

# Hageneth Morris Men 1977- 2019

I should like this report to be included in the 2022 Parish records as it is the first opportunity, due to the Covid epidemic, to formally record the passing of Hageneth Morris Men who sadly came to the conclusion in November 2019 that they could no longer continue as Haughley's own Morris Men.

Hageneth were founded as "Haughley Festival Morris" in 1977 to perform at Haughley's Queen's Silver Jubilee celebrations in June of that year. They managed to reach their 40<sup>th</sup> birthday but sadly hung up their bells after 42 years. The side decided that because of a declining number of fit and able men, it was no longer possible to continue as an independent side. Hageneth had the advantage that when they began all the dancers were young, mostly aged between 25 and 35 years, and were fit, enthusiastic, and willing to learn, which was necessary as most of them had never danced Morris before. They will be remembered for the athleticism and vigour of their displays; a standard set by those original young dancers, especially founder member Ronnie Godbold from Stowmarket.

A celebration/wake was held at the Chestnut Horse, Great Finborough on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and Hageneth went out in style. There was a tremendous turn-out of well over 100 people including dancers from Haughley Hoofers and Bury Fair (both offshoots of Haughley Festival Morris) and friends from East Anglian sides; East Suffolk Morris, Peterborough, Westrafelda, Devil's Dyke, Coton, Hoxon, Green Dragon and the strangely named and colourfully dressed Slack Ma Girdle. Hageneth excelled themselves and by some kind of a miracle actually had 12 men dancing, some of whom hadn't been seen for almost 40 years, as well as others who had given up dancing or had moved away from the area. Many of the original dancing side from 1977 were there and lots of other past members and friends made over 42 years.

Formed with the expectation of being a men's side an injury to one of the original dancers prior to the first performance resulted in his wife taking his place on that occasion. More women appeared for the practice season in September 1977 and the decision was taken that they would dance separately; they later formed Bury Fair Women's Morris. Hageneth may not have been successful in preserving the side for future generations but it is a comforting thought that when they started in 1977 they were only the second side in Suffolk; now there are 19 sides. Hageneth have always had men from the village dancing in the side but also from other Mid Suffolk villages. Bruce Sydell of Haughley Green was a founder member and Richard Coe and Dave Evans of Old Street have also danced with the side for many years

The side performed at numerous Haughley street fairs, fetes and Christmas Lights events as well as outside the King's Arms and Old Counting House on many summer evenings.

As Haughley's unofficial "ambassadors" Hageneth enjoyed representing the village at local fetes and festivals as well as on successful foreign tours, including twinning celebrations for Haughley (with Noyelles lez Seclins) and Bury St Edmunds (Compiegne, France and Kevalaer, Germany). Individual members have also danced for Hageneth in America, Taiwan, New Zealand and Russia.

Haughley Hoofers will continue the tradition of Morris dancing in Haughley.

Dave Evans

Haughley resident and last Squire of Hageneth Morris Men