



## **The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 7 – March 1999**

*Greetings,*

A very warm welcome to **Aldbury Morris Men** who were elected to Full Membership of the Morris Ring at the ARM.

My thanks to all those present at the ARM for confirming me in the position of Bagman and for your good wishes. My thanks to **Letchworth Morris Men** for providing my Nomination. As I am still in post, you are still going to be subjected to these Newsletters. Any constructive comments as to content will be welcomed, as will any contributions.

E-mailed versions of these Newsletters are available on request [as Word document either zipped or unzipped; or plain text – please request and specify by Email].

**Included in this Newsletter:-** The Squire's formats for the Ring Massed dances; Notes from the Treasurer on sales goods and the results of his sponsored slim; and a Summary of the Newsletter. Plus reports on the ARM and the Jigs Instructional - and lots more!!

**Also enclosed with this mailing are:**

The Minutes of the ARM [N.B. For Members of the Advisory Council, the Minutes of that meeting will follow with the next Newsletter].

For Sides not represented at the ARM, a copy of the 1999 – 2000 Directory.

Also:- An update on the Nine Days Wonder; A request for information on new dances – and inevitably, there are already a few **amendments** to the new Directory; and an application form for the Sherborne Instructional - 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> October;

**Remember: Unless you pass on the content of this Newsletter to the Men in your Side, the information stops with you. A summary is included on a separate sheet. Pass it around - copy it – read it out – précis it – whatever .... but let the Men know that the Ring does communicate to you and to them!!**

**ARM – 1999 BEDFORD. Friday 5<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 1999.**

The **1999 Annual Representatives Meeting** was held on 6 March 1999 at Bedford. The Minutes are enclosed and summarise the formal proceedings. The social events are summarised below.

It is difficult to provide a completely unbiased view of the weekend when one's own Side has been the hosts. However, the **Bedford Men** – and their wives and supporters, kept me out of it as much as possible!! We were pleased to have a good attendance – some 100 persons on the day [including the Bedford works team] and some 50 Sides represented.

Friday evening was informal around the bar – which hosted the ARM Beer Festival – and in the dining area and library. Beers from the local B&T Brewery of Shefford, included their Bitter; Dark Mild; SPA [special pale ale] and Stout; guest beers were also available “Archibald Beckett” from Tisbury [Wiltshire] and “Aviator” from Dent [Cumbria].

The last reveller left the library, having slept soundly in a very un-easy chair, as we let in the breakfast squad at 6.00am. A buffet breakfast, with a help yourself and “toast some for the next man” toast bar, helped mop up any hangovers. Lunch in the mid-meeting break included a specially commissioned local Bedfordshire delicacy – the “Bedfordshire Clanger”<sup>1</sup>.

Three sets gathered for the Instructional on the Hinton-in-the-Hedges dances taken by **Bedford** Foreman, **Roger Nicholls**. Some of those at the Advisory Council at this time would have much preferred to attend the Instructional.

By evening, the meeting hall had been transformed with white cloths, and napkins and menu cards alternated in Bedford's Blue and Orange colours. The menu was served with military efficiency by the Bedford hosts. The Menu included Pate and Salami; Spiced Lamb Polo with Rice, Broccoli and Corn; Poached Wardens<sup>2</sup>; Cheeses with Biscuits; Dried Fruits and Nuts and Coffee – these last all accompanied by circulating bottles of Port.

The toasts and speeches included The Loyal Toast [**Daniel Fox** - Squire of the Ring]; The Immortal Memory [**Tim Sercombe** – Immediate Past Squire]; The Hosts, Bedford Morris [**Brian Pollard** – North- East Area Representative]; Reply and The Morris Ring [**Ian Monaghan** – Immediate past Squire, Bedford Morris]; Reply and Thanks [**Daniel Fox**].

The Morris Ring Loving Cup<sup>3</sup> was circulated, whilst songs were sung. Our newest Members, **Aldbury**, started proceedings with a fine duet; then Past Squires **Geoff Jerram** [**Winchester**] and **Richard Hankinson** [**Saddleworth**] each made a contribution. **Shakespeare** followed and then **Ron Shuttleworth** [**Coventry Mummers**] sang the “Female Morris Dancer” with a topical additional verse concerning a Female Morris Musician!! The final song was from **Les Skinner** [**Bedford**] – “The Easter Tree” [or “the soggy squirrel” as it is more familiarly

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<sup>1</sup> An all in one pastry, main course and pudding, with meat at one end and apple at the other – the trick being to work out at which end to start!!

<sup>2</sup> These are another Bedford Speciality, poached Warden Pears in Cider to a medieval recipe. The Squire, **Daniel Fox**, was later found wheedling the recipe out of the kitchen staff.

<sup>3</sup> The Loving Cup was presented to the Morris Ring by the Bedford Morris Men, in memory of their Founder Member, Past Squire Fred Hamer. The Cup is held by Bedford [currently by the Ring Bagman] on behalf of the Morris Ring. It can be made available for Ring functions on application to the Bagman.

known by his fellows!!] which with its sombre and reflective mood suggested to the Squire that it was time for a rounding up tune from the Treasurer, **Steve Adamson**, [**Boar's Head**] who played upon his whistle, before we cleared the tables for dancing.

Dancing carried on for some considerable time until a general drift to the library for coffee biscuits and toast. Some further singing was heard long into the early hours – and the bar did a roaring trade of “last orders” and “a jug of Ale to last you” until unmentionable hours.

A more leisurely breakfast and the Sunday papers preceded departure for some – and further arrivals for the Archive event.

## THE ARCHIVE MEETING

Some fifty persons – some feeling somewhat somnolent after two very short nights – assembled for the second Archive Meeting, under the Chairmanship of Roy Dommett. A fine selection of scrapbooks, diaries, photo albums and other memorabilia were on show.

The main business opened with **Malcolm Taylor** - Librarian, Vaughan Williams Library, EFDSS, Cecil Sharp House on “The problems of housing a collection”. **David Cleveland**, Director of the East Anglian Film Archive, University of East Anglia spoke and showed slides on “Conservation and Storage of Film and Video Material”. This presentation concluded with the showing of various historical movie film of Bedford and then, as a fitting finale, film of Thaxted village and a performance by **Thaxted**, which livened the attention of the audience!!

Before lunch there were two short additional items. **Chris Metherell**, Archivist of The Morris Ring spoke on “The Revised Data Base for the Ring Archives and Morris Archives on the World Wide Web”, and **Pat Pickles** updated us on “Progress on the National Centre for English Traditional Performance”.

**Doc Rowe**, collector and lecturer, drew the short straw to open after lunch with “The Problems of Audio Tape and Similar Materials”. He was followed by **Stuart Welch**, MD of Conservation by Design Ltd., Bedford spoke on “Conservation and Storage of Photographic and Miscellaneous Materials”. The final guest speaker was our 1997 guest, **Rachel Watson**, County Archivist of Northamptonshire, who rounded up and succeeded in “Putting it in Perspective”.

## LOST PROPERTY – ARM WEEKEND

Bedford still have a red sweater [too small for the Bagman, so available to its owner on request]. It was left in the library at the ARM venue on Sunday morning.

## ARM 2000

We still need a Side to host the 2000 ARM. A leaning to the North or West of the country might be preferred. Some interest has been expressed by **Ripley** and **East Surrey**. It is a useful chance for a dry run, if you are thinking of hosting a Ring Meeting. It has been suggested that a workshop on Mumming could feature as the Sunday activity. Any interested Sides please contact the Bagman as soon as possible.

## **RING MEETINGS – 1999**

Plans are now well in hand for this year's Ring Meetings. Deposits are no doubt being requested. Please help the Meeting organisers by paying promptly – late payers may find they are deselected.

**N.B. There is still some space at the Leicester and Thaxted Meetings.** Leicester would be pleased to have another couple of Sides. **Apply NOW.**

## **FROM THE TREASURER**

**New Sales Goods** - Now available from the Morris Shop (Mike Chandler 01525-874854) Letchworth tapes transposed to Compact Disc. If used for practise dancing, so much easier than re-winding, just flick from track to track. And only £7 each +P/P

MORRIS DANCE SELECTION LMM-1 - A variety of tunes from Fieldtown, Adderbury, Bledington, Brackley, Headington and Sherborne

HEADINGTON MORRIS DANCES LMM-4 - Processional, stick and Jig.

HEADINGTON MORRIS DANCES LMM-5 - Handkerchief set dances.

FIELDTOWN MORRIS DANCES LMM-10

FIELDTOWN MORRIS DANCES LMM-11

**The (E.F.D.S.S.) Folk Directory 1999-2000** - Listings, Festivals, Ring Meetings, Classified, Media Contacts. Every thing you would want to know about who does what to whom, where and when (£5.00 +£1 P&P)

## **The Treasurer's Sponsored Slim - a Message from The Treasurer.**

"Many thanks to all persons and sides who supported my sponsored slim. The weigh-in, on the Thursday before the ARM (04/03/99) proved a loss of 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> stone. The target was 3 stone. I have produced a set of accounts, which will be despatched to all participants, along with their Invoice for pledges made, in the near future. If all the pledges convert to cash, the Morris Archive should gain £386.65.

"The struggle goes on. I now have a personal wager with my brother that my next target is to be 20 stone by Christmas. If not, then I have to part with a substantial amount of cash. That, as you all well know, has not happened in the last 5 years. And if I have anything to do with it, they'll be no parting wi' brass this year either."

## **THE DIRECTORY**

**You should have received the 1999 – 2000 Directory, either at the ARM or with this mailing. Remember to communicate any changes of Bagman [or any other changes] to me, and to copy this information to your Area Representative.**

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Sherborne Instructional** - Sutton Bonnington will again be a venue for a Ring Instructional. **Dolphin** have been bullied into hosting another of *Bert Cleaver*'s spectacles. No doubt the **Greensleeves** team will be assisting. This time for a Sherborne Instructional. This will be from 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The cost will be £33.00. An application form is enclosed and a prompt application is advised as only a few places remain, as the event has already been publicised to "Addicts"; at Feasts and Ales; and by Email.

**Musicians' Instructional** – This event is to be re-introduced after a short breather. It is scheduled for October - and the hosts will be **Mendip**. Venue and details will be notified in due course, but expressions of interest can be forwarded to *Mike Chandler*.

**Fools and Animals Instructional** – this is scheduled for the last week-end in October at Wath upon Dearne. Contact *Eric Pressley*.

**Jigs Instructional 2000** – *Bert Cleaver* has again imposed on **Dolphin** and chosen Sutton Bonnington as the venue for the Jigs Instructional in January 2000.

Application forms for these events will be in future Newsletters – but you can express interest to the organisers as soon as you like.

## OVERSEAS MATTERS

The Overseas Bagman, *John Maher*, has had a request from Prof. Alkis Raftis, of the Dora Stratou Theatre in Athens, to establish exchanges with Greek Dance groups. They have 4000 members! "Dora Stratou" is the central organisation of Greek Folklore. Any Morris groups interested? (There are certainly all male dances and dancers in Greece!!)

John has also visited the AGM of the French folk organisation on our behalf – and at his own cost – thanks John. He writes as follows: -

### “Overseas Bagman Absconds to Fouesnant for a French ARM!”

“Whilst Ring members were discussing weighty matters at the ARM, I attended the corresponding annual general meeting of l'Union Nationale Des Groupes de Traditions Populaires in Fouesnant, Brittany. The UNGTP is concerned with French Folk Dance, Music and Costume and Folklore, having around sixty member groups from all over France. They also have a 'Section Etrangere' so have connections with other national dance groups in France, for example Polish dancers. Their president is Madame Annie Ciolfi, whom Jockey MM met last year - she runs the Romans sur Isere Festival, and is with the group Empi et Riaume. There is another Morris connection, Madame Annie LE DU is the new secretary of the UNGTP, and also runs the group Keltiad, who will be visiting Bristol MM over Easter.

“The meeting was very like a Morris ARM, except for the food [he had missed the Bedford ARM – Ed] and that we were staying in a beautiful hotel on the edge of 'Baie de Concarneau'. Their concerns are a little like ours, and the meeting ran like our ARM. They are moving their headquarters over to Romans, and to Empi's premises, this is partly to help the finances of the UNGTP. They had some elections - but don't change their President every other year! There was a lot of music - Breton pipe, drum and bombarde bands are formidable, particularly at 2am and the Saturday feast lasted about five hours!

“During the Saturday lunch time we had a local celtic singer and harpist playing for us - Morgan Touze - Scottish and Irish songs as well as traditional Breton songs. We also met the Mayor of Quimper at a local chateau, and had a coach trip to Pont Aven.

“There was a long discussion about dance choreography, particularly the extent to which dancers should stay strictly with the tradition - as collected, and in authentic costume, and whether they should stage their performances more to please their audience, and not to try to educate. They are very keen on their regional costumes, with many distinctive lace 'coiffes'.

2The other main discussion was about finances, they do seem to be able to get much more support from their local councils than we can. However to run festivals I have heard of one of their group members taking out a loan from a Bank, and using their home as the security!

“At the meeting I was asked about arranging some exchanges with some of the groups, 'Los Pastorels del Roergue' (de Rouergue south of Figeac) would like a team for their festival in mid August. I also have a request to set up one or two group exchanges for the year 2000. There are a few all male groups down in the Basque region, and M. Henri Reynard, who edits the UNGTP magazine 'Folklore Vivant' has promised me that he will put me in contact with their organisation. I also discovered an interesting group from University of Badajoz. 'Tuna de Medecine' are an all male group who will be appearing at the Romans festival this year. Whilst Romans do not want a Morris side this year (no offence Jockey I assure you, they send their regards and appreciation!), they would like to hear from a ladies group to accompany the Spaniards.

“So gentlemen, if you know of a good ladies clog or stave dance group (NOT mixed), and who are free during the weekend of 10/11 July, please get them to contact me as soon as possible.

“I think that it is important for us (The Morris Ring) to make contacts particularly with our French neighbours, and to get our dances and traditions known better in France. Meetings such as the Fouesnant one are an excellent platform for this. Next years meeting will be run by Groupe Folklorique Bressan "Les Hospitaliers" from Bourg en Bresse, I hope I will be there.

## WEB NEWS

Check out the new, super improved **Dartington** Website at: [www.njlong.ndirect.co.uk](http://www.njlong.ndirect.co.uk) - it includes their provisional programme.

If you have not done so, please let **John Maher** have the location [including map reference and/or postcode] of your practice location – and the day of the week and time – and he will conjure up a map to help recruits get off the E waves and to find the real you!!!

The latest Directory includes the E-mail numbers for some 100 Sides. Updated information on E-mail numbers and Website links can be found on [www.TheMorrisRing.org/email.htm](http://www.TheMorrisRing.org/email.htm)

## ANNIVERSARIES

**Icknield Way** celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a Day of Dance in Wantage on 10th July and an evening Ceilidh at the Old Mill Hall. Further Sides welcome but should get in touch.

**Saddleworth** celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their foundation; the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their first Rushcart, and they first danced in kit on Maundy Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 25 years ago. **Richard Hankinson** is thus claiming three Anniversaries to keep the Newsletter full!!!

## THE DOME

Our Domemaster, “Monty” Montague, has finally had a reply from the Productions Department of the Millennium Experience. It does not inspire confidence in their organisation - two different spellings of Montague – both wrong!! They think we want to “host an event” – and have not yet twigged that we feel there should be regular Morris spots!!

## YOUR PROGRAMMES – AND POSTERS

Many Sides produce a Programme, for publicity; recruitment, and in some cases advertising income. It is very useful to have a couple of copies for the Ring files on the each Side. I can then glean [or check] all manner of information, and know where to find you should opportunity arise.

They also provide a useful record for the future of what was going on your patch. The Bagman's files find their way to the Ring Archive, and if they contain your programmes these will also find a permanent place for interested persons in the future.

*Gordon Ridgewell* had asked me if the Ring kept examples of Morris posters. I have been in the habit of acquiring posters when I have visited Morris events – and these are preserved in my personal collection. They will no doubt find their way to the Archive in years to come. However, a fuller record of Morris poster styles would be of interest, and any sent in for your file will find their way to the Ring Archive.

I will organise a few pints for the Sides that I consider have produced the best Programme and the best poster in 1999 – 2000. Send them to the Bagman please – and I will also include those I collect during my wanderings. Results, and beer tokens, at the ARM next year.

## THE JIGS WEEKEND - 1999

The Squire and the Bagman braved potential crippling exhaustion to join the Ring Jigs weekend, hosted by **Dolphin** at Sutton Bonnington Parish Hall from 22 – 24 January 1999.

It seemed to start tamely enough: move in; fill tankard with a pint of Kimberly Bitter; and enjoy an evening meal from chef **Bert Cleaver** [one of the many facets he was to display over the weekend]. However, the pain started all too soon: We danced Fieldtown that evening with a foursome from **Greensleeves** demonstrating; they had obviously been schooled since birth by our [tor]mentor!! We launched ourselves with the confidence that only three pints of said Ale and a good supper can imbue. All too soon it was over and time to go down to the pub to restore liquid balance. This took until the small hours as due precaution had to be taken against dehydration on the morrow.

Saturday dawned and all too soon it was time to work – and work we did!! Bledington from **Geoff Jerram** with **Albert Wilkins** [Winchester] demonstrating. The **Anker** team dealt with the less well known Oddington Jigs. **Tony Ashley** taught and **Joe Oldaker** demonstrated. Then **Bert Cleaver**, exited the kitchen for a very brisk Bucknell session.

Lunch followed – and a chance to rest wearying limbs. All too soon it was time for Geoff Jerram to return refreshed to teach the Bampton repertoire. This was something of a stylistic shock for those of us [the majority] who dance “traditional” Right Footed, Double Stepped Bampton. This was an “up to date” Left Footed, Single Stepped dance.

After lunch Bert Cleaver taught Longborough and then his speciality - Sherborne. A welcome release when Bert dismissed us. Time to rest, change, visit the pub and reassemble for the Feast.

The Feast was a Cleaver spectacular: a Near Eastern menu: Hummus, Tapenade and Tzatziki [try that in your spell-checker!!] – and that was just the starter. Levantine Lamb with selection of vegetables; Halva Cake for pud; Cheese; Coffee [and Mints]. Toasts and Speeches followed including The Immortal memory from *Des Herring* of **East Suffolk**; and The Morris Ring from *Mike Cogan* of **Greensleeves**.

After Dinner the multitude strolled back to the pub – and some claimed they were locked in until three in the morning!! Sunday morning came too soon and after another excellent breakfast Geoff Jerram taught Headington and then we had a revision session.

The thanks of all to **Bert Cleaver** for master minding the weekend and all his work [much in advance] on the catering. Thanks also to the **Greensleeves** team, who cooked, washed up and emerged from the kitchen to exchange washcloths for handkerchiefs to demonstrate jigs. Thanks also to the other instructors and demonstrators from **Winchester** and **Anker** and to **Dolphin** the hosts who had co-ordinated the accommodation, the beer and much of the general administration before and during the event. Thank you all.

## YOUR NEWS

It appears **Dartington** have been a little shy in mentioning that they appeared on Jim Davidson's Generation Game broadcast on Saturday 7th November 1998 on BBC1. Did anyone see it? Or don't we watch such things!!! Dartington feel that it is now safe to admit it. Also from *John Culf* of Dartington. "Here's a thought for your next Newsletter: How many Morris sides take a set of tide tables to their programme planning meeting? Dartington often include a boat trip to a pub at the end of a tidal creek, so a high tide around closing time is essential. Another regular Friday night sees the side using a seagoing tractor taxi to cross from the mainland to a pub on a small island, which is otherwise cut off by the tide".

**Apologies:** - to **Victory** – now that the Bagman has consulted a map, he finds that Nelson's ship of that name is not parked in a suburb of Southampton.

- to **Roger Nicholls** of **Bedford**. He points out that he is not quite so venerable that he reformed **Brackley** in the early 1950s; he suggests that the early 1960s is more likely!

- to a Past Squire who has been counting his mentions and feels that he was overexposed in the last Newsletter – I promised to try not to name him this time!!! His recent amorous activities in USA will go unreported. Are there no attractive young ladies in Devon!

**Helier** instituted Wassailing Saturday, with a tour, in order to encourage the Jersey apple crop – this is on the nearest Saturday to 16<sup>th</sup> January. They have "an abundance" of red:gold:red baldrick braid, if your side needs those colours!! They have already supplied **Carn Brea**!!

**Plymouth** are claiming a first – having danced "Constant Billy", Headington and "William and Nancy", Bledington, in the centre lane of the M5 near Junction 8 on their way to **Lichfield** Ale. The inevitable smash up ahead had left them stuck in a traffic jam – so they piled out and performed – I never did find out whether they passed around the hat!!

**Coventry** are planning a repeat of their Traditions Tour – last year they danced 12 traditions in their home locations. This year they are hoping to repeat the Cotswold section on 24<sup>th</sup> April. They considering a mega-event on the same lines for the Millennium. Anyone interested in becoming involved - or helping - contact **Pete Grassby** [Tel: 01203 336740].



**Adlington** taught the local Venture Scouts dances for the recent World Jamboree in Chile.

**Geoff Thompson**, of **Handsworth Sword**, is back in touch from the USA. His Email address [via his wife at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island] is given in the updates. He sends his best wishes to all, and writes – or types: -

“We are now well settled into a splendid apartment which is less than 10 minutes walk for Jill to the lab and is in one of the older parts on the hill overlooking the city centre. I thought I'd got away from all my DIY tasks once we left UK, but I have spent quite some time on jobs round the apartment and some decorating for our friends who took us in while we searched for a place of our own! I have just made contact with one of the Pinewoods Men and will be joining them for a practice on 7th March - 2-5 on a Sun p.m. - that sounds like a real work out! I'm feeling a bit stiff since my last dance out was on Boxing Day! So life is good and the great thing is the number of gloriously sunny days even if the temperature is rather brass monkeyish!”

**City of Bangor Morris - Fface-to-Fface - 19th & 20th June 1999.** **Tony Foard**, Bagman of **Mersey** sends news that the “occasional” City of Bangor Side will hopefully join the Ring as Associates. Former members and supporters are invited to get in touch with the Bagman-in-Exile for details of this year's gathering. Please contact Tony Foard, [33, Cunningham Drive, Bromborough, Cheshire CH63 0JX] on 0151-334 4566 or via email nanty@ajfoard.demon.co.uk; he will be delighted to hear from you.

I understand that **Bristol** had an instructional on the Ring Massed Dances for 1999. This was taken by Past Squire **Mike Garland** of **East Suffolk**. For the remainder of you, the Squire's chosen format for these dances appears as a postscript to this Newsletter.

## OUT AND ABOUT

Just before I went to press, I had occasion to be in Somerset. A visit was squeezed in to **Chalice** practice evening. These are lubricated with local cider – which is later washed down with beer!! My first dance was a challenge – as well as being an unfamiliar [to me] Fieldtown item, the musician had popped out for a moment and it was danced in silence! I was grateful to their Bagman, **Bob Cross**, who provided accommodation and showed off his memorabilia from their late Past President, and Past Ring Squire, **Father Kenneth Loveless**.

I intended to drop in on **Silurian**'s practice to check how they were progressing with building the Ring Meeting venue!! I was told not to come – they would be out dancing, in kit, in Worcester – a once a month real life practice!! They were duly tracked down in the Dragon and then the Lamb & Flag. In both cases they were “out the back, in the yard, past the toilets!!!” I was pleased to be able to double the crowd size at the first venue – mind you a few more did stop on their way to, or generally from, the aforesaid facilities!! Past Bagman, **Keith Francis**, was showing his virtuosity upon the tambourine!

**Ripley** feast is generally known as one of the high spots on the Morris calendar. This year was no exception and we were joined by the BBC “Food and Drink” Programme and a frantic TV crew rushed around trying to do interviews, whilst the Men made background hub-bub!!

Emma Crowhurst of the Leith School of Cookery devised the menu – although “Beef in Beer” was less novel to the Morris than to the Beeb's Viewers. Excellent beers to wash it down from Burton Bridge, including their Porter [nice to have a dark beer in place of the omnipresent bitters] and B&T's “Bedfordshire Clanger” from nearer home.

Some fifteen Sides were represented – and indeed because of the change of venue several had to be turned away this year. Guests included Judy Mallaber, the local MP for Amber Valley, who thinks we should dance on the terrace at the House of Commons for the 100 years and the Millennium - “She will have a word with the Speaker!” - has any Side already done it.

It was pleasing to see Ripley's younger members in action. The spirit and enthusiasm of their Illmington “Constant Billy” would put many [?most?] of their elders in other Sides to shame. The combined ranks of Ripley then formed three sets, each of 12 men, to dance their “Belper Bob” a doubled up Bampton “Rose Tree” – it was amazing that there was room for guests!!!

Unfortunately as Genetically Modified food had become a burning topic, rather more of the Ripley saga finished on the cutting room floor. They expected 17 hours of film to reduce to 8 minutes – in the event it was probably half that. Several well known faces could be recognised – and I was pleased to see myself in a corner of a shot, even if the interview where I gave my considered views on the merits of the mixed leaves starter was not featured!!!

Following a splendid evening, many went down the pub for a sing-song. All too soon after bedding down, it was morning and after coffee and toast at the hall, we drove to Fritchley for a fine breakfast in the Red Lion – and more beer if you could handle it!!

The Jigs Weekend hosted by **Dolphin** and run by **Bert Cleaver** and **Greensleeves**, with help from **Winchester** and **Anker** is reported elsewhere.

Business in South Wales “coincided” with **Isca**'s practice evening in Newport. I was volunteered into trying something new “ “ a Welsh dance for eight men with a somewhat unusual 3-3-2 formation for much of the time. Some Headington to follow, again with a distinctive Isca style and then Border to finish – again with some local variations – particularly for the two Upton-upon-Severn dances.

The following evening I was able to make a return visit to **Bristol**, and again a chance to learn something of the Ascot and Wheatley traditions. Bristol have added some of their own specialities to their Ascot repertoire, so after dancing their “basic” warm up “Pepper in the Brandy”, I was more than content to watch a “Brighton Camp” with sticking based on the Illmington dance. It is amazing how much one can learn in an evening session [especially when compared with the more usual “expertise” “picked up” as third corner at an Ale!!!].

On being handed a copy of their events update, I was pleased to find a copy of my Newsletter précis on the back – Bagman **Jim Bougnague** swears he was not tipped off about my visit!!!

The post-practice venue, the “Bag o' Nails” in Bristol, must be one of my [to date] all time favourites for beer choice and quality – now you know why they had a second visit!! I was also able to discuss Email matters – and possible French trips for Sides - with the Overseas Bagman and Webmaster, **John Maher** [to who thanks for supper and accommodation].

**Winchester** Feast was the venue for some 100 men, who were tempted by a “English Country” menu. This commenced with excelled beer from the Cheriton Brewhouse “Pots Ale – 3.8%” [we were later to sample the stronger Digger's Gold – 4.6%]. The menu: Pea Soup; Potted Meat; Roast Pigeon; Bread Pudding; Welsh Rarebit [with a bottle of Marston Pedigree strong ale] and coffee, was perhaps the most ambitious that I have experienced in my present incarnation. [A cheese course and fruit was served later – in the small hours!!!].

Following the speeches, the rain at the **Saddleworth** Rushcart weekend in 1998, and Winchester's quest for shelter, were duly commemorated. Winchester stripping off to reveal their specially commissioned "Wimps" T-shirts. Saddleworth responded with a spirited rendering of "Singing in the Rain".

The Feast stretched into the night [it takes time to get the a meal off a pigeon!!] and in spite of short speeches and a few songs, the tables were not cleared for dancing until past 11.00pm.

Several Sides showed a dance: I enjoyed **Wansum**'s Illmington "Brighton Camp" from which was adapted the "Ascot" version I had seen danced by Bristol two days before. **Kennet** danced another favourite: "Princess Royal" Ducklington – again with an unusual [to me at least] last caper phrasing [the Morris is indeed alive and subject to Darwinian development].

**Winchester**'s Squire, *Ian Small*, and their chief chef, *Albert Wilkins* danced the double Bampton Jig "Princess Royal". Winchester use a left foot - single step Bampton style, in contrast to the right foot - double stepping of the majority of those present. This was fine for their jig; but when the two styles were mixed for "Bonny Green Garters" together with a less usual order and style of figures, there was some confusion to say the least!!!

**Ravensbourne**'s Feast was cancelled because of insufficient support. A great pity – but the Squire and Bagman did surprise their respective wives by being home for the weekend – which probably upset their well laid plans for another quiet evening!!!

The following week I was back on the road – this time for **Lichfield**'s Ale, in the splendid surroundings of the Lichfield Guildhall. The evening was informal with plenty of dancing. The menu is by tradition vegetable curry, baked potato and beans [for first timers remember to take a plate – the paper versions provided dissolve and fold under the weight of the curry!!!]. Four beers from the local Lichfield Brewery [Inspired; Bellringer; Musketeer and Steeplejack] – was it the curry that made them all taste rather similar?

All three Ring Officers were in attendance, together with various past Officers. It was very good to see Past Bagman, *Chas Arnold* back out and dancing – even though only in semi-**Jockey** kit as his breeches had apparently "shrunk" – it does happen, of course, if they are left too long in the wardrobe!! Sides and representatives had travelled from all directions: **Plymouth** [who showed a four-man cutlass dance]; **Ebor** [from York]; **Sweyn's Ey** [from Swansea]; **Harwich**; and **King John's** [from Southampton] – to name just a few of the furthest travelled. My apologies to **White Hart** whom I keep failing to recognise, – why not put the White Hart on the front of the baldrick? – I am not accustomed to creeping up from behind!! *Jack Brown* in vintage Lichfield guise danced a sprightly "I'll go and enlist".

Accommodation was provided in the Rainbow Nursery a few miles from the city, and a minibus shuttled Men to and from the event. The sight of Men bent double to wash at the nursery height basins was hilarious, even though there was a severe risk of dislocations!!!

A couple of days later and I found **Cam Valley** in a pub outside Shepton Mallet. Indeed, they found me, as I had an earlier time than they did – still Bass straight from the barrel is always worth a few minutes uninterrupted contemplation. No practice, as the Wessex Vintage Machinery club had got to the function room first. However, there was much business to be discussed as two trips to Lithuania were in the planning stage. In case the information is of use to travelling Sides - the Lithuanian for Squire is **Skvairas** and for Bagman is **Padėjėjas**.

Travelling had to be cut back for a couple of weeks as the planning for the **ARM** hosted by **Bedford**, started to take precedence. Details of the Meeting and the Archive Meeting are given elsewhere – but a good time was had by all – and B& T Brewery tells us it is the biggest order they have ever had for an “outside bar” – and when was the next one?!!

It took a week or so to recover – and there was the matter of a few things to catch up for “the day job”!! It was appropriate that my first visit as “Official Bagman” was to the Ale of the latest Full Members of the Ring: **Aldbury Morris Men**. They say they have not noticed anything different yet, but no doubt it will sink in, in due course! As usual it was an enjoyable evening among old friends, with the traditional Fish and Chip supper – cooked fresh by the van which makes an extra stop in the car park.

An interesting variation of “Skirmish” with the set changing its orientation, was danced by **Woodside**; it transpired that this was “Captain Lahno’s Skirmish” one of a set of Woodside’s “own tradition” dances – normally danced to a tune from the Sussex Songbook. They later danced another as their show dance - “Auntie’s Bequest” to a Brighton Camp tune. Definitely something for the “New Dance Black Book”. Aldbury danced their Adderbury style “South Australia” imported from said territory via a member’s trip to New Zealand. **Grand Union** produced an excellent singer, with an excellent song. **Offley** danced “Black Joker”. Also present representation from **Bedford**, and a unmentionable **Letchworth Fool** !!!

**Icknield Way** are now into their 40<sup>th</sup> year and their Ale was attended by both Squire and Bagman – the former generously acting as driver. Held in a restored barn, the evening included the old favourites and a number of show dances. **Traditional Bampton**, danced Bampton and had a good number of youngsters with them – who put us to shame with the quality of their Jigs. The **Horwich** representatives led us in two North-West dances. Having expected a “teach in” I found I was with some of our hosts who had done it before!! It is amazing how fast one can learn after a few pints!!! Also present:- Sides from **Winchester**; **Oxford City**; **Crendon**; and representatives from **Whitchurch** and **Abingdon**.

## IN CONCLUSION

I hope to visit many of you during the year – please keep me informed of events etc. Please remember to send a copy of your Programme – as well as any News items for the Newsletter.

The next Newsletter will appear in May with the Circular.

My best wishes to you all for the forthcoming dancing season.

*Wassail,*

John Frearson  
Bagman, The Morris Ring

## The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 7 – March 1999 - SUMMARY

### The Seventh Newsletter includes:-

**REPORTS** on: - The “social” side of the **1999 Annual Representatives Meeting** [some 100 people attended]; The **Archive Meeting**, when some 50 persons attended and a fine selection of scrapbooks, diaries, photo albums and other memorabilia were on show; also the **Jigs Instructional**, where both Squire and Bagman suffered.

**LOST PROPERTY – ARM WEEKEND.** Bedford still have a red sweater left in the Library.

**FROM THE TREASURER** - Letchworth tapes are being transposed to Compact Disc. Some are already available. If used for practise dancing, they are so much easier than re-winding, just flick from track to track. **The Sponsored Slim** - proved a loss of 2½ stone, the Morris Archive should gain £386.65.

**THE DIRECTORY** - Your Side should have received the **1999–2000 Ring Directory**.

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS include:** **Sherborne Instructional** – 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> October. **Musicians' Instructional** – also October. **Fools and Animals Instructional** – last weekend in October. **Jigs Instructional 2000** – January 2000.

**OVERSEAS MATTERS** - **John Maher**, has had a request for exchanges with Greek Dance groups. He also reports on his visit to the AGM of the French folk organisation on our behalf

**WEB etc** - The Directory includes E-mail numbers for some 100 Sides. Updated information on E-mail numbers and Website links can be found on **[www.TheMorrisRing.org/email.htm](http://www.TheMorrisRing.org/email.htm)**

**YOUR PROGRAMMES – AND POSTERS** – It is useful to have copies please. I will organise a few pints for the Sides that I consider have produced the best Programme and the best poster in 1999 – 2000. Results, and beer, at the ARM next year.

**YOUR NEWS** - **Icknield Way** celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary; **Saddleworth** celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. **Dartington** appeared on Jim Davidson's Generation Game; **Helier** instituted Wassailing Saturday; **Plymouth** danced in the centre lane of the M5; **Coventry** are planning a repeat of their Traditions Tour; **Adlington** taught the Venture Scouts dances for the World Jamboree in Chile. **Geoff Thompson** of **Handsworth**, is in touch from USA. Former members and supporters of **City of Bangor Morris** are invited to get in touch

**OUT AND ABOUT** – The Bagman has visited **Chalice**; **Silurian**; **Ripley's** Feast, which was joined by the BBC “Food and Drink” Programme; **Isca**; **Bristol**; **Winchester's** Feast; **Lichfield's** Ale; **Cam Valley** who are planning two trips to Lithuania; **Aldbury's** Ale; and **Icknield Way's** Ale.

I hope to visit many more of you during the year – please keep me informed of events etc. Please remember to send a copy of your Programme – as well as any News for the next Newsletter, which will appear in May with the Circular. My best wishes to you all for the forthcoming dancing season.

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

*Wassail,*

*John Frearson  
Bagman, The Morris Ring*

**A POST SCRIPT FROM THE SQUIRE –****THE ORDER OF FIGURES FOR THE MASSED SHOW DANCES FOR 1999**

<b>HANDKERCHIEF</b>	The Rose Tree	Bampton	Foot up/foot down Half gip Whole gip Rounds
	Laudnum Bunches	Headington	Foot up/foot down Whole hey Cross over Back to back
	William and Nancy	Bledington	Foot up/foot down Half gip Whole gip Rounds
<b>STICK</b>	Country Gardens	Fieldtown	Foot up/foot down In to line Back to back Rounds
	Constant Billy	Adderbury	Dance round In to line Procession down Procession up Hands round Whole hey
	Young Collins	Bledington	Foot up/foot down Half gip Whole gip Rounds
	Balance the Straw	"Fieldtown"	Foot up/foot down In to line Back to back Rounds

The Music will play once to yourself before the foot up or dance round.