



## The Newsletter - No. 16 – November 2000

Greetings,

This Newsletter will hopefully reach you well before Christmas; but even at this early date, may I wish you all a very happy Christmas and peaceful New Year / Millennium. A Christmas message from the **Squire** is enclosed.

**Did you remember to send your Subscription and Insurance Renewal Payment.** – Your payment was due **before 1<sup>st</sup> November**. Pay **NOW** to ensure you remain insured.

You should also have sent off your *Application Form* for, next year's *Ring Meetings* – **but - URGENT NOTE** – **if you applied for East Surrey** – there is a problem - the school term is starting earlier than expected – the Meeting will either be at a different venue – or it will be two weeks earlier – **17 - 19 August**. A note for East Surrey Meeting applicants is enclosed.

Associate Sides – did you return the questionnaire – a number have yet to be returned.

**Also enclosed with this mailing are:**

- A **summary** of this Newsletter – as the last page of the Newsletter.
- Inevitably, more **amendments** to the Directory. [An “up to the minute” version of the Directory, Emailed as a Word attachment, is available if required].
- A summary of the Ring **dances for the massed shows** at next year's Ring Meetings.
- An updated “**Shop List**” for those last minute purchases for Santa!
- Details of, and a **booking form** for, the **ARM** hosted by Dartington in April next year.
- For those Sides with no current [or working] Email number – a request for one!
- For North Midlands Area Clubs – a circular from your Area Representative.
- Your copy, or copies, of the Morris Circular.

**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].**

## IN MEMORIAM

**Bob Grant**, of **Headington Quarry**, died on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October. The funeral was on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November at Headington Quarry Church.

The Funeral took place on a fine day with the church filled to overflowing, emphasising Bob's many friends, in many walks of life. Barry Jones [HQMD] recalled some past episodes:- Bob being mistaken for a robber at the Kilkenny Festival after climbing the castle wall to find a bar; Bob sneaking out from hospital whilst awaiting a wisdom tooth operation – to be found in the pub – in pyjamas and dressing gown; and of Bob's singing in a tunnel whilst on a canal boat holiday and emerging into the light to applause from the tow path. He remembered Bob as "... that dignified, fun-loving, compassionate friend".

As well as flowers, the coffin was adorned with his Turkish Knight's feathered hat, and indeed true to his favourite part, he was buried in his Turkish Knight's costume. The Headington Quarry Men lined the church path as a final guard of honour, as the coffin was carried from the church, accompanied by the tunes that Bob knew and loved, Headington dances and their Morris Off; a Playford tune and some of Bob's favourite songs.

The Morris was well represented, with a large contingent from **Westminster** [who dance regularly with Headington] including Past Squire, **Colin Fleming**; also **Roger Nicholls** [Bedford]; **Colin Spencer** [Green Man], Past Squire, **Geoff Jerram** [Winchester]; Ring Publications Officer, **Eddie Dunmore** [North Wood], and representing the Morris Ring, the Bagman, **John Frearson**.

**Derek Schofield** writes: "Bob was the club's archivist and as such was a mine of information about the HQ dancers in the twentieth century as well as life in the village. His uncle danced with the side and was a Squire - Charlie Jones. Bob himself was a member of the club for over thirty years. He also played Turkey Snite in the HQ Mummers' Play. He had not been well for some time, and was noticeably frail at the Boxing Day 1999 celebration in HQ. The Sharp/Kimber/HQ centenary was marked by the publication of two articles written by Bob -- one was the HQ booklet "When Punch Met Merry" and the other was the Folk Music Journal article of the same title. Both articles examined the historic meeting on Boxing Day 1899. Bob's help to me with the William Kimber CD was invaluable. He will be sorely missed."

**Geoff Parker**, past Squire, Foreman and Fool of the **Beaux of London City** died in late October. His funeral was in Harlow on 1<sup>st</sup> November. [From **Howard Mitchell**]

**Sam Taylor**, last survivor of the original **Ripley Side** died in early November. Sam was also a Member of **Foresters, Dolphin and Derby**. Sam had a major heart attack about a year ago and died after another. His funeral was at Bramcote Crematorium, on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2000, and afterwards at the Durham Ox, Ilkeston.

[From: **David Thompson, Ripley** / Midlands & North Area Representative]

## A FEW WORDS FROM THE SQUIRE

Greetings to one and all:

The Autumn / Winter season is upon us and a succession of Feasts and Ales have been pencilled in my Diary. Thank you for the invitations and I shall be clocking up the miles with as many visits as I can fit in. One conspicuous 'gap': a phone call from **Dave Johns, Packington**, with the news that they will not be having an Ale this year. So no sprouts. Most recently I spent an enjoyable weekend at the Fools and Animals Unconvention at **Wath upon Dearne** with Master of Ceremonies **Eric Pressley**. Having never played either role in my own Club and, perhaps, having not paid too much attention to these characters in action, I was most impressed with the dedication and artistic contributions that each member puts into his act. When done in a thoughtful and imaginative way, 'fooling' and 'beasting' can greatly enhance the dancing.

I have chosen the dances for use in the Massed Shows at Ring meetings in 2001. If your Side is attending a Ring Meeting next year (and I do hope you will try to get to one session), please make sure that you are familiar with these dances and the various Figures. [SEE SEPARATE SHEET]

Only seven weeks or so and we will be celebrating Christmas and the New Year. I send good wishes to you all and thank you for your support during 2000.

Wishing you a very Happy Christmas and a bumper New Year with lots of excellent dancing.

***Gerald Willey***

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS -

### INSTRUCTIONALS

**Jigs Instructional 2001** at Sutton Bonnington. **19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001**. **Bert Cleaver** is Foreman and the hosts are **Dolphin**. The **Application Form** was with the last Newsletter. Still space at present.

**RING MEETINGS – 2001**. Applications should have been in by 11<sup>th</sup> November – the Application Form was with the last Newsletter. Sides should be advised of their success, or otherwise, by mid December. East Surrey has been over-subscribed, but as noted, there is now a problem with the date for that venue. To avoid complete cancellation it may be moved two weeks earlier – or retain the date at a new location. A note is enclosed to East Surrey Applicant Clubs.

**Midlands and North Area - Day of Dance – Tour of the Cotswolds**. This will be on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2001. It is planned [subject to permissions] to visit Stow on the Wold; Bledington; Lea Field; Bampton; Sherborne; Longborough or (Oddington); and Ilmington. If the bus is not filled then the tour will be opened to others. Details from Area Rep - David Thompson.

## **ARM 2001 – AND NOTICE RE. NOMINATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.**

The 2001 ARM weekend will be hosted by **Dartington** [30<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001] with the **ARM on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001**. **A Booking Form is enclosed.**

**Remember - 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 [but foolishly 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.

**Dartington** have provided an update. “The location for the ARM will be Kingsbridge Community College Lower School (about 12 miles south of Totnes). **Geoff Jerram** has kindly agreed to cater the Feast.” [Those who have attended Winchester Feasts will know that this means the food should be good. Also, it has been established that Blewitts Brewery, also of Kingsbridge, will be supplying the beer – rumours of a pipeline being installed by the local cable contractor have not been discounted at this stage!! - JPHF] **“Ivor Allsop** has agreed to come down and do an Archive film session for us on Saturday between the meetings and the Feast. Because of the distance most people will have to travel to reach us, we are suggesting that nothing Morris'ey happens on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001. We will have a leisurely breakfast at a civilised time and people can then either do the touristy stuff or head straight off home, provided with a packed lunch by us.

**John Culf** of **Dartington** also says “Look out for a totally revamped website coming soon from Dartington at [www.dartingtonmorrismen.org.uk](http://www.dartingtonmorrismen.org.uk), and make sure to have your sound system turned on when you access it! It even includes a musical competition, but you'll have to live near the side to claim your prize. ***Dartington also intend to make full use of email and their website in the run-up to the 2001 Ring ARM which they are hosting.***

## **THE MEDIA**

**Film - John Price** of **St Albans** tells us “.. about the filming we did for Talkback Productions yesterday afternoon [circa 24 October], but it was run-of-the-mill stuff. Sat around in the pub drinking 6X for two hours waiting for the film people to turn up; waited around on the village green for an hour until Armando Iannucci got round to filming our 30 second segment; did a bit of Wheatley during which one of the dancers got shot by a sniper, splattering the rest of us with blood; went home to work out our dry-cleaning expenses.”

**Television – Gloucestershire** featured in “Think Of England”. An Irishman, a Welshman and a Scotsman (one of the Wurzels!) went off in search of Englishness. Ahead of seaside rock, Lord Bath and cider, was Morris Dancing. It seems that we are progressing towards regionality

## PUBLICATIONS

**Malcolm Taylor**, Librarian, EFDSS reports “The new (2nd) revised and expanded edition of Steve Corrsin's “Sword Dancing in Britain: an annotated bibliography” (London: EFDSS, 2000) has been published on the EFDSS website - <http://www.efdss.org/sword.htm>.

## INFORMATION NEEDED – AND SOME ANNIVERSARIES.

**Michael Jackson (Horwich)** is in search of various information [he appears to be in for a busy time! If Sides provide him with the information and he achieves all that he has outlined below – he will obviously be a potential Bagman candidate!!!!]

**Folk Buzz! Duncan Broomhead (Adlington)** and Michael produce the Morris News pages in this folk magazine, which circulates in the North West and North Midlands. They include contact details for all known Morris, sword, mumming and stepping teams from Staffordshire to Cumbria. News about team activities likely to be of interest to readers is included. They would appreciate more news from Ring sides - please telephone Michael on 01257-480331, or e-mail [michael.jackson@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:michael.jackson@tinyworld.co.uk) Sample copy from: Jason Hill on 01782-813401.

**Celebrating Horwich Morris!** Michael Jackson is also considering producing a pamphlet called “Horwich Morris - A Celebration”, to coincide with the **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** of the revival of Morris in Horwich. *[The first known team in the town started in 1892, and performed until the First World War. They won several Morris dancing competitions, beating other teams from Lancashire and Cheshire, and they added ‘Prize Medal’ to their name. Between the wars there were girls teams in Horwich, and the male team was revived in 1976].* He would like to include a list of all Morris teams that have performed in Horwich over the years, whether at the annual Day for Saint George as guests of Horwich or at other events. *(About ten guest teams come to Horwich each year, though most are regulars from amongst the local teams.)* In addition, he would like to hear from any teams that perform ‘Horwich’ dances, such as those published by Pruw Boswell or those written and taught at festivals by Horwich, such as ‘Original Polka’ and ‘Uncle Rowland’s’.

**Abram Morris Dancers:** 2001 is the **100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** of the last performance by the traditional Abram Morris Dancers. The present revival team, which started in 1984, is aiming to produce a booklet on the history of Morris in Abram and also of the performance of the Abram Morris Dance (don’t call it the Circle Dance!) throughout England and the world. Michael Jackson would also be grateful to hear from any team that currently performs the Abram Morris dance and also to receive photographs of performances. He is aware that **Horwich**, and **Manchester** do versions of the dance, but there must be many others that he does not know of. Contact details as per Folk Buzz above.

**Yateley** kick started their **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** year with a Dinner-Barn Dance on 28<sup>th</sup> October where the guest of honour among the 100+ guests was Barbara Sunderland. Music for the dance was provided by the Bismarks, two of whom are former members of the Side. Other events are planned during the next 12 months including a 25th Anniversary weekend hosted by **Isca** with **Harthill** and Yateley; all three sides are celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> years. The culmination of Yateley’s year will be their Day of Dance which is expected to be held on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2001. Invites are going out shortly to all sides who have been involved with Yateley over the past 25 years, but with a maximum of 120 places, Sides are reminded that acceptances will prioritised on a first come first served basis.

## NEWS

**Saddleworth** Rushcart coincided with the Bank Holiday weekend and there was the normal excellent turnout of Sides. The weather was showery, but after a damp start the main Saturday procession was dry until the cart was put away and the heavens opened and most were drenched in the time it took two hundred Men, and supporters, to get into the pub!! Sides present in dancing strength included: **Bedford; Blackheath; Britannia Coconut Dancers** [Sunday]; **Earlsdon; Forest of Dean; Kennet; Leyland** [Sunday]; **Letchworth; Lord Conyers; Mossley; Moulton**; North British Rapper; and **Rose and Castle**. Others clubs were represented by part sides and individuals.

**Dave Walters** of **Dolphin** replied to the query about the Buxton Mineral Water advert “I think you will find it is the **Winster** men who are prancing through the spring water. I got involved in finding a local team for the casting company who, with less than 48 hours notice, wanted a Men’s’ Cotswold team for the day.”

### **Yateley’s trip to Bietigheim-Bissingen, Germany - July 2000**

*[A four page report was supplied for this visit – which might have caused the Treasurer to have a seizure if we printed it all. Some edited “Highlights” are given below – the full version is available by Email.]*

Heathrow check-in - Morris men on time, airport staff missing. Boarded 737 to apologies from Captain. On time in Stuttgart 12:10, after bumpy air and a ham & cheese salad breakfast.

The ticket office being closed!! (For lunch?) .. denied our discount train tickets ... but the holiday mood on the final leg overcame our English reserve, and out came fiddle and concertina for various folk tunes - hat not passed around, as it’s probably an arrestable offence.

Weather kind so far; not due till 2:30, so must be **Time for a bier**. Caught in the act by leader of hosts, Trachtenverein, come with mini-bus to collect our luggage. A welcome bier or rotwein, and a chance to renew old acquaintance, with our hosts at the clubhouse (Trachtenvereinheim).

Bier research for CAMRA was a mixed success - Ian S as travelling research Fellow for CAMRA took to his duties with enthusiasm, and helped by the likes of Dave Henderson, John F, etc, a wide range of wheat biers, “muddy river yeasty stuff”, stuff so cold it had no taste, and stuff with 30% “schaum” (read “foam”) was seen off. Tasting notes are awaited!! To bed about midnight or later.

Saturday dawned wet, “Still, it will keep the flowers fresh.” Flowers appeared from gardens, and from a wonderfully generous florist ... would not accept payment ... when we danced outside, in small measure of our gratitude, he doubly repaid it by providing a crate of beer, soft drinks, glasses.. No surprise, ... a member of Trachtenverein, such generosity is hard to match. **Time for a bier**, again.

We busked in three or four spots along the Fussganger zone (pedestrian only, in the old town) on well laid sets and paving, which were better than Camberley Shopping Centre. Quality of dancing all morning was good, and it was great to have a pair of besmocked Fools (Dave H & John F) whether rehearsed or just sparking off each other, but really giving an entertaining performance. Kemp’s processional through the Stadtturm (town tower/gate) was photogenic. Not encouraged to see a man with squeegee and broom sweeping water off the flat, shiny surface of the stage ... problems to come?

By 3.00pm, official opening of the Holzklobenfest (“timber log festival”) was watched by 500-600 people. This consisted of the Oberburgermeister speaking for 20 minutes before donning an apron and hammering a brass tap into a wooden barrel of Stuttgart Brauerei bier. Several false blows excited the contents, and the tap was unwittingly left open, so the effect was like a foam fire extinguisher ejecting its contents from the front of the stage! **Time for a bier?** About a dozen stout citizens assembled with glasses to sample the schaum (70%) and bier (30%) to officially open the festivities.

Hopefully no-one videoed our first dance, two sets for Church Green, Badby, ably announced in English, German and French by **Dave Wright**, because we cocked it up “big time”. However, observers were apparently unaware, and our shame only reinforced the rest of our show, which culminated in a very precise, symmetrical performance of Shepherd’s Hey, Headington, led solo by 10 year old **Michael Badely** - so we went from Badby badly to Badely brilliantly in 30 minutes on stage.

Then the Hungarians. What can you say. Semi-professional, 15/16/17 year olds, dancing 6 hours a day at school, since the age of three .. and could they dance!! Finale was 5 feet long sticks with various fighting routines, shades of Jedi Knights - sticks twirled in both hands at arms length alternately in front of and behind the body. Sorry to say that the prospect of applause for the Yateley Boys’ Fighting Jig (Wheatley) was looking distinctly slim at this stage!!

Evening assembly of hosts, English and Hungarians. A thoroughly jovial and successful international event, building many bridges ’twixt England and Hungary via Germany.

Sunday, the English weather we brought with us held off just long enough to see us dance on stage at 2:30pm, and then busk two spots till 5:15pm, before rain set in, steady and unrelenting, but too much to ignore. We were entertained by singing and dancing nuns (what else, on a Sunday?), and a group of Trachtenverein doing something a little more traditional (and tasteful).

As for our performance, on stage, well, it was better than Saturday, but not without problems in Banks of the Dee, Fieldtown. Fighting Jig looked dramatic, and some of the near misses were a sight closer than those Hungarian engineered near misses. **Time for a bier & wurst.**

So it ended: rain denied us the Hungarian delights, and we said our farewells, to them and to about half the Side, flying back Sunday. That night a smaller and slightly sober group gathered for a few refreshments and songs.

**Nigel Strudwick** of **Devil’s Dyke** reports on their Annual visit to Southwold on August Bank Holiday Monday 2000.

“The word 'tradition' is terribly abused these days - do something for a couple of years and you have a tradition. One Devil's Dyke tradition goes back a little longer: since the early 1980s, we've always gone to Southwold, home of Adnams, on August Bank Holiday Monday. Knowing that many sides are stretched at that time of year, we tend to ask individual guests rather than whole teams. This year we had along **David Marr**, **Mike Garland**, **Michael Blandford**, **John Trickey** and **David Pallant**; a surfeit of **Saddleworth** prevented the **Ring Bagman** from joining us.

“The programme is always the same. We commence dancing at the Red Lion on the Green at 11:30, moving on then to the Lord Nelson at 12:30, and the Sole Bay Inn at 1:45, with a second show an hour later. Not surprisingly, the Adnams always tastes better in Southwold than anywhere else. The weather was pleasantly warm, with none of the cold breezes which we sometimes get. The heavens held off opening conveniently until we finished the first show at the Sole Bay, which gave time for a music session, and food generously provided by Tony Fisher, the landlord of the Sole Bay. Tony has been incredibly kind to us over the years, but he is retiring at the end of the 2001 season, so what shall we do then? We always end up with a show in the Market Place about 4:30, where there is always a good audience, and we always do several strenuous dances despite advanced knackeration [why do we only ever do Eynsham 'Brighton Camp' at the end of very long days?].

“But we're not finished yet, as we always stop somewhere on the way home for dinner. It always seems to be somewhere where the coach driver has to work for his money too. This year it was the Half Moon at Rushall (near Diss). We danced to a small audience at the end of another rain shower, dined and headed off for home to sleep on the bus. Or rather try to sleep, due to certain musical activities at the back. It was a great day, and we're grateful to all who came. Photos of the day can be found on the DDMM web site, [www.ddmm.freemove.co.uk](http://www.ddmm.freemove.co.uk)”.

Another “Traditional” sea-side event is the **King’s Morris** Thornham Tour [10<sup>th</sup> July]. This is a North Norfolk village with three excellent pubs which are visited in turn. As well as the hosts, **Rutland, Northampton, Peterborough** and **Coton** were present, as well as a few individuals from **Devils Dyke**. An interesting final “Lollypop”, with Ducklington danced by one set and Bampton by the other. Ducklington won and was at the bar before the other set finished!!!. Dancing was followed by lunch and a “session” with brass interlude including a guest who proved to have been the Sousaphone player for the original Temperance Seven.

The Bagman took a day’s leave and became a tourist at Abbott’s Bromley for the Horn Dance day on one of the few warm dry days of Summer [Ring Meeting days apart!!!]. As well as the dancing – there was the company of a large number of old friends from Morris Sides various. As they were “sans kit”, this did make identification more difficult. Sides represented [this saves space and embarrassment over those individual names one has failed to remember!!!] included **Adderbury Village, Bathampton, Coventry, Earlsdon, Ilmington, Jockey, Leicester, Northampton, Ripley, Rutland, Shakespeare** and **Thaxted** [to name a selection!]. In the evening a Side made up of **Lichfield, Stafford** and **Uttoxeter** entertained the crowd whilst the horns finished touring the far end of the village. The Bagman was grateful for the invitation to join them for a few dances – having not yet been home to unpack his kit after the Thornham tour!! **Steve Tunnicliff** of **Rutland** remarked later on the Web *“As some of you may know, I have for some years been documenting the traditional annual appearance of **Doc Rowe** at Abbots Bromley. It is interesting to see how he and his equipment change from year to year. Unfortunately this year I failed to get a decent photograph because a bunch of blokes with antlers kept getting in the way. But it was a very nice day.”*

The petrol shortage provided some drama and inconvenience to Morris events.

Our esteemed Treasurer, **Steve Adamson**, was all packed up to take the Morris Shop to Bromyard Folk Festival [where a number of Ring Sides were expected to dance] – and was prevented from doing so by a lack of fuel. However, an opportunistic thief, not being aware of this shortage, stole the car [and stock], no doubt to save his own tank!! A full scale police alert followed – with the Ring’s Insurers on stand by, and Steve listing all the slow selling lines that could possibly have been in the car!! However, a boot full of tapes and books reduces “sports performance” and with a thousand bells ringing his ears, the thief abandoned the car – with stock intact. Unfortunately the Insurers considered the cost of door and steering lock replacements was more than the value of the car!! – so Steve – and Morris Shop – are now to be seen in a smart new [to him] Astra van.

**Paul “Monty” Montague** reports on **Yateley’s** Day of Dance on 16<sup>th</sup> September. “The date alone will give an indication of the problems experienced, falling right in the middle of the fuel crisis. They didn’t even know if they had one coach, let alone the two ordered, for their tours until the Friday lunchtime. But Yateley were determined not to let that small fact spoil their annual event! Two sides, **Green Man** and **Icknield Way** were unable to attend at the last minute due to fuel shortages. But a great day was enjoyed by nearly 80 men from **Grand Union, Isca, Spring Grove** and **Thames Valley** who all squeezed onto the one coach and a mini-van for a tour of the Guildford area, including the award winning Hogs Back Brewery. Special praise was given to Isca who despite travelling from the Welsh borders, where fuel was in particularly short supply, managed to stockpile sufficient quantities to make the journey.”



Fine weather also for **Rutland's** Day of Dance [23<sup>rd</sup> September]. This consisted of a bus tour around Rutland water – visiting some splendid pubs and taking in the view. This all helped Rutland in their efforts to dance at all the pubs in Rutland in 2000. They are taking a photograph at each pub, of the dancers surrounding the Landlord as he is presented with a certificate. The evening Feast was followed by an energetic further dance session [assisted by Oakham Brewery's award winning JHB]. Sunday breakfast was taken in a three star hotel no less!!! Followed by a few more dance spots and a finish at the Grainstore Brewery – on this occasion the [now] Ring Squire was able to call Dearest Dickie without the additional hey which was last year's novelty item. He was later to dance **North Wood's** eight man Fieldtown style "Therapia Lane" [named after the location of the new Croydon Tram Depot] – with crib notes written on a beer mat much in evidence!!! North Wood also provided an interesting Young Collins with sticking variations between the legs and later, one chorus sitting down!! Also present Sides and representatives from **Bedford, Peterborough and Coventry**. Two follow up items: Firstly, the event had excellent press cover with photographs in the Rutland Times [*the Bagman's brother having been horrified to see him pictured with arm around strange maiden in his London Evening Standard, found him also on the front page in Rutland, having had a copy sent to him by his mother-in-law who lives in Oakham !!!*]. Secondly, after the event, Rutland's Squire, **Jonathan Unna** sent the following Email under the title "Confessions of a errant Squire" - *"After our Feast I picked up a rag coat which was left behind. The rag coat was carefully stored in my study ready to return to the rightful owner when two nights ago our little cat accidentally got locked in. The next morning there was a strange smell pervading the air and I immediately knew that all was not as it should be. After hunting for some time I found the cat had left a large pile on the rag coat, which it presumably mistook for cat litter. Whose rag coat is it? Who would like to claim it back? I can say that it has been lovingly washed by mine own fair hand, and dried on the Aga, but I have stopped short of ironing it!"*

**Jockey's** Day of Dance for 2000 was held around the centre of Birmingham on 30<sup>th</sup> September. They were joined for the day by **Green Man** and others. The evening Feast was joined by the Ring Squire [who proposed the Immortal Memory] and Bagman [who thanked the host side in a slightly lesser time!!!] and further Representatives from **Shakespeare and Coventry**. During the dancing that followed, there was a teach-in on the Birmingham Sweeps dance and the old and new Jockey Squires danced out and in respectively with a Nutting Girl jig. The Squire lost his tankard [again] and proceedings were interrupted by a massive search operation – it was found before the Insurers had to be advised!! Past Squire, **Roy Yarnell**, not only provided accommodation – but nobly drove the Bagman's car, allowing him to properly sample the fine Beowulf Ales provided ["Wiglaf" [4.3%] and "Heroes Bitter" [4.7%]] - whilst one such generous incident does not provide a precedent – such potential traditions should of course be encouraged and preserved !!!!! [Thank you Roy - JF]

The 7<sup>th</sup> October provided a choice of activities and the Ring Officers went in three separate directions. Squire **Gerald Willey** brushed up his Fieldtown in Devon with **Bert Cleaver** and hosts **Dartington**, The Bagman attended his own Side's Day of Dance; and the Treasurer, **Steve Adamson**, attended **Anker's** Feast after their Day of Dance.

**Alan Dandy, Stafford**, reports upon the Fieldtown Instructional ..... a weekend of the Cream of Devon Hospitality. "The Fieldtown Instructional held over the weekend of 6 - 8<sup>th</sup> October at Haberton, Devon warmly hosted by **Dartington** emerged as another milestone in the achievements of The Morris Ring, setting the very highest of standards in Cotswold Morris. Under the very precise and well structured tuition of **Bert Cleaver**, and with demonstration from **Steve (Parker)** and **Alan (Chetwood)** no less than twenty Fieldtown dances and jigs were presented in the established **Greensleeves'** mode. Even with only half a side demonstrating and, by necessity, Alan whistling the tune one could not fail to be impressed by the exactitude.

As the weekend approached, men seem to have fallen as on a cavalry charge, BFB on having his car stolen, two men from Dolphin, one from Handsworth both for reasons unknown to the author, and Mike Cogan ( the "booked" musician) called to an emergency at the last minute. Music was then provided by Alan on Flute and Bert's pipe & tabor, and if all were needed to dance, Alan whistled and danced at the same time !

For the students, men from **Winchester, Stafford, Kennet, Shakespeare** (none other than our very own Ring Squire), **Bathampton** (reportedly there only as observers ! ), **Plymouth, Wath upon Dearne, Utrecht** (Holland), and those that could be spared from culinary duties from Dartington, there was an ebb and flow of physical energy and mental resource, rising on seeing the simplistic, but deceptive ease of performance, dynamically illustrated by the slow "fall" of the handkerchief, only to crash at the first attempts to copy. Usefully the time available and the repetitive nature of studying just the one tradition, enabled participants to improve on these first attempts, even recover to levels of hope for future performance.

The first one & a quarter hour session on the Friday night followed a very welcome meal of Meat Balls et extras, for many that had journeyed long, to this very scenic part of England. An evening of song in the 13th Century, Church House Inn followed, including a memorable interpretation of "Route A38" in the style "Route 88" with jazz accompaniment on melodeon.

Awoken then around 7.30am by Bert's dulcet tones of "Hail smiling morn....." and a cup of tea from our hosts, then a full breakfast stoked up calories for the day ahead. Four sessions, one lunch, plus quick pint at the pub and two tea breaks later, it was a shower and 'kit on' for quick pint at the pub before the Feast..... Cheese & Celery Mousse, Chicken Breast in Mushroom Sauce; (or Stuffed Peppers), Roast & New Potatoes, Green Beans, Brussels Sprouts; Halva Cake & Cream, Cheese & Biscuits, Coffee & Mints. Ale, Cider and soft drinks accompanying. The Loyal Toast was proposed by Dartington Squire, **Ken Hudson**: The Immortal Memory by **Alan Chetwood** (Greensleeves); The Morris Ring by **Alan Dandy** (Stafford); with reply and Toast to the Dartington Morris Men by **Gerald Willey**, Squire of the Morris Ring. Songs followed from almost every side represented, including several favourites as collected by Cecil Sharp.

Even-song continued at the Church House Inn through until around one o'clock when the landlord's tone dropped somewhat albeit long after several of the more mature men had retired. On the Sunday, men had a lay-in until 8 am, breakfast, and two more sessions, highlighted by a Mayoral visit with photo-call during the coffee break and full cooked lunch before the dispersal. Of all the dances attempted, mention must be made of the finale, Glorisher (Leapfrog) which sapped the last ergs from the many duped into trying it.

On behalf of the attendees I repeat the hearty thanks to Bert and the team, especially Dartington Morris Men whose hospitality really did come to the top as "The Cream of Devon".

**Bedford's** Day of Dance usefully coincided with the Bedford Beer Festival [which was the lunch - and the only dry - spot]. **Manchester** were among the guest Sides, and those who attended the **Leicester** Ring Meeting will realise the inevitable consequences of this. Despite damp weather, every spot was danced, and the bag was excellent [despite rain and England v. Germany at Wembley]. The other guest Sides were **Chipping Campden; East Surrey; Letchworth; Monkseaton** and **Northampton**, also Past Squire, **Daniel Fox**, who claimed that he had more dancing making up numbers missing in pubs etc. than he would ever have had at a Ring Meeting!! A sumptuous Feast followed and an evening of dancing – in the dry!! Morris fellowship can certainly overcome a day's rain, the beer festival also helped!!!

The **Ring Treasurer's** visit to **Anker**; his difficulty in finding the Feast and his subsequent adventures will go down in legend. He is now freed from Police Bail, and expects to dine out on the story for some while – so if you have not yet heard the story – I will not spoil it for him. However, we are negotiating for publication rights – look out for the next Newsletter.

A member of an Australian side [Canberra] had been asked to run a musicians' instructional at a festival. They appealed for help on the Web and were directed to **Clive Du'mont** of **Mendip**, and **Lester Bailey** of **Grand Union**. The organiser responded that they "... have now contacted me with lots of useful advice, so I will, hopefully, be able to produce a musicians' workshop worthy of the name! Thanks again." It is good to see that our worthy Ring Instructors is helping international Morris – thanks to both. [Indeed Clive's notes are now being trawled for content for the Ring's guidance on running Ring Meetings various].

**A FAB Weekend** - - The Fools and Animals convened in late [27 – 29<sup>th</sup>] October in their spiritual home venue, The Red Lion, in Wath-upon-Dearne. Next year they are heading off to Helmond, and the year after to Trigg. They will soon be listed as a "Travelling Side" !! **Mike Wilkinson** of **Dolphin**, reports: - "The annual Fools and Beasts Unconvention was held in the luxurious surroundings of the Red Lion Hotel and Conference Centre, Wath upon Dearne, at the end of October. The meeting is a sort of Instructional, supported and advertised by the Ring, and open to Fools and Beasts from Ring sides. I say a sort of Instructional because, of course, Fooling and Beasting do not lend themselves to "instruction" in the same way as, for example, jigs or music. Fools and Beasts are proud of their individuality and cherish the spontaneity that makes their performances work. Woe betide anyone who tries to tell them how it "should" be done!

The format of the weekend varies from year to year, but it is usually a mixture of open discussion involving the whole group, and short presentations or workshops led by those who think they have something important or interesting to say. This year, the emphasis was on the discussion, and everyone got a chance to chip in, either with questions or with answers.

There was much talk about the problem of badly behaved members of the audience - mainly children - and one or two of the men reported incidents that were very near to criminal assault. Beasts, in particular, have a problem as they have such a restricted field of view, and children can sneak up behind them.

An interesting comment from Squire of the Ring, **Gerald Willey**, was that perhaps we have brought some of these problems on ourselves. It is probably the case that both Fools and Beasts have a much higher profile and are much more active in performance than was the case a few years ago. As we are moving further from our "traditional" role, and (physically) further from the dancing set, perhaps we are exposing ourselves to a greater risk of "attack", and removing ourselves from the "protection" of our sides. There was no suggestion that we should therefore revert to a more "traditional" approach, but we should be aware that developments in one direction often involve problems in another.

**John Edwards** of **Stafford** led a discussion on the importance of not being too frightening when Beasting. By the cunning application of higher mathematics, he was able to prove that an eight foot tall Beast in front of a three foot tall child is like a twenty foot Beast in front of a six foot man. Imagine how you would react to a twenty foot tall Beast, he suggested. (At a mere five foot seven, I was reduced to a trembling wreck and am still suffering nightmares.)

I led a session on "quiet Fooling" - a subject for the teaching of which I am singularly ill-suited by experience and reputation. My argument was that it is better to start a show in a friendly, unaggressive manner, gauge the reaction of the audience and develop the performance accordingly. Many inexperienced Fools do a lot of shouting and arm waving, perhaps to boost their own confidence, and perhaps because they feel that it is expected of them. It might "work" nine times out of ten, but on the tenth occasion, it could provoke complaints or even violence. Not everyone agreed, which is as it should be, but the general point stands that there is much to be gained from a subtle and varied approach, rather than doing everything at full volume and full throttle.

**Roger Comley**, **Letchworth**, demonstrated the ancient art of bladder blowing. As a vegetarian, I am unable to go into detail on this one. You'll have to send Roger £5 for a fact sheet or something! Whilst this was going on, the Beasts had one of those discussions that only Beasts can have and only Beasts can understand. Send Gordon a bag of hay for a fact sheet! (I took the opportunity for half an hour's kip.)

All in all, it was a great weekend, with something for everyone. Thanks to **Eric Pressley** (T' Grand Convenor) for organising it all, and special thanks to Mary and Geoff of the Red Lion for once again being excellent hosts. Next year, it looks like we'll be meeting in Holland.

## MORRIS RING AT THE DOME - 28/29th OCTOBER

On the same weekend as the Fools and Animals – but in the far South - six further sides danced to almost capacity attendances at the Millennium Dome at the end of the school half-term holidays. **Paul “Monty” Montague** of **Yateley** reports “Such were the crowds on the Sunday that all three sides including **Gloucestershire** who had the furthest to travel were held up in the traffic and were a little late arriving. Other sides involved, all of whom were full of praise for the staff at the Dome and for the opportunity to dance there, were **East Kent, Greenwich, Mayflower, North Wood** and **Stockport**.

“This concludes the Morris dancing at the Dome organised by the three national organisations. What did it achieve? Certainly its primary objective of profiling English traditional dance at what should have been the UK’s Millennium attraction. All Sides who attended enjoyed the experience and reported favourably on their day spent there.”

We should all be grateful to Monty for all the work he put in to get Morris into the Dome. Whatever the politics and spin, this did not put him off some very hard and frustrating input to ensure Morris appeared at [and in] the Dome at least on two days each month. Our Thanks.

## YET MORE NEWS

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, **Ken Hamilton** of **Oakworth** noted that they “.. are dancing out at a Chinese restaurant next week ....” – but aren’t you ready to dance again an hour or so later Ken ?!!!

**Steve Ashcroft, Greensleeves**, went to a new printer near where he now works, to collect Greenleaves, his Side’s Newsletter. When he picked it up, they apologised that "my other magazine" was not ready. He said he hadn't brought in another magazine, but they insisted, so he asked to see the masters. It was the Ring Circular!!!

Steve Ashcroft also writes that Greensleeves have also been the inspiration for their local Hindu community’s latest dance programme.

“The Hindu community in Wimbledon regularly train their children to appear in large Indian dance festivals. This time as part of their programme they thought they should present dances from the country they live in, and chose Morris as most authentically English. I have to say they showed more interest in, understanding of, and regard for it than many ethnically English people.

Their local temple's dance director (they do a lot of Indian dancing) came down to a practice with a couple of colleagues, talked to us and watched us, as we went in detail through the two dances we were suggesting as suitable. The dances we taught them were Brighton Camp, Eynsham, and the Upton Stick Dance (which, for reasons totally opaque to me, Greensleeves insist on calling Twin Sisters).

They videoed us doing them, and tried out the steps and figures for themselves. We also discussed with them how their musicians could achieve a suitable sound with their instruments (not actually difficult) and the sort of kit that would reflect both Morris tradition and Indian ethnicity. We offered to go and help train the dancers, but regrettably, the dance director felt we had done such a good job on her that she didn't need further help (apparently she was right).

Twelve 10/12 year old boys performed in a festival in India before 7,000 people to great acclaim. We have asked for a video of them. They danced again in front of 2,000 people in Guildford on 20<sup>th</sup> October. **Steve Parker** was in the audience and reports they did well.”

**FOR SALE** -- Delicia piano accordion, 120 bass, with case. Minor repair needed to rectify coupler action - otherwise good condition. £150. Contact : **Mark Swinger, Peterborough.** Tel: 01733 252067 or Email - mark.swinger@genie.co.uk

## **AND FINALLY ....**

**Mike Wilkinson** – Fule of **Dolphin** sent the following as the fuel crisis [remember!!] bit:

**Cause for concern - Attention Morris dancers everywhere!** In the current climate of protest against prices and taxes, it is only a matter of time before the tabloids and the mob realise that beer is approximately £15 a gallon, and that a large part of the price is duty and tax. As soon as this is realised, it is inevitable that roving bands of truckers and taxi drivers will feel that it is their civil right and civic duty to blockade all of the major breweries, preventing essential supplies from leaving. It will only be a matter of time before the pumps run dry, with queues outside those few pubs with remaining stocks. Mild will probably still be available, but bitter may be pushed up in price to £5 or £10 a pint by unscrupulous landlords. Meanwhile, other truckers will be walking slowly, two abreast, blocking major routes to the pub toilets. In a wave of panic buying, people will be taking milk bottles, watering cans, tea cups and all manner of unsuitable containers to pubs to fill them, taking the beer home and hoarding it in their sheds and garages. The Watneys Party 7 will enjoy a resurgence of popularity, and cans of Fosters will fetch £20 on the black market. Fights will break out outside pubs (as usual). Blair will blame the breweries, the breweries will blame Brown, and Hague will blame Blair. Everyone will think Hague is jumping on the bandwagon (as usual). Perhaps more than most groups in society, Morris dancers will be affected by this crisis, so I urge you all to take these simple precautions:

1. Fill your tankard at every opportunity.
2. Avoid excessive expenditure of energy. Do you really need to do that dance?
3. Remember: jigs are less efficient - conserve resources by dancing in groups!!

## **IN CONCLUSION**

As ever, please remember to keep the News [Gossip and Scandal] flowing in and as usual report any changes of Contact Person, Addresses or Emails.

May I wish you all, once again, the very best for Christmas and the New Year.

The next Newsletter should be produced in January – and that mailing should also include the next edition of The Morris Dancer.

*Wassail*

John Frearson,  
Bagman, The Morris Ring

## The Newsletter - No. 16 – November 2000 - SUMMARY

Ask your Bagman to show you the full Newsletter.

**IN MEMORIAM - Bob Grant**, of **Headington Quarry**, died on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October – a member of the Side for over 30 years and their Archivist. **Geoff Parker**, past squire, foreman and fool of the **Beaux of London City** died in late October. **Sam Taylor**, last of the original **Ripley Side** [also of **Foresters, Dolphin and Derby**] died in early November.

**WORDS FROM THE SQUIRE** – The Squire sends thoughts various and his Christmas greetings and asks you to learn the Massed dances for next year's Meetings.

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS** - **Jigs Instructional** at Sutton Bonnington - **19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001**. **Midlands and North Area - Tour of the Cotswolds** - 16<sup>th</sup> June 2001.

**RING MEETINGS – 2001**. Applications should have been in by 11<sup>th</sup> November

**ARM 2001** – hosted by **Dartington** [30<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001] with the ARM on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001. Details are provided. **Remember - Nominations** for Officers, and Elected Representatives of the Advisory Council, must be sent to the Bagman by the end of December 2000. The three Area Representatives due for election are those for the current East; North-East; and South-East area Reps. Any “**Proposed Alterations to the Constitution**”, or other “**Formal Resolutions for Discussion**” shall also be received by the same date.

**THE MEDIA - St Albans** filming for Talkback and **Gloucestershire** in “Think Of England”.

**INFO NEEDED** – on **Horwich** for their **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** and **Abram Morris** for their **100<sup>th</sup>** – both next year. **Yateley** [also **Isca** and **Harthill**] are starting their **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** years.

**NEWS** – Mention of these events: **Saddleworth** Rushcart; **Yateley's** trip to Germany; **Devil's Dyke's** visit to Southwold; **King's Morris's** Thornham Tour; **Abbott's** Bromley; **Bromyard Folk Festival**; **Yateley's** Day of Dance; **Rutland's** Day of Dance; **Jockey's** Day of Dance; **The Ring** Fieldtown Instructional in Devon; **Bedford's** Day of Dance; **Anker's** Feast; **The Ring** **Fools and Animals'** weekend; **Morris** at the Dome; and a **Greensleeves** trained team of dancers at a Festival in India ... and these Clubs: **Adderbury Village**; **Anker**; **Bathampton**; **Bedford**; **Blackheath**; **Britannia Coconut Dancers**; **Chipping Campden**; **Coton**; **Coventry**; **Dartington**; **Dolphin**; **Earlsdon**; **East Kent**; **East Surrey**; **Forest of Dean**; **Gloucestershire**; **Grand Union**; **Green Man**; **Greensleeves**; **Greenwich**; **Icknield Way**; **Ilmington**; **Isca**; **Jockey**; **Kennet**; **Leicester**; **Leyland**; **Letchworth**; **Lichfield**; **Lord Conyers**; **Manchester**; **Mayflower**; **Mendip**; **Monkseaton**; **Mossley**; **Moulton**; **Northampton**; **North Wood**; **Peterborough**; **Plymouth**; **Ripley**; **Rose and Castle**; **Rutland**; **Shakespeare**; **Spring Grove**; **Oakworth**; **Stafford**; **Stockport**; **Thames Valley**; **Thaxted**; **Utrecht**; **Uttoxeter**; **Wath**; **Winchester** and **Winster**.

**FINALLY** - The **Dolphin** Fule provides information on the imminent **Beer Rationing** crisis.

*.Wassail,*

John Frearson, Bagman, The Morris Ring