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Newsletter No. 90

June 2014

2014 80th Anniversary of Foundation of the Morris Ring

Page The highlights of Newsletter No.90 include:

- 3 Notes from the Bagman
- 4 Morris Ring 80th Anniversary Shirts JMO Morris Census
- 6 Retirement of Malcolm Taylor JMO Appeal - Children in Need
- 7 The Morris Shop has changed
- 9 A number of losses: John Wells
- 10. Russel Caton

Charles Whitlock

11 Ron Staughan

12 Chris Harris

John Helsdon

- 13 The Morris Ring Musicians Weekend
- 14 Morris Ring Publications
- 16 Morris Ring Diary 2014

Saddleworth Rushcart

Dartington

The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts unconvention

- 17 2015 and beyond
- 19 JMO Workshop

Your Area Rep

20 And finally.....

Morris Ring Display Boards

Please look for opportunities to use this resource; Contact your Area Rep (*) if you can make use of a set of the Morris Ring Display Boads.

Arrangements can be made to get them to you!



*South East Area Rep.

With great regret Robin Springett accepted the resignation of Ian Bush from the role of Morris Ring SE Area Rep with immediate effect. Ian explained

"I like to do a job properly and have been very aware that I do not have enough time to devote to the job. I have to devote my time to being Squire of Chancs and getting some recruitment over the next two years."



We are grateful to Cliff Marchant, who was Squire of the Morris Ring 2002-2004, whose offer to step into the Role has been accepted by the current Squire -Robin Springett.

Greetings All.

This Newsletter contains a real mixture of good news and bad. The positive includes the information of the JMO Census and the development of the now cross-organisation Morris Shop but this is tempered by news of the death of a number of stalwarts of the Morris Ring to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude.

A few weeks back the media made a great deal of the story concerning Harrison Brown, the three year old Morris dancer from Cheltenham. This prompted The Sunday Times (18th May 2014) to include a very positive "All you need to know but couldn't be bothered to ask about Morris Dancing" under its The Final Cut column. They referred to the Morris Ring to the MCC of Morris Dancing and I especially liked the information provided under the sub-heading: "Was it popular? Or did people mock even then" I quote:

"Not everybody was keen. Philip Stubbs, a 16th Century pamphleteer, suggested that morris dancing displayed everything that was wrong with England at the time: "They strike up the devil's dance withal; then march this heather company towards the church and churchyards, their pypers pyping, the drummers thundering, their stumpes dancing, their belles jyngling, their handkercheefes fluttering about their heads like madde men".

What not to like?



Morris Ring 80th Anniversary Polo and Rugby Shirts.

You can still purchase polo or rugby shirts in a selection of colours embroidered with the Morris Ring 80th Anniversary logo, and have your own wording as well from www.snappycrab.co.uk.



You can use debit cards, but not credit cards for your purchase; choose your colour and add your own wording on the chest or sleeve.

Go to the website, select Home and scroll down to The Morris Ring, or use the following link: http://www.snappycrab.co.uk/products/92/-the-morris-ring/



JMO Morris Census

All Morris sides have been invited by the JMO (Morris Ring, Morris Federation and Open Morris) to participate in a Census. Addressed to the 'bagpersons' the purpose of the project is to collect information from all Morris sides in the UK to provide a snapshot of the state of the Morris in 2014. By responding you make sure that your side is represented in this snapshot.

The Census is being coordinated on behalf of the JMO by Jack Worth of Headington Quarry Morris Dancers, Summertown Morris, Bristol Morris Men, and Ditchling Morris. He introduced the Census thus:

"In January 2009, a press release by the Morris Ring ¹ launched a thousand newspaper articles on the impending extinction of the Morris. Leaning heavily on the press release, the reports painted a bleak picture for the future of the Morris. Charlie Corcoran, bagman of the Morris Ring, said: "This is a serious situation. The average age of Morris dancing sides is getting older and older."

In April 2014, the Daily Telegraph ran a more optimistic article on the future of morris: "After decades of decline, the numbers of dancers and sides... has started to creep up once more... [with] a rise of around 1,000 in the numbers taking part, to almost 16,000".

1

¹ I still maintain that this Press Release had been taken out of context and seriously misinterpreted but the resulting publicity proved to be extremely useful. *Charlie C*

But do we really know how many morris dancers there are in the UK? What are the proportions of young and old, and of men and women? Which teams are recruiting new dancers, and how are they managing it?

These are some of the questions the JMO is aiming to answer with a 'Morris Census', a survey of all morris sides. The goal is to take a snapshot of what morris sides are like in 2014, by sending an online survey for bagpersons to complete. The questions cover such topics as the number and demographics of side members, side performances, recruitment and kit.

Hopefully your bagperson recently received an invitation to complete the survey by email. If they haven't completed it yet, please encourage them to, as this is your side's opportunity to be represented in the national snapshot. The survey will remain open until mid-July.

The project has been truly collaborative: members of all three organisations have helped to develop the survey, including the President of the Morris Federation, the outgoing and incoming Squires of the Morris Ring and the Treasurer of Open Morris. All of them have given great contributions to a survey that should give a really detailed insight into the state of the morris in 2014.

The findings need to be shared with the whole morris community, so I will be blogging about the results at stateofthemorris.blogspot.co.uk and tweeting @morriscensus. I hope to do much more besides, through newsletters and other means, to publicise what I find in the census. If you have any questions, you can contact me at morriscensus@gmail.com. I am looking forward to receiving all of your responses."

Jack Worth

The survey takes around fifteen minutes to complete. All data collected will be stored securely and no individual side's responses will appear in any reporting. Reports will only include aggregated or averaged data. Please address any queries you have to morriscensus@gmail.com and the team will be happy to answer them.





Retirement In April we heard that Malcolm Taylor is stepping down from his post as Library Director of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) after 35 years.

Robin Springett commented:

"Malcolm has been an influential figure at the VW Library for so long, and where he has offered substantial help to many members of the Morris Ring (as well as others!) who, over the years, have been researching Morris related matters. The Morris Ring feels that it is appropriate to formally register our sincere appreciation and thanks for all his work during his 35 years with EFDSS. He will be missed and will be a hard act to follow."



Children in Need.

The three Morris Organisations' charity is BBC Children in Need. A Presentation of the monies raised in 2014-15 will be made at next year's National JMO Day of Dance on Saturday 11th April 2015 hosted in Bristol by Rag Morris on behalf of Open Morris.



We encourage every team or side in the country to see if we can raise £10,000 over the year.

A reminder of the bank details for donations to the JMO Charity Appeal:

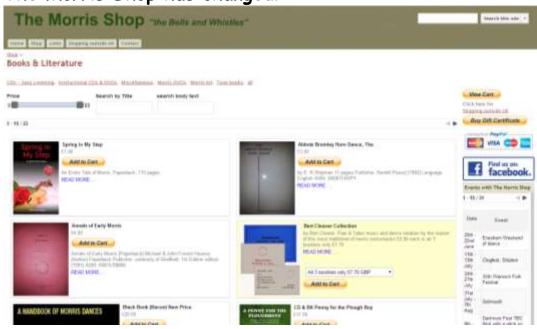
Sort Code: 40 - 41 - 44

Account number 01729780 (HSBC)

Please do not pay it directly to Pudsey.



The Morris Shop has changed!



Dedicated web site

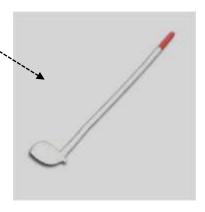


New lines

traditional white clay bacca pipes for sale. They come with the red tips and are about 14 long oh and apparently they are also smokable.



On-line ordering; electronic payments



Clog Irons



From the Morris Shop website:

"Traditionally North West Morris Dancers wear irons on their clogs. During the Industrial Revolution from the mid-18th Century through to the early 19th Century, the wearing of clogs was a cheap and strong item of footwear for industrial workers in factories, workshops, mines, all kinds of chemical works and the hot/cold metal industries.

The sole of the clog is made of wood and so to make the clog to last, nailed under the toe and heel of the sole were clog irons. These irons have a groove down the middle of a strip of metal 10mm wide and 6mm thick of wrought iron. In the recent years wrought iron material is hard and expensive to come by and so it has been replaced by mild steel or an alloy mixture, which does not last as long or give a distinctive ring to the wearing of the clogs when dancing. The groove in the clog iron is to secure it to the sole by using nails or some people use screws. Clog irons on clogs, yes make a noise and yes they came be very slippy on different floor surfaces, which is why you cannot dance on grass, marble or wooden floors. The latter two the irons will shred the floor to pieces. This is why rubber soles are used as you have a much better grip.

So the Traditional Men's North West Morris Sides wear irons on their clogs."

Visit: http://www.themorrisshop.com/

A number of losses:

Please note that these are only those of whom I have been notified. No slight is intended by omissions.

John Wells (1930 – 2014) died in Scotland on 30^{th} May and was cremated on 12^{th} June.

Born in 1930 John was the son of an ostler in the Co-op stables at Catford. The family later moved to Plumstead Common from where John studied Design Engineering at Woolwich Polytechnic prior to working with bottling, packaging, conveyor-belt systems, installing equipment for many well-known breweries and food companies, including Kellogg's, in UK and around Europe.

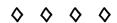




Bagman of Ravensbourne Morris Men 1964 to 1971 and Bagman of the Morris Ring from 1971 to 1977 John moved to Scotland in 1990 upon his retirement and for the last 6 years lived in a nursing home near Montrose. He is survived by his wife Janet (90) who, according to her brother the Rev Dr Gerald Paisey "used to assist with background duties - meals, 'punch-bowls, etc. - especially on Boxing Days at Heston"

John's ashes will be interred at St James' Episcopal Church, Stonehaven, at 2.00pm on Monday 7^{th} July.

When John left office in 1977 he was instrumental in dividing the role of Bagman, creating the post of Treasurer which was filled by Barry Care with Mike Garland taking over as Bagman without the financial responsibilities.



Russel Caton, sometime member of Thaxted Morris Men, died on May 25 after a long illness. Older men may remember him as the fiddle player for Thaxted Morris Men playing in particular for the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance at the Thaxted Ring Meeting.

Daniel Fox, Thaxted MM



Charles Whitlock (1929 -2014) one of Whitchurch Morris Men's aged, long-

standing, dancing men, died on 10th June 2014. He was 84.

"In his younger days I'm told, Charles danced with Coventry MM and Datchet MM [who since 1991 have been known as Datchet Border MM], and while working in Oxfordshire [Harwell?] he would dance with Icknield Way MM on Thursdays, St. Albans MM on Mondays and Whitchurch MM on Tuesdays. I am not sure when exactly he joined Whitchurch, but I know he was already a member in early 1988 [because the then treasurer - David McKeggie - has a continuation page for him, starting then]. Charles' last appearance with us was on 2nd February 2010 when we had our [postponed because of snow] Plough Tuesday 'hot dogs and beer' gathering."

John Bush

Bagman of Whitchurch MM





Charles Whitlock outside the Half Moon at Wilstone on 2nd July 2006

Ron Staughan (1943-2014)

"Ron was a member of the Durham Rams Sword and Morris Men since the formation of the side in 1963. Last year we were able to celebrate with him the 50th anniversary of the first practice on 9 October. Prior to forming the Rams, he had been a member of the Durham University Folk Dance Society when he began his studies at Bede College in 1961. He also frequented the many folk clubs in the area where he sang unaccompanied from his vast repertoire of folk songs. Shortly after being introduced to North Eastern Rapper dancing in the early sixties, he



rediscovered the dance from Hamsteels Colliery after talking to an old chap in a local care home who used to dance with the revival Hamsteels side of the 1920s. He made copious notes so that we could introduce this dance into the Ram's repertoire. As well as leading the dance, he seemed to be able to visualise the complicated and very different moves of each man in the set. This meant he could slot into any position, including the one involving the backward somersault (or cowp) - a feat which he accomplished well, even into his sixties! Ron passed away peacefully on Wednesday night, 18th June after a long illness. Even after he became ill, he continued to teach the side, and was a great encouragement to us. We will miss him.

Chris Wagstaffe Squire of the Durham Rams Sword and Morris Side

> Robin, his son, has supplied the funeral arrangements:

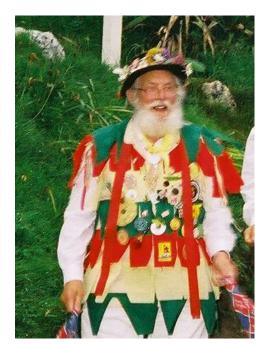
Ron will be cremated, friends meet at Durham Crematorium at 1pm Monday 30th June. Afterwards all will be welcome at The Glendenning Arms, Front St, Witton Gilbert, Durham, County Durham DH7 6SY for refreshments, and to raise a glass. Family flowers only please, or donations in lieu to the Friends of Freeman Hospital (plate at the crematorium).

This is to be a celebration of Ron's life, so Morris and Sword men please feel free to attend in kit. Hopefully dance, music and song will occur during the afternoon. An indication of numbers hoping to attend would be appreciated: Robin Straughan Mob: 07944 845 236

Chris Harris (1943 - 2014). Actor, writer and director. Known to many in the Morris world for his one man show Kemp's Jig. Chris' own interpretation of Kemp's Morris Dance from London to Norwich. Chris performed Kemp's Jig at the Royal National Theatre, the Royal National Shakespeare Company, on television, on the radio and in 57 countries throughout the world as well as at the Morris Ring's ARM in February 2009.







John Helsdon (1930 - 2014) Treasurer of Bathampton Morris Men, died on Monday June 9th aged 84. For many years John had been one of the major guiding influences within Bathampton and he will be greatly missed John started dancing with Bathampton in 1951. He was Squire from 1970-72, Bagman from 1956, 66, again from 1967, 60, and yet again from

He was Squire from 1970-72, Bagman from 1956-66, again from 1967-69 and yet again from 1972-78. Treasurer from 1967 to now, Fool from 1979-2010 and Keeper of the Log from 1977-1982 and from 1994 to now. He was also well-known to other morris and folk-dance groups throughout the country.

Idris Bagman Bathampton Morris Men

The Morris Ring Musicians' Weekend 30 Jan - 1 Feb 2015

Calling all musicians!

Once again, The Ripley Morris Men extend a cordial invitation to all musicians to attend the Morris Ring Musicians' Weekend in Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire. The weekend will coincide with Ripley's annual Ale Feast, which <u>all</u> attendees are cordially invited to attend.

Overall the schedule will be as follows but most arrangements are fairly fluid and can be adjusted to cope with specific requests,

Friday evening 30th January:

Meet at the Church Hall for food and chat, followed by informal music session in the hall or the Duke of Wellington just across the road.

Saturday 31st January:

- Plenary session exploring the role of the musician, general aspects of playing for the dance, and specific features of dance tradition and style.
- Sessions related to interpretation of the music, making the most of your chosen instrument and studies of specific traditions

Participants will be able to attend the Ripley Morris Ale Feast in the evening, when there will be the opportunity to play with the band for real live morris. Those who can resist the temptation will be able to eat at a local pub and stay on for the late-night music session at the Duke of Wellington (again!)

Sunday 1st February

- Opportunity for individuals to play for dances performed by the Ripley Morris Men
- Session related to the special requirements of playing for massed dances, such as at morris organisation Hosted Meetings
- Session exploring and experimenting with ways of making the best use of multiple musicians at club level, while still providing the best support to the dance and dancers.

Squires and Foremen are encouraged to attend the weekend. Dance is a partnership between musician and dancer, and it is important that each understands the other's role.

Good and plentiful food, ale and company are guaranteed with Ripley as hosts. Accommodation will be at the Church Hall or at the nearby Scout hall, and will be suitable for both ladies and gentlemen.

The cost? Just £50 for the whole event (including Friday evening meal, ale feast, lunches, teas, coffees and other beverages)

These weekends don't happen every year, so don't miss this one! Please spread the word.

Anyone wishing to attend please email Malcolm Frier (email horace1981-notes@yahoo.co.uk) with the following information

notes@yanoo.co.uk) with the following information
Name:
Side or Group:
Instruments played:
Any special dietary requirements:
Contact email address:

Payment address will be provided (cheque preferred).

Further details, directions, etc., will then be sent out via email nearer the date

This is an event for members of any Morris Side. Members of Morris Ring, Morris Federation and the Open Morris sides all welcome.

Contact phone number:

MORRIS RING PUBLICATIONS

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On-line Links:



The main MR website with millions of pages stuffed to the gunnels with all you need to know about the MR: http://www.themorrisring.org/

Follow the latest media reports concerning Morris
Matters at

http://www.themorrisring.org/article/morris-matters

The Morris Ring Google Group (MRGG). Private Forum for debate or announcements.

Contact Morris Ring Bagman to register to use. http://groups.google.com/group/the-morris-ring?hl=en&pli=1

Morris Ring Facebook site: http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Morris-Ring/158759257502840

Morris Ring Twitter: http://twitter.com/#!/TheMorrisRing

2014 80th Anniversary of Foundation of the Morris Ring

22nd-24th August Saddleworth 40th Anniversary Rushcart

As you may know, 2014 is our 40th birthday as a side and also the 40th Saddleworth Rushcart, since we revived the local tradition after a 50 year break. The weekend will operate as a hosted meeting of Morris Ring Clubs (a 'Ring Meeting' in old money), but will follow our tried and trusted format of the last 39 years. There will be NO feast, NO speeches, NO massed dancing, NO p.a. systems, and NO bus tours. If you want all these things, this may not be the event for you!

The 'Cart is pulled around the villages of Saddleworth on the Saturday with dance spots throughout the day. On Sunday the 'Cart is pulled up to Saddleworth Church for the spreading of rushes on the Church floor, with dancing and competitions such as Gurning, Wrestling, Clog Stepping & Worst Singer, throughout the afternoon.

As in previous years, both indoor and outdoor camping will be available at a minimal cost over the weekend (approx. £5 per man/tent pitch). No other cost is charged by us, all we ask is that you buy your own food & drink over the weekend. A Morris weekend where you are in charge of how much you spend! A fact sheet will be sent out in the New Year to all sides who have accepted our invitation.

Eddie Worrall Rushcart Secretary Saddleworth MM <u>edworrall@gmail.com</u>



5th-7th Sep. Dartington Morris Meeting.

Based in Dartmouth indoor camping at Dartmouth Academy. Friday evening, in local hostelries in Dartmouth; following the tours on Saturday the feast will be held in the Academy Restaurant and on Sunday will include a visit to Britannia Royal Naval College.

Further information available from Iain Davison (Bagman for the Meeting): iain.davison@data-harvest.co.uk



The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts
Hosted by Trigg Morris with Tywardreath
Morris and Plymouth Morris

St. Mabyn, Cornwall, 17th-19th October 2013

Open to all budding or experienced Fools,

Beasts and Morris Characters from any team

from the Morris Ring, Open Morris or Morris Federation.



Based at St Mabyn Holiday Park, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL30 3BY and will involve workshops, Saturday bus tour to Wadebridge, Bodmin - and a seaside resort! The Feast is planned to be on site. Plus the AGM of course - your chance to have your say!

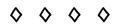
The role of the fool or beast is to supplement, and not detract, from the main purpose of the show - the dancing!

Attending the Unconvention and taking part in the workshops will give delegates the chance to learn or revise techniques in which standards of fooling and beasting can be enhanced.

This has always been the aim of the Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts from its inception.

So, whether you are a budding, novice or experienced Fool or Beast, please come along to this year's Unconvention! (or if you can't make it - a future year's: 2015 Ripley; 2016 Wyvern Jubilee; 2017 Stafford

For further information and application information visit http://www.foolsandbeasts.org.uk/



2015

16th-18th Jan Morris Ring Jigs Instructional

Dancers at ALL levels of competence a full weekend of highquality dance coaching - even if you don't aspire to be a solo performer. jigsinstructional@themorrisring.org

Jan 29th-1st Feb Musicians Instructional Hosts: Ripley MM Venue:

Kirky-in-Ashfield

Open to male and female musicians from three Morris

organisations. More details will follow.

March ARM Hosted by TBA

April 11th JMO National Day of Dance in Bristol

Hosted by Rag Morris of Open Morris

29th-31st May Thaxted Morris Meeting

August 15th Mersey MM One-Day Meeting based in Liverpool City

Centre (Day of Dance format: day time only, no feast, no

accommodation.)

4th - 6th Sept Anker Morris' 40th Anniversary Morris Meeting

<u> 2016</u>

March ARM Hosted by TBA

3rd - 5th June Thaxted Morris Meeting

TBC Greensleeves MM 90th Anniversary Morris Meeting

(Based in Chipperfield)

<u> 2017</u>

March ARM Hosted by TBA

TBC Thaxted Morris Meeting



JMO Workshop: Saturday 18th October Rickmansworth British Legion

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL MORRIS SIDE

Cost £15.00 per person including lunch



We would strongly recommend that sides seriously consider sending a representative to this workshop. Similar events in the past have been very informative. The session covering 'Morris & the law', dealing with road closures, stewarding & the like, is something with which all sides need to be familiar.

Application information to follow.



Your Area Rep: Please remember to use your Area Rep. Please keep them informed about your programme and performances. In addition to being responsive to the desires and whims of the incumbent Squire your Area Rep will assist and support you in many ways - you only have to ask! If your side organises an event that requires road closures please contact your Area Rep. They have some useful information that has been passed on by Mark Ambrose, of Whitworth Rushcart Men, concerning local council and police positions on assisting at events/road closures. As Mark says "Long gone are the days when you could just drag a cart through your village and dance, it makes you weep !!!"

Area Rep.: East Mike Stevens MikeStevensPE11@aol.com

Paul Cross pakcross@gmail.com Area Rep.: North

David Loughlin Dave. Loughlin@ernestgriffiths.com Area Rep.: North West

Area Rep.: South West & Wales Tim Sercombe timothy.sercombe@gmail.com

Area Rep.: West Midlands Pete Simpson simpsonfam@live.com

Area Rep.: North East Brian Pollard bripol@sky.com

Ben Robinson ben@packingtonmorris.org.uk Area Rep.: North Midlands

Area Rep.: South Midlands Roger Comley No email address

Cliff Marchant cliffmarchant@btinternet.com Area Rep.: South East

Morris Ring Newsletter No 90

June 2014



And finally......

The window pane in memory of Stephen BfB Adamson was dedicated as part of the service on Sunday 1st June at the Thaxted Meeting. Thanks to the Thaxted MM and the church officers.

The diary for most Morris sides is already crammed with days, weekends and festivals, with requests and invitations coming in all the time. I suspect that it is because you are all so busy with other things that the MR diary for the next couple of years is looking rather empty. Please consider labelling your event as a Morris Ring event! You will see from the diary (above) that events do not have to follow what has been the 'traditional' format. A meeting does not have to be a whole weekend - some of the early meetings were simply a day! Could you simply re-brand an existing event as a 'Ring Meeting' for one year? How about running a joint meeting with a neighbouring side?

I hope that you have a successful and enjoyable Summer.

Charlie

Bagman of the Morris Ring