



## The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 10 – September 1999

Greetings,

Well, we have survived the Summer Season, the Ring Meetings are behind us and it is time to get on with practices and instructionals – doesn't time fly when you are exhausting yourself!!!

This Newsletter contains messages from the *Squire* and *Treasurer*, as well as two Ring meeting reports. This Mailing also includes a number of separate items, please make sure you have dealt with them all. Two of these are **URGENT** items:

**The Subscription and Insurance Renewal Notice** – for rapid payment in order to receive your “prompt payment advantage”. See also the *Treasurer's* notes herein.

**The Application Form** for, and details of Next Year's **Ring Meetings**. You will need to make a prompt choice and estimate of numbers.

*Also enclosed with this mailing are:*

- Inevitably – there are more **amendments** to the Directory. [The “up to the minute” version of the Directory, Emailed as a Word attachment, is always available].
- **Application Forms** for the **Jigs Instructional**; the **Musicians' Instructional**; and for selecting your preferred dates for dancing in the **Millennium Dome**.
- An update on the “*Nine Daies Morris*” in April 2000.
- A “Morris Shop” Catalogue and Order Form.
- For Members and the Advisory Council – A Draft of the proposed revised voting Areas, for comment prior to the ARM.
- For the Advisory Council - details of, and the Agenda for, the November meeting.

**Remember:** *Unless you pass on the content of this Newsletter to the Men in your Side, the information stops with you. A summary is included on the last sheet.*

*E-mailed versions of these Newsletters are available on request [as a Word document or a plain text file; please order and specify by Email].*

## IN MEMORIAM

**Robert [Bob] Thomas Bradbury**, died recently aged 83. The founding Bagman of **Mendip** and founding Squire of **West Somerset**. He was from the Midlands and once danced with the Men of Mercia. He was keen on all aspects of "Folk", and ran the Burnham and Highbridge Folk Dance Club for many years, with his wife, and was involved with the acquisition of Halsway Manor. He was also once a candidate for Squire of the Ring.

## FROM THE SQUIRE

**The Sharp / Kimber Centenary Celebrations.** "As you will have read in the Circular, the Headington Quarry Morris Dancers are marking the centenary of the meeting between William Kimber and Cecil Sharp on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> December 1999. It will be most appropriate if all Sides danced in their own locality on that day to show how widespread was the effect of that chance meeting. I would hope that as many as possible would be able to dance some of the Headington dances and, in particular, Laudanum Bunches, which was the first dance seen by Cecil Sharp. HQMD would prefer, I think, if there were **not** a mass invasion of Headington on that day."

**Women Musicians – aka "Daniel's Can of Worms".** "For everyone's information, I have written to Area Representatives asking them to let me know how many sides "survive" because they have a woman playing for them. When I know the size of "the problem", I will then, together with the other Officers, be in a position to discuss the issues with the Advisory Council. It is my intention to bring the subject to the ARM next year for discussion and possible decision by the Members.

"So, if you have a view, let your Area Representative know, or tell me. It is you, the Member Sides of the Morris Ring, who decide these issues, not the Officers or the Advisory Council."

**Massed Dances 2000** "I know it is a bit soon to be writing about the massed dances for next years Ring Meetings, but ... next year, at every Ring Meeting, one of the massed dances will be Laudanum Bunches from Headington. I know not all Sides know it or dance it. As we are approaching the practice season, you have advance notice to find the notation and the music, and to give your musicians and your Foreman time to learn it. The other massed dances will be as for 1999."

**Wassail, Daniel Fox**

## WEB NEWS

There is a fine picture of **Helmond** dancing the Offertory Dance in Thaxted Church at the **Thaxted** Ring Meeting at <http://www.nvs-dance.nl/morris.html> .

## MONEY FOR TRAVEL IN 2000 !!

A further reminder that the "**Douglas Kennedy Memorial Fund**" makes modest, but helpful, contributions to travelling expenses. Preference is given to clubs with a young membership. Applications should be made by 31 January 2000 to The Clerk of the Trustees, Robert Parker, 40, Nightingale Road, Middlesex TW12 3HZ.

## FROM THE TREASURER

"It's that time of year again. We've heard so much from the Ring Bagman over the past eighteen months, now it's my chance to try get a word in edge-ways.

"We have not done too badly this year. But I have a confession to make. I have spent a little more on the Morris Shop than I usually do. Not to worry, we have still got a bob or two in the bank. Some of you will have noticed that we have started to up-date our stock of Letchworth tapes to CD's. Firstly the Morris Selection (LMM1), followed by the Fieldtown (LMM 10 & 11) and Headington (LMM 4 & 5). These are available now at only £7 each. CDs are so much easier for dancing practice. No fast-forward or re-winding, just flit from track to track without messing about.

"Other CDs on offer from the Morris Shop include the 'The Traditional Morris Dance Music Album' - an excellent cross section of 21 tunes with **Chris Bartram** (Fiddle) and **Keith Holloway** (Melodeon) and others from **Abingdon** - A belter of a CD for only £8. Also, **Grand Union** has been busy compiling their own CD with a selection of songs and tunes. 23 tracks in all and another good value CD at £8.

"As mentioned in the last mailing, the "shop" also has the EFDSS William Kimber CD. This includes material from the original LP, as well as "new" material and CD ROM readable photographs etc. The price from the shop is **£14.00** per copy – a saving on the EFDSS price to reflect our sponsorship.

**NB** For CDs by mail order add + **£1.00 p&p** for first CD; then £0.50 per additional item.

**SWORDS** "Our biggest investment to-date has been for a supply of longwords and rappers totalling £3,500 that we have had manufactured, in the absence of available stock elsewhere. They are made of high quality annealed spring steel and have lacquered beech wood handles with brass ferrules. They are now available for sale. Ring Members' prices: Long Swords are at £18.00 each and the Rappers at £25.00 each, transportation or carriage additional – so it is best to arrange to collect them!! For a middle of the price range, their quality is excellent and this is reflected in the way they are selling. I have just completed an order for 14 swords destined for the Royal National Theatre, London. This demonstrates another point - it pays to advertise on the World Wide Web.

"Many thanks to you all who assisted with the sponsored slim. The target was 3 stone, but I only achieved 2½ stone. It would take all of this page to mention those who contributed, as sides and individuals. The total raised was £398.00. This amount was set aside and has already been put to good practical use by **Phil Underwood** (Keeper of the Animal Archive) who is now using the Ring's new computer scanner and other auxiliary compatible equipment. We look forward to seeing some results from this project very soon. Many thanks for all your work Phil and, for one last time, thanks to all of you who contributed.

"The fighting of the flab continues, but unfortunately is not without it's medical setbacks, the details of which I need not bore you. My efforts have even go so far as to joining a nearby health club, with three gyms, swimming pool, sauna and steam room - and the subs are considerably more than £35 per year!!"

**Steve Adamson**

**ARM 2000 – A REMINDER.**

The **2000 ARM** of **THE MORRIS RING** will be held from **31 March to 2 April 2000**.

Hosted by **Ripley** in Derby. The ARM itself will be on 1 April 2000 [No Fooling!!!]. The Application Form will be with the [late in] November Newsletter.

**NOMINATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS - A REMINDER.**

Nominations for Officers and Elected Representatives of the Advisory Council must be sent to the Bagman **at least three months before the ARM** – i.e. by the end of December 1999.

The **Squire** and **Treasurer** are due for election. The Treasurer may [and is willing] to re-stand. We have already some nominations for Squire; the fact that any Officer is willing to re-stand does not preclude other nominations.

The same time scales apply to Nominations for the three **Area Representatives** due for election, namely: those for the **Midlands and North**; the **East & South Midlands**; and the **London** Areas. Area Representatives may re-stand. They only require a formal re-nomination, if alternative candidates are forthcoming.

Some **Boundary Changes** are to be proposed at the ARM, in order to deal with the London Area and to even out the size of the Area “Constituencies”. Fortuitously, the Areas most affected are those for which the Representatives are due for election. This does mean that subject to the approval of the Meeting [it is not a “Constitutional” matter], there may be opportunities for candidates from Sides which might not have previously been within these three Areas. Some DRAFT notes are included with this mailing. These will be the basis of a Resolution at the ARM. Any comments [to the Bagman please] will be welcome.

Any “**Proposed Alterations to the Constitution**”, or other “**Formal Resolutions for Discussion**”, shall also be received by the Bagman, also at least three months before the Meeting. This does not preclude other items being discussed as AoB items.

**RING MEETINGS – 2000**

This Newsletter includes the Application Form for the Year 2000 Ring Meetings. **This will require Sides to return the forms without delay – by 12<sup>th</sup> November** for consideration in the first allocation. Sides may apply after that date, but their first choice may be gone.

The Host Sides and the Bagman will then have about four weeks to receive bribes and entreaties; to run the ballot and to allocate places. It is intended [as suggested by **East Surrey** at the ARM] that Sides are advised of their success, or otherwise, before Christmas - even if you do have to ring the Bagman as the letters are stuck in the post! This should assist your summer holiday arrangements.

There will **NOT** be a meeting in the Netherlands – **Helmond** have had an invitation to their twin town in Belgium at their preferred date.

## MILLENNIUM DOME

Our “Domemaster” **Paul Montague** has had a further meeting at the Dome – and he even got inside it!! Hopefully, we may also get to dance inside the Dome for one of the spots!!! He is still finalising the deal – but should have decisions soon. There will probably be a maximum number of dancers, who will each get a free day ticket. This will limit us to two or three sides per day. There will be also be some additional free tickets, although probably no more than one per two dancers. Some small travel subsidy may also be available, probably for re-distribution by various Morris Organisations. Still every little helps and we would try to divide this to help the furthest travellers.

An **Application Form** is enclosed: please express your interest **now**, together with your **preferences on dates**. Those on Monty's list are still first in the queue, but should still send it in. **Sydney** also have expressed interest - but will have to buy their own plane tickets!!!

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Fools and Animals Instructional – 29 - 31 October**, at Wath upon Dearne. Application form in last mailing. Contact **Eric Pressley** [Tel: 01709 874770].

**Pocklington Long Sword Instructional – POSTPONED TO THE NEW YEAR.**

**Jigs Instructional 2000. 21 - 23 January 2000.** **Bert Cleaver** et al instructing. Hosts **Dolphin** at Sutton Bonnington. Application Form enclosed.

**Musicians' Instructional. 11 – 13 February 2000.** The hosts will be **Mendip**. Details are given below and also on the enclosed Application Form. You can also contact the organiser: - **Clive Du'Mont**, 21, Langthorn Close, Frampton Cotterell, South Gloucestershire BS36 2JH. Telephone / fax: **01454 773895** Email: [dumontch@aol.com](mailto:dumontch@aol.com)

## MORRIS MUSICIANS' INSTRUCTIONAL

**Mendip** Morris Men are pleased to announce the revival of the Morris Ring's Morris Musicians' Instructional, to be held from **11-13 February 2000** in Banwell, Somerset.

Having lain fallow for a few years, the weekend was last run by Whitchurch (*a hard act to follow!*) and many musicians have since asked when it would be resurrected.

Those who have attended before will doubtless testify to both the value and enjoyment that previous events have delivered ... and even the occasional non-musician dancer has been heard to remark on the difference they've made! Now there's a chance for your club to once again take fresh advantage of this unrivalled opportunity.

In addition, as previous Instructionals have often attracted some absolute beginners, new workshops are to be introduced, subject to demand, aimed at acquainting players with their instruments and helping them gather the confidence (and resilience?) to get them off the starting blocks.

Another idea being considered is for Foremen and Squires to come along too. If you'd like to know more - or perhaps would be interested in leading a Foreman's workshop in the context of the music – get in touch and talk it over.

## RING MEETING REPORT – LONG MAN – 1999

The Meeting, from 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> July 1999, was the 278<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Morris Ring and celebrated Long Man's 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary. It was based at Park College in Eastbourne. 14 Sides – some 180 men – attended the Meeting. The visiting Sides: **Bristol; Uttoxeter Heart of Oak; Dartington; Yateley; Dolphin; Milton; St Albans; Exeter; Martlets; Letchworth; Anker; Ewell St Mary's; and Trigg.**

Friday evening was spent at the school, although a number of the early arrivals did take in a visit to some of the Eastbourne pubs. A small group from Bristol, good Beer Guide in hand is understood to have visited at least half a dozen establishments!! Supper comprised a selection of "Ploughman's" accompanied by "Best Bitter" from Harvey's of Lewis.

Some informal dancing took place in the gym after "closing time" and carried on until about 1.00am when singing and music in the bar took over.

The weather for the Saturday tours [and indeed for the whole weekend] was warm and sunny. Four tours visited the towns and villages in the area and spots included Lewes; Eastbourne; Beachy Head and Pevensey Bay.

The Squire's tour visited all four tours, which converged for a Massed at the Eastbourne Seafront, Bandstand – a superb setting, with the crowd looking down into the arena.

Notable dances enjoyed during the day – too many to mention but: - Yateley's two man [or boy] Fighting Jig from Wheatley was distinctive. Bristol's Ascott Old Trunkles. Dartington with their Old Taylor in the style of Fieldtown, danced with Father Ken Loveless in mind – being to the tune of one of his favourite songs. Trigg's Bodmin Riding, again in the Fieldtown style. Ewell St Mary's' "Gustav's Dance" composed by Alan Mead in the Adderbury Style to a Gustav Holst arrangement of the tune "Personent Hodie" - this had been their Offertory dance at Thaxted in 1989, in the church where Holst had been the organist.

The Guests at the Feast included the Curate of St. Mary's Church; and Miles Jenner, the Head Brewer of Harveys, Brewers of Lewis. Miles Jenner recounted the Brewery's 11 year association with Long Man, and recounted the history of the welcoming and delivery of the Old Ale each year. This had become, in that short time a tradition, with people in the town recounting how their Grandparents had been involved!!!

There was time for only a few songs before a cabaret performance of a Christmas Mummers Play, from the local Associate Side – **Merrie England Mummers**, who were celebrating their 25 years. After the meal, there was singing and playing in the bar, and informal dancing in the gym until the normal late hour.

On the Sunday – after a massed photograph in the local park, the procession formed up. The Police had preferred to leave it to the Hosts, who marshalled the procession with notable efficiency, as it danced its way to St Mary The Virgin Eastbourne Parish Church for the 11.15am Family Service. Prior to the service, a number of Men, ringers also of larger bells, rang the bells of the church.

The Offertory Dance was presented by our Hosts, Long Man, who performed one of their own Wilmington dances. The Sermon included a very well composed history of the Morris for the non-Morris members of the congregation. Indeed it was probably informative to many of the Men. It is suspected that the Squire of the Ring may have had some input – and it is hoped that the text will be available in due course.

After the Service, the Men crossed the road to the park surrounding the Towner Art Gallery for another mass show.

A pat on the back for each and every member of Long Man, but particularly for The Meeting Bagman, Bob Paterson, whose attention to detail ensured that all the arrangements under their control, went without a hitch [the correspondence file is probably the thickest in Ring history!!]. We thank them all for providing a splendid weekend – and how did they manage the sunshine throughout – easy they say – "Eastbourne is the Sunshine Capital of England"!!!

## RING MEETING REPORT – SILURIAN – 1999

The Meeting, from 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July 1999, was the 279<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Morris Ring, and celebrated Silurian's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. It was based at various locations in Ledbury.

20 Sides, some 240 men, attended: **Bedford; Chalice; Chipping Camden; Colchester; East Surrey; Grand Union; Greensleeves; Hartley; Jockey; King John's; Men of Wight; North Wood; Ravensbourne; Ripley; Rutland; Shakespeare; Standon; Thaxted; Thelwall and Wadard**, as well as the hosts **Silurian**.

On Friday evening, an excellent supper of Chicken Curry and all the accompaniments was provided. This proved a solid foundation for the liquid proceedings that followed as Men dispersed to the pubs.

The Brewery [the pub not the Brewery] proved a particularly popular first stop, being adjacent to the Supper spot. A recitation from Ripley was an early item and the singing was to last all evening. Later the revellers visited [among others] the Prince of Wales [the Feathers – not to be confused with The Feathers (Hotel)]; the Talbot and the Oak, which seemed to outstay most - and was a useful last stop for many on their way bed-wards.

For some of those returning to the School for the night, there was an extensive Brandy tasting, organised by East Surrey, and involving some of Bedford and Greensleeves. The Ring Bagman's contribution of a bottle of Marc was considered to be the "roughest" of what was available. It will be generous to pass over the condition of some of the participants in the small hours. No doubt similar happenings occurred at the other venues.

The weather for the Saturday tours [and indeed all weekend] was very hot and sunny. Indeed the afternoon was to be so hot as to be almost un-danceable – much soft beverage was drunk!!

A Programme "Where to avoid Morris Dancers" outlined the tours. By a complex folding of the various sheets, a guide to each Side's Kit could be established. A blown up version of the Programme and the various Sides attire was included in a window display in the Tourist Office in the town centre.

The six tours visited the main towns - Worcester; Hereford; Ross; Gloucester and Tewkesbury - and a range of village pubs in the area - where crowds could be avoided, but excellent ale drunk!! The Squire's Tour, valiantly driven by the Squire himself - as he felt a sober disposition might be advantageous - visited each of the six tours.

There were no outside Guests at the Feast, and the Top Table included the Officers; the Squire of Silurian, **Mike Neathway**, Past Squires, **Roy Yarnell** and **Tim Sercombe**.

The Squire proposed the Loyal Toast. The Bagman proposed The Immortal Memory; he reminded those present of the significant anniversary on Boxing Day 1999, and the fortuitous event that had occurred when Headington Quarry collected Cecil Sharp. He joined the Memory with the name of **Dave Jones**, who founded Silurian and had done so much to collect and revitalise the Border dances. The Toast to the Hosts was made by Past Squire, **Roy Yarnell of Jockey**, who noted that this was the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Silurian's formation and led a rendition of "Happy Birthday". The Squire of Silurian, Mike Neathway, replied and proposed the health of the Guests.

There was only time for a few songs before the evening Show, which commenced at 9.30pm. This took place under the Market House. Afterwards, Men dispersed to the pubs to dance and sing until "fairly late". The Oak was again the stayer, remaining open until about 1.00am – fortunately we could be guests of the residents – a wedding party finding they had a livelier time than expected. There was a selection of dances, as well as the singing.

One of the **Men of Wight** celebrated his birthday on the Sunday and his breakfast sausage was adorned with three candles. His Side toasted him with Bucks Fizz, the breakfast juice having been enhanced by a bottle of sparkling beverage.

The Men formed up for a walking procession to the Parish Church, for the 9.30am Morning Eucharist Service. The Men processed in through the West Door. During the processional hymn, the Squires presented their staffs at the altar.

Lessons were read by Past Bagman, **Keith Francis** of Silurian and The Squire, **Daniel Fox**. The Sermon by the Revd. Dr. Colin Beevers included thoughts on the procession through life. He compared the Morris and the congregation of the church. The Offertory Dance was presented by Silurian, who performed a selection of their Border dances – somewhat circumspectly – with sticks held somewhat higher than the official “rude” position!!

After the Service, the Men processed into town at 11.00am prompt. The Police arranged the traffic lights to be appropriately set as the Winstar Processional was danced down the High Street to the Market House. During the Mass Show, the “new” Bagman, **John Frearson**, finally “danced in” with “Princess Royal” from Ducklington, to accompaniment from **Roger Nicholls**, also of **Bedford**.

After the show, Men made their way back to the Hall for lunch. A brief interlude occurred to further celebrate the birthday of the [unfortunate] Man of Wight. This was in traditional folk play format and featured a most realistic ethnic Betsy. Various rituals were performed, loosely on a theme of fertility. A ritual “coming” from a symbolically positioned bottle provided a sparkling libation that was quaffed by the upstanding sacrificial victim. The Betsy, who mislaid the majority of her apparel during the course of the ceremonial, proved to be blacked-up overall, no doubt in respect to our hosts’ normal attire and no doubt to avoid any further Silurian blacking. She finally retrieved said attire and retired post haste with “her” minder – to come no more until the next year ... but not before suitable ~~blackmail~~ archival photographs had been taken of posteriors for posterity !!! A report on the Internet alluded to “...a very entertaining birthday “presentation” to a lucky morris man by a young lady immediately after the Sunday lunch, which ended up with her in a state of considerable undress!” – we have no record of any such occurrence !!!!

The entire weekend ran like clockwork – without any member of Silurian showing the least sign of strain! A pat on the back for each and every one, but particularly for Meeting Bagman, **Roger Page**, whose attention to detail ensured all the arrangements under their control, went without a hitch. Past Bagman, **Keith Francis**, was notably everywhere at once, keeping an avuncular eye on the proceedings – as well as working extremely hard. His manual cleansing of the post church procession route was certainly far in excess of the normal call of duty – if we did not shake his hand in thanks ... !!

## HOW TO SURVIVE A RING MEETING

Following these Ring Meeting Reports, the following seem apposite. I am grateful to the publishers of the Beds/Herts/Bucks Folk Magazine “Unicorn” [**Alan Creamer** and **Theo Thomas** of **Letchworth**] and in particular to “**Long Lankin**”, who writes the concluding “BROADSIDE” page, but remains anonymous, for allowing me to reproduce this article.

“A real problem with “Weekends of Dance” is that the washing facilities never match the demand or the need: the accommodation being either indoor or outdoor camping. For those facing these events for the first time here are the main survival strategies that seem to be adopted in terms of personal hygiene.

“**Pre-Cleaning**” can be used alongside any of the other strategies since the emphasis is on preparation for the weekend. The approach is to pre-empt the problems by bathing/showering thoroughly before you leave home. You thus arrive “extra clean” and can expect to make it a bit further through the weekend before you start to feel dirty.

“The **Obsessive** strategy is to maintain domestic standards of personal hygiene whatever the circumstances. People using this approach are easy to spot because they are always in the queue for the few cold showers available. It does however allow you to look immaculate no matter how small your tent or basic the hall you have been accommodated in.

“**Making-Do**” is a more pragmatic approach. People following this strategy wash themselves down as best they can with the facilities easily available. They rely upon clean clothes, deodorants and perfumes to disguise any shortcomings and create a short-term impression of cleanliness. Such people can be identified by the quality of luggage they have with them.



"**Hardies** wash al fresco in, or outside, their tents. These can range from the "sophisticates" who heat up water on a camp burner to the "basics" who wash in cold water from a bowl on the ground. Your choice is obviously influenced by the size of your tent but it does at least save queuing. Indoors they will use a bowl or the kitchen sink (usually when other people are trying to get some breakfast).

"**Tokenism** involves making a show of trying to keep clean but limiting yourself to "*throwing water*" over your face. Basically the idea is to go through the motions and hope that people won't realise who the smell is coming from. Lots of clean clothes and deodorants become even more important with this strategy.

"**Smellies** make no attempt to keep clean whatsoever. There is a theory that the human body can only carry a finite quantity of dirt: once that level is reached you cannot get any dirtier. However you need to be particularly brazen to rely upon the logical extension of this argument that no matter how clean your clothes are to begin with they will only get dirty so there is no point in changing either.

"The **Cop-Out** strategy is simply to go to bed and breakfast or even (if the venue is close enough) just to travel in each day. One way of covering yourself from any resultant criticism is to ensure your spouse/partner comes as well: that way you can blame him/her saying "*If it was just me I'd be more than pleased to spend the weekend reeking to high heaven and sleeping on a cold floor but my partner will insist on his/her creature comforts*".

"And remember: if cleanliness is next to godliness, where does that leave the morris dancer?"

As they say "been there, seen it, got the [lots of clean] tee shirts" – but it does strike some familiar notes. We understand that, the anonymous, "Long Lankin" **is** a Morris dancer!!!

## OTHER EVENTS

**National Pipe and Tabor Festival**, Gloucester, 9 -11 June 2000. Workshops, Performances, Conference, Market etc. Contact:- **Stephen Rowley**, Tanronen, Lurks Lane, Pitchcombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL6 6LL. Tel: 01453-763181 Email: srowley@dial.pipex.com

## ARCHIVAL MATTERS

**Roy Judge**, Bagman for the **Ancient Men**, sent a copy of "Folklore" magazine. It contains his research on the use of Morris dance in a 1908 Cambridge production of John Milton's "Comus" to mark the Tercentenary of his birth. A photograph of the dancers, from an album in Christ's College Library, Cambridge, illustrates the article. The only dancer identified was **George Mallory**, whose body was found just below the summit of Everest earlier this year, raising the controversial point as to whether a Morris man had first scaled that highest peak.

**Dudley Binding** reports that a work up copy [not the actual programme] of the TV programme "Six Fools and a Dancer" has been lodged with the Morris Ring Archive.

## A QUOTE

Seen in "Time Out" Magazine, in a feature on seaside resorts:- "Morris dancing: it's ace, isn't it? All this pagan flaunting of fertility symbols is really pissing off the Jesus bus next to the market." [posted on the net by Elaine Bradtke of London NW3]

## OTHER NEWS

**Icknield Way - 40th Anniversary - *Sem Seaborne*** reports: - "The 40th celebrations were held in hot and sunny weather - with the Wantage landlords rubbing their hands together with glee. Four Icknield Way teams represented three generations. An original 'old boys' team comprising 9 men who started things 40 years ago; an intermediate team from some 20 years ago; the current team and a boy's side. They met for coffee at 10:00am and were joined by **Yateley, Oxford City, Crendon**, Mr. Hemmings TAMD, and **Kenet**, about 90 men in total.

"There were three walking tours of the town starting at the Vale & Downland Museum, WH Smiths and Sainsburys. The newly refurbished Museum has a small exhibit on the local morris and features **Joe Marns** who was chief musician for 30 years. There is a memorial bench on the terrace with an inscription to Joe (who died last year). The IWMM tour danced by the bench and sang 'Poor Old Joe'.

"The tours visited The Abingdon Arms, The Shears, and The Kings Arms, all favourites with the present team, although the Old Boys' pub was the "Kings" whereas the present team favour the "Abby"; lunches were arranged accordingly and there was some vocal entertainment.

"All met up for a massed display at 3:00pm, on The Bear Hotel forecourt, where a good sized crowd had gathered and the dancers received a welcome from lady Mayor Mrs. Jennifer Hannaby. The usual array of dances ensued. Members of the local press were present and photographed Yateley for mass tabloid publication. Typical - Icknield Way do the hard work, Yateley get the glory!!!

"Many of the old boys didn't want the dancing to stop, but a halt was called at 4:30pm with the customary Bonny Green Garters. After this two Icknield Way dancers at the peak of their Morris prime (i.e. 18 and 21 years old) danced the Bampton jig 'Princess Royal' and secured the future for the Morris in Wantage for many a year to come.

"Tea and cake were taken at King Alfred's School and a special 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary cake was presented to the team in blue and yellow complete with yellow Wyvern. Some of the teams then went sight seeing but everyone reconvened at the Old Mill Hall at 7:30pm for a Ceilidh with 'The Mad Hatter's Ceilidh Extravaganza'. Family and friends joined in to make up a crowd of 130 plus. They were treated to a step clog dance display by 'The Corn Dollies' and some highly original welsh style dancing from 'Isis'. IWMM danced 'Jolly Joe Marns', a dance composed in Joe's memory. By 11:00pm everyone had been danced into a soggy mass of Hook Norton soaked humanity - a successful celebration was declared and all retired to a quiet corner for nightcap.

"That was it. Now back to normal. 42 Icknield Way Men dancing on the 10th July - this week struggling to find 6 for the Leckhampstead Feast !

**John Maher** of **Bristol** and Ring Webmaster found it very curious to be sleeping on the floor of his old Eastbourne school at the **Long Man** Ring Meeting - in spite of the ghosts of the past he enjoyed being "back at school"!!!

Represented at the **Silurian** Ring meeting - and in their own Border kit to make up numbers for dances with Silurian Tour Minders were two representatives from **Vancouver**, including their Squire and Web contact, **Graham Baldwin**.

Next year is **Sydney's** 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. They may be looking to visit their Morris roots and searching out events/tours to join in around **Thaxted**-tide. They hope to dance in the Dome.

Associates, **Merrie England Mummers**, are celebrating 25 years. They performed an excellent cabaret at the **Long Man** Ring Meeting Feast.

## THE RICHARD BRANSON PARTY

As those on the Bagman's Email list will be aware, there was a request for Morris Sides to dance at Richard Branson's Mega Millennium Staff Party [for 12,000 people on five days in late August and early September]. *Mike Finn* responded that "The **Welsh Border Morris** is always happy to oblige as long as the Richard Branson's Staff Party could be rearranged for 18 December and could be held in Worcestershire".

However, **Icknield Way** took up one of the slots, and Bagman, *Sem Seaborne* reports:-

"The problem with short notice events in August is whether you can get into contact with sufficient men to pull a team together. Reassured that we had seven men and a musician, I went off in search of Spanish hospitality to forget everything. Come the day (Monday 30th August) there were 18 men including 2 musicians and fool - the attracting power of the Branson name is universal!

"This was essentially a party for all 64,000 VIRGIN employees spread over five days (two weekends). I believe there had been 8-10,000 people present on each of the first two days; there seemed less on Monday. Other sides danced on those occasions (Lyddington Hall on Saturday, but nobody remembered who Sunday's team was). The weather was hot and sunny with the event being held in the 400 acres of impressive grounds around Mr. Branson's property (Mill End House) by the River Cherwell. We were met and welcomed by THE GREAT MAN himself who was happy to have his reputation enhanced by being photographed with IWMM.

"IWMM have performed at many similar outdoor events of this nature, including the highly popular Newbury Show, which we share with Kennet, but this overshadowed all. The event was split into themes covering the millennium viz., Celtic/Medieval, Elizabethan/Victorian, 1920's, Wartime, 1950's, 1970/80's and the future. The Morris was positioned in the Elizabethan section. There was the most extensive range of activities ever seen, including fairground rides, bands/musicians, various entertainers, quad bikes, hovercraft, karts, hot air balloons, parachutists, croquet, tennis, swimming, canoes, nature trails, and a vast selection of food and drink. The food styles also reflected connections with historical periods - the stir-fry being particularly popular. The drinks also reflected fashions over the years, i.e. coffee houses, milk bars, etc. Needless to say our favourite was the wartime draught ale.

"With so much going on it was hardly surprising that our audiences weren't large, but we did four spots during the afternoon. This was more like participating in a great pageant (or promenade play) with the audience constantly passing through. It was great fun interacting with the other entertainers however, like Del Boy, Capt. Mainwaring, Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, R2D2, etc. Our particular favourites were three ladies exotically dressed and behaving seductively on stilts. One of them imitated a Unicorn in such an erotic manner we had to stop the dancing.

"I think the high spot for us was a spell in between dance spots when we took a pleasant boat trip down the Cherwell to Richard Branson's house - freely open for all guests to use his swimming pool, tennis courts, etc. Yours truly was allowed to play a couple of tunes on the Branson Steinway Grand before we all tucked in to a cream tea at the Chinese Summerhouse.

"It was an absolutely splendid day out and the mind can only boggle at the budget for an event where everything was provided free of charge. It must put ten quid on the price of a rail ticket to Manchester!

**Stafford** have been entertaining guests from Denmark. They have been associated with the Taastrup Folk Dance Club in Denmark for some 24 years.

I hear from *Dudley Wells* that **Grand Union** was rushing off to rehearse for TV's "The Generation Game" just after the Bank Holiday weekend.

**Icknield Way** has also been filming. Immediately following their Branson party appearance, they rushed Uffington to join the BBC Manchester TV crew making the programme "Heaven and Earth". The particular episode was dealing with "Lore and Legend".

It deals with an item on Dragons and Dragon Mound in particular, which stands close to the White Horse in the Vale. Dragon Mound is more than 3000 years old and is believed (locally at least) to be the spot where St. George slayed the dragon. No grass grows on the mound due to the spilled dragon's blood. The IWMM connection is the emblem on their backs. Although this is a Wessex Wyvern, with two legs, the Beeb thought it looked sufficiently like a dragon.

Hence they met up with Toyah Wilcox to do a Step n' Fetcher and Maid of the Mill (Stanton Harcourt) for the cameras and all got a kiss for their pains. They also drank the Fox & Hounds dry! The programme was scheduled for Sunday 26 September.

## OUT AND ABOUT

Met up with **Letchworth** who were **Bedford**'s guests at Ickwell Cricket Pavilion – the local equivalent of the village pub!!

The **Long Man** Ring Meeting is detailed elsewhere, as is the **Silurian** Meeting the following weekend. Between times visited Redbornstoke's Tour of the eight pubs and one club in Toddington in the company of **Whitchurch** and **Letchworth** [to both thanks for giving the Bagman a dance]; Grand Union Rapper; etc....

**Ripley** danced out at three excellent pubs in an almost unfindable Bagthorpe. They joined a ladies clog side and a more than capable mixed Cotswold side, Lady Bay Revellers, from Nottingham - one male part of the latter proved to be a **Long Man** who was "recognised" from their Ring Meeting. Their singing afterwards was of the usual high standard but dragged down somewhat by the Bagman's attempts to harmonise.

The inclement weather, flooded roads and generally hazardous driving conditions led to cancellation of a Bagman's visit to a **Kennet, Cup Hill** and **Mayflower** joint evening at North Camp. **Jon Holmes** of Kennet had polished up their Squire specially, but been worried about turnout, as it was also bucketing with rain when he left Reading. But of course, it had not rained at all in North Camp and remained dry all evening. This was because they had sensibly refrained from dancing Orange in Bloom (their rain dance). With three sides on the go, they danced from 8.15 to 9.30, then retired indoors for the Après Morris session. It was still bucketing in Reading when Jon returned home at midnight.

Better luck a couple of nights later with a visit to watch **Ilmington** at Stretton-on-the-Fosse. Rain stopped play before I had to demonstrate a lack of proper knowledge of their tradition!! The Ilmington Squire proved to be **Steve Mitchell** [formerly of **Manchester**] and having found he had camped on my floor some years ago, I had no hesitation in accepting very his [and Anne's] very welcome offer of accommodation [and a lift to and from the pub].

A chance to discuss their Ring Meeting with **Leicester** during an evening at two pubs around Hinkley. As usual old friends popped out of the woodwork – including **John Armstrong**, formerly of **Bedford**. A chance also to dance one of **Bert Cleaver**'s Sherborne stick dances, "Allison's Fury", named, I understand, for his daughter.

A fine evening with **Aldbury** at Eggington as guests with **Bedford** – as usual the Après-Morris music and singing in the pub was well up to their normal standards.

The **Saddleworth** Rushcart Weekend went off with untypical SUNNY – yes SUNNY weather. This did put the hosts into a state of SHOCK – but they still produced a record 24 dancers for some of their show spots. The weather was apparently all due to **Brian Bird** of **Belchamp** posting a request on the Internet for everyone please to touch their monitors at 18.00hr BST on the Friday and say “It will not rain, it will not rain, it will not rain.” It seems to have worked with a vengeance – I understand they will now be deluged with invitations!!

A certain Past Squire, was induced to join a young lady who suggested she was going his way and he could save his legs in her taxi to return from Delph. On arriving near Uppermill she rapidly departed said vehicle, leaving said Past Squire to foot the bill. It is understood that he is grateful for all those who contributed to his distress fund!! Such a thing would not happen in **Jockey**-land it appears!!!

Whilst on the subject, was there any connection with an item in the Independent? Under the heading “Great Railway Fiascos” it said: “Police officers with dogs had to be called after a group of angry Morris dancers who had reserved a full coach in the cancelled train [Cheltenham to Manchester] blocked the tracks in a sign of protest.” WHO WAS IT!!

As this goes to press, the final Ring Meeting of the season was hosted by **Leicester**. A full report in the next Newsletter – but the weather was fine throughout, except for a brief shower of rain; this started with **Manchester**'s show dance, and then finished as they did. Not many hosts can organise such things to ensure that their guests feel at home!!

## IN CONCLUSION

Hopefully it has been a fine Summer dancing season for you all and you also fitted in some holiday. The Ring Meetings have all been excellent. Sides have been on the telly; on overseas trips and seem to have had all manner of fun.

I was dragged off by the family – they said I could report on the Morris dancing scene in Antigua. In spite of searching the vicinity of a great number of bars, I was unsuccessful!! [Steve has therefore declined to do anything about expenses!!]. My apologies to any of you who tried, and failed, to contact me during the last week in August.

We now look forward to the practice season; Feasts and Ales; and Instructionals various – and no doubt as usual, a never ending round of engagements in spite of the less clement weather.

Remember **Subscriptions** and **Application Forms**!! As ever, in this AGM season, please remember to update us on changes of Contact Persons – and keep the gossip [and even some news perhaps!!] coming in for the Newsletter. The next Edition is due in mid November and will be posted “early” for Christmas [hopefully!!].

*Wassail,*

John Frearson,  
Bagman, The Morris Ring

## ***The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 10 – September 1999 - SUMMARY***

**IN MEMORIAM - Robert [Bob] Thomas Bradbury**, 83. The founding Bagman of **Mendip** and founding Squire of **West Somerset**. He was also once a candidate for Squire of the Ring.

**FROM THE SQUIRE –The Sharp/Kimber Centenary**; and next year's **Massed Dances**.

**FROM THE TREASURER** – a summary of the year and details of items for sale. It is now time to get your Side's Subscriptions and Insurances paid.

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS - Fools and Animals Instructional: 29 - 31 October 1999**, at Wath, hosts **Wath upon Dearne**. **Jigs Instructional 2000: 21 - 23 January 2000** at Sutton Bonnington, hosts **Dolphin**. **Musicians' Instructional: 11 – 13 February 2000**, at Banwell, Somerset; hosts **Mendip**. Applications due for all these **NOW**.

**RING MEETINGS – 2000** The Application Form for the Year 2000 Ring Meetings is enclosed. **Sides should return the forms without delay – by 12<sup>th</sup> November**.

**ARM 2000** will be held from **31 March to 2 April 2000**. Hosted by **Ripley** in Derby. Some **Area Boundary Changes** are to be proposed at the ARM.

**NOMINATIONS - A REMINDER**. Nominations for Officers and Elected Representatives must be sent to the Bagman by the end of December 1999. Also any **“Proposed Alterations to the Constitution”**, or other **“Formal Resolutions for Discussion”**.

**MILLENNIUM DOME** – There is a form enclosed to express your preferences on dates.

**OTHER EVENTS - National Pipe and Tabor Festival**, Gloucester, **9 -11 June 2000**.

**ARCHIVAL MATTERS** – An article by **Roy Judge**, in “Folklore” has a Morris photograph showing **George Mallory**, whose body was found just below the summit of Everest earlier this year. The question is did a Morris dancer first scale that highest peak?

**ANNIVERSARIES - Merrie England Mummers**, are celebrating 25 years.

**RING MEETING REPORT S** – are included for **LONG MAN** and **SILURIAN** Meetings – together with an article on washing strategies to survive the Meeting conditions!!!.

**OTHER NEWS** – includes the **Icknield Way - 40th Anniversary** – also their day at **Richard Branson's Mega Millennium Staff Party**. There are mentions of **Bristol**; **Grand Union**; **Vancouver**; and **Sydney's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**.

**OUT AND ABOUT** – The Bagman mentions: **Letchworth**; **Whitchurch**; **Ripley**; **Ilmington** [with an ex **Manchester Squire**]; **Aldbury**; **Leicester**; the **Saddleworth Rushcart Weekend** in **SUNNY** weather, due to **Belchamp** web-magic!! Also a thwarted attempt to visit **Kennet**, **Cup Hill** and **Mayflower**!!

**FIND OUT MORE - ask your Bagman to show you the full Newsletter!!!**

*Wassail,*

John Frearson,  
Bagman, The Morris Ring