



The Newsletter - No. 15 – September 2000

Greetings,

First, a very warm welcome to our new Squire, *Gerald Willey*, who danced in at the Chalice Meeting. This Newsletter contains a letter from Gerald, outlining his initial thoughts.

This mailing includes a number of separate items, please make sure you have dealt with them all. Two of these are **URGENT**:

The Subscription and Insurance Renewal Notice – Together with notes from the *Treasurer*. Your payment is needed **before 1st November** so that you receive your “prompt payment advantage”. You may also make a donation to the Archive Fund [if you have been sent any of the spare duplicate photographs after Ring and other events had been recorded, this might be an appropriate thank-you!!].

The Application Form for, and details of, next year’s **Ring Meetings**. You will need to make a prompt choice, an estimate of numbers and apply **before 11th November**.

Also enclosed with this mailing are:

- **An Application Form** for the **Jigs Instructional**;
- A summary of this Newsletter – as the last page of this bundle.
- Inevitably, more **amendments** to the Directory. [An “up to the minute” version of the Directory, Emailed as a Word attachment, is available if required].
- For Associate Sides – a questionnaire and covering letter [see Squire’s letter herein].
- For the Advisory Council - details of, and the Agenda for, the November meeting.

Your copy, or copies, of the Morris Circular, will be in a separate mailing – hopefully next month but possibly with the November Newsletter

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; please order and specify by Email].

A FEW WORDS FROM THE SQUIRE

Following the AGM (1st April 2000) hosted by the Ripley at Derby, I have been gently inducted into Ring affairs with help and encouragement from Daniel, John and Steve. My grateful thanks to all three.

The Ring Meetings for this year were spread around the country and I thoroughly enjoyed visits to Richmond, Thaxted, Nuneaton and Bridgwater, with the latter providing the setting for my 'dancing in' as the 31st Squire of the Ring. More recently I was initiated into the Rushcart weekend hosted by Richard Hankinson and Saddleworth. As it was put to me: 'a relaxed walk around some moorland villages in the rain pushing/pulling a cart loaded with rushes with a bloke on the top'. I had a great time. If you haven't been, I strongly recommend that you go and experience the atmosphere.

Over the next few months I intend to use the Newsletter to 'set out my stall' and outline some objectives I want to achieve during my stint in office.

First and foremost is the dancing: whatever we do, in terms of performing the Morris to the public, we must do it positively and with vigour and panache. There is no great attraction, especially for young people (as potential recruits) in the audience, when 'tired' Morris is being presented. So when you plan and practise your dancing programmes over the Winter months, go for style and something 'a bit special'. Presentation is everything. One point that must be stressed: in the context of Morris I include all the various components, Cotswold, North-West, Border, Rapper, Sword, Mummers, Fools and Animals and the Musicians. It has become noticeable at many of the recent Ring Meetings that we seem to have a surfeit of the Cotswold tradition. Nothing criminal in that, but a succession of Cotswold dances being performed before an audience which, on many occasions, has a high proportion of other Cotswold dancers watching, is neither good nor desirable. Looking ahead to the Ring Meetings scheduled for 2001, I want the Shows to be more stream-lined and imaginative, with contributions to the dancing programmes from each of the sections (as listed above) but based on quality of performance and not just because the Side is present. It may well be that in some instances a Ring Meeting could have a theme (e.g. to highlight Sword and Rapper) and I shall ask the Host Sides when organising events to keep this in mind. In turn this means that Sides that feature such traditions must be encouraged to attend at least one Ring meeting per year to display their talents. As a basic guideline: let us show the general public all that's best of the Morris tradition.

The list of dances for mass displays will be published in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Doomsday 2000 - In the context of the Millennium I would like to carry out a survey of all the Member clubs of the Ring active in 2000 together with a census of all the members (dancers, musicians etc.). What I have in mind is a picture gallery that could be bound into one volume for the Archives (the possibility of publication will be explored). Please send Eddie Dunmore (Publications Officer) a colour photograph of your Side (standard size 25 x 18 cm) in a location typical to your area together with a complete list of all the members and their role(s) within the club¹. In this way we should be able to create a complete record of the Sides and dancers in the year 2000.

¹ It would also be helpful to have some indication of age and occupation, and any other present and previous Morris affiliations.

Associate Clubs - I am forcibly struck by the ratio of the number of Member Clubs (c.170) to the number of Associate Clubs (c.66). This is something of an anomaly and I intend to take a close look at the situation. As a start, a Questionnaire has been distributed to all the Associate Clubs [*with this edition of the Newsletter*], in order to ascertain why the progression to full membership has not been made. Once we have received and sifted through this data we can plan the next move to encourage as many Sides as possible to convert to full membership.

Area Representatives - I have arranged to meet with the Representatives at a separate session before the next Advisory Council Meeting, to see if we can clarify and define their role. For me this is a priority item. I see the Representatives as very important people who can keep the Squire up-to-date with the activities of Clubs throughout their Areas and who can promote and orchestrate events between the various Sides.

Revised Areas - The allocation of Clubs to particular Areas, which is still under review, will also be discussed at this session.

My diary of dates for Feasts, Ales etc. is growing by the week and I am looking forward to travelling around and about during the Autumn months to meet as many people as possible and to enjoy some good company, ale and dancing. *All best wishes* **Gerald**

IN MEMORIAM

Charlie Evans, the scout-master who formed the team that became **Coventry** died recently at the age of 97. Members of Coventry attended his memorial service and Squire, **Dave Marr**, danced a jig. [From **Martin.Trewinnard**, Bagman, Coventry]

Steve George, formerly **Cambridge**, and founder member and Fool [distinctive in blue smock] of the **Leicester** revival side, died on 31 July, aged 84. [From **Charlie Corcoran**, Leicester]

ARM 2001 – AND NOTICE re. NOMINATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

The 2001 ARM weekend will be hosted by **Dartington** from 30th March to 1st April 2001. The ARM will be on **Saturday 31st March 2001**.

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 2000.

The **Bagman** is due for election and is willing to re-stand; the fact that an Officer is willing to re-stand does not preclude other nominations.

The three **Area Representatives** due for election are those for the current **East; North-East;** and **South-East** areas. Area Representatives may re-stand. They only require a formal re-nomination, if alternative candidates are forthcoming.

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.

INSTRUCTIONALS

Fieldtown Instructional. 6th – 8th October 2000 at Harberton, Devon. It may be possible to squeeze in one or two more, if you have not yet applied, contact **Bert Cleaver** without delay.

Fools and Animals Weekend [and ?Instructional?]. **27th – 29th October 2000**. The Application Form was in the last mailing – and revealed that the Meeting will be held at its spiritual home venue in Wath-upon-Dearne. It will possibly come South next year. *Contact Eric Presley for details and any last minute spaces.*

Jigs Instructional 2001. 19th – 21st January 2000. **Bert Cleaver** as Foreman and again the hosts are **Dolphin** at Sutton Bonnington. **Application Form with this Newsletter.**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - RING MEETINGS – 2001

Application Form with this Newsletter. Sides should be advised of their success, or otherwise, by mid December. This requires Sides to return the form without delay – **by 11th November**. Start thinking about next year **NOW**. **REMEMBER** – deposits and final payments have to be paid **on time** – otherwise your Side may forfeit their place. **NOTE: Bristol** have decided not to proceed with a Ring Meeting in 2001, but hope to invite their friends to an event during the year to celebrate their 50th Anniversary.

JOINT MEETING

The Officers attended the annual joint Meeting with the Officers of the Morris Federation and the Open Morris. There was a useful exchange of views on many matters of mutual interest. Phil Wilson, the new Chief Executive of EFDSS also attended [he was at the Ring ARM this year and has a rather more “Morris friendly” background than some of his predecessors]; he was able to make some very positive, and useful, contributions to the discussions.

It is hoped that all four organisations can co-operate on a funding application to enable the Morris to be more constructively “marketed”. Hopefully, this might lead to less “knocking copy” and more helpful items appearing in the press. This is something that will be useful to us all and hopefully have value for recruitment. Phil is hopeful that the Morris can have a greater input into the EFDSS; at his initiative, Immediate Past Squire, Daniel Fox has been seconded onto the EFDSS Council and will be able to provide input from his dual knowledge of Morris [and “Folk”] and also of Charitable Institutions.

The Morris “**Combined Counties List**” is now available from the Bagman, by Email as a Word document attachment or by post. Area Reps will receive a copy in this mailing.

“**Sidefinder**” - Also confirmed at the Joint Meeting was the availability of the Morris Federation’s “Sidefinder” to all three Morris Organisations. This is a web page which enables those looking for Morris Sides in an area to locate the nearest clubs to any point in UK. Originally designed for the Federation, Ring Sides’ locations will be added shortly using existing data already published on the Morris Ring web site. Hopefully, this will assist new recruits, “bookers” and audience to find contacts for Morris dancing in any area. All Sides have to do is to continue to keep the Bagman up to date with their contact details.

NEW DANCES

Broadwood advise that they have produced a book of “The Horsham Dances” with details of the 14 dances [one jig; 2 x 4 man; 6 x 6 man; 4 x 8 man; and a Processional] that they have devised over the last two decades. 34pp in portrait format. Possibly a CD of the music later. Cost: £3.00 from **Dennis Salt**, 40, Depot Road, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5HD

THE MEDIA

The Press -

A glossy magazine by the name “Sleazeration” [June 2000] included two items on the Morris. An article on dancing styles “come on feet”, had full page of “**Peter Judge** – Morris Dancer”. Peter, whose father was also a Morris dancer, is Bagman of **London Pride**. At the other end of the spectrum, “Fetish Morris Dancing - A Whitsuntide flogging”, dealt with the rubber and leather clad “Prince Albert Morris” – not for the squeamish or traditionalist – indeed alongside this, women dancing conventional Morris seemed positively “Traditional”!! – it obviously takes all sorts – and that, no doubt, is the strength of the Morris. To quote “Some people’s perversions are more acceptable than others”. Thanks to **Anthony Heywood** of **Bedford** for this contribution from the big smoke – but why did he have a copy ??!!!

The **Bagman** featured in a large photograph in the London Evening Standard, his arm round an attractive young lady, who it transpired was a reporter looking for action in the countryside and heading “for the Cotswolds”. In a rather dismissive paragraph, she appeared only to be excited that “Two of the troupe have facial piercings – the closest thing to “modern” I’ve seen since leaving the M25”. One rather pitied her for her anonymous “passing tourist” approach to getting the photograph and her skimpy reportage when the location of the photograph was tracked down² :- **Abingdon**’s Mayor Making Day with the “Horns” having their 300th Anniversary; the bun throwing and four Traditional Morris Sides gathered in one location.

Television -

Sandy Glover of **St Albans** noted “There is an ad running on TV for Buxton Mineral Water. Its tag is "that's why we make a song and dance about it", and it features male Morris dancers with red and blue baldrics, and black? straw? hats.” He asks “Anyone own up, or can anyone identify them?” He adds “The ad appears NOT to treat Morris as a joke or a piece of aberrant behaviour, and as such is quite refreshing. A bit like the water, I suppose.”

Martin Trewinnard, Bagman of **Coventry** reports “... combining the Media and May Morning, Coventry always dance at the Earlsdon Festival in Coventry on the Mayday Bank Holiday. This year, of course, it was 1 May and we arrived to find a presenter and cameraman from Midlands Today (BBC regional programme) doing a “Morris dancing on Mayday” item. What went out on the lunchtime and evening bulletins was a clip of us dancing Black Joker (in the style of Ascott-under-Wychwood), a clip with me answering questions about the local history of the Morris, a clip of “public reaction” generally favourable, although one young girl thought we were embarrassing (us?) and a final clip of us trying to get into a pub which never opens that early in the morning. We had not contacted the BBC, we still haven't found out who did!”

² It was taken outside the Air Balloon public house in Ock Street – which has now closed and is boarded up.

NEWS

Small world – the Bagman was talking to a customer who had visited the Dome – he had been impressed by the Morris dancers and their interaction with the crowd – and especially “the Masked Horse”. It was **Yateley** et al. on the inaugural visit. Well done Men.

Ken Hamilton of **Oakworth Village** reported on an earlier visit to the Dome by The Taborers Society ably assisted by **Gloucestershire**, and members of Oakworth Village. “On the whole, most seemed to enjoy it, but personally I found it devoid of content. The pedant in me was annoyed to notice several erroneous captions to exhibits, but I was amazed at the politeness of the brush off the staff gave me. In design and architecture terms, wonderful, but devoid of content. One thing I found difficult to deal with was the levels of noise within the structure (which made it very disorientating). It also managed the hitherto unheard of feat of drowning out 5 tabor and pipe players, all playing at once! It made dancing quite tricky, because we couldn't hear the music ... , I'm glad I didn't pay.”

An update from **Roy Stubbs** who injured himself so spectacularly in the final show dance at **Anker**'s Ring Meeting. He reports that “The pain is easier but I doubt if I will be dancing this year again. Thank you again for your concern.” He mentioned that whilst collecting his daughter's D of E Bronze award. “I was chatting to the deputy mayoress whom I had known from previous work. Alongside her as we were chatting about my limp and its cause were a couple who apparently are/were assessors/co-ordinators for the D of E awards. The lady suddenly said "I know who you are, you are the man who was injured". She was the sister of the man from **Trigg** who was ex-Nuneaton!!!! Small world?”

Chris Benson Bagman of **Greensleeves** reports on their “Chipperfield Weekend 2000”.

“Greensleeves welcomed no fewer than nine sides to their annual weekend at Chipperfield, Hertfordshire. Present were **Barnsley Longsword**, **Bathampton**, **Chester City**, **Datchet Border Morris**, **Dolphin**, **East Surrey**, **Helier**, **Thelwall** and **Utrecht**. Three bus tours on Saturday visited various attractive locations around the Herts/Bucks borders. After tea and cakes the sides were redistributed into three "walking" tours (walking at least for the more energetic), before repairing to the Village Hall for the usual Greensleeves' home catered feast, albeit with an unusually large number of mouths to feed - and wash up after. **Bernard Beecher** was presented with a tankard on completing fifty years' membership of Greensleeves, and reminded us that when he joined new members were positively not wanted - plus ça change! Another senior Greensleeves member, **Geoff Trewinnard**, proposed the Immortal Memory. After the feast informal singing continued well into the small hours.

“The following morning saw good weather for the usual open-air church service and show. The vicar broke with tradition by not inveighing against the evils of drink, but could not resist a passing reference to the health benefits of abstinence! The show saw fine dancing by all teams, and included the rare sight of three simultaneous Greensleeves sides in Dearest Dicky (Fieldtown). A procession to the Windmill followed and the final show there was blessed with bright sunshine.

A report on the final Ring Meeting of the season at Bridgewater, hosted by **Chalice**, will be in the next Circular with photographs etc. Suffice that **Daniel Fox** danced out to great approbation and **Gerald Willey** danced in; they were supported by double-sides from **Thaxted** and **Shakespeare** respectively and various family. Some 200 plus Men attended. The weather for the weekend was superb – with dancing outside until midnight. The Sunday was cooler for the massed show – but there was a good crowd and the local TV reporter.

Comment from other than “The Ring” on the MDDL on the Web, on the Stepback dance show and their claim that “The surprising aspect to the presentation of Traditional Dance on the stage is the need to innovate”. Keith Leech commented: “... My personal opinion is to disagree totally with this statement. There is a need to think about the presentation, but you do not HAVE to innovate and turn a traditional dance into a version of Riverdance. It may be heresy, as I know that the Stepback project is considered by many to be THE best thing since whatever, and it is always difficult to say anything against anything arty without being branded a Philistine. Yes the project is laudable, yes the dancing is superb, yes it is really interesting as an art form, yes it is enjoyable to watch but ... , I don't think it's Morris. Those who saw the Flashback show at Sidmouth last year would have to agree, Headington Quarry doing ordinary Cotswold on that stage were just superb; who needs flashy innovation?” Bob Collier from Canberra, [Australia], also on the Web, responded “I'm with you 100 per cent. There are too many arty-farties messing around with the morris these days. Morris dancing without bells? The "need" to innovate? Off to the ballet with you, yer b*stards!”

And speaking of Sidmouth: an internet report on the Festival referred to **Ripley** and their “16-man Lichfield hey”. The writer was baffled and stated “I have no idea how it worked” !!

Patrick Harries of **Wessex** relates that in 1999 they were invited to perform at the Sherborne Beer Festival, and met delegates from Chojna, in Poland. As a result, 15 Wessex Men “Crossed the Oder and invaded Poland” from 24 – 28th August 2000. The report on the visit includes “educational” comment on the local vodka; the idiosyncratic toilets; and the pulchritude of the local maidens!! Careful reading also suggests they may have been induced to dance in Szczecin [Stettin in German] and Moryn, as well as in Chojna [that is when they could be persuaded to leave the afore mentioned vodka and maidens!!!]. A full [unexpurgated] copy of the letter describing their visit is available by Email from the Bagman – a fuller text and photographs will hopefully be included in a future Circular.

AND FINALLY

A challenge from **Coventry**!! “We were dancing recently at one of our favourite pubs and, when our Fool and Collector, **Pete Grassby**, went round with the hat, a gentleman put a £50 note into it. Pete continued on his round but then returned to the gentleman to check whether he had realised the size of the note. As he turned away he was called back to be given a second £50 note. Has anyone else ever collected this amount from a single person or can we claim a record?”

IN CONCLUSION

As ever, please remember to report any changes of Contact Person, addresses or Emails – also remember your subscriptions and complete the various paperwork [and the survey form if you are an Associate Side].

The next Newsletter will be the Christmas edition – and will be produced in November.

Wassail

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring

The Newsletter - No. 15 – September 2000 - SUMMARY

THE SQUIRE provides his first thoughts. He “thoroughly enjoyed visits to Richmond, Thaxted, Nuneaton and Bridgwater” with the latter providing the setting for his “dancing in” as the 31st Squire of the Ring. He intends to use the Newsletter to “set out my stall”. His primary objective is to ensure Morris is danced “positively and with vigour and panache” and to ensure Shows are “more stream-lined and imaginative ... based on quality of performance and not just because the Side is present ... let us show the general public all that's best of the Morris tradition”. He is looking to survey Clubs and produce a “Doomsday 2000” book of photographs of Sides. He hopes to encourage more Associate Sides to become Full Members; redefine the role of the Area Representatives and complete the review of the Areas.

IN MEMORIAM - *Charlie Evans*, who formed **Coventry** died aged 97. ***Steve George***, formerly **Cambridge**, and a founder member and Fool of **Leicester** died aged 84.

ARM 2001 - will be hosted by **Dartington** from 30th March to 1st April 2001.

INSTRUCTIONALS - Fieldtown Instructional - 6th – 8th October 2000 in Devon. **Fools and Animals Weekend - 27th – 29th October 2000** at Wath on Dearne. **Jigs Instructional - 19th – 21st January 2001** at Sutton Bonnington.

RING MEETINGS – 2001 – The Application Form needs to be filled without delay – Meetings for 2001: - **1st - 3rd June - THAXTED; 29th June – 1st July - BOAR'S HEAD/CLARO SWORD; 13th - 15th July - GREENSLEEVES 75th Anniv; 30th August - 1st Sept - EAST SURREY 75th Anniv.**

JOINT MEETING - The Officers met with the Morris Federation and the Open Morris. The new Chief Executive of EFDSS also attended. It is hoped that all four organisations can co-operate on a funding application to enable the Morris to be more constructively “marketed”. Immediate Past Squire, ***Daniel Fox*** is now on the EFDSS Council. “Sidefinder” is available to all the Morris Organisations; this web page enables those looking for Morris Sides in an area to locate the nearest clubs to any point in UK.

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THE MEDIA - The Press – “Sleazenation” included a full page of **London Pride's *Peter Judge***; also an item “Fetish Morris Dancing - A Whitsuntide Flogging”. The Bagman's photograph was in the London Evening Standard. **Coventry** were on TV on May Day.

NEWS REPORTS – include – Dome visits: by **Yateley** – and earlier **Gloucestershire** [plus **Oakworth** and The Taborers Society]; **Anker** and **Trigg**; **Ripley** at Sidmouth; the **Greensleeves** “Chipperfield Weekend 2000”, with guests **Barnsley**, **Bathampton**, **Chester City**, **Datchet**, **Dolphin**, **East Surrey**, **Helier**, **Thelwall** and **Utrecht**; **Wessex's** invasion of Poland and **Coventry's** two £50 notes.

Ask your Bagman to show you the full Newsletter.

Wassail,

John Frearson, Bagman, The Morris Ring