



## The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 9 – July 1999

*Greetings,*

Hopefully this edition will not be unduly delayed – and I will be able to deliver some copies at the Long Man and Silurian Ring Meetings – saving the Treasurer postage!!

This mailing includes preliminary details of next year's Ring Meetings. As mentioned at the ARM, we are asking Sides to make a fairly prompt choice and estimate of numbers. It is our intention to sort out who is going where before Christmas. This will allow you all to make summer holiday arrangements without the uncertainty of "will we get our first choice".

Your Application Form will be with the September Newsletter – for prompt return by early November – so start thinking about next year, and looking at your Diaries, **NOW** [please!!].

*Also enclosed with this mailing are:*

- A summary of this Newsletter – as the last page of this bundle.
- Inevitably – there are more **amendments** to the Directory. [The "up to the minute" version of the Directory, Emailed as a Word attachment, is available at any time from the Bagman – In due course we may put it on the web].
- An **Application Form** for the **Fools and Animals Instructional** in October.

**STOP PRESS ---- SWORDS / RAPPERS** now available from Morris Shop ---- see Page 13.

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

*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 2000.

The **2000 ARM** of **THE MORRIS RING** will be held from 31 March to 2 April 2000. Hosted by **Ripley** in Derby. The ARM itself will be on 1 April 2000 [No Fooling!!!].

## NOMINATIONS

In accordance with the Constitution, Nominations for Officers and Elected Representatives of the Advisory Council must be sent to the Bagman at least three months before the ARM – that is by the end of December 1999.

The **Squire** and **Treasurer** are due for election. The Treasurer may, and is willing, to re-stand. The same time scales apply to Nominations for the three **Area Representatives** due for election, namely: for the **Midlands and North**; the **East & South Midlands**; and the **London** Areas. Area Representatives may re-stand. They only require a formal re-nomination if alternative candidates are forthcoming. Details etc. from the Bagman.

Any “**Proposed Alterations to the Constitution**”, or “**Formal Resolutions for Discussion**”, shall also be received by the Bagman, also at least three months before the Meeting.

The above constitutes due notice, given at least six months before the Meeting. If you have any queries – or wish to discuss any of the posts - please contact the Bagman or any Officer.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Sherborne Instructional - 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> October.** 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. The cost will be £33.00. The application form has already been circulated, but **there are still a few places – apply now** to Bert Cleaver [Tel: 01226 241551].

**Fools and Animals Instructional** – this is scheduled for the last weekend in October, **29 - 31 October**, at Wath upon Dearne. Contact **Eric Pressley** [Tel: 01709 874770]. An application form is included with this mailing.

**Pocklington Long Sword Instructional - 23 November 1999** - with **Ivor Allsop**. Venue Red Lion, Fritchley. Organised by **David Thompson / Ripley**. Details to follow.

**Jigs Instructional 2000. 21 - 23 January 2000.** **Bert Cleaver** has again imposed on **Dolphin** and chosen Sutton Bonnington as the venue for the Jigs Instructional.

**Musicians' Instructional** – This event is now expected to be in the New Year - the hosts will be **Mendip**. Venue and details will be notified in due course, but expressions of interest and advance details can be obtained from **Clive Du'Mont** Tel: 01454 73895; Email: DuMontCh@aol.com.

*Application forms for the above three events will be included with future Newsletters – but you can express interest to the organisers as soon as you like.*

## RING MEETINGS – 2000

The next [mid-September] Newsletter [due out in early October with the Ring Circular] will include the Application Form for the Year 2000 Ring Meetings. It is intended that Sides are advised of their success, or otherwise, by mid December. This will require Sides to return the forms without delay – by early November. Host Sides and the Bagman will then have about four weeks to receive bribes and entreaties; to run the ballot and allocate places.

To enable Sides to start discussing their preferences, preliminary details are given below. As more details become available, they will be forwarded to Side's Email contacts. A full summary will be included on the Application Form in the September Newsletter.

### 13 – 14 May RICHMONDSHIRE RING MEETING – 130 men - Richmond

The traditional bi-annual Northern Ring Meeting. Indoor camping at local halls; breakfasts at the Black Lion. Friday evening Fish and Chips and pub session. Saturday Tours of Wensleydale, Swaledale and Arkengarthdale. Mass show at Reeth; Feast in Richmond Town Hall; drinking/dancing in pub yard etc.. Sunday Treasure Hunt alternative to Church, and then a parade to a mass spot. **Price £43.**

### 2 - 4 June THAXTED RING MEETING - 200 plus men - Thaxted

The traditional annual meeting. Tours of the countryside around Thaxted on Saturday finishing with tea in Thaxted. Processions to a mass show before the Feast and a further mass show in the evening. A procession, service and more dancing on Sunday. Anticipated cost: **“approx. £45”**. Flexible options for part time attendance.

### 23 – 24 June ANKER 25<sup>th</sup> Anniv. RING MEETING – 120 men – Nuneaton

The *“Anker Silver Jubilee Mid-Summer in the Heart of England”*, will be centred at Etone Community School in Nuneaton. Tours to market towns and country villages on Saturday, with a late afternoon massed show in Bedworth. Church service [or alternative] and a show in a Nuneaton park on Sunday. Various other items are still at the planning stage. Budgeted at **“about £45”**.

### 21 - 23 July CHALICE RING MEETING - 150 Men - Somerset

Three venues are still bidding for the privilege of hosting this Meeting – so prices should be competitive with Chalice **“aiming for” £45**. The Meeting will be self-contained on one site with tours out to the wilds of Somerset etc.

There is also an outside chance of a mini-Ring meeting in the Netherlands – hosted by **Helmond**, as an expansion of their weekend in August. Details, or otherwise, in the September Newsletter [or by Email when available to those Sides on the Email contact list – if your Side has not yet provided an Email contact – now is the time to Email it to the Bagman – and to the Ring Webmaster, *John Maher* !!].

**REMEMBER** – start your Side thinking about your **2000 Ring Meeting** choice - **NOW !!**

## MILLENNIUM DOME

The Dome has excited discussion and controversy – but, whether you love it or hate it, if you want to see it at an advantageous rate – then the option is yours – express an interest **NOW**.

Contact our “Domemaster” **Paul Montague** - Monty is Bagman of **Yateley** and listed in the Directory.

Sixteen Sides have already “expressed an interest”, almost enough for one Side on each of “our” days, but we would expect to have at least three sides on each day. Remember the Morris Ring has 17 days available at present - 8/9/15/16 April; 6/7/27/28 May; 17/18 June; 1/2 July; 19/20 August; 23/24/30 September.

Monty will be contacting those expressing an interest in due course [probably in August] to firm up dates. Hopefully the details of the “package” will also be available soon.

Meanwhile, register your interest – early bookers will inevitably get priority on dates.

## FROM THE TREASURER

Please note that the **Third Party Insurance** has now been increased to £5 Million per incident [up from £2M as agreed at the last ARM]. For most events the present cover, as summarised in the current Directory, will be sufficient. If you should require a copy of the letter stating the higher cover, please contact the Treasurer or, in his absence, the Bagman. The revised letter will be copied in the next Directory. This cover only applies to UK based clubs, but the cover for them is world-wide.

As mentioned in the last mailing, the “shop” now has the EFDSS William Kimber CD. This includes material from the original LP, as well as “new” material and CD ROM readable photographs etc. The Ring is providing some sponsorship – and we hope to recover much of this from our own sales. The price from the shop is **£14.00** [+p&p if appropriate] per copy – a saving on the EFDSS price to reflect our sponsorship.

The new CD “The Original MORRIS DANCE Music Album” has also been selling like hot cakes - the price from Steve’s stall is a mere **£8.00**.

**NB** For mail order add + **£1.00 p&p** for first CD; then £0.50 per additional item. However, Steve has been known to do some special deals at Ring Meetings etc. Check out his stall !!

## MONEY FOR TRAVEL IN 2000 !!

Douglas Kennedy was Squire of the Ring [1938 - 1947] and Director of EFDSS [1924 – 1961]. He died in 1988. The “**Douglas Kennedy Memorial Fund**” exists to help clubs represent England abroad by making modest, but helpful, contributions to travelling expenses. Preference is given to clubs with a young membership.

Applications should be made by 31 January 2000 to The Clerk of the Trustees, Robert Parker, 40, Nightingale Road, Middlesex TW12 3HZ.

## WEB NEWS

Available on the Web at <http://homepages.tcp.co.uk/~johnburke/collections.htm> is John Burke's updated **Guidance on Collecting**. This was originally circulated in 1995, but many will not have seen it. Whilst nothing is hard and fast, this note provides some excellent guidance and could well be helpful when dealing with local authorities. John Burke is the Licensing Officer for Southampton, and a Solicitor, and has provided informal advice to various Sides over the years, in his unofficial, but exceedingly helpful role as Ring Legal Advisor and Tame Expert!!

If your Side does not have anyone with web access, a copy can be obtained from the Bagman.

The Ring web-site now includes a rogue's gallery. This was recently further expanded with five photographs of **Sydney** dancing in front of well-known landmarks on 1<sup>st</sup> May. They can be viewed at [www.TheMorrisRing/Pics.htm](http://www.TheMorrisRing/Pics.htm)

## ARCHIVAL MATTERS

The last Newsletter mentioned the possibility that past Bagman, **Russell Wortley**'s papers at Sheffield University were likely to be exported to USA. This has fortunately proved to be a false alarm – although such items are always at risk. The photographs are generally those associated with his research files. Not all Russell's photographs are included; indeed, items most relevant to **Cambridge** were given to their archive. However, as Russell's photographs in the Sheffield collection had not been copied, this has now been done - just in case!!

Some 220 photographs [not all Morris related] were copied. To save reprinting work at a later stage, some extra shots were taken, to provide spare copies of those [few] photographs that it was felt might be of particular interest to the Ring Sides featured. Hopefully some may be new to them.

The largest collections of Morris photographs relate to **Bampton** [50ish photographs: 1921 – 1938]; **Winstar** [30ish: 1927 – 1950] and **Thaxted** Ring Meetings [30ish: 1953 – 1963]. There will be an opportunity for these Sides to view the copies before they are filed away.

A full listing of the photographs is available. Some may be re-photographed to ensure optimum print quality. The negatives and a set of prints will be stored with the Ring Photograph Archive. A further set of prints will be kept in the main Ring Archive with the copies of Russell's papers.

## MORRIS PIPE EXHIBITION

There was a temporary exhibition at the Gloucester Folk Museum, to coincide with the Gloucester Pipe and Tabor event. This was a must for those interested in the history of the instrument. The exhibition included the Bampton, Bucknell and Chipping Campden pipes, together with Helen Kennedy's pipes and what is believed to be the (a) Bampton tabor. This was considered to be the first time such a distinguished collection had been accumulated. The display also included two mediaeval three hole pipes.

## ANNIVERSARIES

The **Travelling Morrice** have been celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their first tour to the Cotswolds, where they had collected so much valuable dance information in 1924. They provided some continuity to Cecil Sharp's work, he died in that year, whilst they were on that first tour and dancing in Adderbury. **Michael Blandford** organised a re-run of the Tour from 19 - 27 June. It took in many of the Cotswolds Morris villages and they met up with a number of other Sides and ended on the final Saturday with a Feast in, and as guests of **Chipping Campden**.

Not strictly an anniversary, but **Stafford** have just beaten the Millennium – they have just performed at their **2000<sup>th</sup> event** since their formation. The event, on 12 June, was the village fete in their home location of Weston-on-the-Green [where they hold their Ales – and the former home of their esteemed Fool, the late **Johnny Burke**, and now of his widow, Ellen]. Stafford feel that he must have had some influence from above to provide this fortuitous coincidence. Stafford danced a “warm up” at the Woolpack, and then gave an early afternoon show. They later danced a short session by Johnny Burke's Memorial Tree, with several wives - and Ellen - looking on. A later show included both a double jig and rapper..

## RING MEETING REPORT - THAXTED – 1999

Some 21 Sides – probably well over 200 men – attended this year's **Thaxted** Meeting. There were two Sides from the Netherlands - **Helmond** and **Utrecht**.

The other Sides present were: - **Offley, Standon, Taunton, Wath-upon-Deerne, Belchamp St Paul, Durham Rams, Letchworth, Whitchurch, East Suffolk, Foresters, Hageneth, Oakworth, Winchester, Dolphin, Lord Conyers, Mendip, Thames Valley** and **Westminster**.

Friday evening was spent in hostelrys various. Supper was provided at the “Rose and Crown”. Informal dancing by some of the Sides took place later at the “Star” until late. Singers and music were concentrated at the “Rose and Crown”.

Saturday dawned fine and the weather for the Saturday tours was generally very good. There were four Tours that visited the traditional range of villages in the area and a mini “Squire's Tour” which included the Thaxted Men and allowed them to meet up with all their guests.

The Tours returned to Thaxted for tea and afterwards the Men made their way to each end of the High Street to form up for the start of the Processions. These set out in a light drizzle at 6.00pm. Unfortunately, the weather deteriorated further, and although a good-sized crowd stayed through the rain to watch the dance displays in front of the Guildhall, this was well down on expectations and by the end of the show only the stalwarts remained.

The Guests at the Feast were: The Vicar of Thaxted; The Chairman of the Parish Council, Simon Latham; and John Hunter, the son of the Morris Ring's first Squire, **Alec Hunter**. Also on the top table were Past Squires, **Mike Chandler** and **Tim Sercombe**; and the Officers.

The menu, said by some to be almost as traditional as the Thaxted Meeting itself, was Soup; Braised Pork and various vegetables; Rum Baba and Fruit Salad; and Coffee.

The Speeches followed: The Squire proposed the Loyal Toast – and also included the Queen of the Netherlands. Tim Sercombe proposed the Immortal Memory. The Toast to the Thaxted Morris Men was proposed by Mike Chandler, who made the point that Thaxted hosted Ring Meetings “Year after Year after Year after Year” which was chorused “Year after Year after Year” by the Men – and was to become the catch phrase of the weekend!!

The Squire of Thaxted, *Colin Townsend*, replied. He had seen and attended more than half of the 66 Ring Meetings that Thaxted had hosted – “Year after Year after Year”!!

Simon Latham said a few words and thanked the visiting Sides for coming to Thaxted and entertaining them all – “Year after Year after Year”.

There was time for only a few songs before the start of the evening show: an offering [in Dutch] from **Helmond**; *Stuart Angelinetta* of **Mendip** with his humorous composition “Doggy Doggy Do”; and **Wath-upon-Dearne** with “Yon Green Banks [the Pratty Flowers]. **Utrecht** played a Dutch tune.

By the end of the Feast, the weather had moderated and a fine evening was in prospect. The second massed display in front of the Guildhall had a drier – and larger - crowd. After the show, the crowd by the Guildhall parted, as *Jake Walker*'s solo fiddle stuck up its haunting tune. The Squire led the Thaxted Morris Men in the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance to provided the normal climax to the show – raising the hair on the back of the neck. The eerie silence of the crowd remained through the entire performance as they listened to the flawless fiddle playing, watched the dancers and took in the atmosphere. As always, unforgettable.

Afterwards Men gravitated to “The Star” for a few more dances and to sample the ale, some direct from the barrel in the rather less crowded alternative bar in the adjacent garage! Dancing continued until midnight and singing, in the “Rose and Crown”, until the early hours.

On Sunday morning the procession made its way to Church for the Sung Mass. Apart from the considerable Thaxted involvement in the service, there was celebration as one of the Thaxted men, the Thaxted Thurifer, *Joe Hobbs* and his wife Norma were celebrating their Ruby Wedding anniversary on that day [Joe also celebrates 30 years with Thaxted this year].

The Squire and the Squire of Thaxted read Lessons. The Sermon also picked up the theme of the Meeting and the Congregation duly echoed “Year after Year after Year” after the Vicar had woven this into his few words. Helmond performed a very fine Fieldtown “Banks of the Dee” as the Offertory Dance. At the end of the service the Choir sang an anthem; the last verse – for those paying attention – had been rewritten to include an appropriate tribute to their fellow member - “and Daniel is Squire at this time of year”. Indeed he is !!

After the Service, there was dancing in the Churchyard, by the Bullring, until lunchtime. During the dancing, there was an interlude for a Presentation. The Squire presented Carole Curtis, a loyal follower of the Ring for many years, with an engraved Rose Bowl. Tim Sercombe, who should have made the presentation at Exeter - was presented with the bowl that he should have presented. It had been repaired, after a fashion, following its accidental dropping by the Ring Treasurer prior to that intended presentation.

After lunch, there was Morris and Country Dancing for all in the Margaret Gardens. The Thaxted and Utrecht sides danced Morris and there were a good number of country dances.

In particular it was good to see not only an excellent and enthusiastic Side of Thaxted Boys, but also that they had one of their own as musician. The future bodes well for Thaxted.

For most Sides running a Ring Meeting every ten or twenty years is quite enough, but this was Thaxted's 66th Ring Meeting. The entire weekend went smoothly. A pat on the back for each and every member of Thaxted, whom we thank for this unstinting service to the Ring "Year after Year after Year".

### ***A Thaxted Postscript – Fools - A personal view.***

Keith Leach, on the Morris Discussion pages on the Internet, said of Thaxted, that he "was particularly impressed with some superb Morris animals ... and also that the fools were all the whole time playing the crowd."

That is of course where they should be – and on the whole they do an excellent job – and take care not to distract that crowd from watching the dancing when it is in progress.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a trend for a minority of Fools to overdo it. When the same Fool appears with Side after Side, frenetically dancing through the set, it gets very tiresome for all. This year at Thaxted, the "Fooling" in the mass shows, and indeed at some other spots, threatened to distract from the dancing and the event started to look like Fool's road show, with a selection of "guest Morris Sides".

Whether the Sides so treated had all been asked whether they wished to be "Fooled", I do not know, but a Fool should never invade a Side without their prior permission. The unexpected presence of a Fool can be very off-putting for a Side unused to one, especially when they are trying to concentrate on giving their best in their show dance. No doubt there are many views on this subject, but Sides do not have to put up with being fooled if they do not require it – a courteous "no thanks" will work for most.

There is also an unfortunate trend for Fools to drag women into, and through, a dancing set. Indeed at the "Star", on Saturday evening, a young woman was provided with a stick and dragged in as a Fool's partner, making a quasi-extra pair of dancers. This is, to me, not Fooling but a distraction. If we wish to retain Men's Morris, we have to consider the context of such activity – the "formality" of a woman led in to a Brighton Camp or the Rose, is entirely another matter.

Another trend, not just a Fooling issue, is for the final Bonny Green to be treated as a come all ye<sup>1</sup> – remember that for many Sides, it provides the formal finish to the show.

Fools working with their own Sides, or invited to assist a Fool-less side, or helping to entertain the crowds between dances are a wonderful feature of the Morris. Fools – do not let a minority of your number spoil a good thing by overplaying it, and detracting from the dance – however well intentioned this may be.

The participants on the "Fools and Animals" weekend can no doubt debate this further.

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<sup>1</sup> What may happen on a Club's home territory is of course their own concern.



## OTHER NEWS

**Wyre Forest** were at the Wheaton Aston folk festival in May and bumped into Past Squire **Roy Yarnell** of **Jockey** who had a dance with them. A photograph may appear on their web-site in due course.

**John Culf** of **Dartington** noted that although I had reported that he was their Fool in the last Newsletter, this is not the case. He only fools when the Side goes away and their regular Fool cannot because of work commitments during the extended summer. Apologies.

It is a small world. **Chanctonbury Ring**'s fool, **Cliff Marchant**, met the owner of the Rugby Prontaprint shop, who prints these Newsletters, on a tall ship in the middle of the Atlantic.

**Bedford** featured briefly in an Anglia TV News Report on Bedford's "Springing Step" weekend dance festival.

**East Surrey** was selected to film an insert for a BBC children's educational programme. They are likely to be paired with a counting **Hen** who will rhyme with **Ten Morris Men!!** The expenses were minimal – but the mobile canteen lunch was reported to be well worth it!! They danced Willow Tree, Bucknell, about a dozen times – and feel they know it now!!

Also on the TV trail, **The King's Men** were selected to participate in one on a series of six Anglia TV programmes in which two novices would be taught a dance form in a day. After negotiation it was decided it would not be sexist to teach two men – as the belly dancing programme would feature two women!! [Having seen a few Morris Beer Bellies there perhaps could have been a review of the latter!!!]. The original title "Dance Steps" has now been superseded by "Feet First" and it is due to go out in September at 5.30pm on Wednesdays. The Morris part, it is thought, will be Programme 3 or 4 and should therefore be broadcast about the end of September / early October.

The King's Men also report that their Musician **David (Jacko)** has had his heart bypass surgery [in June] and is now recuperating.

The last weekend in June was **Ashdown Forest**'s annual tour. This year to the Badby area, based on the Youth hostel in the village. They danced on the Friday afternoon and evening, and all day Saturday and Sunday – a total of 12 spots. In spite of a range of weather from the baking hot to torrential downpours – a good time was had by all.

Left out of an earlier edition was the misfortune of **Bob Cross**, Bagman of **Chalice**, who fell off a ladder and broke his shoulder. The shoulder is improving and Bob will be at the Silurian Meeting – but will not be able to sleep on a floor!! It seems that the report of a Chalice practice night in Newsletter No 7. arrived at an opportune moment to cheer him up whilst he nursed his injury.

## A FILLER

A quote from Keith Leech on the Internet Morris Dance Discussion page, " ... there was a note outside the Jubilee in Bampton which said "Essex Men can't hold their Beer", underneath was written "Absolutely true, why hold it when you can drink it? ... " ... "

## OUT AND ABOUT

A joint evening with **Bedford** gave an opportunity to watch **Northampton** – and congratulate them on their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Northampton were dancing in fine style. I particularly enjoyed their “Old Taylor” from Ducklington – it is not often that two clubs meet that could have chosen that tradition for the massed dances!!

A chilly evening with **Cambridge** and **Milton** out towards the Fens. Fortunately the member of the Constabulary who stopped me was on his own and my speedy progress did not gain a bank account draining penalty – or worse!! Did he think the gong round my neck was that of his Chief's Masonic Lodge or something?!!!

Hopefully Milton, who are currently Associates, can be coaxed to become Members. They allowed the Bagman to make up their numbers for a selection of Fieldtown dances.

A busy week in mid May. Monday in Sheffield with **Ivor Allsop**. Not dancing for once but copying the photographs in Past Bagman, **Russell Wortley's** collection, which is now at Sheffield University. A range of Morris and folk material – and there were even some items “copyable” for **Bedford's** own collection. Material was also copied for onward transmission to **Greensleeves; Cambridge; Thaxted; East Surrey** and **East Suffolk**.

A speedy dash back to near home to the Brown Bear in Biggleswade to watch Redbornstoke – no longer Associates unfortunately [but hopefully willing to take a subscription to the Ring publications to keep in touch]. They showed a number of their own Ampthill Tradition, before we retired to the bar to muse over seven unusual [and excellently kept] Ales.

I had a “fortuitous” afternoon meeting in Longborough – and that evening **Gloucestershire** were dancing at the Coach and Horses in the village. Fortunately I had kit with me!! The treat was to join them to dance “Swaggering Boney” in its own village. The inhabitants did not seem to feel they had to observe this – but it was a cold night.

A trip to deepest Worcestershire and, having visited their web site, a chance to meet **Wyre Forest**. Recent numbers have led to the adaptation of a number of dances for four men – which was in fact necessary after their Foremen was “massaged” over a finger joint with a stick – and was rushed to A&E for stitching. Much disappointment that the Hospital used a rather less dramatic super-glue technique. The music session was excellent with Wyre Forest in the guise of their Ceilidh Band “Unspoiled by Practice”.

Returned home the following day via Headington for the launch of the William Kimber CD. By the time this is published many of you will already have a copy. But Steve Adamson will have a plentiful supply in the shop. Folk luminaries too numerous to list – and indeed being a mere Morris person, I'm afraid I did not know the half of them. However, past Squires, **Nibs Matthews** [also a past Director of EFDSS of course] and **Ivor Allsop** were present. **Derek Scofield** of **Manley** had done much of the collation and production for the project and written the booklet. He gave a brief presentation and **Headington Quarry** danced.

A late May Bank Holiday weekend out with **Bedford** on **East Surrey's** tour of the Kent/Sussex borders. Also present their usual guests, **Greensleeves** with past Squire, **Bert Cleaver**. A country pub tour in glorious sunshine on the Saturday, and a meet-up with **Chanctonbury Ring** at Tenterden. Sunday was based in Rye – and fortuitously, rain saved us from two gruelling dance sessions and provided an extended music session in the Ship.

Bedford rounded off the evening with Abbots Bromley, which allowed the Duke of Bedford's gift of antlers to emerge into the public arena for the first time in some 20 odd years.

After a final two dance spots in Sussex on the Monday, a return to Bedfordshire via **Bampton** to catch the evening's dancing. A range of Morris was on offer and Ring Sides present as guests included: **Abingdon; Chipping Campden; Icknield Way; and Bourne River**. As usual, there was the difficulty of identifying miscellaneous Morris Men "out of kit": but there were "representatives" from **Thaxted; Moulton; Ravensbourne; Dartington; and Ilmington**; and no doubt many others whose allegiances I was not aware and whom I did not meet during my brief visit.

All to soon the first Ring Meeting of the season at **Thaxted** – details are given elsewhere.

On the road again, and work in the South West allowed a re-visit to **Exeter**. An excellent two pub evening in the wilds of real Devon. Accommodation at that fine establishment ["The Jamiesons on Draft Hotel"] run by Past Squire **Tim Sercombe**.

The home trip conveniently passed through Henley, the base for **Yateley's** cycle tour camping weekend. Guests for a walking tour of the town on Friday were **Headington Quarry** and Eynsham. Consistently good dancing from all through the evening. Various guests in civvies included **Keith Barker** [formerly of **Winchester; Yateley** and latterly **Faithful City**]; also Men from **Greensleeves; Kennet** and others not identified!! The host of the final pub was a former **Cup Hill** man – he knew the form and had laid on a barrel of Rebellion's "Smuggler" for the delectation of the assembled men, who were able to help themselves. The fact that the Bagman fell flat on his face was due to missing a step in the dark due to his bifocals – he was definitely **not** "p\*\*\*ed" as someone gleefully remarked – however, I was pleased that my daughter was driving!!

A quick [non-dancing] visit to Malvern to see some of **Silurian** and update on the Ring Meeting. Completely coincidentally, bumped into Past Bagman, **Keith Francis** as I came out of the hotel dining room. He was arranging dancing spots for a Tour, and kindly gave me a lift, which saved having to count the pints.

I rushed Northwards to have my clogs resoled – and was delighted that there is still a "while you wait service" at Walkley's Clogs. I was thus well shod for **Bedford's** North-West tour of Bedford accompanied by seven members of the Bedford Town Band on the following day.

A few days recuperation – and a visit to **Abingdon** for the Ceremonial that surrounds the Election of the Mayor of Ock Street. **Stuart Jackson** was duly elected. It was a fascinating, and long, day of dancing - as well as being an opportunity of seeing Abingdon's own unique set of dances. I am not sure whether the substitutions during the prolonged Jockey, are part of the Tradition – or just that some are not as young as before!!! Also performing, and helping to spread the load - the day included over a dozen spots - were **Bourne River** and **Icknield Way**. I enjoyed Bourn River's Oddington, in particular, their composition Three Cross; also The Grenadier, in which the sticks changed side in some very high throws [no wonder we need insurance!!!]. Icknield Way also fielded a complete Boy's Side – a good sign for the future.

Past Squire, **Bert Cleaver**, [in **Wath** kit and whites] was assisting with the Abingdon music [which included Fiddler, **Chris Bartrum**, whose "Original MORRIS DANCE Music Album" is selling like hot cakes from the Treasurer's shop].

I escaped lightly, helping out Icknield Way as a sixth man, when some of their team had rushed off to evening engagements and dancing a couple of jigs [my thanks to Bert Cleaver for the music]. Past Squire, **Ivor Allsop**, recorded events for posterity – and has so far refused to censor out the jigs!!

Bourne River's final Upton Stick danced largely to the beating of several drums and tabors threatened to cause a breach of the peace, but was followed by a chance for us all to join in Abingdon's final Nutting Girl. It was amazing how many seemed to manage the unique step, considering the dances are not danced "outside"!!

The Feast and evening entertainment provided a welcome rest and a fine selection of songs – mainly in the humorous vein. These included "Shoals of Kippers" from Abingdon's concertina player, **Ian White**; **Colin Corner** with "A little bit off the Top"; a music hall turn from **Doc Rowe**, who was also making archival audio-recordings of various of the days happenings; and a selection from Bert Cleaver, including the Song of the Salvation Army. My thanks to **Geoff Smith** of Icknield Way for overnight lodgings.

As an honorary **Cambridge Man**, I joined the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tour of the **Travelling Morrice** for two evenings. On the Tuesday to dance Bledington in Bledington, and visit two other villages and later that week, on the Thursday, to dance in Hook Norton, Adderbury and King's Sutton, at which last spot **Brackley** appeared as guests.

At the weekend, there were showers to dodge for the last two Sunday evening spots on **Ashdown Forest's** annual tour – this year to the Badby area. There was a very friendly greeting from a Side who appear to subsist on Breakfast and Beer – well the pub didn't do food on a Sunday!!! I understand that the local Chinese received their appetites with enthusiasm later!! I was very pleased to be able to join them for the rarely danced "long version" of the Oddington "Leap Frog", and also to learn [rather rapidly] the Wheatley "Shepherd's Hey", to make up the number for their second set. Having borrowed the firm's digital camera, they have now been showered with Emailed images for their web site.

Early July and an invitation to visit **Winster** for their Wakes Day. Although threatened by torrential rain on the Friday night, by midday Saturday the weather had changed to the idyllic. An gentle day of dancing, drinking, eating and good fellowship in a wonderful setting. **Thaxted** were present as the guest Side, although the Ring Squire was missing, being in Ghana on business. Winster, as well as performing their own unique dances, produced a fine Flamborough and also some Rapper.

The day ended with a final Winster Processional up the Bank to the Miner's Standard for the last show. The last Winster Gallop completed and the formal dancing finished, Thaxted produced a "Hokey Kokey", which was danced with enthusiasm by Morris and audience alike!! My thanks to **Roy Witham** of Winster for providing accommodation and breakfast – with a choice of coffees!!

Back South to visit **Silkeborg** who were making a week's tour of the Roots of the Morris!! Ably driven by their co-ordinators from **Ilmington** and **Shakespeare**, their Monday evening was hosted by **Silurian** at two excellent pubs in the vicinity of Upton upon Severn [both due for further visits during their Ring Meeting]. Silurian had the erstwhile missing "**Birko**" present with collapsible and collapsing euphonium [or similar] wrapped about his person.

A Reporter writing up advance publicity for the Ring Meeting interviewed all and sundry with enthusiasm and filled his notebook with shorthand – he could probably fill his whole paper with material – but expected to finish with a short column!!

A second visit to see **Silkeborg** [truly unpredicted, until work plans assisted without premeditation!!!] on the Tuesday at Stratford. This time with hosts **Shakespeare**, and guests **Green Man** and **Coventry Mummers**. Two spots, one in the Bancroft Gardens and then outside the pub in the Cobs Yard [a converted timber yard with its own microbrewery]. It was pleasing to see two youngsters in the host's Side and even better when they performed a Bampton Double Jig – and to a very high standard, putting rather more dance quality than normal into what can be a less than elegant jig. Coventry Mummers performed a St. George play and later a sword play, based in part on Eskritt – both were excellent and they will certainly have to be visited during their Christmas season. The Ring Bagman danced Ladies Pleasure, and itinerant Black Joker Fool, **Peter Constrano**, a Bampton Jig. A good sing-song finished the evening – which managed to drown the loudspeaker of the pub-quiz master inside. The Coventry Mummers' ladies meanwhile had "killed time" and won said quiz – the prize being two containers of the Jester Ale brewed on the premises.

Shakespeare made a formal presentation of the Visitors Book, that it is understood had been abstracted from the Silkeborg Ring Meeting in 1996. This had left Denmark as a few sheets from a notebook. It was now returned, signed by all the Meeting participants, with added photographs and splendidly rebound with a gold blocked and inscribed cover.

## **STOP PRESS - SWORDS NOW AVAILABLE**

Following the demise of Specialised Products, there had been no manufacturer of Morris swords. The Morris Ring has had manufactured, and now has available for sale, 100 Long Swords and 100 Rappers. They are made of high quality annealed spring steel and have lacquered beech wood handles with brass ferrules. Ring Members' prices: Long Swords are at £18.00 each and the Rappers at £25.00 each. These are now available from the Treasurer, transportation or carriage additional - he suggests that you arrange to collect!!

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Hopefully you are all having a fine season, with much good fellowship and full bags. I will look forward to seeing many of you at Ring Meetings, and at other events, as I travel around the country during the Season.

As ever, please remember to update The Ring on changes of Contact Persons – and keep the gossip [and even News] coming in for the Newsletter. The next Edition is due in September and will be posted in early October [in theory!!].

*Wassail,*

*John Frearson  
Bagman, The Morris Ring*

## ***The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 9 – July 1999 - SUMMARY***

**ARM 2000.** – Notification is given that the ARM will be hosted by **Ripley** in Derby from 31 March to 2 April 2000. The ARM will be on 1 April 1999. Nominations for Squire, Treasurer and Elected Representatives [for the **Midlands and North**; the **East & South Midlands**; and the **London Areas**], and any “**Proposed Alterations to the Constitution**”, or “**Formal Resolutions for Discussion**”, must be sent to the Bagman at least three months before the ARM – i.e. by end of December 1999.

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS - Sherborne Instructional - 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> October - Sutton Bonnington - £33.00. A few places remain – apply now. Fools and Animals Instructional – 29 - 31 October - Wath upon Dearne. Pocklington Long Sword Instructional - 23 November 1999 - with *Ivor Allsop* at the Red Lion, Fritchley. Jigs Instructional - 21 - 23 January 2000 with *Bert Cleaver* at Sutton Bonnington. The Musicians' Instructional is expected to be in the New Year, hosted by **Mendip**.**

**RING MEETINGS – 2000** – Preliminary details of **Ring Meetings** are available. Application forms will be sent out in early October – start thinking about your preferences for Meetings **NOW**.

<b>13 – 14 May</b>	<b>RICHMONDSHIRE RING MEETING – 130 men – Richmond - £43.</b>
<b>2 - 4 June</b>	<b>THAXTED RING MEETING - 200 plus men - Thaxted - ?£45.</b>
<b>23 – 24 June</b>	<b>ANKER 25<sup>th</sup> Anniv. RING MEETING - 120 men – Nuneaton - ?£45.</b>
<b>21 - 23 July</b>	<b>CHALICE RING MEETING - 150 Men - Somerset - ?£45</b>

**MILLENNIUM DOME** - contact *Paul Montague* **NOW**, if your Side wish to dance in the Dome.

**FROM THE TREASURER** - The “shop” now has the EFDSS William Kimber CD at **£14.00** - a saving on the EFDSS price. The CD “The Original MORRIS DANCE Music Album” is at **£8.00**.

**WEB NEWS** - The Ring web-site now includes a rogue's picture gallery. This includes **Sydney** dancing in front of well-known landmarks on 1<sup>st</sup> May. View at [www.TheMorrisRing/Pics.htm](http://www.TheMorrisRing/Pics.htm)

**MONEY FOR TRAVEL** - The “*Douglas Kennedy Memorial Fund*” exists to help clubs represent England abroad by making modest, but helpful, contributions to travelling expenses.

**ARCHIVAL MATTERS** - past Bagman, **Russell Wortley's** photographs [not all Morris related] have been copied. **Bampton**; **Winster** and **Thaxted** Ring Meetings are well represented.

**ANNIVERSARIES** - The **Travelling Morrice** have been celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their first tour in 1924. **Stafford** have just performed at their **2000<sup>th</sup> event** since their formation.

**RING MEETING REPORT - THAXTED – 1999** – **Helmond** and **Utrecht** from Netherlands and **Offley**, **Standon**, **Taunton**, **Wath-upon-Deane**, **Belchamp St Paul**, **Durham Rams**, **Letchworth**, **Whitchurch**, **East Suffolk**, **Foresters**, **Hageneth**, **Oakworth**, **Winchester**, **Dolphin**, **Lord Conyers**, **Mendip**, **Thames Valley** and **Westminster** attended.

**OTHER NEWS** – from **Wyre Forest**; **Dartington**; **Chanctonbury Ring**; **Bedford**; **East Surrey** and **King's Men** on their TV filming; and of **Ashdown Forest's** annual tour.

**OUT AND ABOUT** – The Bagman mentions meeting with: **Bedford**, **Northampton**, **Cambridge**, **Milton**, **Gloucestershire**, **Wyre Forest**, **Headington Quarry**, **East Surrey**, **Greensleeves**, **Chanctonbury Ring**, **Chipping Campden**, **Thaxted**, **Exeter**, **Yateley**, **Silurian**, **Abingdon**, **Bourne River**, **Icknield Way**, **Cambridge**, **Brackley**, **Ashdown Forest**, **Winster**, **Silkeborg**, **Shakespeare**, **Green Man** and **Coventry Mummers**.

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

*Wassail,*

John Frearson, Bagman, The Morris Ring