



## The Newsletter - No. 36 – December 2004

### *Greetings,*

This edition contains Christmas messages from the Squire and the Treasurer [this latter with important updates on Insurance]. There is also news of the new Editors of the Morris Publications, and information on the ARM.

Did your Side remember to send their subscription? There are still some 30 clubs who have not yet paid. If you have not paid you will not be covered by insurance when performing. Generally, there has been an excellently prompt response this year, with comparatively few Sides opting for the “still un-insured and making a donation to the Archive fund” option!!!

Bagmen, please remember to make this Newsletter available to your Side – the Squire is concerned that communications seem to stop with the Bagmen. The Newsletter is available as an Email version if you ask for it. Your successor Bagman should apply in turn as this is saved as a request by the individual, not as the Side’s current and ever changing Bagman.

We were sorry to hear that **Hoghton Rapper Sword Team** has decided to hang up their swords – a dwindling number of fit dancers meant they could no longer form a viable team. But, we are pleased to welcome to new Associates, **Great Yorkshire Morris**. Further details of both clubs is included in the News section.

Also enclosed with this mailing [or collated with the Newsletter] are:

- **Amendments** to the 2004 Directory,
- The Squire’s selection of **Massed Dances** for 2005 Ring Meetings.
- **Application Form** for the **ARM** at Harthill.
- For the **Advisory Council**, the **Minutes** of their most recent meeting.

*Remember: Unless you pass on the content of this Newsletter to the Men in your Side, the information stops with you.*

*As already mentioned, E-mailed versions of these Newsletters are available on request as an attached Word document; please order by Email.*

## IN MEMORIAM

### **Gerald Carey – [White Rose - also Burton upon Trent and Uttoxeter]**

*Gerald Carey* died on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2004 at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham aged of 78. He was a founder member and one-time Squire of **White Rose** and for many years lived in Barton under Needwood (Staffs) where, before his retirement, he taught at the John Taylor School. He recalled accompanying on his melodeon a team of **Leeds** men led by *Norman Peacock*, who had rediscovered the Greatham Sword Dance on Teesmouth, when they were invited to perform at Cecil Sharp House. Gerald was a gentleman and noted local historian, publishing books on the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway and the history of Thomas Russell and Barton's schools.

Whilst in Needwood, he danced with **Burton upon Trent** and for a while with **Uttoxeter Heart of Oak**. Most recently he was delighted to read in the *Circular* of the **White Rose** 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and to see at first hand the success of Celebrating Uttoxeter 2004 (300<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ring) at which he enjoyed one of the tours' visits to Barton.

He leaves his wife Audrey, four sons and grandchildren. Audrey and he were very keen Country dancers, representing West Yorkshire in the EFDSS Festivals at the Royal Albert Hall in the 1950s where he proudly recalled being asked by Douglas Kennedy to lead all the dancers into the arena for the start of the first dance.

His funeral in St James church, Barton under Needwood, was on 26<sup>th</sup> October.

[Info: *Adrian Wedgwood, Uttoxeter Heart of Oak*]

### **John Seaborn – further information**

*John Seaborn*, Squire of **St Albans**, [as reported in the last Newsletter] died on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September after several weeks in hospital.

*Bill Brown* [Foggy Bottom MM in USA] wrote on the MDDL: "We all lifted our glasses to John Seaborn, late squire of St Albans, whose passing we recently learned of. Many of us remember him from visits we've had with and to St. Albans Men."

*John Price* [St Albans] replied: "Thank you, Bill and FBMM, that is much appreciated. John may well be the first SAMM squire to die in office in our 75 years - and at the age of only 58. As you can imagine, SAMM feels a deep sense of loss and shock. John had been seriously ill for some weeks but we and his family had remained optimistic for his recovery. SAMM danced Bonny Green Garters at the end of the service, and we musicians played for the hymn (Battle Hymn of the Republic). I'm sure of John's amusement and forgiveness that I started playing the latter in the wrong key and had to change after the "once to yourself". Kept the congregation on their toes anyway! FBMM may wish to lift a further glass (any excuse?) at their next meeting to John's first grandchild, born a couple of weeks ago. Life goes on."

**FROM THE SQUIRE – A Christmas Message**

Dear All

Compliments of the Season. Since I danced in, in July, my feet have hardly touched the ground but then when you dance the Morris they are not supposed to. I have attended many varied events since July and have been very touched by the welcome I have received up and down the country.

A couple of weeks ago I was asked by **Mendip** if I would meet the Wine Witches from Ettlingen (Germany) who are anarchic folk - they don't dance but are part of a tradition of processions and wear very ugly masks decorated with carved bunches of grapes. They joined our local Weston-super-mare Winter Carnival and also the Glastonbury Carnival and had a wonderful time. The group is part of a twinning association that Mendip have been involved with for something like 20 years. No doubt Mendip will send an article and maybe some photographs in for the Circular.

This to me illustrates part of the many and varied connections and associations that Morris clubs have formed over the years. It would be interesting to hear of other events and friendships that perhaps your club has.

This brings me on to the Circular and The Morris Dancer. Many of you will know that **Eddie Dunmore** has been editor for a good many years and is now passing his editor's cap on to **Harry Stevenson (Winchester)** for the Circular and **Sean Goddard (Chanctonbury Ring)** for The Morris Dancer. More details to come but I know I can say now on all your behalves a massive thank you to Eddie for his hard and dedicated work over the years.

We are coming up to the Christmas Season now and the diary seems to be collecting dates of Feasts and Ales that I am very much looking forward to. However I do have a worry in that it seems to me that numerous members of clubs are not getting the information they so properly deserve. For example the discussion sheet that came out for 'Morris in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' had a very disappointing number of replies - this may imply that, as our noble Bagman said, the clubs may be very happy with the status quo, but I feel that more views should have been forthcoming. If you don't know what I'm talking about ask your Bagman!

I have just returned from a very successful Musicians Instructional run by **Jim Catterall (Thaxted)**. I am quite sure that the musicians of all abilities left Thaxted having learnt a great deal and having enjoyed a very good weekend. Look forward to reading reviews/articles from a couple of the musicians attending. It was felt that Foreman could also benefit from a similar instructional as Jim's comments and advice could apply to teaching the Morris as well as playing for it. He was ably assisted by **Mike Howley, Mike Chandler** and **Clive Du Mont** as well as assistance from **Thaxted** to dance for the musicians.

No doubt you are all in the middle of a practice season and looking forward to the Christmas break. For those of you who go out to dance over the Christmas period I wish you good luck, a good bag, an appreciative audience and a reasonably fine day .

To all a Happy Christmas - Wassail - The Squire



## THE TREASURER

When the Morris Ring Bagman starts shouting for everyone's input for the December Newsletter, I know my busiest time of the year has arrived. Most of my evenings are then occupied with annual subscriptions, insurance, stock taking and assembling numerous Morris Shop parcels for Santa to deliver during his annual tour.

**PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE 2005.** I have no doubt that many of you have already noticed that your last insurance document expired on the 26.10.04. Worry ye not. The document may have run out but our cover certainly hasn't. All three Morris organisations are currently in the middle of a bridging period. This enables all of us to get it together for the commencement of the new policy anniversary on 25.01.2005. The new public liability insurance document will be issued in the next Bagman's newsletter...honest!

Because the premium for 2005 - 2006 is not yet fixed, we are not allowed to issue the document as early as intended. When we do, the level of indemnity will have doubled from £5m to £10m. If you are required to provide proof of public liability insurance cover during the festive season, please contact me as soon as possible and everything will be sorted.

**OPTIONAL PERSONAL ACCIDENT INSURANCE.** The recent change in the way this is now administered seems to have gone ahead with very few problems. If your side has decided to take up this optional policy and has not yet submitted the appropriate form to Michael Stimpson, please do so as soon as possible.

**THE MORRIS SHOP.** It has been a very busy year with numerous new items of stock. A big thank you must go to our Web Master, Mr John Maher, who never ceases to amaze me with his keyboard dexterity in managing the sales page in the Morris Ring's window to the world - [www.TheMorrisRing.org](http://www.TheMorrisRing.org).

**CD - AN ALBION CHRISTMAS.** A seasonal offering from the Albion Christmas Band, featuring Kellie While, Simon Nicol, Ashley Hutchins & Simon Care. £12.

**CD - THE COMPLEAT DANCING MASTER.** After long absence, now back in stock. John Kirkpatrick and Ashley Hutchings at their best. Is there anyone out there that does not have this on an LP? Try it on CD.....what a difference. £12.

**CD - FURZE CAT** by Hekety. Although principally a dance band, they always manage to incorporate a track or two just to prove that the Morris is still with them. Inspirational musicianship. £13

**CD - THE DUCK RACE [NEW]** John Kirkpatrick. Morris tunes from Shropshire. £13.

**CD - SHEEPSKINS** by John Kirkpatrick. [1993 CD but re-release by popular demand]. First released as a Squeezer cassette in 1988. Morris Dance music from Shropshire, the repertoire of the Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish. Solo performances on bass, baritone and treble anglo concertinas plus one-row and two-row melodeons. £13.

**TANKARD 1 PINT.** Heavy gauge, glass based, pewter tankard. Brass lid, handle & rim base. This tankard demonstrates the superb craftsmanship of Carl Longshaw of Birmingham. Retails £55.00 - Morris Shop price £38.

**TANKARD 1½ PINT.** When one pint is not enough! Heavy gauge pewter with a solid base. Its beauty is in the simplicity of the design. Also by Carl Longshaw of Birmingham. Retails £60.00 - Morris Shop price £48.

## THE ARM - 2005

As already notified, **Harthill** are hosting the ARM in 2005, from **4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005**. An **Application Form** is enclosed with this Newsletter.

I am delighted to advise that **Anker** have proposed **Charlie Corcoran** of **Leicester** as my successor as Bagman. There were no other candidates at the deadline date. This constitutes due notice [at least one month before the ARM]. The formal papers, whilst possibly not required as there is no election contest, will follow for information, as per precedence, in the Newsletter in the New Year.

All three Representatives for those Areas where re-elections are due [those from the western side of the country] have indicated that they are willing to continue in office. As no other candidates have been proposed, they will be re-appointed at the ARM. They are for the **North West - Duncan Broomhead**; the **West Midlands - John Davis**; and for the **South West and Wales - Dudley Binding**.

There were no “Formal Motions” or “Proposals for Changes to the Constitution” at that same deadline. This does not prevent any matters being discussed or raised in Any Other Business. Items for inclusion on the Agenda should be advised to the Bagman as soon as possible.

We look forward to an excellent turn out for the Meeting next March; this is your Side’s opportunity to air its views – and also to discuss matters on a less formal basis with other Sides’ representatives and the Officers. Attendance at the Meeting alone incurs no charge, as the Morris Ring meets the cost of the formal business of the ARM. This reduces the cost of the “social” component of the event for all those wishing to participate.

The Advisory Council will meet on Saturday afternoon, after the main meeting [which will hopefully be shorter than some!!], so that its members do not have to stay over until, or return on, the Sunday.

**Chalice** have offered to host the ARM in 2006. If any other Sides wish to bid / offer to host then, or a later year, please advise the Bagman.

## RING MEETINGS – 2005 – UPDATE

**Helmond** attracted some three times more applications than there were spaces. They were very disappointed that they had to turn so many away. **Long Man** was neatly filled after reallocations of those that had applied by the initial deadline and had included a second choice. **St. Albans** was nearly filled on that basis, and potentially overfilled when later applicants had been included; hopefully they will be able to find space for a few extra. **Durham Rams** is nearly full and **Thaxted** already has higher numbers than usual at this stage.

If any Sides wish to attend a Meeting and have not yet applied, please do not delay. Dates of Meetings still available are given below. Sides may attend Thaxted in addition to any other Meeting.

3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> June    **THAXTED RING MEETING**  
 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> June    **DURHAM RAMS 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIV. RING MEETING**

## **MORRIS RING - 2005 TOURS - T-SHIRT.**

Because we have six Ring Meetings [including the ARM] during 2005, we have decided to shout about it. The Morris Shop is stocking T-Shirts. All shirts are a very tasteful heather grey with blue print. Morris Ring logo on the front and the 2005 Ring Meetings listed on the back. To further appreciate this Christmas 'must have', go to the Morris Ring website "sales page" to see it being beautifully modelled (no, not by the Treasurer!). Fruit of the Loom (Premium) £6 + P&P

## **INSTRUCTIONAL and TOUR**

**Jigs Instructional – 2005.** The dates for your diaries - **14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> January 2005.** An Application Form was enclosed with the last Newsletter. Details and information from the indefatigable *Bert Cleaver* [who claims that this will be the last under his leadership!!].

Tommo's **Cotswold Tour 2005**, arranged by *David Thompson*, will be on **10<sup>th</sup> September 2005.** Venues should include: Badby, Hinton, Brackley, Bucknell, Oddington and Stow. Details to follow – or from Dave on Tel: 01332 770578 or Email: tradcap@ntlworld.com.

## **OTHER EVENTS**

**DERT 2005** - The **2005 Dancing England Rapper Tournament** will be held in Preston (Lancashire) on the weekend **4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005.** The weekend will include workshops and informal events, and the Rapper competition, which will occupy most of Saturday. This will include dancing in the pubs of central Preston as well as outdoors at the Flagmarket, and a display when there will be a chance to see all participating teams. There are typically about two dozen Rapper teams at DERT, and whilst most choose to compete, some come simply to exhibit and to mix with other dancers. Prizes will be awarded for dancing, playing, and Tommying/Bettying. Indoor camping and a late bar will be available on Friday and Saturday nights. The price will be announced soon, and there will shortly be a website for the event. Meanwhile, if you would like more information then contact *Andrew Kennedy* [88, Liverpool Road, Penwortham, Lancashire. PR1 0HT Tel: 01772 741503 andrew@north-british.co.uk] or *Jeff Lawson* [110, Park Road, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 1QY Tel: 01257 249686 jeff.lawson@btinternet.com].

**St George's Day – Newcastle upon Tyne.** Following the success of the Trafalgar Square event, celebrating the progress with the Licensing Law exemption, it was decided to run a similar event in the North. This will be in **Newcastle on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2005.** All three Morris Organisations will be involved, and there is support from the local council. Sides without other St George's Day commitments and interested in performing on that day in Newcastle should contact the Ring Squire for more details.

**Chris Harris Workshop.** This one-day workshop entitled "**Tom Foolery**" and dealing with Fools, Betseys and Animals, is now scheduled [as per the Email update] for **9<sup>th</sup> April 2005**, at Bristol University. Details were in the last Newsletter – and can also be obtained from [www.bris.ac.uk/drama/lifelearn](http://www.bris.ac.uk/drama/lifelearn) or Tel: 01179545471 or email: drama-lifelearn@bristol.ac.uk

**Battle of Trafalgar** - We understand that there will be various celebrations of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar on **22<sup>nd</sup> October 2005.** The Morris Ring had been invited to be involved. If individual Sides wish to join in with any local events, that will be a matter for them. The date is provided for information.

## PEL – and MUMMING

Hopefully, Sides are establishing what their Local Authorities are doing with regard to Guidance on Licensing. If you have done nothing yet, please refer to the last Newsletter and the item by John Bacon.

There is some more useful information from “our authoritative source” given in the box below. This more clearly defines the position of Mumming – which is **not** as we had originally hoped. The message - ensure that the pubs where you may wish to perform include mumming - “traditional drama performance” - on their applications to vary premises licences. This applies also to town and city centre managers – make sure they remember to include Morris and traditional drama on their Applications.

“No local authority can write something into their policy exempting mummers from the law - either as it now is (the Theatres Act 1968) or as it will be under the Licensing Act 2003, whenever the DCMS do all that they need to do to make it happen.

Such an exemption would need an amendment to the Act - despite bad drafting and some fundamental flaws, there is no prospect of this for at least two years. The only way the law will change in the meanwhile is if the High Court decides on a point of law.

Do the Morris organisations want to foot the bill for a challenge? For instance, the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea is reputed to have a contingency fund of £5,000,000 to fight any challenges to their decisions under the Act. Others may have more . . .

What you can do, and should be doing, is making sure that all the locations you at which perform your mummers play include "traditional drama performances" in their applications to vary their premises licences.

The vast majority of premises will be applying to vary when they apply to convert their current licences, starting on 7th February 2005. The DCMS is actively encouraging them to do so (in respect of hours etc.) and it won't cost them any more in fees.

Whatever may have been discussed in meetings 18 months or two years ago with DCMS, mumming is **\*NOT\*** exempt from the 2003 Act, just as it isn't exempt from the current legislation.

What no-one needs is a mummers' team causing a pub problems by performing there illegally and some disaffected local complaining to the authorities, as has happened before. It gets us all a bad name and makes it even more difficult to perform in public.”

There has been various comment in the MDDL [Morris Dance Discussion List] regarding the Licensing Bill. Again, “our authoritative source”, has worked overtime to provide comment – that has been published on MDDL. Copies are available from the Bagman by Email.

**SO REMEMBER...** "The advice is still to think about where and when you do what you do, and make sure that the licensees include your activities in their applications for variation after 7th February 2005. If they don't, the net result will be to kill it stone dead. It won't matter that the DCMS will be putting a Licensing (Amendment) Bill to Parliament in two years time - that will be too late. Don't forget that post November 2005 (when it will probably come into force) will be too late and too expensive".



## RING PUBLICATIONS - EDITORIAL UPDATES

As you will be aware from the “job adverts” in the Morris Circular – and his valedictory editorial – Eddie “the Editor” Dunmore is stepping down from that post. He has though been successful in finding TWO successors to deal with the two publications. They introduce themselves below: -

**Harry Stevenson** will edit the “Morris Circular”.

I dance with **Winchester**, both Cotswold and Long Sword. I am presently their Archivist/Scrapbook Keeper, and have an interest in the history of Morris. I prefer to dance and encourage others to do it - knees permitting. I look at the Circular as an informative publication, and, optimistically, with an increasing readership. I expect to look for the next Editor from day one!! I think it important to keep it fresh. Your ideas (for content) will be especially welcome. Harry Stevenson, Erin House, 59, Olivers Battery Road North, Winchester SO22 4JB. Tel: 01962 855911 Email: [harry\\_wmm@trunkles.freemove.co.uk](mailto:harry_wmm@trunkles.freemove.co.uk)

**Sean Goddard** will edit the “Morris Dancer”.

I have been appointed the editor of The Morris Dancer - the Morris Ring's yearly publication devoted to historical and similar research. I dance with **Chanctonbury Ring** (Sussex), and my father was a member back in the 1950's. I have been their Squire, and am currently the Captain of the Cotswold Side. I have a great respect for Morris Dancing, and am very interested in its historical development and associated traditions. I have written short articles for English Dance and Song, Society of Folk Dance Historians, and The Morris Dancer and Circular. I would like to encourage any reader to submit an article, comment, suggestion, obituary [lets hope not!], or review to me for inclusion. Sean Goddard, 142, Hollingbury Road, Brighton BN1 7JD Tel: 01273 559107 E-mail: [s.p.goddard@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:s.p.goddard@sussex.ac.uk).

## HOGHTON RAPPER SWORD TEAM

On Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2004, **Hoghton Rapper Sword Team** held a meeting to consider their future. In the light of their current situation with a dwindling number of fit dancers meaning that they could no longer form a viable team, it was decided to wind up the Team's affairs, and so they sadly cease to exist.

**Thomas Calderbank** said “This is a sad time - the Team has danced for 41 years - but age and creaking joints have caught up with too many of us, and sadly we have to call it a day. It is particularly sad for me - I am the only founder member still with the Team after all this time!”

The Bagman was conveniently in Preston shortly afterwards, and visited Thomas Calderbank to collect Hoghton's Staff. He was also able to view and advise upon the future of the considerable collection of archival material. This is, of course, the Side's property. However, it is being sorted and classified – names are being put to faces in photographs – and the material will be allocated to various archives. The Side has indicated that the log books and a representative collection of the many photographs and slides will be given to the Morris Ring Archive. There are also films and a video – and it is intended that these be copied so that they can be deposited with the local Lancashire Archives as well as with the Morris Ring.

It is always sad when a Side cannot continue. At least there should be an excellent record of their activities, thanks to the information saved over the years by Thomas Calderbank and the Team.

## MEDIA

**Business Telegraph** City diary. Edited by Helena Keers (Filed: 13/11/2004).

"... the Anglo-Swiss agribusiness, Syngenta's **Peter Sandbach** and **Michael Wadham** have formed a Morris dancing troupe [Morris Ring Associate Side - **Ferrette** – ed.] in Basle, performing at weekends for bemused locals. PR Andrew Coker says: "In any group you're bound to find oddballs. I think a lot of British people, let alone Swiss, don't understand the attraction of men in silly hats, banging sticks and ringing bells. I suppose after a few beers anything seems sensible."

**"Beyond River Cottage"** on Channel 4 [11<sup>th</sup> November 2004 8.00pm], featured the May Day crowds watching **Wessex** dance on the Cerne Abbas Giant as a background to chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall making and selling chocolate waffles!!

**The Macclesfield Express** noted that - "Macclesfield is a cultural desert – and that's official" **However** "The council leader says the wealth of poetry recitals, **morris dancing**, brass band concerts, amateur dramatics and similar one-off events are **evidence of a thriving cultural scene.**"

**BBC News in West Yorkshire** with reporter Mark McGregor. His web article "Morris men recruitment crisis" featured **Mark Ashton** of **Oakworth Village**.

"Every time Mark Ashton tries to find new people to take up his favourite pastime he faces the same problem. He cannot avoid the sniggering, even with a simple request to put up a poster advertising his hobby. Because the 32-year-old's passion is morris dancing and in his home town of Keighley, West Yorkshire, new recruits are hard to find. "Throughout the country, Morris sides are struggling," said Mark, who is now attempting to reverse the trend. "I started dancing 20 years ago and a lot of the sides I have met through the years have folded. "A lot of morris sides haven't had new dancers for over 10 years." Mark joined the Oakworth Village Morris Men as a 12-year-old and has remained their youngest member ever since. Formed in 1981 during a "boom time" for the traditional English dance, the group is approaching its 25th anniversary. But a distinct lack of interest in donning the boots, bells and bows associated with the ancient pastime has left the group facing an uncertain future. "It's very hard to get new dancers," said Mark, who is squire (leader) of the Oakworth morris men. "We always try every year - maybe not as hard as we should do - but we are not sales people. "One of the big problems is that people my age are not really interested. It is hard to get people my age into dance. "The majority of morris dancers are in their 50s. And that's the same with our side." But despite the gloomy picture in West Yorkshire, where there are a number of sides competing for members, the picture across the country is far more positive. Trefor Owen, chairman of the Morris Federation, told the BBC that young people were taking up morris dancing in "phenomenal numbers". "There are more people dancing various styles of morris dancing than there has been for a long time." While the Oakworth side is struggling, Mr Owen said some teams in other parts of the country have waiting lists and are able to pick and choose members. "It depends on where you are, what you are doing and how you are doing it. "There is a team called Hammersmith that dances the same Cotswold style as the Oakworth lads - they have a nine-month waiting list." Mr Owen said the fact there are "about a dozen" teams within easy driving distance of Keighley might be behind Oakworth's problems. Perhaps mindful of the competition, Mark is keen to emphasise the strength of his side. "We always try and be aggressive. We're not - how can I put this? - a prancey side," he said. "We were described as another side as 'morris dancing with balls'. I thought that was a great compliment." Although he realises his hobby is not the most fashionable pursuit, Mark does think it suffers from an unfair portrayal. "A lot of people have misconceptions about morris dancing. They don't know anything about it but choose to ridicule it. "If they would give it a try, people would find out just how enjoyable it is - especially people who like real ale." If the team does get some new blood at its beginners' night on 6 December, it will be a triumph for Mark's frustrating efforts to publicise the Oakworth dancers in the local area. "I went to a leisure centre in Keighley to ask to put up poster and the receptionist said she would have to go and ask the manager," said Mark. "She went off into the back room and all I could hear was her laughing," he added with a smirk. [Story from the BBC NEWS, West Yorkshire website. Published: 20 November 2004.]

The **Hexham Gazette** [web 5<sup>th</sup> November 2004]. “**Hexham** Morrismen have returned from an international festival in Hungary and are set to share their skills by hosting a free workshop tomorrow. The Hungary trip was the sixth overseas festival for the dancing group, who are regulars at the top UK events. Morrismen leader **Roger Kennington** said: “There has been a great resurgence of interest in the folk scene generally with a whole new generation involved. Many acts appear in unlikely places in the media. Some of our mates danced on Jools Holland’s TV spring spectacular last year. We want to welcome anyone who might like to try out dancing, male or female.” Everyone is welcome to attend the workshop, where energy and enthusiasm are said to be the essential ingredients.”

## NEWS

**St Albans** Day of Dance was on 25<sup>th</sup> September, with guests: **Bedford, Etcetera, Greensleeves, Ripley, Whitchurch, and Westminster**. “After a light breakfast at the Peahen, there was a mass show at the Alban Arena during which the new Squire danced in. Sadly, due to the recent death of **John Seaborn**, there was no Squire to dance out. However, in a touching ceremony, John’s widow and daughter passed over the regalia of office to the new incumbent. After the mass show, two tours embussed for a selection of pub spots, in deteriorating weather. The two tours visited Hatfield House and Knebworth House respectively, before a final refreshment spot and an excellent Feast in the St Albans Abbey refectory.”

**Bedford** Day of Dance – to abstract from their Christmas Newsletter “Our Day of Dance was repeated in early October. We were pleased to see our friends from the **East Surrey** and **Manchester** again, also a full side from **Aldbury** [some of whom normally join us on Plough Monday]. We also welcomed **St Albans; Thaxted** and **Yateley** who had not visited us for some years. A representative from Faultline Morris in California, USA also attended, as did **Bob Cross**, Squire of the Morris Ring. The weather was idyllic and a very successful day was had by all. Two tours danced in the Embankment area in the morning, before combining for a massed show in Harpur Square before lunch. We then moved to the Corn Exchange to dance two spots at the Bedford Beer Festival. There was a generous time allowed to take lunch [Gunn the Baker’s “Bedfordshire Clangers” and sample the beers]. In the afternoon, we danced at the Swan Hotel; the museum and in Silver Street. We next checked the beer [and tea] at the Banker’s Draft, and later the guest beers at the Wellington Arms. We returned to Castle Lower School for a Feast. The quality of the food was, as usual, exceptional – thanks to our wives and partners. We were pleased to be joined by our guests **Roger Nicholls** and **Phil Marsh**. After passing the Loving Cup, songs were sung, and there was some informal dancing to complete the day. Phil Marsh [now in his 80s] showed his prowess on the harmonica and played for a Bledington Trunkles – he remarked that he had not played it for some 40 years!!! He was much pleased by photographs in the scrapbooks on display that showed him as the Doctor for the Ampleforth play in 1947. Indoor camping was available and a full English breakfast on the Sunday morning.”

**G.Y.M.** – no not that energetic thing – but the acronym for **Great Yorkshire Morris**, who have joined as Associate members. As mentioned in the May Newsletter [No. 33] the Side formed when local Sides were having to turn down events when they might not have enough Men, but realised that there were Men keen to dance more often than numbers in their own Sides allowed. **Andrew Lynch**, their Squire, and also Squire of **Boar’s Head** updates us “We had 15 men at the practise, including one beginner. This enabled us to do both Long Sword and Cotswold. None of the individual constituent sides have been able to practise the 8 man Vandals of Hamerwich for some considerable time. This evening we had Vandals at one end of the hall and a Sword Dance at the other. I am enthusiastically confident that this is going to work... really well.”

**18 – 30s Morris Weekend.** This was hosted in, and by **Leicester** from 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2004. No information is yet to hand – perhaps a photo-item for the Morris Circular?

**Paul Woods, Bristol**'s "Uncle Happy" provides the stats for the dances they have performed most often over the course of the last year at <http://eis.bris.ac.uk/~lipw/morris/charts.htm> (There's ten years' worth of stats up the site). "Anyhow, this year's chart has a major shock. Our all time most-danced dance, March Past, Bristol-Eynsham style, has been knocked from top position in the chart (held since 1976) to fifth place, and the current Top of the Pops is (ta da!) Happy Man in a style supposedly based on Adderbury. The reasons for this huge turnaround are far from clear. I suspect it's something to do with the fact that our current Squire, **Grant Glanville**, said at the start of his tenure, "I don't like that dance, and don't intend to call it during my Squireship!" Well! Red Rag to a Bull! Bristol being bl\*\*\*y minded in the extreme have contrived to perform the dance as often as possible through the last twelve months - with considerable success, it now seems. If you're remotely interested in any of the above twaddle, run, don't walk, to the website ... where you can see the full sordid details of what we dance at the moment. Or did, up until September just gone."

**Norman Anderson, Harthill** notes "We have had a cracking year and it is continuing into the practice season. A couple of weeks ago, **Colin** our Squire has a bit of a birthday do on practice night (60 years young) with pie and peas and a barrel. Last Saturday it was my mothers 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and the lads came and performed at the party in a local hotel. We even got another booking from someone who had seen us through the glass doors! We are into the South Yorkshire carol singing season in the pub after practice. Whilst not strictly a Morris event, we organise it and run it with the help of the widow of one our local doctors. It's all happening."

#### AND FINALLY .....

**"Ring is Morris dancing as Caerphilly pull off win"** "Caerphilly coach Mark **Ring** was upbeat last after his side posted a last-gasp 14-13 Welsh Premiership victory. .... With the hosts 13-9 ahead in the final minute, a howler by the Bedwas backs let in on-loan full-back Stuart **Morris** for the winning try....." 14<sup>th</sup> October 2004 – South Wales Echo.

**Shag Graetz** of **Pinewoods** wrote to the Ring Bagman "I read that a Mexican outfit is buying your cement company. Does that mean we'll have to call you Señor Bagman from now on?"

#### CONCLUSION

As well as wishing you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year, may I thank all those Sides and individuals who have invited me to events and provided hospitality. This year I have cut down the visits somewhat, so my apologies if work; other pressures [or the stop in hospital!] – or multiple invitations for the same evening/weekend, meant I could not attend. Those pressures have meant that I have not always produced a formal thank-you letter. So if I did not provide written thanks for hospitality, may I tender my sincere apologies and thank you again now? I am sure my successor will be far more efficient in this respect!!

Please to keep the News flowing and report any changes for the Directory. Ensure your event is advertised and/or reported by sending in a flyer or Report by Email. Editing takes less time than copy-typing.

The next Newsletter should be produced in the New Year; it should contain the new improved Insurance Certificates; and The Morris Dancer.

*Wassail*

John Frearson, Bagman, The Morris Ring