



The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 3 – July 1998

Greetings,

This third Newsletter of the 1998 season includes the calling notice for the ARM; the call for nominations for the post of Bagman; the call for ARM resolutions and various other reminders.

A brief summary of the contents is again included. You can copy this to your Side, or leave this full copy around for them to peruse. "Copy Shop" owners can copy the full Newsletter!!

Also enclosed with this mailing are:

A page of amendments to the Directory.

An application form for the Jigs Instructional.

A form to update us on changes to your Bagman and other activities.

Information on the Morris Ring Treasurer's "Sponsored Slim".

For Members of the Ring Advisory Council – the Minutes of the last Meeting and the Outline Agenda and details for the Meeting in November.

NOTE: The next Newsletter [mid September] will include the demand for your **Annual Subscriptions**. For your *rapid payment discount rate* [Full £35 – Associate £25], cheques will be required by 1st October. To avoid short notice, if the Newsletter is a couple of days late, get your Cheque Books warmed up ready – you do not have to await the demand to send your Annual Subscriptions to the Treasurer !!!!! **NO PAYMENT MEANS NO INSURANCE.**

Remember: 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 communicate to you and hence to them all!!

ARM – 1999 BEDFORD. 5 – 7 MARCH 1999.

The 1999 Annual Representatives Meeting will be held on 6 March 1999 at Daubeney School, Kempston, Bedford. It will be hosted by Bedford Morris Men. This is the Formal Notification required by Item 14 of the Constitution.

Item 15 of the Constitution requires that the Bagman receive various items at least three months before the Meeting – that is, by 6 December 1998. These include:-

Nominations for Bagman. It will be necessary to elect formally a Bagman to regularise the current situation. Nomination forms are available from the Bagman.

Nominations for three Elected Area Representatives. In 1999 those due for election by their areas are the Representatives for the North West; the South West; and the West Midlands and Wales [West and South]. The present incumbents are prepared to continue.

Proposed alterations to the Constitution. Some are due for discussion at the Advisory Council Meeting in November. We would be pleased to have preliminary notification of any proposals for that Meeting – which would not, of course, debar any such proposals being made direct to the ARM.

Formal resolutions for discussion. Whilst other matters can be raised and discussed as “Any Other Business” on the day, they may not be able to be formally ratified.

MEETING UPDATES

Fools and Beasts Unconvention. A REMINDER: The 1998 “Unconvention” will be in Plymouth [well there was a call for a more Southerly location!!] from 23 – 25 October 1998. The Application Form was in your May mailing, but arrived too late to receive mention in the Newsletter as it was a Stop Press insertion. If you have mislaid the garish coloured form, either contact me for a spare copy or – to save time [as bookings are required by 20 September] - contact the convenor Eric Pressley [Tel: 01709-874770].

Ring Advisory Council: A reminder for those involved: the next RAC will be on Saturday 14 November 1998. This is the Saturday before that postulated at the RAC meeting at the ARM.

Ring Jigs Instructional. This will be 22 - 24 January 1999. The venue is Sutton Bonnington, Nottinghamshire. Dolphin Morris Men will host the Instructional. An application form giving further information is enclosed with this mailing.

THE CONSTITUTION

We are hoping to discuss some changes and clarifications to the Constitution at the Advisory Council Meeting in November. Any suggestions or proposals in advance of the formal resolution stage will be welcomed.

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. **A copy of a form to assist is provided.** Hopefully this will be well in time for those Sides with end of summer season elections.

RING MEETINGS – 1999

Although this year's Ring Meetings are not yet complete, it is time to start considering your choice of Meetings for next year. Those scheduled are as follows:-

4 - 6 June THAXTED RING MEETING - for some 200 plus men; the traditional annual meeting, with tours of the countryside around Thaxted and mass shows on Saturday; a procession, service and more dancing on Sunday. Always good value.

16 - 18 July LONG MAN RING MEETING – for 150 men based in Eastbourne, with tours of East Sussex; massed displays on Saturday [on the seafront] and Sunday.

23 - 25 July SILURIAN RING MEETING – for 200 men, based in Ledbury [a market town endowed with excellent pubs, which feature heavily!!]. Comparable to [but smaller than!!] the recent Campden meeting. Tours on the Saturday; service and mass show on Sunday.

8 – 10 September LEICESTER RING MEETING – based in South Wigston, Leicester. Tours of the County and mass show on Saturday. Service and dancing on Sunday.

A booking form and fuller details will be included in the September mailing.

RING MEETINGS 1998 - RICHMONDSHIRE

The **Richmondshire** Meeting had glorious weather. Unfortunately I missed it, but my reporters indicate that a good time was had by all. The Squire is reported to have spent an evening carousing with a reporter from the Mirror. No doubt polishing up his interview technique ready for a closer study of the guidance notes on dealing with the media. My thanks to the Squire Elect for transporting the Ring silverware – at least it reached Thaxted without delay.

RING MEETINGS 1998 - THAXTED

The **Thaxted** Meeting also had glorious weather, and fortunately not quite so hot as Richmondshire [relief!!]. I thoroughly enjoyed attending my first Ring Meeting as your Bagman – and have discovered that one needs the ability to be in three places at once and to have eyes in the back of one's head. A clip board to match one's kit is an essential!! However, with our ever efficient hosts, **Thaxted Morris**, any potential problems melted away – even the presence of a well shaped “man” at the Feast was tactfully ignored.

The other high spots - actually they were far too numerous to mention - but they must include:-

On tour: Yateley Morris and their “Postman’s Knock” with counts to three in various foreign tongues; then Latin [I, II, III] and Silicon Valley computer speak [01,10,11]!! From sublime to ridiculous [or vice versa!] - the Friary Meux Bitter, labelled “Friary Moo – Udderly Beautiful”.

The late afternoon show: Standon Morris accompanied by a solo mouth organ reminding me of stories of the music in Bedford’s early days.

The Feast: with a reading from Past Squire *Mike Chandler* to introduce the “Immortal Memory”; fine words from Past Squire *Mike Garland* on change in the Morris; and a reply from *David Thompson* for Thaxted to say that in Thaxted “nothing would change”.

The evening show: The Squire made an excellent choice for the last two show dances before the Horn Dance. **Westminster Morris** danced their Longborough style “Loveless”, composed in memory of Father Ken Loveless, to an arrangement for fiddle and accordion of Ken’s favourite song, Sharp’s “Seeds of Love”. This was a triumph and was to be repeated in Thaxted Church on Sunday. On Saturday evening our friends from Holland, **Helmond Morris** closed the show, dancing to a solo fiddle, and setting the mood for the Horn Dance that was to follow.

The greatest problems of the weekend: Being refused admission to lunch by the Thaxted bouncers – after all no one gives the Bagman lunch tickets – fortunately the Squire Elect was on hand to recognised and vouch for me!! Then the Police Constable who felt he would need to call on reinforcements to clear the way for the entry of the Thaxted Horn Dancers through the crowd!! As usual, the crowd parted Red Sea like, as the fiddle stuck up its haunting tune.

On the Sunday: the Procession to Church, which included the Bishop of Chelmsford resplendent in Purple. A Fool was later to complement him on his kit and ask with which Side he danced! The Thaxted “Grandfathers” Side produced a total age of, was it 682? for their 11 eligible Men. It seems that our Squire Elect is the youngest Grandfather!!

Other Past Squires present: a slim-line *Bert Cleaver* [with a flask of Sloe Gin]; *Ivor Alsop*, in close encounter with his Video Camera [recording memorable Archive footage of the Bagman’s back – sorry Ivor!!!]; and *Barry Care* [with his be-Clogged minders from **Moulton Morris**].

Jack Thompson, Letchworth Morris, sent greetings to all those at Thaxted. He has now had his leg fitted, and has done some walking – otherwise he is reported to be well.

RING MEETINGS 1998 – CHIPPING CAMDEN

The **Shakespeare/Chipping Campden** Meeting was forecast to have a heat-wave – but there was a slight delay to this when the Saturday morning started with drizzle; however, this cleared and the afternoon and Sunday, were in idyllic weather. The Meeting, with over 400 Men had 10 Tours and three separate Mass shows on the Saturday afternoon – in Stratford on Avon; Stow on the Wold and Chipping Campden. There was a further mass show in Campden on the Sunday morning, featuring those Sides that had not danced in Campden on the Saturday.

How does one summarise the largest gathering since the 50th Anniversary Meeting in 1982? It deserves more than can be included here – hopefully a full Report will be produced for the Circular – and feature some of the photographs taken by Shakespeare’s own Professional Photographer.

The highlight must have been the town of Chipping Camden itself: a wonderful setting, with hospitable and tolerant inhabitants. Eight excellent watering places, in pubs, hotels and clubs –

and a function licence in one pub until 1.00am. The two massed shows were rather splendid – if somewhat long, given the number of Sides wishing to dance – and the sun shone.

The finales of both shows featured the host Side, **Chipping Campden Morris Men**, dancing one of their own dances. Most present had never seen this Side – and it was something rather special – and good to see a number of boys, to carry on the tradition.

The Feast for some 450 Men was admirably catered, and we were grateful to Banks Brewery for the rank upon rank of [free] barrels of Mild and Bitter.

The highlight of the Feast was a presentation of a silver Chain of Office to the Ring by **David Hart**, Squire of **Chipping Campden Morris Men**, on their behalf. Its links are inscribed with the names of all the past Squires, and the Squire's Badge can hang from it. A wonderful and very generous gift. Few cities have a mayoral chain as grand!!

The Sunday church service was a contrast to the high church service of Thaxted – but another splendid event in a fine edifice. The Squire counted 26 staffs taken to the altar.

For the Sunday show, the guests from USA, **Minnesota Morris Men**, gave us a culture shock - or shot in the arm - when they showed a Fieldtown based dance composition to a Scott Joplin tune "Rag Time" played on the solo fiddle. After initial gasps of shock [and horror!!], we realised this was something rather special; indeed, as the Squire remarked, if Cecil Sharp had been present – which way would Morris have gone!!! The Minnesota Morris Men featured in a colour photograph in the Times on 22 June.

RING MEETINGS 1998 – EXETER

The **Exeter** Meeting is still to come as this is written – hopefully the weather will again be kind. We will be thanking Tim Sercombe for his hard work on our behalf during two very busy, and well travelled, years as he dances out as our Squire. We will also have the pleasure of greeting our new Squire, Daniel Fox, of Thaxted Morris Men, who will be dancing in.

DESIGN A LOGO

There is still time to design a logo – to feature the Boxing Day 1999 - Centenary of Cecil Sharp's Morris experience at Headington - and the following Millennium Year, as the basis for some national publicity for the Morris. We are looking for a theme and a logo for programmes for appearances over the period. The best design [which may not be that finally used of course] will win a "gallon of beer voucher".

Ron Shuttleworth has already suggested some parameters upon which it might be judged – now let's see some entries – Steve Adamson is looking forward to buying your beer!!

ANNIVERSARIES

Whitchurch Morris celebrated their **50th Anniversary** on 4 July 1998 with a Weekend of Dance and Feast. The Feast was held in plush surroundings [carpets even!!] as befitted the Anniversary. Past Squire **Mike Chandler** officiated as Squire of Whitchurch, and the Squire, Squire Elect and Bagman of the Ring were present in various capacities.

Dolphin Morris celebrated their **30th Anniversary** over the Weekend 26 – 28 June 1998.

Southport Sword celebrate their **30th Anniversary** with a Day of Dance on 12 September 1998.

Thelwell Morris celebrate their **25th Anniversary** on 18 July 1998 with a Feast.

The King's Morris celebrate their **20th Anniversary** with their Thornham Walking Tour [three pubs on the north Norfolk coast!!] on 20 September.

We wish them all well, and look forward to receiving reports of these events for publication in this Newsletter or the Morris Circular.

THE COMBINED MEMBERSHIP COUNTIES LIST - 1998

This listing is produced by the Morris Federation and is a compilation of the member Sides of all three Morris organisations on a County by County basis.. It can be useful for handling those enquiries that need the names of Sides in an unfamiliar area – however, as it does not include any phone numbers or addresses, one then has to contact the Secretaries of the other organisations!!

As most Sides know of the other Organisations' Sides in their immediate areas, its use for most Sides would be somewhat limited. To save the cost of unnecessary copying and posting, we have limited circulation to Officers and Area Representatives - whom you can consult if need be. If you feel your Side needs its own copy, I will be more than happy to put one in the post.

A SURVEY OF MORRIS DANCERS – 1978

Some twenty years ago, Steve Hollier [**Thaxted Morris**] carried out a survey of Morris dancers, as part of his University of Essex Sociology Degree. His project was entitled "*Aspects of the changes in social and economic structure of England from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries with regard to the cultural form known as Morris Dance*".

As a result of a fortunate meeting on the Sunday afternoon at Thaxted, when we discussed matters archival, Steve has now donated the survey forms and a copy of his Project Report to the Morris Ring Archive. Five hundred and sixty six survey forms were sent out, in 1977, to Squires and Bagmen of all known Sides, and to some other organisations. Some two hundred and twenty [anonymous] responses are available [this seems to be an amazingly high response rate – perhaps Morris persons liked forms in those days!!].

Should anyone be undertaking any similar studies now, or in the future, this could prove to be a useful resource; Steve suggests that reanalysis of the data could be well worth while. Our thanks to Steve for making this available – he now has more shelf space at home!!!

Although anonymous, it is possible to identify some of the Sides by the answers given – and it is fascinating to read some of the additional comments provided – attitudes have changed over

twenty years!! One writer commented that he felt that “ ... too many people are jumping on the band wagon and that if the trend continues, Morris will lose a great deal of its mystique and enjoyment on the part of both dancers and audience through over exposure.”

It is interesting therefore to compare numbers of Sides – then and now – as based on that survey and the present Ring Directory and the latest “Combined List”.

	1977	1998
Morris Ring [full members]	126 [#]	171 ⁺
Morris Ring [other clubs [#] /associates ⁺]	86 [#]	71 ⁺ *
[Ladies [#]] Morris Federation	53 [#]	341 ^{\$*}
Open Morris	--	106 ^{\$*}
Totals	263	689

[#] From the Project Report ⁺ From the Ring Directory ^{\$} From the Combined List

* Some clubs belong to more than one organisation – total numbers approximate only.

Certainly the “bandwagon” is considerably larger – but many Sides feel they could still use some more members!! Has the Morris lost its “mystique”? – it is still quite hard to find, if you don't know where to look. Times change: no doubt we could still debate these points ad infinitum.

I will try to produce a few more extracts for the Circular – then the correspondence can run and run – but do let's please keep it constructive.

NEWER DANCES

We have had one volunteer for the task of collating a collection of newer dances – and will be discussing the project in more detail at the next Advisory Council Meeting.

We have also heard from **Thames Valley Morris** who are already producing and using an updated version of the Black Book for their own teaching of the Traditions they dance. This includes additional “Chapters” for their own revivals of the Withington and Horsham Traditions.

It would be useful to have any other views and then we can decide how to run with the project. It does however, need to be a simple approach – this is not to be a comprehensive analysis of every nuance, and certainly not attempt to legislate whether we should or should not galley/hookleg up/down in any particular Tradition. It should list the options being used.

INDEX TO THE MORRIS DANCER

We are still seeking an Indexer for the Morris Dancer – names to Eddie Dunmore please.

PUBLICATIONS SCHEDULE

It is intended to issue The Morris Circular and the Morris Dancer with the Newsletters as detailed below. **Deadlines** - for articles - these should be with Eddie Dunmore by the beginning of the previous month. Newsletter items can be slightly later and should be received by the Bagman by the end of the month prior to the issue. Last minute Newsletter items will be at the Bagman's discretion – and dependent on space.

Approx. Issue Date	Including	Eddie's Copy Deadline
Mid September	Morris Circular	1 st August
Mid January	Morris Dancer	1 st December
Mid May	Morris Circular	1 st April

INDIVIDUAL SUBSCRIPTION SCHEMES

For some years it has been possible to take out an individual subscription to the Morris Circular and the Morris Dancer. This enabled Men to have their own copy and not depend on seeing one of the three copies sent to each Side [which often stop with Bagman, Squire and which ever other lucky individual gets there first]. Also a number of Men who are "Country" or "Retired" members and not in direct contact with their [original] Side or Sides take subscriptions.

It has been suggested that a similar subscription scheme should apply to the Newsletter. We can see no reason why not!! So with immediate effect the following subscription schemes [ARM to ARM year] are available for UK mailing [overseas rates on application]:

Morris Circular [2 No] and Morris Dancer [1 No] – as at present .	£4.50 per annum
As above , plus Newsletter and attachments [generally 6 No]	£9.00 per annum
Newsletter and attachments only [generally 6 No]	£6.00 per annum
Directory [1 No. issued in March at ARM time]	£2.00 per annum

While copies are available, the subscriptions will include back numbers for the year in question.

PROGRAMMES

Thank you to those who have sent their programmes. They are helping me plan my customer visits – and some of you will have already survived a Bagman's visit!!

YOUR NEWS

East Suffolk Morris confirmed that they featured on BBC on May Day. Mike Garland is reported to have appeared "very sober" – as if we would expect anything else at dawn!! They have also been off to Amsterdam for a weekend to celebrate one of their member's [Des Herring's] 70th year And he is still dancing

OUT AND ABOUT

I dropped in on **Offley Morris**, conveniently close to home at Ashwell. Incidentally Ashwell used to have a Morris Side in the 1930s and a photograph has recently come to hand. The Bagman got an unscheduled half dance when one of the Side fell into a pot hole. [I am pleased to report that the victim was found and has recovered!!]. For safety reasons, the musicians were deputed to stand in said hole for the final Bonny Green Garters in the gathering gloom.

Stafford Morris provided a fine evening and a two pub tour – the second spot was ideal for train spotters – hard by the London Glasgow main line – a Virgin Express against Wittle and Daub is “No contest”!! . Both a long sword [North Skelton] and a rapper [Winlaton] side were conjured up [with the help of “members of the crowd”] and the rust was beaten of the swords in a lively fashion!! A fair few of the Side appeared to be former **Cambridge Morris**, Honorary Cambridge Men or **Travelling Morrice**!! The Stafford Fool, Jack Brown, recalled dancing with Horace Hoole of Bedford Morris in an EFDSS show Side at Stratford in 1947.

Gloucestershire Morris were “coincidentally” dancing their second spot in the courtyard of my “Hotel” in the Cotswolds. My previous practice paid off; this time I survived their Bledington Trunkles third corner variations. At one point a Side of musicians mirrored the Adderbury formations as their side danced. Afterwards the pub music session was again excellent – and they had even remembered to bring my triangle!!

Fortunately, my Bagman duties [and sorting out Rugby Cement's problems] still leaves time to dance with **Bedford Morris**, and we were joined by **Northampton Morris**, for a convivial evening in May. Three former Bedford musicians from the 1960s appeared for the post-dance session with their instruments - a live Archive night indeed!!

Whilst I was in travelling mode I felt I should see Bampton and Headington on the late May Bank Holiday Monday. Bampton, with three Sides, showed that this is an ever evolving Tradition – and why not. Past Squire, **Barry Care** was present in the guise of Fool for the **Traditional Bampton Morris**. Another past Squire, **Nibs Matthews** was also in the crowd – looking, I must say, very fit. “Mr Publications”, **Eddie Dunmore**, was taking photographs – no doubt for the next Morris Circular!!

The pleasure of watching the dancing at the various pubs was much enhanced by the excellent quality of the beers on offer [I will not list my favourites – there is not room – but I was thankful to have a driver. On which subject ... the best bribe for lady drivers is the dress materials shop in Bampton ... no problem with transport for me next year!!!]

In the evening, a transfer to Headington to watch **Headington Quarry Morris Men** and their guests, **Westminster Morris**. Headington appeared to hand over to their guests in time for each rain shower!! Splendid dancing – unfortunately the beer was not up to Bampton standards!!

A stop in Ledbury – and in the pub two members of **Silurian** – not easily identified with white[ish] faces! Also conversed with a female “Vampire” who had been leading a ghost walk with a very white and blooded face!! Make up, black or white, seems de rigueur in Ledbury!! Stopping for lunch, on my return, at the Pear Tree in Hook Norton for a pint of Stout [for my health you understand!!] I crossed paths with Ring Instructional Co-ordinator **Andy Fieldhouse** of **Boar's Head Morris**. It's a small world and littered with Morris Men – indeed a visit to a customer on the way to Campden revealed an **Ilmington Man** on the staff!!

A stop on a return trip from Weymouth to Bedford and the chance to see two very lively Sides: **Yateley Morris** and **Eynsham Morris**. Eynsham had three Sides out [and they had left some more back home apparently!!] and all from the village itself. Not a Ring Side – but independent spirits – and not members of any other organisation either!! A distinct style – boots and almost a

border feel. A lively “living” tradition – something we should pay heed too – and they are not short of stamina or recruits. We should all observe and learn. One of the youngsters, is now named “Feathers”, after his ?great – grandfather, Edward “Feathers” Russell, one of Sharp’s informants.

Another return trip later in June gave a chance to join with **Peterborough Morris**, dancing at Helpston, next to John Clare’s cottage. They were preparing for a trip to Germany, and their leaping “Valentines” crossings should go into the variants [deviants] book!! The Squire of **The King’s Morris**, in probationer guise was awarded his Peterborough “badge” and celebrated by locking his bells in Bonny Green and doing a passable imitation of a frog!!!

A visit to Morris correspondent, **Gordon Ridgewell**, [formerly **Standon Morris**] to delve in his extensive archive, provided an opportunity later to drop in on **St Albans Morris**. They were bravely dancing on the evening of the England-Rumania Match [World Cup Football I am advised!!]. Interval entertainment was provided at one pub; and a Morris dance “wake” at the other following the final whistle.

Following their visit to the Campden Ring Meeting, I took the opportunity to watch **Minnesota Morris Men** when they danced nearby. The crowd was somewhat reduced [England were involved in a kick a goal competition with Argentina!!] A different interpretation of the Morris is always thought provoking – and their hosts that evening, an Open Morris team, further widened my experience of the Morris.

Finally, with a work colleague found myself “coincidentally” in a Malvern pub with a fair skinned **Silurian** on a practice night – few so earnestly practice their drinking and humour – “wot dancing” ?!?!

IN CONCLUSION

Many thanks to all those who have communicated since the first Newsletter.

Keep communicating. . Let’s have some feedback – either items for this Newsletter – or items and articles for the Circular or the Morris Dancer [which should be sent to Eddie Dunmore]. This Newsletter should include **your** announcements and information, as well as my “fill the page” waffle.

Wassail,

John Frearson.
Bagman