

0407 References to Morris Dancing in Wheatley

In the Wheatley Church of England School, published in October 1982, on page 41, there is a section on Holidays and Treats.

May Day was a special occasion. The children gathered greenery and flowers and made garlands. They formed themselves into small groups and went round the village calling at houses, singing the May Song and hopefully collecting money. This money was then pooled and, a few days later, spent on providing a tea. There was a move in 1890 to put the "garlanding" as it was called onto a more formal basis. The entry in the log book for May 2nd reads; ***"Yesterday, May Day, the children were granted a holiday. Acting on the advice of the vicar (the Rev. Arthur Sturges) and the Master (Henry J. Wooldridge) the children, instead of going around with their garlands in groups of two or three, have this year combined, and nearly 70 went round in charge of a monitor and sang their songs at the houses of the gentry and tradespeople, the monitor taking care of the money and handing the amount 28/- to the Master who will with it provide a tea"***.

Wilfred Sheldon (*local blacksmith and Church Warden*) remembered "The highlight of the school year was the May Day Garlanding. With the garland carried by two boys, we toured the village stopping frequently at a house to sing the May Day songs. But that wasn't all: there had to be a King and Queen of the May both wearing cardboard crowns. Queens were easy to come by – but Kings were more difficult. One of his duties was to kiss the queen when requested and this happened at most of the stopping places and so at times he got tired of it all and refused to kiss. On one occasion I remember he refused to take any more part in the march and handed over his crown."

In the Wheatley Records, on page 118, there is a reference to the garland:

"The garland consisted of flower decorated hoops, hung over broom-handles and surmounted by a crown of pearls."