



The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 4 – September 1998

Greetings.

This fourth Newsletter of the 1998 season includes various news and information.

A brief summary of the contents is again enclosed. Please copy this to your Side, or leave this full copy around for them to peruse.

Also enclosed with this mailing are:

A page of amendments to the Directory.

The demand for your **Annual Subscriptions**. For your *rapid payment discount rate* [Full £35 – Associate £25], cheques will be required by 1st October [which thanks to the date of this mailing and the bountiful generosity of the Treasurer, will occur this year on **31 October!!!**]. **Remember: NO PAYMENT MEANS NO INSURANCE.**

An application form for the 1999 Ring Meetings. Return by 30 November please.

Your copy / copies of the Autumn Morris Circular

An apology: for omitting to mention in the last Newsletter that I had allowed myself a holiday for the last two weeks in August – if you failed to get answers during that time – I grovel.

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!!*

IN MEMORIAM

ROY HORTON

We are saddened to have to announce the death of Roy Horton, formerly Fool of Bedford Morris Men from the 1970s to the 1990s, latterly active with Exeter Morris Men, on morning of 1 September, following a considerable period of less than robust health.

He had had various visits to hospital and, ever cheerfully optimistic, had hoped that things would be sorted out and would improve soon.

The Bedford Men were very pleased to have seen him recently when he led their tour [together with the Plymouth Men and Martlets] at Exeter Ring Meeting in July. He had been presented with Honorary Membership of Bedford Morris Men on that occasion.

We extend our sympathies to Roy's widow Yvonne *.

[* Bonny Green, 1, Rowen Drive, Seaton, Devon EX12 2UH]

JOHN GREEN 1948 – 1998

Those acquainted with the Wessex Morris Men over the last 20 years will be saddened to hear of the death of John Green, musician, dancer, singer, comrade, at the early age of 49. The son of a Yorkshire miner turned cabinet maker, John was born in Hull and brought up in Doncaster and followed his father's second trade. Involved with music from an early age, he became proficient on harmonica, banjo and concertina and was involved in the folk circuits of the sixties. Following his girl friend Pat to Australia, they married and formed a small folk group on the Australian circuit.

Returning to England, John joined the prison service in his trade, and was posted to Portland in Dorset, where, in 1978, he also joined the nearest Morris Side, Wessex. He learned the dances with his usual determination and single-mindedness, but it was the music that really interested him and he bought a melodeon and set about learning and mastering 100 tunes. Henceforth John played for Wessex with skill, authority and sensitivity.

John retired from the prison service on health grounds but later he set up a workshop that made high-class furniture to his exacting standards. Blunt, honest, fiercely loyal and of the highest integrity, John feared no man but was ever ready with encouragement, a helping hand and sound advice. He will be sorely missed.

Condensed from a fuller text by Don Byfleet – Foreman

VINCE WEBB

Dudley Binding reports the death of Vince Webb of Carn Brae Morris, at the tragically early age of 45 years.

ARM – 1999 BEDFORD. 5 – 7 MARCH 1999.

The 1999 Annual Representatives Meeting will be held on 6 March 1999 at Daubeney School, Kempston, Bedford. .

Remember that the Bagman must receive various items at least three months before the Meeting – that is, by 6 December 1998. These include:-

Nominations for Bagman*.

Nominations for three Elected Area Representatives* for the North West; the South West; and the West Midlands and Wales [West and South]. The present incumbents are prepared to continue but other candidates may be nominated.

Nominations for New Member Clubs*.

Proposed alterations to the Constitution.

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.

* Nomination forms are available from the Bagman.

MEETING UPDATES – and reminders

Fools and Beasts Unconvention: The 1998 “Unconvention” will be in Plymouth from 23 – 25 October 1998. The Application Form was in your May mailing. There are still some places available; contact the convenor Eric Pressley [Tel: 01709-874770].

Ring Advisory Council: A reminder for those involved: the next Advisory Council will be on Saturday 14 November 1998 at The Lamp Tavern, Barwick Street, Birmingham – near Snow Hill station.

Ring Jigs Instructional. 22 - 24 January 1999 at Sutton Bonnington, Nottinghamshire. Hosts: Dolphin Morris Men. An application form [bright yellow] was enclosed with the last mailing. For information contact Bert Cleaver [Tel: 01226 241 551].

THE CONSTITUTION

We are hoping to discuss some changes and clarifications to the Constitution, including outline proposals on Voting arrangements, at the Advisory Council Meeting in November. Any suggestions or proposals in advance of the formal resolution stage will be welcomed. These would not, of course, debar any such proposals being made direct to the ARM.

PUBLICATIONS SCHEDULE

Reminder: Copy for the next Morris Dancer to Eddie Dunmore by 1st December please.

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 form was provided with the last Newsletter. The form is not essential – you can send the information by Email or carrier pigeon – but make sure we receive the changes. The form also asks for both practice and dance out nights – this helps those wishing to be guided to a side for practice, or for Ring Bagmen and like minded individuals to come and watch you – or even to join in!!

Congratulations to **Silkeborg** for being first to return their corrections – in spite of the fact that we have been sending their envelope to the wrong town in Denmark for the last four years!!

RING MEETINGS – 1999 - APPLICATIONS

It is now time to considering your choice of Ring Meeting for next year. Fuller details are given on the reverse of the appended Application Form. Those scheduled are as follows:-

4 - 6 June THAXTED RING MEETING - for some 200 plus men;

16 - 18 July LONG MAN RING MEETING – for 150 men based in Eastbourne;

23 - 25 July SILURIAN RING MEETING – for 200 men, based in Ledbury;

8 – 10 Sept LEICESTER RING MEETING – for 180 men, based in South Wigston.

Late applications will be processed after those that have arrived on time and may lose you your first choice of Meeting. Please return the form by the end of November. Your success or otherwise in obtaining your selection will be notified in December. A provisional listing of attendees will be included in the January Newsletter.

RING MEETINGS 1998 - EXETER

The **Exeter** Meeting was blessed with fine weather [except for the merest drizzle for a dances or two on the Sunday – sorry **Westminster** – now I know why you wanted an early spot!].

We gathered in Honiton on the Friday evening and after the meal some were treated to a tasting session with **East Surrey**. The theme for a small collection brought by their Bagman **Bob Davies** this year was Rums: these included a Nigerian Rhum [to be avoided - although it passed “Loving Cup” style around the **Bedford** Men when they were not sending round one member’s Draft Cider!!]. The runner up was a Guyanan “Pusser’s Rum” at 95.5% Proof, after which Past Squire **Geoff Jerram** was heard to declare, “I could get to hiccup on that”. The winner, an incredible Jamaican Rum from Appleton at 151% Proof – a tiny drop on the tongue was sufficient to appreciate this – any more pickled the taste buds!!! A home brewed Apricot Brandy was also noteworthy!!!

There was a fine selection of local Real Ales at the school for those treating matters in a more conventional way. After those drinking in the town had returned, a selection of dances was performed, with various degrees of success!!

On Saturday five tours set out from Honiton – and an additional “Squire’s Tour” travelled in style in a minibus and was able to make a leisurely visit to all the Sides on their various tours during the day.

A first stop in Cullompton to watch **Icknield Way**, **Offley** and **Thaxted**. Then a retracing of our steps to make an additional stop in Dalwood [as Tim said we had time for a quick pint, at a good pub he knew]. We had just made it to the bar when a hoard of Morris Men turned up in a coach – it seemed the Exeter Tour organisers also knew a few good pubs. We watched **Mendip** and **Spring Grove** together with **Westminster** whose Unicorn stole and then sat upon the Bagman’s hat – it was recovered in due course!!

The next [official] stop was at Colyton, to meet up with **Martlets**, **Plymouth** and **Bedford**. Bedford had by this time transformed from a Cotswold Side into a North-West Side to the relief of Past Squire **Richard Hankinson** who had felt somewhat lonely as the only “clogger” present. Your Bagman was also allowed a dance – even though somewhat rusty – and casting clog-irons in all directions!!

On to lunch at Branscombe to take a leisurely break in company of **Kennett**, **Ripley** and **Northwood** and then later to the seaside at Lyme Regis to meet up with **East Surrey**, **Jockey** and our hosts **Exeter**. For some reason Jockey all had blue noses – due to some incident with some Snooker chalk at lunchtime; and were accompanied by a small step ladder which had been elected as their president – I was sober – honest!!! After these excitements a cup of coffee was considered essential and a tea shoppe was found before returning to Honiton.

Prior to the Feast, the Mayor of Honiton gave a reception for a representative from each Side at Honiton museum – it transpired that he was a member of **Greensleeves**.

The Feast was taken sitting at the Primary height tables [apparently there was a great shortage of tables in the school and they only just had enough] – we were grateful we did not also have to use the primary mini-chairs that were stacked in each class [sleeping] room!!! After an excellent meal – and more local beers – various speeches and presentations took place. The Squire’s Badge was passed to its new guardian **Daniel Fox** and **Tim Sercombe** received his past Squire’s badge and an engraved tankard. After a selection of songs, the tables were cleared and dancing continued until a late hour.

On Sunday we travelled to Exeter. Our hosts had allowed for normal Morris snail pace, but for some reason all moved off promptly – leaving us with time to kill. The procession to the cathedral moved off with two Cotswold sections to the fore, and a rear guard of Bedford dancing a North-West processional, with plenty of drum accompaniment.

After the service, we had the glorious setting of the West Front of the cathedral for the mass show. There were some excellent show dances. We then thanked **Tim Sercombe** for all his hard work on our behalf during two very busy, and well travelled, years as he danced out as our Squire with “Ladies of Pleasure” from Bledington. We then had the pleasure of greeting our new Squire, **Daniel Fox**, of **Thaxted Morris**, who danced in with “Bonnetts so Blue” from Bucknell..

A photograph in “The Times” on the following Monday, featured a father and son from **Dartington** [although not at the Meeting as a Side, they were some of many - including several Men from **Shakespeare** - who came on the Sunday to say farewell to Tim and to greet Daniel].

Other Morris personages present included: Past Squire **Roy Yarnell** playing “alternative tunes” for **Jockey**; and spotted in mufti, Past Squire **Mike Garland**. Again it was delightful to have old

friends of the Ring in the crowd including: Pru Boswell-Harper; Carol Curtis and Hilary Blandford.

Leaving after lunch and passing the Cathedral, we were asked when the show would start – unfortunately the local press had misprinted the times [I'm glad it is not just the Bedford papers that do this!!]. Our enquirer, on hearing that she had missed the show, asked if Bedford were present. We remarked that we were Bedford; she retorted that our hats were “wrong” [we were wearing our north-west kit] and that her father was a Bedford Man. It transpired she was Past Squire, **Fred Hamer**'s daughter Jacqueline. It is a very small world!!

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.

ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to John Messias, Fool of **East Kent Morris** who, on 20 June this year, celebrated 40 years as the East Kent Fool. A notable achievement – congratulations.

John o' Gaunt Morris [Lancaster] – 30th Anniversary. Keith Tassart, Bagman writes to let all those clubs with which they have been associated over the years that they have made it to 30 years. A weekend of dance was held in July in Garstang. Ten Sides were present or represented and John o' Gaunt thank them for their support. As the local brewery was the main sponsor, ALL the beer was FREE [from Mitchells Brewery of Lancaster]. They even managed to recruit three new members during the weekend – which does deserve congratulations. Keith also reached his 30th anniversary – and is the only Founder Member still dancing – congratulations to him also.

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. Any more who would like to be involved??

INDEX TO THE MORRIS DANCER

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

GLEANINGS

“All plays and Morris dancing shall be forbidden, for fear of spreading infection”

A public notice from Nashes Papers (1631), [quoted on **Ashdown Forest's** Programme].

“If you feel inclined to join in, have a desire to dress in strange attire, drink copious amounts of good ale and desport yourself with wild abandon,

please contact one of the officers of the side, before you get locked up by the authorities”

Recruiting statement - also from the **Ashdown Forest** Programme [Thanks – I **do** read them!!]

SERVICES

Concertina Manufacturer/Restorer: Andy Norman [Foreman **Ashdown Forest**]. A.C. Norman & Co, Old Stables, Nursery Lane, Nutley, Uckfield, Sussex TN22 3NR . Tel: 01825 713551.

THE “WWW” AND OTHER MATTERS

The three Morris Organizations have now registered www.morrisdancing.org to provide a central address with links to the various Morris pages. The Morris Ring itself has registered www.themorrisring.org to provide a similar central address. This will relieve some of the burden on John Maher's own site. John is the maestro for this site, which will host much of the material that was previously on his own site. Please check these new pages and the listings for your Side. Please Email John Maher [johnmaher@argonet.co.uk] with any corrections and also the Post-Code of your practice venue – he can then add a map to the directory! If you do not have an Email postman for your Side, try to obtain one and let us know the details please.

For those with access, there is a wealth of information on the Morris – and most can be accessed through these and John Maher's own pages. Calling in on a pages set up by **Wyre Forest**, I found Morris music emitted by my laptop – somewhat tricky when you are having a sneaky surf on the internet in the office!!

MAY DAY PUBLICITY

The Morris Federation collate publicity on events on May Day, and send this to the Tourist Board and post it on the Web Site etc. If you wish to take advantage of this central publicity service send details as follows: County; Town/area; Date; Host Team; Dance style; Other Teams attending and dance styles; Specific venue details; Contact name and telephone; Email and Website if available. Please send your details direct to Janet Dowling, 47, Chestnut Avenue, Ewell, Surrey KT19 0SY or Email: JADowling@AOL.com by the end of November.

AN APPEAL

Straw Hats: Does anyone have a source of trilby style hats in closely woven soft straw? Please contact Tony Tomlin of **Hartley Morris**. Tel: 01622 685969 or Email: TonyTomlin@aol.com

SWORD DANCE MAGAZINE

If anyone wishes to subscribe to “**Rattle Up Me Boys**”, the quarterly publication for those with an interest in sword dancing, they should contact Trevor Stone Esq., The Old Vicarage, Downe Street, Driffield, East Yorkshire YO25 6DX. [Subscribers and correspondents please note that the Royal Mail have changed the postcode!!]. Trevor is also looking for photographs of the Second Sword spectacular held in Whitby in May, for use in a future issue.

YOUR NEWS

Welcome to new Associate Members **Oak Apple Mummers** from Peterborough.

Apologies to the Squire for the error in my **Thaxted** Ring Meeting item in the last issue: he informs me that he is not the *youngest* Thaxted Grandfather – merely the most recent!!

We hear that **Jockey Morris** – and some hangers-on [including Past Squire Tim “International” Surcombe; and Overseas Bagman, John Maher] visited France. The visit coincided with both the World Cup Final and Bastille Day. Some trip by all accounts – hopefully someone will write it up for the Circular, so we can all know what they got up to!!

A thank you to **Stafford Morris** for the copy of their own Newsletter – all sorts of fancy columns and formats that I should try!! It included a Report on the Chipping Campden Ring Meeting from a Side's perspective – it was still as good as we thought it seemed. Well done again Shakespeare and Campden and sorry about the missing “p”s in the last Newsletter!

John Milce of **Sydney Morris** in Australia writes that “we always welcome visiting Morris Men, and usually manage too give them a good time [as two of the Yateley Men will vouch for]”. If you are visiting contact John as per Directory or appropriately at jmilce@sherborne.com.au.

Dudley Binding visited **Vancouver Morris** whilst on a trip to Canada. He reports that they are in fine health, dancing well with some 30 dancers and enjoying a wide range of Morris dance.

Congratulations to **Ripley** who have produced an Educational Resource Pack “Morris Dance for Youth”. This comprises a video, audio cassette and teachers manual, and covers seven dances. They obtained funding from the National Lottery through the “Arts for Everyone” scheme. To quote the Introduction: “**As an educational tool, Morris Dancing combines mathematics, physical education, music, history, culture, art, spatial awareness, mental ability, bodily co-ordination and team working.**” - no wonder I have problems getting it all together!!!

OUT AND ABOUT

Rather fewer visits – with Ring Meetings to attend and Summer Holidays.

A less well-timed visit to see **Exeter** – a week before their Ring Meeting [the customer could not wait!!], but it was at least on Exeter's night dancing out, and a chance to meet them all again before the Ring Meeting.

The evening before the Exeter Meeting, the journey from the office encompassed the **Redbornstoke** annual “Toddingtong Tour” of the eight pubs in that village. Other Sides present

included: **Letchworth; Stevenage Sword; Grand Union Rapper; Rose and Castle; Northampton** and **Aldbury**.

After the Exeter Meeting and trip to Bristol gave a chance to discuss Overseas and Web Site matters with **John Maher**, our Overseas Bagman – he has been busy this year dispatching Squire Tim to exotic locations – but he kept finding his way back for more.

As Bedford do not dance out regularly in August I was able to visit **Anker**, who also dance out on Wednesday evenings – but keep going through the holiday season. Anker are known for their lively dancing and their mega-hankerchiefs – I had not realised that they also had mega-sticks to match – caber tossing would be light exercise by comparison. The youngest member of the audience [aged 4.5 days] was Past Squire **Mike Garland**'s latest grandchild – unfortunately there is still not a full Garland family side, as this latest addition is of the wrong sort!! – but congratulations to all anyway – and keep on trying!!

A visit with some of the Bedford Men to one of **Aldbury**'s regular evenings and some interesting dance variations: an Adderbury style “Haul Away to South Australia” with sung shanty accompaniment and some interestingly nautical stick movements. Collected by their Squire in New Zealand, to where it had sailed from Australia; the dance having been devised by the Adelaide Morris Men. Aldbury's “Skirmish” tune set included Beethoven's 9th and the Lord of the Dance as well as the more usual Grenadiers. The music in the pub afterwards was excellent.

IN CONCLUSION

Many thanks to all those who have written with news and contributions – keep it up.

As we move from the dancing season, a thank you to those Sides that have worked so hard hosting some very successful Ring Meetings this year – **Richmondshire, Thaxted, Shakespeare, Chipping Campden** and **Exeter**. A thank you also to all those other Sides that have hosted their own Days of Dance and other events that are so essential to the well being of the Morris social calendar.

Although most Sides will still be dancing out from time to time - we now move into the comparative calm of the practice season. Hopefully we will all find new recruits – however difficult this may be. It is also the season of Feasts and Ales, and I look forward to meeting many friends – old and new - at events various.

Wassail,

John Frearson
Bagman, The Morris Ring

The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 4 – Sept 1998 - SUMMARY

The **Fourth 1998 Newsletter** includes:-

IN MEMORIAM – Notice of the deaths of *Roy Horton* [Bedford & Exeter]; *John Green* [Wessex] and *Vince Webb* [Carn Brae].

REMINDERS - **Fools and Animals** weekend and next year's **Jigs Instructional** and **ARM**.

RING MEETINGS 1998 – A Report on the Exeter Meeting at which *Tim Sercombe* [Exeter] danced out as Squire of the Ring and *Daniel Fox* [Thaxted] danced in.

RING MEETINGS 1999 - These will be hosted by: **Thaxted** [4 – 6 June]; **Long Man** [Eastbourne, 16 - 18 July]; **Silurian** [Ledbury, 23 – 25 July]; and **Leicester** [South Wigston, 8 – 10 September]. **It is now time to make your Ring Meeting choice for 1999.**

THE “WWW” - The Morris Organizations have now registered www.morrisdancing.org and the Morris Ring has registered www.themorrisring.org.

YOUR NEWS - Welcome to new Associates **Oak Apple Mummers** from Peterborough. We hear that **Jockey** – and hangers-on [including Past Squire Tim “International” Sercombe; and Overseas Bagman, John Maher] visited France. John Milce of **Sydney Morris** in Australia writes, “we always welcome visiting Morris Men”. Dudley Binding visited **Vancouver Morris** whilst on a trip to Canada. Congratulations to **Ripley** who have produced an Educational Resource Pack “Morris Dance for Youth”. This comprises a video, audio cassette and teachers manual.

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OUT AND ABOUT – The Bagman met up variously with: **Anker; Exeter; Redbornstoke; Letchworth; Stevenage Sword; Grand Union Rapper; Rose and Castle; Northampton and Aldbury.**

FIND OUT MORE - ask your Bagman to show you the full Newsletter!!!

Wassail,

John Frearson
Bagman, The Morris Ring