



The Newsletter - No. 17 – January 2001

Greetings,

Hopefully all are recovered from Christmas and New Year Festivities and associated seasonal dancing; mumming; wassailing and plough playing etc.

The Treasurer has unfortunately spent the Christmas period in Hospital – the regime means he has shed a useful number of pounds and the legs are improving. He was released for a few hours on Christmas Day to try to undo the good with seasonal fayre. He has now returned home and we wish him a very rapid recovery to his usual robust health. However, to add insult to injury he arrived home to find that he had been burgled and his computer and fax/phone had been stolen. This does mean that Emails, faxes and phone messages may not have been received. If you are expecting anything please ring to check. The “Shop” and the cheque books are all OK.

You should have heard about the Ring Meetings that you are attending – if you are still in doubt – get in touch quickly. There is still space at Thaxted.

Also enclosed with this mailing are:

- A **summary** of this Newsletter – as the last page of the Newsletter.
- Inevitably, more **amendments** to the Directory, collated with this bundle. [An “up to the minute” version of the Directory, Emailed as a Word attachment, is available].
- A **DRAFT Agenda** for the ARM at the end of March [collated with this bundle]. Please communicate any further items to the Ring Bagman without delay.
- Your / your Side’s copy of the **Morris Dancer**.
- For Members of the Advisory Council – Minutes of the November Meeting.

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

E-mailed versions of these Newsletters are available on request [ideally as an attached Word document; please order and specify by Email].

IN MEMORIAM

Ian Hamilton, Squire of **Ravensbourne**, died in November 2000. He was just short of his 75th birthday. He was a founder member of the Side and had been its Squire on three occasions, most recently when he was re-elected for their Golden Jubilee. During the 1950s, he danced for a short while with **Bedford**, when working in the area. He was out with Ravensbourne at Bampton on Whit-Monday evening this year - but playing the tabor-drum - as he was not in dancing condition.

The funeral was at Newington Parish Church on 24th November. Ravensbourne preceded the hearse to church with the Winster Processional, and danced The Rose, Fieldtown outside afterwards. At the crematorium after the curtains closed, all the Morris Men present danced Bonny Green Garters in the aisle – a fitting Morris Man's last goodbye. Our thoughts are with his daughters. [A further note by **Eddie Dunmore** is included in the Morris Dancer.]

Derek Giddings, a founder member of **Blackmoor**, died in late November as a result of a road traffic accident whilst riding his bicycle.

Roy Judge, dancer with the **Ancient Men** and **London Pride**; folklorist and researcher, died - very peacefully - in Guy's Hospital, at 4.40am on the morning of 17th November 2000.

The funeral was held on 30th November at his local church, where he had been Secretary of the PCC. It was a packed church with a service in which all his family participated. His wife Betty had said before the funeral that it “would be lovely to have some dancing in church hall afterwards if that's possible”. Indeed it was a good Side of London Pride and two plus of Ancient Men present, as well as sundry other representatives in kit and without. Indeed it was a who's who of the Morris and folk world, with two Past Squires; two Past Bagmen. The dancing, by some thirty Men, continued for an hour or so, until a final Bonny Green.

An appreciation by his fellow dancer **John Hawkins**, is included in the Morris Dancer. However, an unprecedented number of tributes have been received - it would be churlish not to include them here.

Derek Schofield wrote, “Although a Morris dancer for 40 years (with the Ancient Men and London Pride) he actually came late to Morris dancing, and did not dance whilst an undergraduate at Oxford in the late 40s. And although many knew him as a dancer, it is for other reasons that many of us will remember him. As a researcher and writer, his contribution has been immense, tackling many of the issues in custom and Morris dancing that many people have known about, but few had researched in detail. There was the book on Jack in the Green, carefully - meticulously - researched (and recently reprinted). There was the whole relationship between Sharp and Mary Neal, which carefully restored Mary Neal's rightful position as a founder of the revival. The Lichfield Morris Dances discovered in the 1950s - often thought to be composed by a revivalist - were researched by Roy with some clear conclusions to back up the hunches. D'arcy Ferris. The Plaited Maypole Dance. Helston. May Customs. He was also fascinated by those early days of the folk dance and Morris revival. There was a recurrent theme - to quote the title of a book by Hobsbaum and Ranger -- 'The Invention of Tradition', but also the clear connections between the 'invention' and the tradition that was there in the first place. Roy's research of all of these topics - and others - have had an important influence on the ways in which we have viewed Morris dancing and customs in recent years. They were also researched with sensitivity (Lichfield) and even-handedly (Mary Neal).

“Roy was on the Editorial Board of EFDSS's Folk Music Journal, and a President of the Folklore Society (he danced a jig as part of one of his Presidential addresses). He was awarded the Gold Badge of the EFDSS and the Coot Lake research medal of the Folklore Society.

“More than all this, Roy Judge was a kind and generous man - with not a malicious thought in his head. He saw good in everybody and everything. He was a great encouragement to me, especially with the Kimber CD, and to many others. He was a good friend and he will be very sorely missed.”

John Price, The Ancient Men and St Albans, supporting the latter paragraph, “Yes, that's what I will miss most with his passing. It has been a privilege to know such a man. I've rarely felt such a deep sense of loss at someone's death, even people much closer to me. He will live on in his works and our memories.”

Norman Stanfield of Vancouver [Canada] wrote, “Sad news to accompany the bitter cold of a late-November morning.” “I have collected almost all of his articles and together they make a magnificent commentary on morris, and related customs. His passing will be a great loss to the academic morris community, so I hope and pray that there is/are successors ready to take up his excellent cause - shining the blazing light of reality on morris, as illuminated by the records of the past.”

Keith Leech wrote, “Sad news indeed. Roy was a wonderful man and one of our finest researchers into English Custom. He acted as a kind of mentor to me when I completed his research into the Hastings Jack in the Green. It was a privilege to work with him, he was always willing to help and open with his material and advice. A stickler for evidence and facts to back up any argument, he would never allow idle speculation and he knocked the 'P. word' [*P word---anything referring to pagan origins*] right out of my vocabulary. I am so glad he managed to see the second edition of his book 'The Jack in the Green' in print before he went. He has left us a fine legacy. All those Jacks in the Green 'sprouting up' all over the world are a testimony to that.”

John Forrest [author of “The History of Morris Dancing”] wrote from USA, “Many people who knew Roy Judge have been offering sweet thoughts in his memory over the past day. The Ancient Men have been grieving profoundly because Roy was the founder of so much, and he was one of the strongest pillars of our strange and rambling edifice. Many people have mentioned his meticulous scholarship and his gentle nature. No one could question either. Many people have also said that Roy will live in our memories and in our hearts. That, too, is unquestionable. But he will also live on in our actions. I know that every time that May morning comes round, there is a flurry of activity on MDDL about what dancing at dawn means, where it started etc., and eventually it is (re)discovered that the modern practice began at Oxford University in the post-war years [and was brought to America and subsequently disseminated by Roger Cartwright -- who among many other things is an Ancient Man]. It was Roy's cohort at Oxford who founded the custom (not Roy himself), but it was Roy's undying passion for May morning and Jack in the Green and Maypoles and all things to do with May that kept it alive over the years, as generations of undergraduate dancers came and went. This passion also led Roy into scholarship rather late in life – he was in his fifties when he began postgraduate research -- and you see the thread of May customs running through it all. So while we should, indeed, be grateful to him for the wonderful scholarly treasures he has unearthed, let us also be grateful for his support of and devotion to dancing itself and to May customs.

“I cannot think of dancing on May morning without thinking of Roy, and so I would like to offer a humble suggestion. Perhaps teams that dance at dawn, could in this coming year dedicate their dancing to the memory of Roy. That way he will be remembered in what we do and love the most, and what he loved the most. I am not making this as some grand or formal proposal, only as a thought for you to ponder. Roy would never push himself forward in some grand manner, and I would not do the same in his name. But the sun will never rise on May morning without my thoughts turning to Roy. Go in peace, friend.”

FORTHCOMING EVENT - ARM 2001

The **2001 ARM weekend** will be hosted by **Dartington** [30th March to 1st April 2001] with the **ARM on Saturday 31st March 2001**. **The Booking Form was with the last Newsletter**.

At the deadline date there had been no additional nominations for Bagman [you rotten lot of cowards!!!!], or for the Elected Representatives of the Advisory Council [for the current **East; North-East; and South-East** areas.] Neither were there any “**Proposed Alterations to the Constitution**”, or other “**Formal Resolutions for Discussion**”. This does not preclude other items being placed upon the Agenda for discussion, or raised at the Meeting as AoB items.

The **Draft Agenda is enclosed**. Further items for discussion may be submitted to the Bagman for consideration – or raised as AoB items. An updated Agenda will be submitted by Email prior to the Meeting, and will also be available “on the day”.

As the Treasurer spent a restful Christmas in Hospital, and the masters of the Annual Accounts are on his stolen computer, these were not be edited and audited in time for this mailing. Copies will be circulated by Email and will, of course, be available at the ARM.

If you have not yet booked places for the ARM, **please do so as soon as possible**, so that **Dartington** can provide adequate facilities etc. Dartington remind us that information on the 2001 Ring ARM will be at **www.dartingtonmorrismen.org.uk** .

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - RING MEETINGS – 2001 – UPDATE.

Thanks to the accelerating effect of Emails, Sides were advised of their success, or otherwise, well before Christmas. **Boar's Head** was very popular and unfortunately a number of Sides had to be disappointed. Some have transferred to **Thaxted**, which promises to be a larger meeting this year. There may still be some space if prompt application is made [direct to their Bagman please]. **East Surrey** was also over-subscribed, but the change to an earlier date, although meaning some Sides could no longer attend, did serve to avoid having to turn down any who could make the alternate date. **Greensleeves** was neatly filled to capacity with sufficient “happy campers”.

OTHER EVENTS

LICHFIELD INSTRUCTIONAL – prior to **Lichfield Feast** - 17th February 2001. At the Guildhall, Lichfield, led by Jack Brown. For fuller details see notice on Page 13.

ASCOT INSTRUCTIONAL – W. Midlands and Wales Area – 10th March 2001. This will be held at Corley, Nr. Coventry. First priority to representatives from Sides in the Area, but space should be available for others. Contact **Coventry** [Bagman: **Martin Trewinnar**, **Tel:** 02476 676991; **Email:** martin.trewinnard@coventry.gov.uk.]

COTSWOLD TOUR - Midlands and North Area Day of Dance - 16th June 2001. Visiting Stow-on-the-Wold; Bledington; Lea Field; Bampton; Sherborne; Longborough or Oddington; and Ilmington. This tour is now open to others than the Mids. & N. Area. Details and bookings to **David Thompson** - **Tel:** 01332 770578 **Email:** Thompson_Capers@tesco.net

Scarborough Fayre Morris Dance Festival 2001 – Not a Morris Ring event, but in case of interest. Friday 29th June - Sunday 1st July. £16 per adult; children under 14 free. Tours on Saturday; ceilidh Saturday night; Sunday procession along the sea front, etc. etc.
For information, booking form, provisional programme, contact: **Wendy Bostock**, 5, Westbourne Park, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4AS. Tel/fax: 01723 350078 Email: wbstock@mistral.co.uk

E-MAILS

Many thank to all the Sides that filled in the Email number request [for those were we had no current / working contact number.] We now have 137 out of 167 Full Member Sides [but only about half of our 60 Associate Members] who can be contacted by Email. I particularly enjoyed the **North Curry Mummers'** Email No: "*greenman@fromthegreenwood.com*".

JOINT WORKING PARTY ON THE MORRIS

The three Morris organisations together with EFDSS are working together to establish a strategy for promoting a positive image of the Morris. There have been three meetings, hosted by EFDSS at Cecil Sharp House.

As part of its redevelopment, EFDSS is focusing on its new mission statement "To put English Tradition into the hearts and minds of the people of England". This clearly includes Morris. Working together, the three Morris organisations and their members, with EFDSS, are developing a strategic plan that will help to promote the positive images of the Morris.

The first step is to secure funding for EFDSS to employ someone to work at C# House working to a brief agreed by the three Morris organisations. The Morris Ring representative on this working group is **Daniel Fox**, Immediate Past Squire, who is also an elected member of the National Council of EFDSS.

PUBLICATIONS

Malcolm Taylor, Librarian, EFDSS reports "The current (2nd) edition of **Mike Heaney's** "An Introductory Bibliography on Morris Dancing" is now freely available on the EFDSS Website. Simply key in <http://www.efdss.org> and click the "resources" button to find it."

THE MEDIA

- - **Television:** Past Squire, **Daniel Fox**, recalled that he "gave some advice and help to a TV production company, Turn On Television about Morris dancing for a series they were doing for Channel 4 called Post Modern Pastimes. The programme on the Morris was expected to be broadcast at 04.40hrs on Christmas Morning [Santa's peak viewing time!!]. **Ken Hamilton** advised that the program was about **Oakworth Village** (well, about one of the younger members of the side).

Alan Barber confirms that it was **Mersey** on Jonathan Meade's programme [7th January]. The subject - the Arts and Craft movement and "getting back to a type of bucolic utopia".

- - **Sound:** A track from **Jockey's** CD has been used for the call waiting music for the Perth, [Australia] telephone service. It is also alleged to have been heard in a hotel in Goa [India].

- - **Press:** **Dave Reed** of **Gloucestershire** notes that the Men "... appeared in the November issue of Gloucestershire Today, a new glossy published by the local newspaper." [see News].

East Kent featured in an article in the Folkestone/Hythe Herald under the title "Bring on the dancing boys". Whilst starting in the "traditional" – "Me – go Morris dancing?" - style beloved of the press – it soon changed to a very positive piece from each of the two reporters [yes two – and a photographer!!]. "Linford Christie would be tired after trying this" – they were also "...struck by the amount of alcohol consumed ... during the rehearsal." Well done!

East Kent also submitted an article they were sent from the Georgia Straight [14th December issue] in Vancouver, Canada. It includes an interview with **Vancouver** Squire, **Graham Baldwin**. For once someone actually seems to have listened, and written some sense – perhaps journalists are different over in Canada!! [See also News below].

VALETE

Jon Plackett, Bagman of **Pomfret** writes "The time has come to bow to the inevitable and relinquish our Associate Membership ... if only to prevent other Sides wasting their valuable time sending kind invitations to ales etc. We have so few members that we cannot possibly call ourselves a side although I have not given up hope that in the not too distant future Pomfret can be resurrected."

Hopefully in due course they can – and that any other nearby Sides can offer good homes for the remainder in the meantime.

NEWS

Correction – **King's Morris** note that their walking tour was on 10th September – not July as stated by the Bagman, who had not remained in kit for two months before Abbots Bromley!!!

Dave Reed reports that **Gloucestershire** provided "... a guard of honour at Blockley Church for a couple from New York who wanted a typical English wedding. The photocall [see Media above] was followed by dancing at the reception to entertain the guests before the wedding breakfast. The men of course took advantage of the opportunity to kiss the bride, who works for Calvin Klein. The groom (vice president at ING Barings) was not entirely neglected, as one of the GMM volunteered him a peck on the cheek. All good fun and somewhat more upmarket than our usual appearances!"

[*Note: It was **Dave Reed** who should have been credited for the Adderbury photograph in the last Morris Circular – not the Bagman!!*].

Colditz – the Escape! Famous Castle Survives Third Invasion by Wessex Morris Men. **Wessex** write ... "In 1995 we visited Colditz Castle for the first time when taking part in a dance festival. The following year we were invited back to participate in the celebration of the 950th anniversary of the Castle. That should have been enough for anybody! Incredibly, however, we received an invitation to return once more at the end of September 2000, as part of the tenth anniversary Festival of German Unity and the celebration of the tenth anniversary of Colditz twinning with various towns across Europe." The edited Journal of the third invasion may be included in the next Morris Circular. [A full version is available by Email as a Word document from the Bagman].

Dudley Binding writes that **West Somerset** had one of their periodical trips to the Loire Valley town of Blois in the Loire; and also a trip to Taunton's twin town, Konnislutter [supplemented by **Julian** and **Ray** from **Plymouth**]. They also danced in London, at the Albert Hall, for "Dancefest 2000" presented by the Central Council of Physical Recreation.

Missed from the last Newsletter. Past Squire **David Welti** celebrated his 75th Birthday [and his wife's 60th] with a luncheon party at Shuttleworth House on 15th October. **Bedford** danced as a pre-lunch drinks entertainment for the assembled guests. Also present Past Squire **Mike Garland** and Past Bedford Squire, **Geoff Nicholson** [now **Green Ginger**] who joined in with a final Bampton "Quaker".

S. E. AREA INSTRUCTIONAL - **Mike Austen** – Area Representative writes: - "On 19 November 2000, members of the South East member and associate clubs gathered at Hartley nr. Gravesend in Kent for the annual instructional that is coupled with the Area meeting. The day was kindly hosted by **Wadard** (complete with "training fluids") and **Gloucestershire** provided the instruction. "We started off gently enough by looking at Highland Mary, very laid back, until you consider all the differences from other "normal" traditions that have to be included (left footed, galley/hook etc). Those of us who generally dance with two left feet probably had an easier time than the rest. "From Highland Mary we graduated to the two stick dances, Young Collins and Constant Billy. It was again reasonably gentle with most of us still struggling to come to terms with Galley/Hook and going the correct way to start. "Lunch was a welcome respite down at the local (although the Area meeting, cunningly held at the school in order to keep it short, delayed club reps). A good pint or so of Adnams to was enough to sustain the majority. "Immediately after lunch those that wanted to were put through the odd jig (Princess Royal). Latecomers from the pub managed to avoid this but were then pitched into Trunko without the benefit of having tried the typical corner movements beforehand. "The afternoon climax came with the Old Frog Dance, which would have been great to see from outside the sets. I hope that our Gloucestershire colleagues enjoyed the spectacle of about six sides of men not necessarily used to leapfrog dances (and like myself, not built for them) falling over each other. Wonderful sight! "Grateful thanks must go to Wadard for organising the day and of course to **Simon, Harry** and **Bob Pierce** of Gloucestershire for their dance expertise, not forgetting **Ian** for his musical abilities. A truly excellent instructional at which I personally learned a great deal. Thank you gentlemen."

A note from **Leonard Pepper**, Bagman of **Whitchurch**, on their 50th Anniversary [thus their 51st] Autumn Feast 2000 held on 11th November. "Sadly, our one remaining veteran of the original side, **Charlie Hogston**, was unable to come because of his wife's ill health. The Feast was held in the village hall at Wilstone, as it had been for nearly 30 years. There was an afternoon tour, starting in the gloomy Half Moon in Wilstone, where all the lights had gone out, and calling at the Greyhound in Aldbury, the Grand Junction Arms at Bulbourne, and finally the Queen's Head at Long Marston, where once again the lights failed. There were sides or part-sides from **Etcetera, Grand Union, Leeds, Leicester, Man Friday, Thaxted** and **Uttoxeter** on the coach with the Whitchurch men, all encouraged by Letchworth's Fool, **Roger Comley**. The weather for the tour was atrocious. Brave men danced outside at Aldbury, but good sense prevailed and indoor dancing was the regime for the rest of the afternoon. The party returned to Wilstone, the Whitchurch men wondering if the power cuts of the afternoon had made it possible for the Squire's wife and her team to cook the food for the Feast. There was a reassuring waft of roast meat to welcome them. The Squire of the Morris Ring and **Roger Entwistle** from **Stafford** had arrived as well. Sixty men finally sat down to enjoy prawn cocktail; roast pork and apple pie. **Gerald Willey** proposed the Toast to the immortal Memory, the Whitchurch Bagman welcomed the guests, and Uttoxeter proposed a toast to the Whitchurch men. There were one or two rousing songs to complete the evening and **David Brewster** from Thaxted gave a short example of his virtuoso melodeon playing. Then it was time for more dancing, until some drifted away into the night and other retired to dark corners of the hall to sleep. No-one took up the option of camping outside on the windswept, sodden field. Fifty years ago they might have been hardier!"

A full house of Officers on 18th November at the **Headington Quarry** Ale/Feast, to see Past Squire, **Nibs Matthews** – on the eve of his 80th Birthday, receive a certificate confirming that he had been voted a Full Club Member. **Terry Phipps**, HQMD Bagman danced in on his behalf – “Old Mother Oxford” being the chosen jig. There was a large turnout of HQMD and their guests, and representatives from **Westminster** [including Past Squire **Colin Fleming**]; **Oxford City** and **Oxford University**.

Three events clashed on 25th November – The Squire visited his nominating Side, **Green Man**; the Bagman visited **Wadard**, and the Immediate Past Squire was doubtless at **Thaxted**.

The Squire prevailed upon **Jim Pennells**, Bagman of **Green Man** to provide a brief report. “The guests at the Feast on 25th November were The Squire of the Ring, **Gerald Willey**; **Roger Venables**; and **Eric Taylor** who had danced as a member of the Birmingham Boys before they evolved into Green Man. Other Sides represented were **Coventry**; **Jockey**; **Harthill**; **Stafford**; **Shakespeare**; and **Uttoxeter**. A six course meal included Roast Beef and “Vegetables Green Man” and a trifle “Femmes d’Hommes Vert”. The Squire of Green Man, **Alan Moran**, proposed the Loyal Toast and the Immortal Memory. Eric Taylor gave the speech and toasted the guests and Past Squire **Roy Yarnell** replied on their behalf. The mass dancing later included short Instructionals on Bidford and Lichfield. **David Marr** [Coventry] and **Joe Oldaker** [Anker] performed the double jig “Jockey to the Fair” from Ascot-under-Wychwood.”

The **Wadard** Winter Ale and World Conker Championship was well attended with representatives from: **Benfleet Hoymen**; Frog Island; **Green Oak**; **Hartley**; **Ravensbourne**; **Saddleworth**; and **Wantsum**.

“The event started during the afternoon, in theory with some dancing – but rain stopped play and a few beers were taken, before moving to the Chequers at for the pre-dinner “cocktails” session – a choice of eight fine ales [space does not permit a full assessment!!!]. The culinary delights of the feast helped soaked up a further three ales. It is rumoured that the Trades Description Inspectorate are investigating the “passing off” as “beer from local Kent breweries” of products from Hook Norton [Old Hookey] and Yorkshire [Daleside’s Shrimper, and Saddleworth’s Moor Gold]!!!

“The highlight of the evening was the Conker Championship. After the contestants had been drug tested by the Doctor/Fool of Wadard, the contestants formed up. The Bagman was gratified to make the semi-finals in his first contest for forty years and is going into training in case of an invitation next year. However, he was soundly beaten by **Peter Roberts** [Bagman of Wantsum] who, in his turn, lost in the final to **Danny Betts** of Green Oak, who was duly crowned. The over-night [en-suite] camping and breakfast service was much appreciated.

Thaxted danced for the new Vicar of Thaxted, Fr Raymond Taylor, at his induction on Monday 4th December 2000. Fr Raymond commented: there cannot be many priests who have Morris dancers at their induction. Fr Raymond is looking forward to welcoming the Morris Ring to Thaxted Parish Church on 3rd June.

Vancouver Squire, **Graham Baldwin** reports on two events:

“ ... "Now Christmas is Come" contained a Mumming Play, Molly and rapper dancing (the latter by a local mixed side), as well as VMM's own band providing all the music. The show, the second annual one, was based loosely on the "Wassail!" series of concerts performed a few years ago throughout northern England.

“The annual Festival of Lights in Vancouver, which occurs on the Winter Solstice, 21st December, included VMM singing wassail songs, performing a Mumming play and Welsh Border dances.”

Mendip's Ale was on 15th December. *Chris Avery* writes:

“On what was probably the coldest night of the year so far, until the New Year cold snap that is, just over one hundred Morris Men gathered at Wrington Memorial Hall in North Somerset for the annual Mendip Christmas Ale” “... For many of us it is the start of Christmas, and the communal singing of “The Holly & The Ivy” led by **Bob Cross** of **Chalice** is that starting point. Many other songs were sung, including a rendition of “The Doggy Doggy Do” by **Peter Rose** of **Mendip**, and many other more serious offerings. Each visiting side performed its own show dance ...” [Show dances included an energetic Wheatley “Room for the Cuckolds” from **Bristol**; a two stick “Nuts in May” with a change of set orientation midway from **West Somerset's** own tradition; and Mendip provided a Kirklington “Royal Oak” – JF]. “The high spot for the making of an Ale to remember was the **Bourne River** Men’s Mummers Play” ... [This had a cast of thousands - well, three, but working very hard!! - and assisted, in keeping with the evening’s theme, by two costumed teddy bears that substituted for the dead Turkish Knight and King George, whilst the cast acted elsewhere “... *these two Teddy Bears lie bleeding here ...*”. Over the last twenty years Bourne River and their play have raised some £20,000 for children’s charities. A splendid effort. – JF]. “For the last couple of years attendances have been waning but this year we had our best attendance for a long time with 102 men. Invitations are usually of a humorous nature, but this year we went for the threat of violence! The invitation was in the form of a threatening letter implying violence to a Teddy Bear. The ploy worked and not only was a high attendance achieved, but it has reduced the number of Teddy Bears ears that will have to be posted to non-attenders! Apart from the Squire and Bagman of the Ring, **Bathampton; Bourne River; Bristol; Chalice; Dartington; Exeter;** and **West Somerset** sent sides. Individuals also represented **Lassington Oak; Letchworth** and **Plymouth**. “There were also 30 Mendip Men. One of these guys is just a little bit special. **Dave Robbins** has been confined to a wheelchair all his life. A victim of Spina Bifida (or the Rhondda Rot as he has described it) he saw Mendip dancing in Nailsea in 1978, and has been a supporter of ours ever since. He is lucky to have a converted Ford Escort that has been fully adapted to take a wheelchair and this enables him to get around and follow us far further afield than he was once able. Dave is not just a fair weather friend, either. He puts in regular appearances at our Monday night practice sessions, as well as our AGM every year. Dave has written a piece about himself ...” [Hopefully this, and a photograph, will be in the next Morris Circular - JF].

This year’s annual **Welsh Border** tour met at another new location as the River Severn had again visited the pub!! A coachful of dancers and musicians, including a number of past Ring Officers participated. Breakfast was taken at the Fox at Monkswood [the single house of the Cannon Royal Brewery]. Arrowhead Bitter [3.8%]; Fruiterers Mild and a stronger Heart of Oak replaced breakfast cuppas and accompanied the “full English”. The tour embussed for White Ladies Aston; Pershore; and Upton upon Severn, to dance the villages’ own dances in-situ, as well as a selection of other Border offerings in the original Dave Jones style. Then to Worcester for a final spot and a drink at the Crown [run by **Silurian's** “**Burko**” who accompanied the tour with his gleaming Tuba], before returning for supper at the Fox.

Dartington Squire, **Ken Hudson**, writes [on their Website] on the wedding of one of their Men, **Bryan Marks**. “The numbers who travelled to Lawrence Castle, some two miles from the peak of Haldon Hill, near Exeter on 23rd December, were suitable testimony to the esteem in which we all hold Bryan and his new wife Vikki! ... the mass exodus of DMM into the outside gloom to form the longest 'guard of honour' I have ever seen at such an event, the traditional dancing of 'Getting Upstairs', 'Highland Mary' (Cajun version), and Vikki's unexpected (for her) involvement in 'The Rose Tree' (during which she was able to display her green Dublin garter to the invited guests!), there were some magic moments that we will all remember for some time. As we climbed the 164 (...well not quite that many!) steps to the next floor for refreshments, ... there were more items for all to savour, including a great song from **Ziggy**; the 'Princess Royal' jig from **Matthew Culf** and a miscellany of musical items from that well-known duo **Nigel** and **Les**. About 6:30pm, as the official proceedings drew to a close, we gradually melted into the mist, quite literally, and it is still not quite clear whether everyone found their car, or even travelled home in the one in which they had arrived!?”

Ripley are celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the sides reformation this year at their Ale Feast on 27th January. **Mick Brittain** reports on their annual odyssey, which raises an astounding amount for charity.

“Ripley performed their Guisers play on the four Fridays in December, leading up to Xmas, performing in over 60 pubs and clubs in Selston, Somercotes, Ripley and Heage, collecting a total of £1,540 for Ripley Hospital League of Friends. The play was originally collected in 1983 by **Keith Giddens**, from **Percy Cooke** of Hammersmith, Ripley, who was born in 1892 and remembered performing the play last in 1904, when he was twelve. Ripley have continued the Guising tradition ever since. However, this is a living tradition and although the basic play remains unchanged, it can change from week to week depending on which characters turn up and how much Ale we've had on the way round. By cutting the play down to the bare bones we can be in and out of a pub in 10 minutes, leaving the audience entertained and gratified by the opportunity of donating £30 - £40 to their local hospital, which, as we often point out, could be “a wise investment”.

“The highlights of the play include the quest for a nurse from the audience to revive the Turkish Knight (usually one or two per Knight), **Jack**'s topical references to current affairs, which this year included the American election and Euthanasia being legalised in the Netherlands, and what that night's Doctor has got in his “Nick Nack” bottle (which ranges from Potcheen to Pernod and blackcurrant spring water). **Gilbert Butler**'s School Mistress complete with parasol and full length lace gloves [one year when it was snowing as we went round Selston this had to be seen to be believed!!]. **Jack Daw**'s range of wigs is legendary, and **Graham Clarke**'s “electric” Beelzebub comes complete with batteries. In fact most of Graham's costumes do. To be truthful there are too many stunning performances and costumes to mention all by name.

“This year after disrupting the pensioner's Bingo at Leabrooks Club, we were invited to perform the play in t'other room where a 50's Rock and Roll night was in full swing. Also **Geoff Sims**, alias Turkish Knight, was snogged by a large dog in “The Nelson” then had to be propped up for his next performance in “The Canal” where a real nurse was found to revive him.

“Guising is hard work but bloody good fun and we have the satisfaction of raising money for our favourite local charity.” Very well done Ripley.

BOXING DAY

Paul Woods advises that **Bristol** were out on Boxing Day as the Keynsham [you remember K-E-Y-N-S-H-A-M] Mummers. For anyone interested, snaps of some of the performances of this year's Mummers' Play are available on: <http://info.bris.ac.uk/~lipw/morris/km2000.htm>.

Stafford were out on Boxing Day for their 2100th event and **Keith Walter**, Squire of **Datchet** advises they were also out dancing and collecting for the local Air Ambulance.

Dartington's Website indicates that they were at the Steam Packet, Totnes, on Boxing Day. Squire, **Ken Hudson**, writes “With limited numbers braving the almost Arctic conditions (albeit amazingly dry!), the show eventually 'got on the road' at around 12:40pm with an encouraging number in the audience to make it all worthwhile. The shortened Morris display (with the musicians' fingers particularly in mind!) gave way to a short interval, before the audience bravely returned to witness yet another performance of the Dartington Mummers Play. ... The players once again gave their all (and often a little too much in certain cases!), and after a brief photo call, it was back inside at great speed to warm up, and to enjoy the hospitality of the new landlord with savoury snacks and bowls of chips. The ever-increasing musical line-up was already in full flow, and ... the warmth of the atmosphere soon revived those parts which some of us were not sure we still possessed!”

Sandy Glover of **St Albans** writes that “The St Alban's Mummers got lucky on Boxing Day. The weather was dry, for a wonder, but raw, with a considerable wind chill factor (or a negative Comfort Factor, as it seems we will have to learn to call it). We had substantial crowds, not our biggest ever, but pretty good, and quite receptive. Lots of old friends, and several rather bemused newcomers but everyone seemed to enjoy the performances. ... Excellent late lunch courtesy of the Verulam Arms.”

Bedford were out on Boxing Day dancing Border Morris [and Lichfield – well it's near compared to Bedford!!] on Bedford Embankment and singing the Boar's Head carol for the ceremonials in the Swan Hotel [to the surprise of the unsuspecting new management!!]

WASSAILING AND PLOUGH - WEEKEND – MONDAY – etc

Steve Tunnicliffe [nominally **Rutland**] reports on the **Hinkley Plough Bullockers** 15th Annual Plough Tour, which visited Sharnford; Sapcote and various spots in Stoney Stanton .. “It usually clashes with Whittlesey Straw Bear but not this year For those who think traditional Molly is confined to the Fens it is well worth a day out to see the reconstructed Leicestershire version based on documentary evidence. Nice village settings, quite small but appreciative audiences (I understand there were more later in the day), excellent mulled wine and mince pies at Bob the Builder's, and all done in the right spirit of maintaining a tradition for its own sake without making a big production number out of it and by a gang who come together specifically for the purpose, not as a winter version of the Somewhere Morris. PS There are some photos from the past few years on: http://homepages.go.com/~phil_the/bullockers/Bullockers.html”

The *Squire* was down in Somerset on 5th January doing a bit of wassailing and **Dartington** were out on the evening of 6th January at the Bishop John Degrandisson pub, Bishopsteignton. A Wassail took place in the nearby newly planted Community Orchard at with dancing afterwards, and the usual apres-Morris, with free beer for participants.

Stafford's 44th Feast [6th January] and again a splendid blend of formality and informal entertainment. Guests included the Ring Squire and Bagman; Past Squires, *Mike Chandler*, *Roy Yarnell* and *Daniel Fox*; Reps, *John Davis* and *Dudley Binding* and sides - or representatives - from **Green Man**; **Jockey**; **Chapel-en-le-Frith**; **Coventry**; **First Sedgeley**; **Uttoxeter** and **Woodside**. The meal comprised home made vegetable soup, spiced pork stew, luscious puds, cheese and coffee. The Port circulated in the Loving Cup and toasts and speeches were made. Stafford's junior member, *Maxwell Haynes*, [aged nine years – ish] gained his “silver knots” [being apparently too young for adult membership and his gold knots!!] and later danced in with a fine “Shepherd's Hey”. Stafford's newest recruit, *John Coleman*, was also presented with his [gold] “knots”; he has a long Morris pedigree having danced with **Woodside** [as did his grandfather; his father was with **Mayflower**]; the Squire of Woodside then handed Stafford a copy of their own dances, so that these could be passed into their own repertoire with their new dancer; he danced in later with a spirited “Princess Royal”.

John Edwards took over as Squire [from *Roger Entwistle*] having driven the Hobby Horse for 25 years. Songs followed [*Daniel Fox* was “Pleasant and Delightful”; *John Coleman* sang “The Ironmonger's Lament”; First Sedgeley provided the turkey leftovers for the 12 Days of Christmas; after *Dudley Binding* “Cut down a young sailor in his prime”, *Peter Morgan* for the hosts sang “The Moberley May Song”. During the evening various spots included offerings from Coventry [a song from *Pete Grassby* and also an Ascott Double Jig]. A double fighting Stave Jig and a fiddle and viol duet from the hosts followed with various other show spots. The finale was a multitudinous “Saturday Night”, which meant the event over-ran somewhat !!!”

Plough Monday and **Cambridge** were in Molly mode [mainly for schools audiences] during at Comberton; Girton and Histon. Later they danced Cotswold to accompany the Balsham Ploughmen's tour of that village – and imbibe a goodly quantity of good cheer. That evening, **Bedford** “... blacked up to visit six pubs in the town, performing the Branston [Leicestershire] Plough Play in four and dancing additionally in the High Street “Wetherspoons” to great acclaim – the play being barred as it was “not a music pub”. Their guests – the singers and musicians from **Aldbury** [with their splendid “Apres Morris” CD - not a Morris tune on it!! – but highly recommended]. In the “crowd” *Ray Fuller* of **East Surrey** [and his mum]; and *Clive Harman* of **Ravensbourne** [and his wife]. Raucous Border dances in The George and Dragon under the inscription “No noise; No strife; Nor swear at all. But all be decent in this hall” - A splendid night out with a grand finale in the Wellington Arms – the best real ale pub in town.”

AND FINALLY

Not wanting to upset anyone – but I could not help noting a reply to a query on suitable gloves etc for Morris Musicians in the cold winter months. Amongst the recommendations for various finger-less mittens etc. was this from **Lester Bailey**, Bagman & Foreman of **Grand Union** “I recommend boxing gloves for pipe and tabor players!”. Comments to him please – not the Bagman. In the same discussion **David Barnert** [from Pokingbrook Morris, Albany, N.Y. USA] gave his “**first law**” of playing music for Morris: ... “**If the dancers are comfortable, the musician is cold.**” In giving his permission for this to be quoted, David kindly offered his other “*laws*”, and these may bring a wry smile to musicians [and to some of us lesser mortals].

Barnert's Laws of Morris Musicianship:

- 1) If the dancers are comfortable, the musician is cold.
- 2) The dancers will tell you what to do.
- 3) If it sounds lyrical, you're playing it wrong.
- 4) Keep the dancers in the air until you are ready to play your next downbeat.
- 5) The morris musician should be able to transpose printed music on the fly from any key into the key of G major.
- 6) Try to keep your fingers clean at pub stops.
- 7) If you're playing the pipe & tabor and the dancers insist upon dropping their hats at your feet, you might or you might not allow drool to fall from your instrument onto them. Either choice should be deliberate.
- 8) It is rarely in the best interest of the dance to have more than one musician playing at a time. (Corollary: U-No-Hoo counts as three.)
- 9) Don't play it the way it's written.
- 10) Don't play it the same way twice for the same audience.

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. Thanks to all those who responded to the appeal to provide Email contact numbers.

The next Newsletter should be produced in March, in time for the ARM. That mailing should also include the next edition of the Morris Circular – we hope to have three issues this year, and cut down on some of the longer articles in the Newsletter.

The Directory will also be issued for the ARM, to save postage [as we do not have any elections] – please ensure that all your Side's current details in the Directory [or the Amendments] are correct.

Wassail

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring

STOP PRESS

STOP PRESS

THE LICHFIELD DANCES

The **Morris Ring** is proud to announce the publication of:-

“THE WRAGGLE TAGGLE GYPSIES”

The story and notations of the Lichfield Dances

by *Jack Brown*.

Jack Brown was there when the original manuscripts arrived and was given the job of working the dances out. This A5 Book contains 80 pages of history, instructions with diagrams for dancing the dances, 8 pictures, music notation of the tunes, and for the first time ever, copies of the manuscripts themselves.

The book costs £5.00 plus £2.25 postage and packing. If you wish to order a copy, send your payment to the Midlands and North Area Representative, *David Thompson* at 13, Larks Close, Littleover, DERBY DE23 7TE. If you require more details, contact him direct at Tel: 01332 770578, or e-mail at thompson_capers@tesco.net. In due course it will be available from Steve Adamson's Morris Ring shop [no P&P].

Publication date - Saturday 17th February 2001 - is the date of the annual **Lichfield** Feast – when it will also be on sale.

LICHFIELD INSTRUCTIONAL

To celebrate the publication, there will be an instructional at the Guildhall, Lichfield, led by Jack Brown, from 2 - 4pm, on 17th February. The cost will be a nominal £2.00.

Some basic knowledge of the Traditional will be assumed. Priority will be given to attendees at the Lichfield Feast. There may be some space at the Feast for those attending the Instructional only and not currently “booked in”.

All those wishing to join the Instructional, should contact the Lichfield Bagman, *Peter Cole*, **Tel:** 01543 252758; **Email:** Peter.Cole@University-b.wmids.nhs.uk as soon as possible.

The Newsletter - No. 17 – January 2001 - SUMMARY

IN MEMORIAM - *Ian Hamilton*, founder member and three times Squire of **Ravensbourne**, died in November - just short of his 75th birthday. *Derek Giddings*, a founder member of **Blackmoor**, died in late November as a result of a road traffic accident whilst riding his bicycle. *Roy Judge*, dancer with the **Ancient Men** and **London Pride**; folklorist and researcher, died on 17th November 2000.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - **ARM 2001** hosted by **Dartington** with the **ARM** on Saturday 31st March. **RING MEETINGS 2001** – All very popular – but still space at **Thaxted**. **AREA EVENTS** - **LICHFIELD INSTRUCTIONAL** – 17th February, led by Jack Brown. **ASCOTT INSTRUCTIONAL** – 10th March at Corley, nr. Coventry. **COTSWOLD TOUR** - 16th June.

PUBLICATIONS - Mike Heaney's "An Introductory Bibliography on Morris Dancing" on the Web.

THE MEDIA – *Television*: One of the younger members of **Oakworth Village** on Channel 4's "Post Modern Pastimes". **Mersey** on the Jonathan Meades Show. *Press*: **Gloucestershire**; **East Kent** and **Vancouver** all featured in the press.

JOINT WORKING PARTY ON THE MORRIS - The three Morris organisations, together with EFDSS, are working together to establish a strategy for promoting a positive image of the Morris.

NEWS: **Pomfret** call it a day. **Wessex** invade Colditz. **West Somerset** visit Blois and Konnislutter, and dance at the Albert Hall. **Bedford** Dance for *David Welte*'s 75th. **Whitchurch** 50th Anniversary and 51st Feast. **Headington Quarry**'s Ale/Feast - Past Squire, *Nibs Matthews* [on the eve of his 80th Birthday], receives certificate of Full Club Membership. **Green Man**'s Feast. The **Wadard** Winter Ale and World Conker Championship. **Thaxted** dance for the induction of the new Vicar. **Mendip**'s Ale – mumming and teddy bears. **Ripley** go Mumming. A **Dartington** wedding. The **Welsh Border** tour. **Bristol** [the Keynsham Mummers]; **Bedford**; **Dartington** and **St Albans** mummers were all out on Boxing Day. The **Hinkley Plough Bullockers** 15th Annual Plough Tour. **Stafford**'s 44th Feast. **Cambridge** and **Bedford** on Plough Monday. Also mentioned: **Aldbury**; **Bathampton**; **Benfleet** **Hoymen**; **Boar's Head**; **Bourne River**; **Bristol**; **Chalice**; **Chapel-en-le-Frith**; **Claro Sword**; **Coventry**; **Dartington**; **East Surrey**; **Etcetera**; **Exeter**; **First Sedgely**; **Grand Union**; **Green Ginger**; **Green Man**; **Green Oak**; **Greensleeves**; **Harthill**; **Hartley**; **Jockey**; **Lassington Oak**; **Leeds**; **Leicester**; **Letchworth**; **Man Friday**; **Oxford City**; **Oxford University**; **Plymouth**; **Ravensbourne**; **Saddleworth**; **Shakespeare**; **Stafford**; **Thaxted**; **Uttoxeter**; **Wadard**; **Wantsum**; **Westminster**; **West Somerset** and **Woodside**.

Jack Brown's book "The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies" - The story and notations of the Lichfield Dances, will be published by The Morris Ring, on 17th February 2001. Make sure you order a copy – or attend the Instructional that afternoon in Lichfield.

AND FINALLY ... David Barnert [from New York, USA] gives his law's of playing music for Morris: ...the first ... *"If the dancers are comfortable, the musician is cold."*

Ask your Bagman to show you / provide a copy of the full Newsletter.

.Wassail,

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring