Breweries. **Fraoch** (pronounced Frook) **Heather Ale** (4.1%) is made with flowering heather, giving a spicy-woody flavour and a dry finish. Another one to look out for is **Dwan** of Irelands **Black Pearl** (4.3%), a deep dry roast flavour and a hint of bitter, which has made the Irish Stouts famous. Keep your eyes peeled for **Batemans** and **Oakleaf** Products, as well as **Hopback's Thunderstorm**

lent. The Old Stag and **Old Comical** have just taken their 1st batch and as I said in the last issue, **Oakleaf** are definitely one to watch out for.

A warm welcome to the new team at **The Old Stag**, Nigel and Debbie Mason and Ian Mitchell. Nigel and Debbie have run establishments from the Yorkshire Dales to Durban in South Africa and our editor remembers Ian from the time he ran the Crew Bar on **SS Canberra**.

Several Island pubs have had the builders in recently:

The **Woodvale Hotel**, Gurnard have undertaken further improvements, this time to the outside with some new decking and a

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For the summer issue of Wightwash, leaving aside the theme of alcohol for once, let's test the knowledge of GROCKLES (holidaymakers) and CAULKHEADS (Islanders) alike on examples of Isle of Wight dialect. There's a ten pound book voucher for the winner. Match the words or phrases (numbered left) with the definitions (lettered right) NB Beware of Red Herrings

Answers to: Wightwash, Oakdene, Rookley, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 3NH or by email editor@wightwash.org.uk by 5th August

1. ZWALLEY
2. CHOCK-DOG
3. OVERNER
4. QUEAL IN
5. NAMMET
6. NUTTEN
7. YOPPUL
8. CHUCKLEHEAD
9. MALLISHAG
10. SHRAMMED



- a. cheese
- b. a stupid person
- c. large caterpillar
- d. refreshment
- e. laptop
- f. mainlander
- g. go to bed
- h. dinosaur
- i. useless talk
- j. to swallow
- k. donkey
- l. numbed

Answers to Last Issue's Alcopops Quiz: 1. **Malt** and **Barley Blues**. 2. **Bitter** Sweet Symphony; 3. Matthews **Southern Comfort**; 4. **Whisky** in the Jar; 5. **Brown** Sugar; 6. Pump up the **Bitter** (45 Pints); 7. Milk and **Alcohol**; 8. **Tequila Sunrise**; 9. **Liar's Bar**; 10. **Strange Brew**; 11. **Drunken** Logic; 12. Electric **Light** Orchestra; 13. **Lilac Wine**; 14. **Drinking** in LA; 15. **Champagne** Supernova ; 16. **Sherry**; 17. **Portsmouth**; 18. I've Been Drinking; 19. Cigarettes and **Alcohol**; 20. A **Winter's Tale** **Simon Meredith** of Haylands wins a £10 Book Voucher

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L & M

If you happen to be in Ryde on a Sunday afternoon make sure you visit the Sunday Club, which is hosted by J.C. and Angelina at the **Simeon Arms** in Simeon Street. You will have a musical treat with some of the best musicians performing during a three-hour session. If you haven't had enough by 4pm then make your way around the corner to the **Solent Inn** located in Monkton Street. You maybe lucky and catch two guys who have been around the scene for a few years.



Loris and Mick or L & M as they are billed have played in various bands. They were together in a four piece band called the Wot- Nots. This was around 1966 and they played in holiday camps, sometimes having to escape with their lives after being threatened by irate staff at Lakeside. In 1971 Loris could be found playing bass in **Sprinkle** a band that ' got it together in the country' as they use to say. Following the demise of Sprinkle Loris teamed up with Mick in **Monkton Mead** a progressive band that played a residency at Brook House in Binstead. Mick saw some sights sitting behind his drum kit and he and Loris will tell you some great stories about that sadly missed venue. In 1974 Mick joined **Rags** with Loris, a band which was one of my favourites, mainly because they did some fine Dylan covers. Nowadays Loris can be found playing regularly with the **Mechanix** who are a fine band. Mick sometimes sits in on drums with **Tin Lids** but when he and Loris team up Mick will be found playing the guitar or his speciality

instrument, washboard. Their set consists of Creedence Clearwater songs, The Band, Grateful Dead , Dylan and a fine version of Drug Store Truck Driving Man by the Byrds and of course the Beatles. Mick is practising the violin and the accordion and I guess he is trying to get Becky's job in Tin Lids ! These guys are wonderful to talk to. They have stories about everything. If you want to know what

the Rolling Stones were like at The Ryde Pavillion read Loris's review at iowrock.net and if you want to know what Ringo Starr was doing in Meaders Road ask Mick.

To contact Mick or Loris phone 730930

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petanque terrain. The **Bugle Hotel**, Brading with £5,000 of improvements to their family facilities, including an internal children's play area. The **New Inn**, Shalfleet with major improvements to the inside. And very soon, the **Pier View**, Cowes will be opening a brand new front door onto the High Street. **Alan**, my generously proportioned friend, gave me this little teaser last week: There

are 23 Bus Stops on the Island which are all named after pubs. e.g. The Griffin, God-shill,. Could I name them all? How many IoW bus stops named after pubs can you think of? **Paul**
Look out for **Going for a Beer on the Bus** coming soon .

Have You Got News for *Wightwash*? Tel 721557 or editor@wightwash.org.uk

Letter to the Editor.

Dear Sir,
I thought your readers might be interested in a piece of research I came across recently:

Female Hormones Found In Beer

Yesterday, scientists suggested that, considering the results of a recent analysis that revealed the presence of female hormones in beer, men should reconsider their beer consumption.

The theory is that drinking beer turns men into women. To test the theory, 100 men were fed six pints of beer each within a one-hour period. It was then observed that 100% of the men gained weight, talked excessively without making sense, became overly emotional, couldn't drive, failed to think rationally, argued over nothing and refused to apologise when wrong. No further testing is planned.

Yours truly,
ANONYMOUS of Wroxall

The Editor would hurriedly like to point out that—the views expressed in *Wightwash* are not necessarily those of the Editor or CAMRA either locally or nationally!!

Apologies

In our last issue we incorrectly printed the web address of the Volunteer, Ventnor. It should be www.thevolunteer.demon.co.uk Sorry Tim!
We would also like to apologise for any confusion between this magazine and **Wight Wash**, the excellent car valet service in Gate Lane, Freshwater. Tel: 754900

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What do you do on a Thursday night?

Do you watch football, play darts, do karate or go ballroom dancing, or just sit in front of the telly?

How about then, going to two pubs during the evening, doing some exercise to help the thirst, having a good time with some friends and have people give you money with a smile on their face.

Does this sound a good way to spend a Thursday evening?

Then Morris Dancing is for you!

Me ? Oh I'm Steve Baker a member of the Men of Wight Morris Dancers. We are the Islands Morris Side. There are other Morris dancers on the Island some even have women in them, but that is another story.....

The MEN OF WIGHT Morris Dancers started back in the dark ages the 1970's with a bunch of happy folkers in one of the Island folk clubs; either the **Redan** or the **Sloop**, following the great folk revival of the 60's. They were all young fit men then...they are now, as some of them are still dancing out. It just shows how good Morris Dancing is for you!

So what is it all about you ask. Well I do not have space to enter into the full debate of the origins of Morris Dancing, however, in Shakespeare's time it was already regarded as an ancient tradition. In fact, one of the cast of the early Shakespeare's Company did a jig from London to Norwich in nine days in 1600. It was known as "the nyne daiys wonder". This was repeated last year by a whole bunch of Morris men to celebrate the Millennium and the 400th anniversary of the event. (Mad Fools).

Talking of which, each side, traditionally, has a number of characters in them, namely the **Fool** and the **Horse**.

The Fool is the one with a frock on and a bladder on a stick. His job is to entertain the audience between dances and generally get in the way when we are dancing!!



Illustration - Chris Molan

Ad for the Globe & Anchor

In some quarters it is said that they are the best dancers in the side, but we dispute that. **The Horse** is one of the animals that most Morris sides have in their cast. They come in a range of beasts from horses to rams and unicorns. The Men of Wight have **Sidney the Sea Horse**. His role like the fool is to entertain and get in the way!!

The officers of the side have titles too. There is, the **Squire**, the **Bagman** and the **Foreman**. I will let you work out what their respective jobs are.

Oh, when is this rambler going to tell us the origins of the Morris, you ask.

Well it goes something like this,

There were two old men sitting in deck chairs..... *oops wrong story!*

There were these knights see, who decided that it would be a jolly good wheeze to go on a foreign package tour to the Holy Land for a bit of a dust up with the Locals. Nothing changes does it??!!

Anyway on the way out and on the way back they met this bunch called "The Moors" who were living in Spain at the time, but came from North Africa. They were of distinctly darker colour than our lads but they danced well and taught our lads how to dance after they had a few beers together.

In fact, in Northern Spain today, some of the lads still wear bells and carry handkerchiefs when dancing. (Question, is Pavarotti a Morris Dancer??)

Anyway, when our lads got back from their foreign holiday they thought it would be a good idea to carry on the dances these foreign lads taught them, and if they blacked their faces like them, the girls would not recognise who was who making a real fool of themselves. Anyway it was a good excuse to have a few beers with the lads. Some sides still black their faces to this day.

The other side to this tale is that before Christianity was brought to this "green and pleasant land", we had a right lot of interesting ancient traditions - such as "sacrificing virgins in the spring" to make the crops grow, celebrating the shortest day of the year with a really good party lasting 12 days with everybody swapping roles, i.e. the Squire becoming the Serf and visa versa, and all other sorts of events to enjoy the long dark nights. No Christmas specials on TV then! Anyway some of these traditions did not die totally with the coming of Christianity but were absorbed in to our culture as was this strange dancing

(Continued on page 16)

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