

# Holiday weekend at Bampton

AS IS CUSTOMARY, the bank holiday weekend saw lots of activity at Bampton, with the Great Shirt Race on Saturday, Morris Dancing and fete on Monday.

The weather was disappointing for the start of the festivities on Saturday evening being damp and dark, but it would take more than rain to dampen the spirits of the crowds who yearly flock into the town to enjoy the Great Shirt Race organised by the S.P.A.J.E.R.S. in aid of their funds for local elderly people.

By 7 p.m. competitors and spectators crowded into the Jubilee car-park whilst judges Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Woodley and Mr. David Titus a visiting Morris dancer from Maidson, Winsconsin U.S.A. walked amongst the contestants judging the costumes and vehicles.

Shirt race it may be called, but there was hardly a shirt to be seen this year as the competitors had excelled themselves in decorating their vehicles and themselves. There was even a coffin containing a beautiful blonde victim being pushed around by a blood-dripping Dracula, whilst some of the buxom beauties in fish-net tights could only be rumbled when they turned around and displayed their moustaches!

The races are run in pairs (all men) who take turns in pushing each other around a mile-long course, stopping at each of the eight pubs on the way for a compulsory half pint of ale or soft drink.

Finally the judging was over, and prizes were awarded to the oldest pair, Mr. Ernie Hunt and Mr. Bill Mattingly (with some 120 years between them) and to little Ian Baker and Ivan Lomas as Cowboy and Indian in the junior section and to James Smith and Martin Barber as Gandhi with a most realistic Indian train, in the senior section.

Then the competitors

made their way to the starting point and the first race for the juniors was started at a slightly less distance by Mr. Ernie Buckingham. The younger lads all finished the race, some gamely pushing their small wheeled vehicles to the end but there was no doubt at all about the winners, Floyd Curtis and Paul Biles, who established a new course record of five mins. 18 seconds knocking off two seconds from the old record. In second place were Michael Dunbar and Steve Lawrence, and third place Danny Beckett and Lee Woodley.

In the seniors race it soon became evident that some pairs meant very serious business, their vehicles and costumes were of the slightest and designed for speed. It was left to the more decorative and amusing to keep the crowds lining the route entertained with their antics. Right from the start there was some keen competition and it took no time at all for the first half-dozen pairs to flash past the Town Hall on the outward journey and the competition lasted until the finishing line.

Once again it was Richard Buckingham and his partner T. Coles who finished first (this is Richard Buckingham's third time in a row) with John Pearman and Bob Ellis hot on their heels in second place with Anthony Collett and G. Blackwell almost making a dead-heat for second place. Aren't our policemen wonderful? They are certainly very fit for both Buckingham and Blackwell are police officers.

Cups, trophies and beer were presented by Mr. David Titus who said how much he had enjoyed the evening and of the happy memories of a village festivity

that he would take back to America.

## MONDAY

Holiday Monday saw the Bampton Morris dancing teams out in full strength and the streets echoed to the strains of fiddles and accordions and vast crowds, many of whom had travelled many miles, followed the dancers from pub to pub. In the mid-morning children gathered in the Market Square with their garlanded hoops of wild flowers for judging by Mr. Simmonds and the Rev. Andrew Scott, Vicar of Bampton-with-Clanfield. The lateness of the flowering season had a good effect in as much as there was a greater variety of flowers in the garlands this year and the lovely results were the end products of many hours patient work. Prizes donated by Mr. Reg Pratley were awarded to Luke Newman and Robert Smith (1st), Adam Newman, Anabel Newman and Philip Wakeham (2nd), and Kenneth Jenkin, Charlotte Kinghorn and Oliver Warner (3rd). All children in the competition were given bars of chocolate.

During the afternoon the fun continued with the fete and junior 6-a-side football tournament organised by the Royal British Legion and the Bampton Football Club on the Sandford Field. Some keen football was played by the lively youngsters and in the final game between Aston Boys and the Vikings (Witney District) it was the Vikings who became the winners in a 1-1 match decided only on corners.

In the evening the Bampton Morris teams were joined by Morris Men from far afield and the whole line up as they danced through the streets was most spectacular particularly as the Men were joined by a ladies team.





**Dale Stephens (11) joins the Traditional Bampton Morris Dancers at Bampton Street Fair.**

Bampton's traditional slice of Merrie England was served up on Whit Monday with Morris Dancing teams performing throughout a very hot day.

Thousands of visitors flocked to the village for the spectacle and had no shortage of refreshments — the pubs were open all day to quench the thirsty.

The West Oxfordshire village also preserves another old holiday custom with local children going out into the fields to pick wild flowers for garlands round their hair.

The afternoon's festivities also included a fete and six-a-side football organised between the Royal British Legion and village football club.

On Saturday the annual Shirt Race was split up into a seniors and juniors section — the youngsters stopping off at eight pubs on the way for half-pints of lemonade, the adults for beer.

Winners were Paul Trinder and Keith Wixey in the juniors and Richard Buckingham and Tom Coles in the seniors. The race is organised by the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Junketing (SPAJERS) and raises money for local elderly people.

Folk followers from far and wide converged on Stonesfield over the Bank Holiday weekend for an annual two-day folk festival.

Singing, dancing, crafts and demonstrations featured in the 11th annual festival to be organised by the Stonesfield Folk Dance Group.

One of the big attrac-

tions was a folk dance workshop on Sunday morning in which the Staffordshire Morrismen were the main instructors.

Entertainment over the weekend included a recorder session by children from Stonesfield Primary School and songs by folk singer, David Hinton.

Four people were injured and taken to hospital after their Hillman Imp car crashed just outside Witney.

The accident happened during the early hours of Sunday morning on the

Witney to Bladon road about a quarter of a mile from the town.

The driver of the car, Miss Alison Bailey, of Wychelms, East End, North Leigh, and her three passengers were all taken to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

The passengers were Miss Clair Thomas, of 6 Mountfield Road, Witney, Miss Yvonne O'Shea, of 72 Park Road, Witney and Mr Angus Longsdale, of Glenfield Farm, New Yatt.

No other vehicle was involved in the accident.

## Hot foot dancers



**Ken Adams hands round the High Fertility cake at Bampton Street Fair. Pictures: PETER FLOYD.**

## Warmest day

Bank Holiday Monday proved to be the hottest day in May with temperatures soaring to 27.5 degrees Centigrade.

But the month started off coldly with a low of minus 2 degrees Centigrade on May 4, according to figures from Mr H. G. Hamilton, source superintendent of the Worsham waterworks, near Witney.

There was rain on 11 days but the total rainfall for the month was only just under an inch.



# WHITSUN, TIME FOR FESTIVITY AT BAMPTON

WHITSUN TIME was always regarded as Bampton's own particular time for feasting and merrymaking, dating back to the days when the villagers were allowed into the Wychwood Forest for the purpose of catching a stag which was brought back to Bampton, roasted and shared out all round.

For the past 100 years or more, Bampton has always celebrated with dancing by the famous Bampton Morris Men and today's dancers still dance the steps handed down through the generations and the sword bearer carries a cake to share in stead of a stag. Many present day dancers still wear the bells worn by the grandparents.

From early morning until late at night the streets echo with the sounds of fiddles, accordians and dancing feet as teams of dancers make their way first to the gardens of the larger houses and then in the Market Square and outside the local inns. Like the Pied Piper they are followed by scores of visitors who come to Bampton each year to see the dancing. After six o'clock teams from other parts of the country join the Bampton Men and the dancing continues until late at night. With their ribbons, flowers and emblems the colourful sight is constantly snapped by amateur photographers.

The children too have their part to play in the festivities and in preserv-

ing the ancient customs. From early morning they visited the houses to show their garlands made from wild flowers in which they nestled a doll. At 11.30 a.m. they lined up in the Market Square to be judged and the crowds flocked to see the pretty sight. Most of the garlands represented hours of patient work both in the picking and in the creating particularly now that many wild flowers are becoming increasingly scarce. Thanks to the generosity of local business houses all the children were given chocolate with larger boxes for the winners. Judging the garland this year were Rev. Dr. and Mrs. J. Savoy, from America who are on exchange with the Rev. and Mrs. J. Selwyn Taborn, vicar of Bampton. Dr. and Mrs. Savoy were charmed with this pleasant custom and would have awarded 1st prizes to all children had it been possible.

## THE TOWN HALL

The Exhibition of Art and the Crafts Fair organised by the West Oxfordshire Arts Assoc. attracted hordes of visitors who found much to admire or purchase on the well displayed stalls of patchwork, pottery, glassware, jewellery and photographs.

## CANCER RESEARCH

The Bampton branch of the Cancer research council also had a corner of the Market Square where there was a competition for a hand-knitted blanket made by Mrs. Doris Cleaver during the Winter months especially for this day.

## COMMUNITY FETE

Bampton's Festivities continued through Monday afternoon with a community fete organised by the Royal British Legion on the Old School Playing Fields. Previously this fete has been run entirely by the R.B.L. but this year invitations were sent to all local organisations to make a joint effort. The response was very good and this year the field was gay with stalls and competitions of all kinds, whilst the Bampton Football Club organised a 5-a-side junior football tournament and staged their now famous "It's a knock-out" competition. Fine weather brought the crowds out in strength and the tea tent did brisk business in feeding the multitudes. Entertainment was provided by a display and band performance by the Oxfordshire Royal Green Jackets Btn. and by the A.C.F. Bampton det. There was a Fire Service Static Exhibition and Morris Dancing by the Traditional team led by Mr. Arnold Woodley. The fete opened with a

fancy dress parade for children (to 15 years) judged by Dr. and Mrs. McPherson and Mrs. Peerless who awarded prizes to Denise Kew (Gypsy) Graham Dent (Mexican Bandit) and Helen Becky Warner (two departed Spirits). Consolation gifts were given to all the contestants.

## BAMPTON PUMPKIN CLUB

Still tirelessly working to collect as much cash as possible to give to Bampton's elderly people at Christmas, members of the Pumpkin Club provided a series of entertainments during the holiday weekend.

On Saturday evening after the close of the Shirt Race they organised a Tramps' Supper in the Cotswold Hotel which proved very popular. Shouts of glee went up as each "tramp" arrived at the hotel, and before the jollification could begin the King and Queen of the Road had to be found. With the help of the local dialect poet Mr. Dan McNab, assisted by Mrs. McNab, who officiated as judges, Mr. J. Gascoigne was elected King and Mrs. Gertie Jordan Queen of the Road. Prizes were awarded to Mary Basson, Timothy Williams and Dorothy Basson as the juvenile class. Then began juvenile class. The began the traditional feed of sausages and mash which provided the stamina to last the party for the rest of the enjoyable evening.

On Monday the Pumpkin Club organised an exhibition of dolls and local arts and crafts in the Old School, Church View. The Bampton Art Group also had a corner of the exhibition for showing work by some of their members. The children too had their corner where by emulating the good work done by the Wombles they created useful and decorative articles from waste products.

The main exhibition was beautifully arranged and the work shown was of a high standard of craftsmanship. A display of hand-made dolls entitled "A cavalcade of history" by Mrs. M. Smith of Witney was one of the highlights and the other dolls of all sizes were all beautifully dressed and displayed. A model of Witney Buttercross made of matchsticks was a work of art representing many hours of patient labour.



# BAMPTON'S GREAT SHIRT RACE

IT WOULD take more than grey skies and a chill breeze to keep the crowds from Bampton on Spring Holiday Saturday evening to enjoy the annual frolic organised by the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Junketing, the Great Shirt Race.

This year more than ever packed into the town centre, many of them visitors who as members for the Camping Club of Great Britain, had pitched their site at nearby Lew for the pleasure of joining in some of the Bampton festivities.

There were many more competitors also with a field of 30 pairs in the senior race and a large crowd of youngsters in the junior event. Their wheeled vehicles were as diverse in appearance as ever, but one could not but wonder where all the prams came from and the costumes of the competitors, whilst no longer the "Shirts" of the original race of 1952, were highly comical. Many men competitors were hard to distinguish as males for with liberal make-up, wigs, and false bosoms they ran close to being second to Danny La Rue. Neither indeed is the Great Shirt Race still limited to males only for women's lib has crept into this former male stronghold with several female entrants.

## HARD TASK

There was much hilarity as competitors made their way to the Market Square to line up for Judging before the race and this year's judges Mr. and Mrs. Don Rouse had a very hard task indeed before they decided that Neil and Andrew Hitchens as "Some Mothers do have them" in the Junior section were the younger winners and Frank Piercy and John Fox as "The Potty People" deserved the prize in the senior section. The oldest competitors Mr. Ernie Hunt and Mrs. Win Woodley who topped the century between them were also awarded a deserved prize.

By courtesy of Mr. Horace Hollifield who provided a handsome broadcasting cabin, Mr. Paul Bovington was able to keep the crowd informed of items of interest, viz — that the competitors hailed from all parts of England — from Hammer-smith, Swindon, Kelms-cot, Northmoor and Leicester with the Bampton Inns well represented.

At 7 p.m. the juniors made their way to Fisher's bridge where Mr. Ernie Buckingham was waiting with his starting gun to set the wheels turning and the youngsters off on their tough task of pushing one of each pair in a rickety vehicle and drinking half a pint of lemonade at each of Bampton's nine hostelrys en route. By the time the first two pubs had been visited and the Town hall reached on the outward journey, it was obvious that this year's race would be run in good time at Anthony Collett and Andrew Bathe streaked around the corner in Broad Street. Well ahead of their nearest rivals, this pair did in fact break the finishing tape in the record time of 6 mins. 47 sec. It was some seconds before the next couple rounded the bend to the home straight and a big cheer went up for the Mary Poppins team of Jocelyn Mills and Jeffery Adams. The third place competitors were Richard Elliott and Martin Beresford.

Then it was time for the senior competitors to push down to Fisher's Bridge

to be given the "off" by Mr. Buckingham and it was not long before the field had separated into the "determined" and the "fun raising". Crowds lined the mile-long route and the merry bursts of folk in holiday mood could be heard for some distance as vehicles weaved their way along the course, with seemingly near spills at corners. The inns too were popular vantage spots for seeing the fun of trying to down a half-pinta (beer offered this time) almost on the run.

## ANOTHER RECORD

Mr. Bovington had great pleasure in announcing that yet another record had been broken as last year's winners Michael Smith and Richard Snooks completed their double in 5 mins. 36 secs., closely followed by Bob and John Hudson (of London but with strong local connections) and John and Alex Wixey in third place. These last four have completed successfully many times previously and are old favourites with the crowds.

The presentation of a "pin" of ale at the pub of their choice was made to the senior winners and cups and plaques to all other prize winners by Mrs. Robert Colville, wife of the President of the S.P.A.J.E.R.S.

Collections were taken during the evening for the S.P.A.J.E.R.S. funds for distributing to Bampton's elderly residents at Christmas.