



## **The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 2 – May 1998**

*Greetings,*

This second Newsletter of the 1998 season, should accompany the Spring Edition of the Morris Circular. We were nearly caught out by the printer, who produced it ahead of schedule. Thanks to Eddie Dunmore for allowing it to clutter up his front room for a couple of weeks, and then volunteering his tongue to lick stamps and organise the posting!

It includes a further crop of odds and ends, as well as various musings from the Bagman.

Enclosed are two further pages of amendments to the Directory.

Also enclosed with this mailing, and of major importance, are notes providing guidance on News and Press Releases [see details below] and dealing with the Media. The Ring Publicity Officer, Adrian Wedgewood, has provided these.

### **A REMINDER TO READERS – ESPECIALLY BAGMEN!!!**

Unless you pass on the content of this Newsletter to the Men in your Side, the information stops with you. Pass it around - copy it – read it out – précis it – whatever .... but let the Men know that the Ring does try to communicate to you and hence to them all. Then let's have any feedback – either items for this Newsletter – or items and articles for the Circular or the Morris Dancer [which should be sent to Eddie Dunmore].

In the past there has been a précis, for you to copy to your Side – is there still a demand for this to be done? I have this month included a brief summary of the content as Page 8 of this Newsletter. Hopefully you can save me this extra editing and copying, and communicate the whole Newsletter to your Side. Leave this Newsletter around for them to peruse – it is not confidential to Bagmen!!!

## RING, AND OTHER, MEETING UPDATES

The **Richmondshire** Meeting will be happening as this Newsletter goes out. My apologies that prior commitments as the Incoming President of a school old-boys association will prevent my attendance. However, the Squire Elect should be on hand. My best wishes for a great meeting and fair weather. I expect to be available for the other Ring Meetings this year.

The **Thaxted** Meeting has expanded since the last Newsletter and now has four tours – I look forward to attending my first Ring Meeting as your Bagman.

The **Shakespeare/Chipping Campden** Meeting has expanded to be effectively three Ring Meetings in one – with three separate Mass shows. How the Squire is going to MC all three shows is not yet known – but being a well travelled and versatile chap he will no doubt cope!!.

The **Exeter** Meeting has also been well supported – and is laying on an extra tour.

**“Sword Spectacular”**. This event is on the Spring Bank Holiday, 21 – 25 May 1998 at Whitby. Details from Vince Rutland at **Sallyport** [or Rutland@ontxnet.co.uk].

**Buxton Festival Weekend of Dance**: 17 - 19 July 1998. There is still space for a Side or two at this event. Contact **Derby Morris Men** – either Tony Lloyd [Email: lloydrrh@enterprise.net] or Peter Cave [0115 9323902 or Email: dmm@writers-inc.ndirect.co.uk].

**Ring Jigs Instructional**. 22 - 24 January 1999. Sutton Bonnington, Nottinghamshire. (Hosts Dolphin Morris Men). Further information later this year.

## FUTURE EVENTS – PUBLICITY - DESIGN A LOGO

As mentioned in March, we hope to use the Boxing Day 1999 - Centenary of Cecil Sharp's first experience of the Morris at Headington - and the Millennium Year, as the basis for some national publicity for the Morris. It would be helpful to have a common theme and a logo available for use [if you wish] on programmes for appearances over the period.

Why not try your hand [or your Sides' hand] at a design for a logo. Send suggestions to the Bagman. The best design [which may not be that finally used of course] will win a “gallon of beer voucher” [if they can prize it out from under the Treasurer!!]

## PUBLICITY - ETC

Enclosed with this mailing are notes on Press Releases and dealing with the Media. The Ring Publicity Officer - our “Media Man” - Adrian Wedgewood has provided these. They are a summary of the material that featured in a Ring Media Instructional. At the last ARM, **East Surrey Morris Men** requested that this should be more widely available – hey presto!! Thank you Adrian for organising and drafting [and re-drafting!!] the “pseudo-press release”.

The last three double pages should fold to form an A5 booklet – if the printing has worked!!

If you are likely to be interviewed – think positive: **Morris is fun and good for us all**. Take time to put your thoughts together – have lists of positive points to hand ready for the media. If necessary arrange to “ring back” the reporter – but do ensure that they are then rung back!!

The Squire is drafting position papers to help us comment on some key issues. These will then be Media-ised by Adrian Wedgewood and issued for guidance with a future Newsletter. Key issues to be dealt with included: Women in Morris; Drinking in the street; Blacking up; Origins of the Morris [Note: there is a sensitivity about “Paganism” as an origin of Morris – defining it as an “Ancient Ritual” is less sensitive to some!!] and the more positive “Morris is Fun”.

Some of the tips included in the enclosed notes, and provided on other occasions by Adrian, have already proved invaluable. Read them and make sure those in the Side who may have contact with the Media read them too.

I had the doubtful “pleasure” of being interviewed twice within the week at **Bedford Morris** events: first by the local radio’s mobile radio transmitting station and then for Anglia Television on May Morning. Hopefully Adrian will be able to extend his notes on “Press Releases” to tips for being interviewed. I made far too many errors – I did not stand still when talking – and kept going out of focus [and that was before I’d had a drink!!]. Fortunately **Letchworth Morris**’s Bagman, Alan Creamer, kept rooted to the spot [he said it was fear!!] and finally featured to tell us that “we all had a bit of the showman in us” – or was it “show-off” in us!! – whilst Bedford danced the fifth retake of a snippet of Brackley, that the camera had missed earlier.

I hear from **Dartington Morris** that BBC South West ignored them, as they were too far away from the BBC base in Plymouth. The Beeb went round the corner and filmed **Plymouth Morris** instead. However, West Country TV (ITV) were more sympathetic and sent a reporter and cameraman up onto the edge of southern Dartmoor where Dartington had an excellent turnout, saw a brilliant sunrise and had a great breakfast at one of their best pubs, the Church House Inn at Holne. The reporter's (Seth Conway) father had previously been with **Taunton Dean Morris** and is now with the Minehead 'Oss. So he was sympathetic and produced three different reports that appeared variously on five different news programmes during the day. Well done Dartington.

I understand that Mike Garland and **East Suffolk Morris** featured on BBC. Morris had some useful positive coverage.

## JOINT MEETING OF MORRIS ORGANISATIONS

Whilst some may not be entirely in sympathy with the other Morris Organisations, they are a very significant fact of life, and we hold an annual joint meeting to discuss matters of common interest. The April meeting provided some constructive discussion. Some of the items of more general interest are summarised below.

**EFDSS:** We should be working more closely with the EFDSS and hope to have a joint meeting with the new Chief Executive after he is appointed in June. Items for discussion could include: working together; how can the Morris organisations use the resource for hosting events; recruitment of younger members; archives and storage; grant aid and funding; the Sharp 1999 Centenary.

**General image:** Items covered: Morris needed a more positive image. Good news stories are needed. Increasing the popularity of Morris. Publicity should ensure Morris was seen; looked fun, and raises the profile. Make Morris available. Be positive. It was estimated that 14 – 15,000 people dance Morris in UK. What about a Morris equivalent of River Dance?

**Survey on younger members:** There is often a call for details of Teams with younger members [see item below].

**The Internet:** Adrian Wedgewood noted that the British Tourist Authority had a “Visit Britain” web site. This could probably be used by the Morris organisations to signpost their own sites at a modest cost.

## THE DIRECTORY

Amendments are listed on a separate sheet. Please remember to communicate any changes of Bagman [or any other changes] to me, and also copy this to your Area Representative. [This should ideally be on the form provided from time to time – generally in the late Summer Newsletter – and from next year, as a copyable page in the Directory itself – another useful suggestion that was made at the ARM].

## THE CONSTITUTION

As mentioned in the March Newsletter, we are hoping to clarify some aspects of the Constitution. If your Side has any thoughts, concerns ... or just wondered why things are done the way they are, please communicate these to the Bagman. The Advisory Council will consider proposals in November. These will be prepared for debate and vote, if appropriate, at the next ARM. Please note this will not prevent the separate proposal of any motions in the normal way.

## ARCHIVE FILM ETC

The next **Archive Workshop, 7 March 1999**, will be looking at preservation of modern media - film, photographs, audio and videotape. We will want to show some of this material. If anyone has possible items for the display of Archival material, it is not too soon to start looking it out – and letting me know what you have for our delectation. As the **ARM** is also on that weekend, **5 - 7 March 1999**, there is a chance for a much wider audience for this material.

## YOUNGER MEMBERS

From time to time the various Morris organisations receive enquiries from TV children's programmes etc. for contact details for junior Sides. It would be useful to have a list of Sides to whom we could pass on such enquiries – some Sides will otherwise scoop the lot – or we will miss out because we are not aware of a local Side that might be available.

Could any Sides with boys' sides – or significant numbers of younger members - please provide details to the Bagman. Any listing would not be available for general circulation and any enquiries would be referred through a Club contact in the first instance.

## NEWER DANCES

There has been a proposal that newer dances should be recorded [and possibly published]. Whilst no Side can dance even the existing "Black Book" repertoire - and lets face it some dances are pretty un-danceable anyway!! - some of the developments do last and get into the repertoire - dances such as Bledington "Black Joker" and "Skirmish" spring to mind.

Some listing of those that have been used for some reasonable time and actually are danceable, would be useful. There have already been suggestions that a further Black Book is produced in discussions in the USA on the Internet. It would be sensible to do it over here. Who is going to pursue this task. Are there any volunteers?

## AN APOLOGY

In the London area item in the ARM minutes reference was made to the late John Plaister. It has been pointed out that this should have been the late John Glaister. My apologies for this error.

## INDEX TO THE MORRIS DANCER

Former Ring Bagman, John Wells, wrote to remind us that there is as yet no Index to Volume 2 of The Morris Dancer. Indexing is a time consuming business and Eddie Dunmore has his hands very full producing the current editions. If anyone has the time to compile an index – preferably straight into a word-processed format, then please make yourself known to Eddie, who will outline the technical requirements.

## NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

Deadlines for any information to be included in the Newsletter mailings will hopefully be the end of the month prior to the issue. Last minute items will be at my discretion – and dependent on space. Issue dates and typical "business" matters are as follows:

<b>Approx. Issue Date</b>	<b>Including</b>
Mid July	Initial information on next year's Ring meetings.
Mid September	ARM Prelim Agenda; Call for Nominations etc. Change of address form; fuller details/booking for Ring Meetings.
Mid November	Christmas greetings; Booking form for ARM; confirmation of Ring Meeting Bookings.
Mid January	Final Agenda and details for ARM.
Mid March	The Directory [if not collected at ARM]; ARM Minutes.
Mid May	ARM Minutes, if not available in March!!

## E MAIL

So far about 40 Sides have communicated their Email "Postman" – and some contacts are being picked up from their various web-sites. **West Somerset Morris** provided three contacts – Dudley Binding is working on the principle that one of them might get through to him!!!

Hopefully by now some of you will have received my interim E-mail May greetings even though we have not yet gone live on an interim News summaries.

Much as I have disliked the thought of modern technology for the Morris communications, it is an easy way to circulate those with the facilities – and could keep the subscription levels stable as it becomes a more used media. For those without, never fear, normal friendly paper will continue to drop through your letterboxes.

**Note: If anyone does not want their Email numbers etc. published in the next edition of the Directory, please let me know.**

## THELWELL MORRIS MEN "MEMBERS REUNION"

**Thelwell Morris Men** are trying to track down old members for a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Day of Dance on 18 July. If you are in contact with any old Thelwallians – posing as a harmless member of your Side - please tell them to get in touch with James Berry – Tel: 01925-601826. I have not been informed if there is any reward for exposing them – negotiate with James!!!

## PROGRAMMES

I am always pleased to receive a couple of copies of your programmes. Thank you to those who have already sent theirs. They are very useful to have on your file – yes, I have a file for each club – some are notably empty, which may or may not be a good thing!! Programmes help with enquiries and contacts [although most of these will be passed on to you!!].

Programmes will also eventually reach the Archive and provide an additional record of your Side. Hopefully, they may also help me plan my customer visits – so I am "coincidentally" on your patch when you are dancing!!

## OUT AND ABOUT

I was able to drop in on a **Bristol Morris** practice night in early April – they were brushing up technique ready for a trip to France. It was a chance to watch – and dance – some less usual [to me] dances. One non-Black Book "Bledington" dance was committed to memory for instruction [when the Men are inebriated] back in Bedford!! They told me "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" – and they had stolen it anyway!! [Please see comment on "new" dances above].

**Offley Morris** transferred their Ale to a pub down the road. Undeterred, the die-hards arrived to dance outside on a freezing [well it seemed like it] night. We then adjourned to the warmth to quaff, eat, sing and play until Midnight gone. The **Ripley Morris** "Cabaret Team" still had the energy to steal the show, despite the drive down and the dancing.

**Gloucestershire Morris** showed outstanding tolerance when I dropped in on their final practice. Their Bledington Trunkles third corner could also be a candidate for a book of variations; they let me into the secret about halfway through the dance, when collisions looked like decimating their side!! Afterwards the pub music session, revealed that all those present played or sang. They played to the original captive audience – a caged parrot!! I was allowed to play a triangle and, after buying a round, was promoted to a [very] small pottery drum!!

**Cambridge Morris** was also subjected to dance “variations” when, as an Honorary member, I joined their Spring Tour. The dancing seemed to improve once I had been handed the sword and cake to feed the crowds around Ely and its Cathedral. An excellent day.

The weather was less clement [indeed it was perishing!] for the evening of May Day for **Devil's Dyke Morris** and guests, **Cambridge Morris** and **Letchworth Morris**. A mercifully short programme was followed by excellent music in the pub and doorstep sandwiches.

Fortunately, my Bagman duties [and sorting out Rugby's cement problems] still leaves time to dance with **Bedford Morris**, who tolerate my tales of Morris variations elsewhere!! Dancing on three of the first four days of May [sixteen shows] has left me ready for some more restful Morris-watching around the country!!

## IN CONCLUSION

Many thanks to all those who have communicated since the first Newsletter. Yes, I made a few mistakes. Did you spot the best one? - the spelling error in the Treasurer's address!! I suggested he paid for a re-print - but he declined!! - and said he'd let me off this first time!

Keep communicating. This Newsletter can include **your** announcements and information, as well as my “fill the page” waffle. It gets to every Bagman [and after all it's Bagman who run Sides!] – and – with luck, they may even pass on some of your news to their Men!!

Wassail,

John Frearson.  
Bagman

## **The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 2 – May 1998 - SUMMARY**

The second 1998 Newsletter accompanies the Spring “Morris Circular”. It also includes valuable guidance on Press Releases and dealing with the Media, provided by the Ring Publicity Officer.

Hopefully this summary will encourage you to ask your Bagman to see the full Newsletter.

This years Ring meetings are at **Richmondshire** [in progress as we post this]; **Thaxted; Shakespeare/Chipping Campden** [expanded to be effectively three Ring Meetings in one – with three separate Mass shows]; and **Exeter** [also well supported – and laying on an extra tour].

The next **Ring Jigs Instructional** will be on **22 - 24 January 1999**. [Hosts Dolphin Morris Men].

**DESIGN A LOGO** - We hope to use Boxing Day 1999 [The Centenary of Cecil Sharp's first view of the Morris at Headington] - and the Millennium Year, as the basis for some national publicity. The best logo design for programmes etc. will win a “gallon of beer”. Details from your Bagman.

**JOINT MEETING OF MORRIS ORGANISATIONS** - Whilst there are differing views on the other Morris Organisations, they are a fact of life, and we hold an annual joint meeting to discuss matters of common interest. The April meeting provided constructive discussion on the EFDSS; the general image of the Morris; younger members; publicity; and “the Internet”.

**THE CONSTITUTION** - We are hoping to clarify some aspects. If you wondered why things are done the way they are, please send comments or concerns via your Bagman.

**ARCHIVES** - The next **Archive Workshop** is on **7 March 1999** at Bedford [the Sunday following the ARM] and will look at preservation of modern media - film, photographs, audio and videotape.

**NEWER DANCES** - We need a volunteer to start a compilation of “new” Morris dances – for a “Black Book” of new and developed dances. Who will become a latter day Sharp?

**THE MORRIS DANCER** - We also need a volunteer to produce an index to the Second volume of the “Morris Dancer”.

**E-MAIL** - So far about 40 Sides are in communication by E-mail “Postman” – if this trend continues it could speed communications and help reduce postage costs in the future.

If anyone was once a **THELWELL** Man, they have a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reunion in July.

**OUT AND ABOUT** - I have been out and about – a record of my Morris rambles is included in the Newsletter. Hopefully, I will have the chance to meet more of you at Ring Meetings and at some of your own events as the year progresses. I will not attempt to emulate the travels of our Squire, Tim Sercombe, who will go down in Ring history as the most travelled Ring Official ever!!

Keep communicating. The Newsletter can include **your** announcements and information. It gets to every Side and is a useful way to tell others your news. Remember also, that we need news and articles for the “Morris Circular” and the “Morris Dancer”.

**Wassail,** John Frearson – Bagman, The Morris Ring