



Denis Smith R.I.P.

Judith Inman and Maggie Fletcher share happy memories of Denis Smith, an inspired accompanist for many forms of folk dance for over 50 years, in particular his links with the Chilterns.

Maggie remembers first meeting Denis at a Musicians' week at the Bath Training College, where he was one of the tutors. She recalls attending 2 or 3 courses with him. Denis was an excellent accordionist and a perfectionist, to the extent that his playing appeared effortless. He was great fun to be with, and had a dry wit.

He played for Westminster Morris Men (alongside the Unicorn, their 'beast' which accompanies the team wherever they go). His relaxed and graceful style of playing was reflected in their elegant dancing.

Denis, with Jim Coleman, played for many dances in Bucks. For the Playford Balls they appeared resplendent in velvet (smoking) jackets.

Their recording of the Airedale dances, originally made between 1978 and 1981 was later put out as a double CD, and is still a staple element of many callers' repertoire.

At an evening dance in Sidmouth, one of the visiting teams was Russian, so Jim and Denis played a repeat of *Newcastle* in Russian style, permitting themselves a laugh at the end, while acknowledging the applause, and also applauding our attempts at Russian dance!

Those who attended the Carols and Customs events at Cecil Sharp House each year will remember Denis and his daughter, Jenny floating their way through the Symondsburys Mummings tune.

Denis worked as a civil engineer and after retirement continued as archivist of their Institute. Judith recalls 'several years ago the 'Civils' were meeting in Marlow and invited the public to a talk about 'our' bridge. A group of my neighbours attended. The speaker was to be Dr. D Smith. It wasn't until I looked at the person checking his slides that I realised who it was! I dashed out to ring Maggie. Our plan was to surprise him as he started to speak but of course he saw us before that. It was a fascinating talk. We were all enthralled. His speaking was like his playing, relaxed and clear. You can see I am a fan or hero worshipper!!!'

Denis had suffered from dementia for several years and passed away at the end of last year. We extend our sympathy to his family.