



The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 14 – July 2000

Greetings,

Hopefully you are all having a fine season, with much good fellowship and full bags. I have enjoyed seeing many old friends at Ring Meetings, and at other events, as I have travelled around the country during the first part of the Season.

The Chalice Meeting is imminent and with it the change over of Squires from *Daniel Fox* to *Gerald Willey* – the tradition carries on.

This Newsletter should reach you in July, and the Mailing also includes: -

- Hopefully, an **Application Form** for the **Fools and Animals Instructional**.
- A summary of this Newsletter – as the last page of this bundle.
- Inevitably, there are already **amendments** to the Directory. [An “up to the minute” version of the Directory, Emailed as a Word attachment, is available if required].
- The Minutes of the **ARM**, [and of the Advisory Council for its Members].
- A flier for Heddingham Cards [all good advertising income for the Ring].

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 [ideally as an attached Word document or rtf file; please order and specify by Email].

IN MEMORIAM

Barnet Field of **East Kent** died on Sunday 7th May 2000. He was one of East Kent's founder members. He had been ill for some time and had not been able to dance for many years. In the early 1950's he undertook research on Kent's own tradition of the Hooden Horse. He found several of the old horses and built his own horse that accompanied several local groups for many years. With his wife Olive he helped found East Kent in 1953 and danced with them for many years, and as a bank manager was Treasurer for most of that time. He last joined them in Folkestone for their Fool's 40th anniversary tour in 1998. Our sympathy is with Olive and the other members of his family at this time. The funeral was at Barham Crematorium near Canterbury on Thursday 11th May. [Report by **Pete Thomas** of **East Kent**]

ARM 2001

The 2001 ARM will be hosted by **Dartington** from 30th March to 1st April 2001. The ARM will be on Saturday 31st March 2001. This provides "... at least six months notice ..." as required by Paragraph 14 of the Constitution. The exact venue will be announced shortly.

INSTRUCTIONALS

Fieldtown Instructional. 6th – 8th October 2000. Applications should have been made already for this weekend, which will be held at Harberton, nr. Totnes in Devon. **Bert Cleaver** will be the Foreman. The cost will be £33.00. An application form was in the last Newsletter.

Fools and Animals Weekend [and ?Instructional?]. 27th – 29th October 2000. Another not to be missed weekend. As this goes to press there is still some uncertainty whether this will be held at Cecil Sharp House as had been suggested, or whether it will be back at its traditional home venue in Wath-upon-Deane. If the latter, it will possibly be coming South next year. If available, the Application Form with this Newsletter will provide the answer to the question "where will it be?" Otherwise contact **Eric Presley** for details.

Musicians' Instructional. Planned toward the end of the Year. Date and venue T.B.A.

Jigs Instructional 2001. 19th – 21st January 2000. **Bert Cleaver** as Foreman and again the hosts are **Dolphin** at Sutton Bonnington. Application forms will be available later in the year.

HANDS ON MUSIC WEEKENDS

Not Morris Ring events – but of interest to Musicians. Details are now available of a series of musicians' instructional weekends at Witney. Tutors include Martin Carthy, John Kirkpatrick and Kathryn Tickell, Chris Bartram [**Abingdon**] and a who's who of folk musicians. Cost £60 [non residential] with concessions for young people. Dates: Concertinas [23/24 Sept 00], Fiddles [7/8 Oct 00], Melodians [18/19 Nov 00], Strings [3/4 Feb 01], Accordions [17/18 Feb 01], Wind [3/4 Mar 01], Misc. plucked and hammered! [10/11 Mar 01]. Details: homweekend@aol.com; Tel: 01865 714778; or PO Box 1162, East Oxford D.O., OX4 4WS. [The Bagman has a small stock of brochures available also].

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - RING MEETINGS – 2001

Preliminary details of the proposed 2001 Ring Meetings are outlined below. Fuller details will be in the September Newsletter, with an Application Form. It is intended that Sides are advised of their success, or otherwise, by mid December. This will require Sides to return the form without delay – by early November. Start thinking about next year **NOW**. One application for Thaxted has already been received!! **REMEMBER** – deposits and final payments have to be paid **on time** – otherwise your Side may forfeit their place.

1st - 3rd June - THAXTED RING MEETING - 200 plus men - Thaxted. The traditional annual meeting. Tours of the countryside around Thaxted on Saturday finishing with tea in Thaxted. Processions to a mass show before the Feast and a further mass show in the evening. Procession, service and more dancing on Sunday. Anticipated cost: **“approx. £45”**.

29th June – 1st July - BOAR'S HEAD/CLARO SWORD RING MEETING - 120 men - Otley, West Yorks. Indoor camping in Otley Civic Centre. Three tours of the surrounding area on Saturday, a Feast at Otley, and informal dancing in and around the pubs of Otley. Sunday Church Service, then a procession and massed display in Otley. Cost **“approx. £46”**.

13th - 15th July - GREENSLEEVES 75th ANNIV. RING MEETING - 80 men - Chipperfield, Herts. To celebrate Greensleeves's 75th anniversary, the regular Chipperfield weekend (established over 40 years) will be a mini-Ring meeting. Based around Chipperfield village hall with home catering by Greensleeves. Predominantly outdoor camping on school field. B&B (at additional cost) is also available locally. Tours of Herts and Bucks on vintage buses on Saturday. Open Air Sunday Service followed by massed show and procession through the village to lunch in pub garden. Anticipated cost: **£45**.

To be advised BRISTOL RING MEETING

30th August - 1st Sept - EAST SURREY 75th ANNIV. RING MEETING - up to 150 men –Epsom, Surrey. A "luxury" meeting based on Epsom College (Independent Boarding School) with indoor camping (most will have a BED!). Friday supper and dancing. Saturday tours of beautiful Surrey villages and hostelries and a massed show, followed by a sumptuous feast at the College. Sunday church service followed by dancing at nearby pubs. Price “not yet confirmed - it will not be excessive”.

ANNIVERSARIES

Robert Price of **Leeds** notes that they celebrate their 50th Anniversary in 2000. The first of a number of special events was held on Saturday, 6th May, when they performed at the ten pubs (and one social services home for adults with learning difficulties) along the Horsforth Mile. Horsforth is an old township on the north-western edge of the Leeds conurbation. The Horsforth Mile is a traditional bridegroom's stag night pub-crawl, covering the 10 pubs and rather more than a mile. In the past, Leeds have danced the Mile several times and raised money for Wheatfields Hospice. This time they attempted 50 different Cotswold dances [see their website] during the afternoon. This was Successfully Completed!

Mersey celebrate the 40th Anniversary of their formation from the Wirral Morris Men and the Liverpool Morris Men [prominent in the Morris revival in the early 1930s].

THE MORRIS RING AT THE DOME - AT LAST!

"Monty" Montague ["Domemaster"] would like to thank all those sides (there were 54 initially) who expressed an interest in dancing at the Millennium Dome. He was not surprised that many of them lost interest as the year long saga unfolded.

Finally, and at very short notice four sides, namely **Bathampton; Ewell St Mary; Malvern Swordsmen** and **Yateley** represented the Morris Ring dancing at the Dome over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend. Most members of these sides enjoyed the experience, although some expressed surprise that one of the venues for dancing was adjacent to the Faith Zone! The sides were well looked after by a Stage Manager appointed to look after them for the day as they danced four times between 11.00 - 17.00hrs. Ewell St Mary and Yateley split each of their sets between them but on the Sunday, with Bathampton and Malvern Swordsmen having further to travel, they decided to dance two spots each.

Dancing continues on the last weekend of each month throughout the summer with the Open Morris and Morris Federation providing teams for June to September (remember this was always a joint venture between the three national organisations and the dates offered have been allocated according to the number of clubs in membership in each organisation).

The Ring will provide teams again in October, which is the last month currently being offered, when the following sides will perform:- Saturday, 28th October: - **Mayflower; North Wood** and **Stockport**; Sunday, 29th October: **East Kent; Greenwich; Gloucestershire** and **Royal Liberty**.

CHARITY EVENT - OUTCOME

Malcolm Smith, Squire of **Shakespeare** reports on his charity Bike Ride. "I got back about 2.00pm on Monday 19th June! Yes, I did manage to cycle the full 500 kilometres (300 miles – in 5 days) from the Great Wall of China to Tiananmen Square in Beijing, including some "interesting hills" rising to over 850 metres in 14 kilometres. Harder than I thought it would be, but tremendous fun and conveying a real sense of achievement.

"On the serious side, I anticipate that I will have raised over £2,000 for MENCAP, which will go a long way towards helping those with learning disabilities, and their families, lead fulfilling and rewarding lives. The whole event, in which 94 riders participated, should raise more than £250,000."

You can still send a donation - contact Malcolm on: 01789 840519 (home); 01789 842965 (office/fax); or E-mail: Malsmith@btinternet.com.

THE MEDIA

The Press - Two major Newspaper media interests in recent months.

Firstly:- an Article in the Guardian by Vanessa Thorpe dealing with Steve Rouse's "England Dances" project which promised to do for the Morris tradition what river-dance did for the Irish jig.

Steve Tunnickliffe [**Rutland**], commented on the article:

"It includes some positive comment about Morris. But what a pity it ended up entitled "Morris men's war on morrisettes: All-male folk tradition enjoys upsurge as sex barriers fall" and harps on so much about alleged Ring attitudes to women dancers and suggests that women dancing to any extent is something that has just emerged. No mention of the Federation or Open Morris or of co-operation between the THREE UK Morris organisations. Or of recent advances in Morris scholarship. Or of Morris's international aspect. A quote: "Many Morris sides have now agreed to accept women, in spite of a November ruling from the official Morris Dancing Ring of England that they must be excluded as members." Another lost opportunity where I suspect people's quotes and the story as a whole have been tweaked to suit an old fashioned and somewhat sensationalist journalistic view of Morris. It smacks of telephone interviews and library pictures¹, not to mention the unwitty cartoon. What a shame Vanessa Thorpe appears not to have actually ventured out into the Morris world."

As a result of the article, The Bagman was contacted by researchers for both BBC's Newsnight and a Granada programme. In the event it seems that Morris was not controversial enough for them!!

Pete Thomas of **East Kent** had seen the show in Canterbury and his comments included:

"There were people from various local sides and folk dance groups. There were a wide range of opinions expressed which ranged from "why is he messing about with Morris when he doesn't understand it" to "the basic idea was good but it hasn't come off".

"He and his company are basically classically trained Character dancers. One definition of Character Dance is "the artistic synthesis of folk and classical dance". ... They are also normally the people who would dance the roles of the sailors or peasants in a classic ballet

"I agree with Stephen's basic premise that it is important to take England's dances back to the English especially those who are not involved in either the "Folk" or "Ballet" worlds. What I disagreed with was the method of doing it. He along with a number of other show producers I have met at various times believe that English dance, whether it is Morris, Sword or Country Dance, cannot be put on a stage unless it is dramatically altered and "properly" choreographed.

"The major drawback of the show was the lack of quality about the folk side of it. I firmly believe that the only way to attract an audience such as Riverdance's would be to have an absolutely first rate high energy performance. One of the company's major problem is that the personnel are not fixed and the whole thing ends up being under-rehearsed.

The Squire also did a related interview for BBC Essex on Friday morning before Thaxted, together with Steve Rouse the producer of the "England Dances". The show was on in Ilford that weekend. A revue of the show by Eddie Dunmore should be in the next Morris Circular.

Secondly: - This concerned a Morris Federation side Carlisle Sword, Morris and Clog Dancers in Cumbria. They were "banned" from appearing as they were blacking up. The story was picked up from the local papers by the National Press and then appeared in the Times, Mail and elsewhere, even though it had been resolved well before even the local paper picked up on it.

The Council concerned later wrote "The article carried by the Times and various other newspapers was mistaken. The City Council has not objected to Morris Dancing, has not banned Morris Dancing, and has no plans to ban Morris dancing. A resident of the City complained about a particular part of the performance to a local newspaper. We investigated the complaint, discussed it with the local Morris Men and agreed with them a response to the complaint. The notion of a ban was invented by our local paper and picked up by the nationals. Do not believe everything you read in the press."

¹ Hilary Blandford reports that it was **Hartley** dancing Adderbury "Landlord Fill the Flowing Bowl" - JF.

Television –

- The new title sequence for Channel 4 TV's for "The Big Breakfast" show featuring **St. Albans** is now being used. **Paul Woods** of **Bristol** reported that it features "a yellow bird flying through peoples' windows and transforming their lives. One guy became Elvis Presley. Another, a Captain Birdseye look-a-like, was transmogrified into a Morris dancer - and immediately started dancing what looked suspiciously like Wheatley." **Brian Bending** of St Albans confirmed that it is "St Albans, with an added actor".

- An enquiry from BBC Children's TV came in just after **Pete Thomas** of **East Kent** mentioned that they were teaching a children's Side. The BBC wanted a Morris item for a Summer holiday daily programme, that would include a "don't knock it 'til you've tried it" item. Folk and Morris dance were on their list of activities; they needed a "Kid's Side". The BBC was put in touch with Pete and they filmed a item on the 24th June at Ashford Folk Day. Their children's Side "The Iron Brood" proved too young, but the Ashford Folk Day organisers had funded a teacher at a youth club to teach Morris. The Kids Kop Club had been set up a couple of years ago in a community centre on a deprived council estate in Ashford by the local police to keep the kids off the streets. There were about 20 kids aged from 8 to 15, boys and girls, who had been taught several border dances. This fitted the BBC's brief perfectly. The resulting spot will be on BBC1 on the 18th August at about 09.55. They will be encouraging kids to find out more about Morris by contacting the BBC Website where they will be putting suitable Morris links. Pete Thomas and the Morris Organisations will be assisting with the links – standby for youthful recruits!!!.

The Radio - Capital Gold Radio invited our esteemed Treasurer, **Steve Adamson**, to do his bit on a morning show (08.10am on 23/05/00). Quoth Steve "It was fun, nothing too taxing for about ten minutes."

BAGMAN'S E-MAIL APPEALS – YES, THEY WORK!!

Yes, asking you for information on the Email **works**. Thank you for your responses.

First: - The Ring Display Boards are located, safe and sound. In future **Ron Yates** [**Saddleworth** and NW Rep] has volunteered - yes really!! - to keep track of them and indeed to store them as necessary. They were used by **Anker** and then go on to **West Somerset**.

Second: - **John Milce** of **Sydney** asked for anything by Jacqui & Bridie, a 1960s Liverpool folk duo. This located copies of 'A Place in the Choir' and the booklet 'Songs for Singing Folk' which were in **Steve Adamson**'s collection and 'Hold Back the Dawn' from **Martin Graetz** of **Pinewoods**. He recalled "I met Jacqui and Bridie in 1970 when they were at Pinewoods, and bought their record. When I visited England for the first time in 1971, I saw them again at a concert at the Tring youth hostel."

Third: - Having had a weekend cancelled, **Redcar Sword** were looking for somewhere else to go. Offers came from **Plymouth Reunion** for a Day of Dance, and **Brian Bisp** [**Bourne River**] offering Wimbourne Festival; [this was also suggested by **Tony Tomlin** of **Hartley**]. Although both events were too distant, Redcar were most grateful for their responses.

Remember, if we do not overload Sides' Email correspondents, the Bagman can forward short items to all the Member and Associate Sides. If your Side has not advised an Email contact, or if the number is changed without notification, you will not be able to help in this way

ARCHIVE NEWS

Cannock Chase were formed in 1974 from the local folk dance club and admitted to the Ring in 1982. They faded away in the late 1980's. Their last Bagman, **Colin Woodward** contacted the Ring and their various artefacts and regalia have been collected for safekeeping. Among the items collected were the staff; the Squire's carved oak badge of office and engraved two handled pewter quart tankard; the logbook, minute-book and account books; and a musician's tabard. These will be sorted and catalogued, and stored as appropriate.

Yet another box of Archive material has been received from **Bill French**, the last Squire of **Luton Longstraw**. It is currently being sorted and catalogued.

OTHER [pre May Day] NEWS

Apologies to **Aldbury** – for missing out a report on their Ale in late February. **Bedford, Crendon, Grand Union, Offley, Letchworth** and **Woodside** were present. An energetic evening of dancing with the traditional fish and chip supper – the chip van makes a special stop at the hall for the order. All washed down with excellent Chiltern “Beachwood” [4.3%].

An apology also to the **Britannia Coconut Dancers** from **Bacup**. In the Report of the **Horwich** Day, they were inadvertently missed from the list of Sides compiled at the beginning of the day. A fresh supply of film had to be purchased when it was realised that they were also present, having by tradition, started where they could get a morning cuppa!!!

As the Summer season started, a visit to Adderbury for the Day of Dance on the 25th Anniversary of the first dancing by the revived Side; which then split to form the more locally based **Adderbury Village** Side and the Adderbury Side. A fuller Report and pictures in the next Ring Circular. In the evening other sides join the event. The Bagmen was very pleased to make up **Bourne River's** numbers, together with **Dave Reed** of **Gloucestershire** [in Village kit]. Music for an Oddington “Highland Mary” was provided by Chris Leslie [currently Fairport Convention] who composed an interesting new B music!!.

Brian Bird of **Belchamp** reported that they were at the Upton-upon-Severn Folk Festival with “wall to wall sunshine” on the pre May Day Weekend after “a shaky start with a wet Friday evening”. “We danced in the dawn in the altogethger again this year, this time under the bridge, we had about 30 other dancers with us, but they kept their kit on!”. He asks “If someone has photos could they get in touch, we were a bare six dancers and did not take any”.

MAY MORNING

Stephen Rowley reported “A spectacular sunrise on Painswick Beacon, bathed **Gloucestershire** in golden light at 5.41am (upper limb). 20 men turned out to welcome in the summer. At one point we had two sets dancing, six musicians, a fool and Crumpet the horse. This is getting scary - two years in a row we've had perfect weather.”

Sandy Glover reported “.. **St Albans** greeted the mist at 6am in the centre of the city. The Mayor and Mayoress turned out, together with the usual suspects to watch us. The dancing went well, with a few Wheatley dances appearing for the first time. At 11.30, we re-assembled outside St Albans Abbey, where we were joined by Bedfordshire Lace and **Woodside**.

We were also delighted to welcome back **Roger Avery** and Rosie who are on a visit here. The sun had broken through by then, so we had a pleasant spring day. A nice, mixed show, with the three sides demonstrating how diverse the same source material can become when filtered through different clubs and experiences. Three further spots followed: two at pubs and one on a NEW dancing site, outside our recently extended Museum. Good, appreciative crowds at each venue, and a lot of interest.”

Lawrie Hodges, treasurer, web-master, musician and sometime dancer for **Wadard** reported “Wadard take their name from the first lord of the manor of Farningham, where the side was formed. Eynsford is the next village upstream from Farningham on the river Darent. Wadard began their May Day celebration by dancing in procession (Winster) from in front of the church in Eynsford, over the narrow road bridge to our usual 'lek' by the ford. We danced for just over half an hour, a selection from this year's repertoire. We had a goodly congregation this year, about 110. Dancing was followed, as usual, by the singing of 'Jack in the Green' and other seasonal 'hymns'. Then came the yellow plastic duck race (50p per contestant), accompanied by a couple of puzzled mallard. While the ducks were being 'sponsored', the waiting time was alleviated by a tot of whisky for those that wanted it and some ceremonial cake. The race was swum fairly rapidly this year with the river in full flood. Catching a hundred odd plastic ducks before they disappeared into the mill-race has always been a challenge. Finally the annual group photo taken by the ford with the church in the background. The weather, like most of southern England I understand, was misty, but quite pleasant. Compared with the rain and biting wind of one or two May Days in the past, this was quite balmy. Breakfast at our home pub, The Wheatsheaf at Westwood was next on the agenda. The majority of the side went on tour with a hired bus; this solves our drinking problem. First to Greenwich to dance in the market, where they met up with West Hill Morris, and then at The Cutty Sark pub. From there they went to lunch at The Norman Conquest in Rochester and then on to an outpost of The Flagship brewery. Finally back to The Wheatsheaf.”

Ron Ford of **Chanctonbury Ring** reports that they “...danced up at the Ring as usual on 1st May. There was a woman (with her mother) in the audience holding a very young baby (good job it was too young to say daddaddaddad !). It's a 3/4 hour walk up to the Ring. They had stumbled across our Website just the previous evening and decided to get up early and do it! ` They really enjoyed the dancing/singing. We then rushed off to Lewes for Garland Day during which we processed down the High Street holding twigs of May Blossom. These were launched into the River Ouse from one side of the bridge (by Harvey's Brewery) by all the Men simultaneously. We rushed across to other side to see which one came through first: just perpetuating yet another tradition, honest - Pooh Sticks!”

Alan Dandy reports that **Stafford** danced on Castle Ring - Cannock Chase with **Green Man**, did a combined day of events and ended in Uttoxeter with **Uttoxeter Heart of Oak**, 15 hours 20 minutes after the start [- and he went into the office next morning!!].

David Walters of **Dolphin** reported on the web that “the famous coconut dancers from **Bacup**” were at a Victorian May Day event at Nottingham's Brewhouse Yard Museum.

MORE [post May day] NEWS

A spectator at **Bedford's** opening spot on their May Saturday Tour proved to be **George Chaplin**, one of the founder member's of **Roger Nicholl's** first **Brackley** revival side of some 40 years ago. The greater coincidence was that he proved to be a former consultancy client of the Bagman – and neither knew the other had Morris connections!!

The first outing of the season for **Sweyne's Eye** was to a splendid brew pub on the Gower, The Joiners Arms at Bishopston. The Bagman sampled some excellent brews before realising that not only was he being invited to dance, but also he had to drive later. The Deep Slade Dark [a strong 4.0% mild] was much commended – as was the lively evening of dancing.

It seems that Royal Doulton have produced a porcelain "Bunny" in garb of a Morris dancer. There was discussion on the Web as to what kit the beast was wearing and what tradition he was thought to be dancing!!! With one arm up, one down, **Chipping Camden** came to mind, and even the kit is similar!! However, *Alan Dandy* thought it was Oddington, and reports that **Stafford** danced at Royal Doulton for the launch of the "Morris Bunnykins" and were paid. Costing £35 on the day rumour has it that the "bunnies" are now up to £100. Stafford were joined on the occasion by two men from **Green Man** and *Roy Yarnell*.

The first Ring Meeting of the season at Richmond will be reported in more detail in the Circular. The weather was fine and the dance locations idyllic; the beers good and the music in the evening sessions outstanding. The penultimate dance from the Host Side, **Richmondshire on Swale** was their opportunity to "dance in" to the Morris Ring in their new form. They are an amalgamation of the Richmondshire and Swaledale Sides. It was later discovered that for one member of the Side, *Keith Giddens*, this was the fourth occasion on which he had danced in to the Ring. Those occasions being with **Mansfield** at **Uttoxeter** in 1982; **Ripley** at **Moulton** in 1983; **Richmondshire** at **Claro** in 1987 and now with **Richmond on Swale** in 2000. He wonders if this is a record – has anyone else danced into the Ring on so many occasions?

On the Friday night in the Black Lion, at Richmond, **Bristol's** musician/bagman, *Phill Butler*, lost one of his hand-made three-hole pipes. The severely limited what Phill could play over the weekend, and as he also uses it to play for Somerset Maids, he was doubly inconvenienced. Fortunately, as *Paul Woods* reports "...the pipe has turned up! Someone returned it to the pub after the landlord put "Return this pipe or I'll set Somerset Maids on You!" notices up. One assumes it was removed from the pub when we were there as a "joke". We were able to present it to Phill when we danced at Wraxall - he was overjoyed. Thanks to all who helped get it back".

Cumberland danced at Egremont Castle as part of the Egremont Millennium Celebrations.

David Reed of **Gloucestershire** reports that they travelled to the Rheindahlen army base in Germany to appear at their Summer Show [20/21 May] and later danced in the Dome [7 June] as part of a pipe and tabor party on Gloucester's Day at the Dome. Both venues "seemed well pleased with the performances"

Sandy Glover of **St Albans** reported on the moist conditions as they danced at the Hertfordshire Show (their local "agricultural" festival) on 27 May. "The concepts "dry" and "grass" were mutually incompatible, as were "mud" and "free", and "morris" and "whites". Particularly exciting was watching the waterlogged ground as it shifted under the feet of the dancers - it's not that often that morris actually makes the earth move."

Steve Tunnicliffe [of **Rutland**], is also the Open Morris Area Representative for the North Midlands and a Member of a Morris Federation side – is this a record for a broader perspective on the Morris?

Whit Monday at Bampton and a decent day [most of the time]. Many old friends in the [smaller] crowds. **Traditional Bampton's** evening guests were: **Icknield Way**, **Oxford City**, **Gloucestershire**, and **Ravensbourne**. Many thanks for the latter for coming a man short and providing a chance for the Bagman to retrieve his kit from the car and have an evening's dancing – what a treat!!

Pete Thomas of **East Kent** reports on a weekend in Bad Munstereifel which is the twin town of Ashford. "We spent most of the weekend trying to work out why we were at the event which was the Fest der Nationen. It was actually a meeting of Marching Bands and organised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the local band. They had invited a band from their other twin town of Fougères in Brittany (who also brought a group of Breton pipers). We had been contacted by the local twinning organiser and asked if we would go over, so we said yes. The twinning group in Ashford helped with some of the travel and the Germans provided accommodation (indoor camping) and some meals. There were about 15 or 20 of these bands around over the weekend from France, Belgium and all over Germany - and us! They were extremely loud and desperately serious especially when they were performing. They kept marching around the town in various processions. We were supposed to join in one of the evening processions but the level of noise was so high we decided that it was not practical so we occupied one of the crossroads outside a bar. Invicta the Hooden Horse had great fun as the anarchic part of the procedure. He followed Drum Majors, tried to make the more po-faced members of the bands smile, attacked the Mayor of Bad Munstereifel and generally made the crowd laugh. The bands associated with the other bands but did not really have any interaction with the public. We were close to the audience and made them laugh and they thoroughly enjoyed it. This is the second time that we have been to Bad Munstereifel and we have been well treated. One of the disadvantages of the twinning thing is disparity of the sizes of groups. A lot of the continental groups are a lot larger than the average morris side which can make homestay a problem when they come back to the UK."

The following Ring Sides took part in the "World Millennium Sword Spectacular" in May at Whitby: **Castleford Longsword**; **Coventry**; **Goathland Ploughstots**; **Handsworth**; **Horwich Prize Medal**; **Sallyport Sword**; **Southport Sword**; and **Stevenage Sword**. **Ivor Allsop** once again ran his "last" Longsword workshop: apparently his workshop at the 2nd Sword Spectacular in 1998 was his "last ever" Longsword workshop too. They are hoping that he will be doing another "really the last this time" workshop in 2002!!

"**Monty**" **Montague** reports that **Yateley** should receive plaudits from the Deputy Prime Minister as they have visited the metropolis on three occasions and have travelled as a side en-masse by Train. [*What's a train??!*] The three Saturdays were: - 15th April - the start of the Nine Daies Wonder re-enactment (they also supported the finish in Norwich, the following weekend and were the only side dancing at both the start and finish); 13th May - **Westminster** Day of Dance; and 27th May - The Millennium Dome, Greenwich.

Jethro Anderson on the MDDL commented that at Chippenham Festival, **Datchet** proved "that Border can be interesting without lots of yelling and pheasant plumage"!

Thaxted's Ring Meeting will hopefully be reported in the next Morris Circular – again marvellous weather, and a splendid weekend.

The first International "Pipe and Tabor" Conference was based in the Blackfriars Priory, an English Heritage property in Gloucester, and so authentic was the atmospheric period location, that no electric light was available in the lecture hall! The event was meticulously organised by **Steven Rowley** and **Richard Sermon**, both of **Gloucestershire**. The pre-meeting tour finished in Broad Campden for a performance by **Chipping Campden**. The tour organiser produced the Tabor Pipe [normally kept in Gloucestershire Folk Museum] that would have accompanied the dancing of Campden's predecessors some 200 years ago.

A special display included the Bucknell Pipe and Tabor, once played by Sharp's informant Joe Powell [tracked down having been "missing" since their last public appearance at the Ring 50th Anniversary in 1984], and tabor pipes and tabors from Bampton and elsewhere.

The formal Symposium was on the Friday and was organised by **Ken Hamilton [Oakworth Village]**. The tuning of the extant historical tabor-pipes was the subject of one of the many fascinating presentations - it seems that the Bucknell pipe may have been in Continental tuning but played to behave with English tuning characteristics. The full story of the instruments and their rediscovery will hopefully be published before long. Among the speakers was John Forrest, whose "History of Morris Dancing" was reviewed in the last Newsletter. He spoke on the Tabor in early Morris and later that evening on the influence on the Church on Morris in its early days. He explained that the "pagan" attribution so often quoted, was merely one commonly applied to anything that had been associated with the Roman church, and had no reference to unGodly pre-Christian activity. His final talk preceded a performance by Chris Harris of his "Kemp's Jig" one-man show. Whilst this has been around for years, many had not seen it and it was very appropriate so soon after the "Nine Daies Wonder".

On Saturday, there were Workshops in various types of Tabor-pipe playing, and recitals – including one in the Cathedral. Practical events included the chance to make your own tabor pipe from plumbing items [instructed by **David Thompson [Thaxted / Ripley]** – another hidden talent!!] Gloucestershire provided dancing in the town, augmented by the Ring Bagman and various Morris participants from the Conference. The overseas players gave particularly fine renditions using the tabor pipes and styles peculiar to Catalunya in Spain, and Provence in France. Other international performers came from Denmark, Netherlands and the USA. The mass Morris Pipe and Tabor event at the close of the Saturday showed the power of this traditional instrument. A Makers' Market was organised by **Graham Lyndon-Jones of St Albans**. A feast followed on the Saturday evening and there were more workshops on the Sunday – the Morris aspects being tutored by **Andrew Richards** [variously **Cambridge, Travelling Morrice and Pilgrim**].

Andy King, current Foreman of **Plymouth** and a member of **Plymouth Reunion**, sent details of this year's Reunion Tour. "As everyone knew Plymouth so well it was held on the opposite north-east corner of Dartmoor. We were based at The Globe Inn, Chagford, on an indoor camping basis. We had a music session Friday evening. On Saturday we invited Plymouth to join us as they are celebrating 30 years this year. The weather was absolutely glorious after a week of mist and drizzle. We danced in Chagford square before taking a mini bus to Moretonhampstead where we danced for approx. 1/2 hour including 'Rose Tree', Bampton with a German 'Rose'. We moved on to The Cleave Inn at Lustleigh for lunch and where **Greg Yates** (the only other current member of both Plymouth Morris & Plymouth Reunion) was married in 1979 and where the 'then' Plymouth Morris danced on that day. After lunch we went to Castle Drogo, a fortress-like country house designed by Sir Edward Lutyens near Drewsteignton. Made from granite it looks quite medieval but was actually commissioned by the self-made millionaire Julius Drewe in 1889 Here, after a short dance spot, we performed the Winstar Processional up through the grounds to the tea rooms and National Trust shop at the entrance. From here we went to a nearby local beauty spot on the River Teign known as Fingle Bridge before retiring back up the hill to the Drew Arms in Drewsteignton, a remarkable old fashioned pub, for a final dance and something to eat and drink. Then it was back to The Globe in Chagford about 8.30pm for another fine music session to end the day.

[Andy King provided this background to the Reunion Side, having joined the Plymouth side in October 1982, when "... we had over 30 members on the books. The side had been together for a number of years and had formed quite a bond. Over the next two years just about all the side had moved away from Plymouth with jobs etc. but decided to stay in touch and meet up on a regular basis. Some men joined the local side wherever they went. Others gave up regular Morris for various reasons. The idea came up to form Plymouth Reunion and to meet once a year. Someone different hosts the weekend each year. We have members in Hull, Oxford, Stroud, Honiton, Shaftesbury, Glasgow and Basingstoke to name but a few; as well as Plymouth and its environs. For kit we generally wear whites (for a common factor) and our own individual baldricks etc either from the individual's current side or made up especially for Reunion. Next year the Reunion will be held in the Oxford area during May. "]

Bedford's annual North-West tour of Bedford was accompanied by members of Bedford Town Band – eager for a less usual context and promises of free beer!! Their conductor [Bedford Foreman **Roger Nicholls**] provided a new arrangement of “Colne” for Brass Octet – and in a playable [for brass] key – which did not help the Bedford musicians!! At one stop various Morris kit was found to be decorating the pub wall. A **Bristol** baldrick was easily identified; there was also a **White Rose** baldrick – assuming White Rose baldricks feature a white rose!! And some bells. The Landlady had “found them in a charity shop down the road, and one of her irregulars later said – how did those get there – it seemed his wife had done an attic clearout!! Bedford are still trying to identify the dancer – any ideas?

Mayor's Day 2000 (17 June) and **Abingdon TMD** celebrated the 300th Anniversary of the date on the Horns and elected their Mayor. A marvellous day – a full report and photographs will be in the Morris Circular. Present also Bampton [the Daniel's Team], **Headington Quarry** and **Chipping Campden**, to provide a full set of the "Traditional Cotswold" sides. Guests also included Sherborne, and from Abingdon's twin towns in Belgium and France respectively, the Boerke Naas sword dancers and flag-throwers from Sint Niklaas, and La Gigouais Sabotiers from Argentan, Normandy. **Stuart Jackson** was re-elected as Mayor of Ock Street. Others present included Past Squires, **Bert Cleaver** [an Honorary Abingdon Man] and **Ivor Allsop**, who played and filmed respectively. Familiar faces spotted in the crowd **Derek Scofield** of **Manley**; Roy Dommett; Doc Rowe, Roger Cartwright from USA, as well as representatives from **Bourne River** and **John Swift** from **Leicester**.

Pilgrim hosted a joint evening with **Kennet** in Tongham. The first stop was at the Hog's Back Brewery [and with such a Beer and Morris combination, the Bagman inevitably appeared]. An excellent evening with two barrels of free tea [TEA = “Traditional English Ale” [4.2%] a splendid bitter]. A large crowd of brewery customers partook of the Brewery's Ales and barbecue. Later, Men and ale were transported by a quasi-vintage dray to the next spot at the White Hart in Tongham. After some dancing, and a fine broom dance from **Simon Read** of Pilgrim, the music and song carried on inside until closing time.

A report on the **Anker** Ring Meeting will be in the next Newsletter – or the next Morris Circular. For now it is sufficient to report that a splendid time was had by all!! Indeed so good were the beers from the Church End brewery, that the weekend's supply was drunk on Friday night, giving the brewery much further welcome trade from Anker the next day!!!

East Surrey danced on the Epsom Downs, at a pub in sight of the racecourse and then retreated to a pub in the woods for a final session. It was a useful opportunity to gain news of their Ring Meeting next year, which promises real beds on which to set down sleeping bags!! Thanks to **Bob Davies** for providing bed and breakfast – and Appleton 151 extra proof rum until the small hours - and apologies to Mrs. Davies for the late hours we kept!!

“Beasts in Banbury” celebrated the 400th Anniversary of the destruction of the Banbury Crosses, and provided an excuse for a Festival of Beasts various. Morris Ring Beasts spotted included those from **Bedford**, **St. Albans**, **White Horse** and **Wyre Forest**. Star beast was 102 year old “Sam” the **Ilmington** Horse, whose Side danced in the morning, together with Adderbury, and Juggler Meadow from Massachusetts, USA, with Roger Cartwright providing their music and Past Squire, **Tim Sercombe**, acting as their guide and “translator”. **Sandy Glover** [St. Albans] was Master of Ceremonies, and others present included **Ron Shuttleworth**, **Phil Underwood** [who ran an introductory Workshop], and representatives from **Gloucestershire** [variously propelling a Gloucestershire Dragon and providing music and song].

That evening Doc Rowe gave a talk on “Animals and other Ritual Beasts” and his experiences of “collecting” them over the years – look out for his talk “Booze, Blood and Bedlam” at Tate Britain in September.

Devils Dyke hosted **Cambridge** and **Standon** for a two pub evening in early July. At the later spot the publican name “David Valentine Short” over the door assisted dance selection. Standon produced their party piece [last seen at Richmond Ring Meeting] with a Headington Rodney, which started sedately and increased in speed, phrase by phrase, to frenetic. Devil's Dyke's finale in the gathering dusk was a spectacular Balance the Straw – but with flaming sticks – additionally, in the final choruses, these were thrown across the set and to a considerable height - a superb showpiece - but do not tell the Insurance Company!!!

AND FINALLY

Yateley are advertising their programme and seeking new members in the local CAMRA Newsletter. The advert indicates that they “ ... welcome all real ale drinkers to their events. They may even buy you a drink if you are a CAMRA member! Why not keep two English traditions alive?”. Good thinking Yateley - I must visit them again and claim my drink!!

IN CONCLUSION

Thanks to all who have sent in press cuttings. Apart from keeping us informed and ready to respond – if necessary – to the media, they are essential material for the Archives.

Thanks also to those who have sent in programmes. These not only provide a chance to come and visit you, they also produce all manner of other useful material, and contact information for inquiries from the public. Finally they provide a useful source of Archive material.

As ever, please remember to report any changes of Contact Person, addresses or Emails – and keep the gossip [and even some News perhaps] coming in for the Newsletter.

The next Newsletter is due in September and will probably be posted in early October [in theory!!]. It will include the details and Application Form for next year's Ring Meetings for your prompt attention, so that they can be processed before Christmas.

I look forward to hearing from all of you.

Wassail

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring

The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 14 – July 2000 - SUMMARY

IN MEMORIAM - *Barnet Field* a founder member of **East Kent** died on 7th May.

ARM 2001 - will be hosted by **Dartington**: 30th March - 1st April 2001. ARM on 31st March.

INSTRUCTIONALS - **Fieldtown Instructional** - 6th – 8th October 2000. **Fools and Animals Weekend** - 27th – 29th October 2000. **Jigs Instructional 2001**. 19th – 21st January 2000.

RING MEETINGS – 2001 - 1st - 3rd June - **THAXTED**; 29th June – 1st July - **BOAR'S HEAD/CLARO SWORD**; 13th - 15th July - **GREENSLEEVES 75th Anniv**; TBA - **BRISTOL**; 30th August - 1st Sept - **EAST SURREY 75th Anniv**.

ANNIVERSARIES - **Leeds** celebrate their 50th Anniversary; **Mersey** their 40th Anniversary.

THE DOME - **Bathampton**; **Ewell St Mary**; **Malvern Swordsmen** and **Yateley** represented the Ring on Spring Bank Holiday weekend. In October: **Mayflower**; **North Wood**, **Stockport**; **East Kent**; **Greenwich**; **Gloucestershire** and **Royal Liberty**.

CHARITY EVENT - *Malcolm Smith*, of **Shakespeare** cycled 300 miles in 5 days in China.

MEDIA – **The Press** - An Article in the Guardian on Steve Rouse's "England Dances" project - comment from *Steve Tunncliffe* [Rutland] - review by *Pete Thomas* of **East Kent**. A Federation side, Carlisle Sword, Morris and Clog, in Cumbria, "banned" for blacking up. **Television** – The new "Big Breakfast" titles features **St. Albans**. The Ring [and East Kent] got kids Morris onto BBC Children's TV. **Radio** – the Treasurer was on Capital Gold Radio.

ARCHIVE NEWS - **Cannock Chase** regalia collected and more from **Luton Longstraw**.

NEWS ROUND-UP – the following Sides are mentioned: **Abingdon**, **Adderbury Village**, **Aldbury**, **Anker**, **Bedford**, **Belchamp**, **Bourne River**, **Brackley**, **Bristol**, **Britannia Coconut Dancers**, **Castleford Longsword**, **Chipping Camden**, **Chanctonbury Ring**, **Coventry**, **Crendon**, **Cumberland**, **Datchet**, **Devils Dyke**, **Dolphin**, **East Kent**, **East Surrey**, **Gloucestershire**, **Goathland Ploughstots**, **Grand Union**, **Green Man**, **Handsworth**, **Headington**, **Horwich**, **Icknield Way**, **Kennet**, **Letchworth**, **Oakworth Village**, **Offley**, **Oxford City**, **Pilgrim**, **Plymouth**, **Plymouth Reunion**, **Ravensbourne**, **Richmond on Swale**, **Rutland**, **St Albans**, **Sallyport**, **Stafford**, **Southport**, **Standon**, **Stevenage**, **Sweyne's Eye**, **Thaxted**, **Traditional Bampton**, **Wadard**, **Westminster**, **White Horse**, **Woodside**, **Wyre Forest** and **Yateley**. Also May Days various and Ring Meetings hosted by **Richmond on Swale**, **Thaxted** and **Anker**.

Ask your Bagman to show you the full Newsletter.

Wassail,

John Frearson, Bagman, The Morris Ring