



The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 12 – January 2000

Greetings,

And a very happy new Millennium ... and my thanks to all Sides and individuals who have sent Christmas Cards or greetings by media various.

This Newsletter should reach you in early February, and the Mailing also includes: -

- Inevitably – there are more **amendments** to the Directory. The revised Directory will be published following the ARM – make sure I have all relevant amendments NOW.
- Papers for the **ARM in Derby**, including: An outline **Agenda**; The **Treasurer's Report and Accounts**; The **Proposals** for three Candidates for Squire; Two **Formal Resolutions for Discussion**; An application for Full Membership from **Milton**.
- For Member Clubs a **Voting Form** [for instructions see NOTES on reverse] is enclosed. Bring to the ARM or use for your Postal Vote.
- **DANIEL'S CAN OF WORMS – A progress report** from The Squire on the survey on women musicians. This will form the basis of a discussion item at the ARM. Please ensure that it is widely read within your side and you know your Side's views.
- For Sides, the Advisory Council and Subscribers, a copy of "**The Morris Dancer**".

REMINDER – have you completed and sent off the *Application Form* [in the last Newsletter] for the ARM at Derby. Also, check now, whether you have your copy of the 1999 ARM Minutes that were with Newsletter No 7 [March 1999]. Check now – if missing I can E-mail you a replacement!!

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 the last sheet.

E-mailed versions of these Newsletters are available on request [ideally as an attached Word document or rtf file; please order and specify by Email].

IN MEMORIAM

Jack Thompson, an early member of **Letchworth** and latterly **Offley** and an Honorary Member of **Cambridge**, died peacefully in his sleep on Monday 6th December 1999. He was a printer by trade and as Hive Printers in Letchworth, he provided his services to the Morris Ring and many of its clubs over many years. He donated the paper for the printing of the first edition of Bacon's "Black Book".

A memorial service was held in Radwell Parish Church on Saturday 18 December. The small church was filled with friends and family including about thirty Morris Men from seven sides – **Bedford, Cambridge, Letchworth, Offley, St Alban's, Thaxted** and **Whitchurch**. The Squire and a Past Squire represented the Morris Ring. Letchworth and Offley – his two sides provided full Sides.

Mike Chandler (Whitchurch and Past Squire) and **Jim Catterall** (Thaxted) played for the singing of Lord of the Dance. After the service, the Morris musicians led the procession from the church to Radwell House, where a "Handkerchief Tree" was planted and Jack's ashes were added to help the tree grow.

The Morris Men danced for Jack and his family and friends – massed Laudnum Bunches, The Willow Tree (Bucknall) from Offley, Highland Mary (Oddington) from Letchworth, massed Bobbing Around and finishing with Bonny Green Garters – before enjoying tea (or beer) and some bread pudding – a Jack Thompson speciality.

We send our condolences to his daughter Anne Godschalk, and his Partner for many years, Kerry Wright.

Tom Camp, a member of the former **Bishop's Stortford and Thorley** Side [admitted to the Ring in 1935, but long disbanded] died on 3 November 1999 aged 83. He was a member of the Side when it danced for William Kimber at Bampton on Whit Monday 1939, following Kimber's lament at not being able to raise a side as Headington had, at that time, lapsed.

ARM 2000 – A REMINDER.

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**. The Application Form was in last month's bundle – return this to Ripley [**NOT** the Ring Bagman] as soon as possible.

The various formal **Nominations and Resolutions** are detailed on the enclosed papers.

There are three **Nominations for Squire**. **Cliff Marchant** of **Chanctonbury Ring**; **Bob Pierce** of **Gloucestershire**; and **Gerald Willey** of **Shakespeare**. A **Voting Paper** is included for each Full Member Club.

Voting guidelines are included on the voting slips for your information. The full draft of the latest edition of the Guidelines, which follow the Constitution are available from the Bagman.

There are no further nominations for **Treasurer**, **Steve Adamson** is prepared to continue.

One **Elected Representative** [*David Thompson - Ripley*] is due for formal election, by the Northern Area clubs; he has served in an appointed capacity for the last year; and has been proposed by **Foresters**.

There are no “**Proposed Alterations to the Constitution**”. Two “**Formal Resolutions for Discussion**” have been provided “on the Officers’ behalf” by **Bedford**. One deals with the raising of the subscriptions as proposed by the Treasurer at the last ARM; the other deals with the amendment of Areas to redistribute the clubs in the London Area and even out representation. Whilst probably neither item requires formal resolution, they have been dealt with in this way “for the avoidance of doubt”. Other matters, not subject to formal resolution can of course be raised during the Meeting or as “Any Other Business”.

RING MEETINGS – 2000 - UPDATE

A thank you to Sides for [mostly] applying before the deadline for Ring Meetings. This, and the prompt decisions by the host clubs meant that we had notifications out by early December. This achieved our aim of letting you know the position before Christmas, and allowing you to make your other summer arrangements.

Chalice were well over-subscribed, but managed to expand their Meeting somewhat, so fewer Sides than expected had to be disappointed. **Richmondshire** and **Anker** were both well subscribed and only a couple of Sides were unlucky. Remember, Sides that are unsuccessful have a degree of priority the following year. **Thaxted** is still able to take more Sides, and would like a few more please – but apply as soon as possible so that the organisers can do their planning.

MILLENNIUM DOME

Yet more frustrations for our “Domemaster” **Paul Montague** who has had a further discourse with “The Dome”, which has a few problems of its own it appears!! They have now suggested that we might like to go one weekend a month – which will not fit in all those interested. Paul will be in touch as and when – but chosen dates may not be available.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Ring Musicians’ Instructional. 11 – 13 February 2000. Hosts – **Mendip**. 22 were booked at last count, - last minute bookers welcome - **apply to the Organiser NOW** : - **Clive Du’Mont**, 21, Langthorn Close, Frampton Cotterell, South Gloucestershire BS36 2JH. Telephone / fax: **01454 773895** Email: **dumontch@aol.com**

OTHER EVENTS

National Pipe and Tabor Festival, Gloucester, 9 -11 June 2000. Contact:- **Stephen Rowley**, Tanronen, Lurks Lane, Pitchcombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL6 6LL. Tel: 01453-763181 Email: **srowley@dial.pipex.com**

World Millennium Festival of Sword Dancing - Whit Weekend 2000 – see last Newsletter.

Nine Daies Morris. Details were in previous Newsletters. Further information from **John Tarling** [Tel: 01279 861146]. If you wish to participate, please get in touch NOW.

Hastings Jack in the Green – 28 April – 1 May 2000 is a revival of the 19th century custom. Approaching its 20th year, it is one of the largest annual dance gatherings. Few Ring Sides attend, and the organiser would like to see more. A formal stand on Saturday followed by general dancing around the town. Saturday evening ceilidh. Sunday Morris Eucharist in the medieval church followed by dancing around town. Sunday evening concert with Magpie Lane. Monday procession - 600 dancers led by Jack in the Green and a stand in Hastings Castle where each team does a show dance. **Free** to participants. Plenty of accommodation and restaurants, or a couple of halls for indoor camping [nominal fee]. Information from, and applications, by end February, to: -. Keith Leech, 205, Priory Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN343JB. Tel: 01424 716576. E-mail: keith.leech@britishlibrary.net.

OVERSEAS EVENTS

Overseas Bagman, **John Maher**, has a list of festivals requiring Morris Sides. Viborg (Denmark), Bleiesransbach (Germany), the Polesian Summer Festival (Poland and Ukraine), Szeged (Hungary), Komsomolsk (Ukraine) and Kyongju (Korea). Contact him – or consult the Ring Web pages. He can also help set up visits to French groups, and will be visiting the AGM of one of the French Folk Dance organisations at Bourg-en-Bresse in late February

As already circulated to many Sides by Email, **Helmond** are organising a Morris Weekend in their twin-town of Mechelen [between Brussels and Antwerp] in Belgium, from **27 - 29 May 2000**. Details from **Antony Heywood** - Email: antony@iae.nl - Tel: +31 40 285 3337.

WEB NEWS

One or two people missed the listing of Traditional Tours that used to be included in the Directory. Last year there was too much work needed to include this; it also takes a lot of space and events [however traditional] tended to change. A far superior listing is included on the Morris Ring web pages at <http://www.themorrisring.org/Trad/Trad.htm>. This appears a more appropriate place for this listing and more easily updated. Send your "Traditional" events to John Maher for inclusion.

ANNIVERSARIES

Rumford celebrate the 40th Anniversary of their last reformation in 1960. In 1952, a group of men from the Romford and Brentwood EFDSS formed a Morris side, calling themselves the Rumford Morris Men. Rumford was the old spelling of the town's name. During those early days, practice sessions were held in the garage of one of the founder members, the late **Bob Fernee**, who was later to become the first Squire of the side. Bob had danced with **Headington, London Rodney** and **Letchworth**. After 2 or 3 years, the side became defunct, mainly because a number of the Men were called up for National Service. The side was reformed in 1960 and was admitted to the Ring in 1963, Bob Fernee receiving the staff from the then Squire of the Ring, **Lionel Bacon**. Subsequently, there have been no more breaks, so they celebrate a 'Ruby' anniversary this year, with several events to commemorate the achievement, including a Barn Dance in February and a Day of Dance in September.

BOOK REVIEW - The History of Morris Dancing 1468 – 1730

John Forrest's "History of Morris Dancing 1458 - 1750" was published on 12 January 2000. The UK price is £45 Hardcover and £17.50 Paperback. John Forrest is Professor of Anthropology, State University of New York at Purchase and has previously published "annals of Early Morris" with Michael Heaney of the Bodlian Library. The book is published by James Clark & Co, Cambridge.

I include some brief comments here to wet the appetite for a superb and comprehensive book of 456 pages. Within these, the book contains a wealth of quoted references and analysis.

After an initial chapter commenting and largely dismissing all the commonly quoted origins, Forrest sets out to analyse the frequency of occurrence of references to the Morris and then to define a number of "dance contexts". These Morris occurrences are then analysed to establish the most frequent context for any period and then these are ordered to give a chronological sequence. He then describes the dance within those contexts with chapters on Earliest References; The Royal Court; Urban Streets; Church Property; Church Proscription and Prosecution; The Public Stage; Rural Locations; Assemblies and Country Dance Halls; Private Premises.

As there is very little description of the dance itself in these early references, this is not an alternative black book full of dance material. It will be, however, THE source of reference on early Morris and the contexts in which it occurred - whatever that Morris may have then been.

Virtually every page has a quotation, or indeed quotations, about Morris or Morris dancing and Forrest's comment on these. It will be a valuable source of reference, not only for those fascinated by the history of dance and the origins of the Morris, but for social and dance historians.

Forrest has analysed this wealth of information and concludes that Morris dancing does not have pagan or ancient origins. He does attempt "to see if any evolutionary process emerges" and suggests that the following will be abundantly clear.

- Morris has no single point origin.
- Morris is not and has never been a single or simple phenomenon.
- Morris has evolved continuously throughout its documented history.
- Morris is not especially "Folk" or rural.
- Styles of Morris from different contexts have had a constant evolutionary influence on one another.

However, this can only be analysed within the context of the available references – no one can analyse earlier origins when there is no earlier data. The conclusions must therefore all be constrained by the caveat "throughout its documented history".

Will it will touch upon or affect the quality of performance of the average Morris Dancer? Having shown it to a few practicing dancers, the quote from one that "there's a lot of words there" summed it up. This is definitely not the idiot's guide to "Which One's Morris?", but that is not what this study set out to do. Whilst a straight read through may be a daunting task, wherever one dips there are fascinating insights, and each dip lengthens and leaves one amazed as to how many references there are to the Morris. Our Morris dance is no isolated hangover from a few minor occurrences. The wealth of quotations suggests that Morris was well known and well understood. The media may joke about the Morris today, but this seems to be traditional and true to form, they were making similar remarks in Shakespeare's time.

If you think you can deal with the crowd's enquiry on the Origin of Morris whilst you collect a few coins, think again – once you have started reading this book, the mere mention of Moors may embarrass you!!! Buy it and enjoy it – you will never be short of information again!!!

ARCHIVAL MATTERS

Just as John Forrest issues his book [see above] with known Morris history starting at 1458 [the first English reference in the will of Alice Wetenhale], an earlier pictorial reference appears in a bible in the National Library of the Netherlands in Utrecht. The bible is dated 1443 and around one page of text are shown six figures including a musician with pipe and tabor; three dancers, two with bells on their legs and a woman [a Betsy?!]; a fool with a bauble; and a monkey [yes – fools and animals!!]. To see it use the link on the Morris Ring web page, it is easier than <http://www.konbib.nl/100hoogte/hh-en/hh011-en.html>.

Eddie Dunmore advises that there is an even earlier reference quoted by Steve Corsin, of “... sailors performing with swords at Shrovetide in 1389” – anything earlier anyone? How about cave paintings – are those really spears the hunters were waving? Perhaps a stick dance ... !!

Patrick Harries, Bagman of **Wessex** writes “We have recently discovered that an old boy of Yeovil School has an 8mm film, that he has now transposed onto video, of the Blue Dragons Morris side dancing in 1970 at Weymouth and other spots on the Dorset coast. The Side were set up at Yeovil School and were a feeder side for Wessex. Sadly, neither the Blue Dragons, nor the school now exist”. He asked whether the Ring would like a copy of the tape for the archives. The Archive is, of course, always pleased to receive film and video.

Just Acquired: A copy of the programme for the opening of Cecil Sharp House in 1930, with on the reverse, a contemporary shorthand note of some of the speeches. This had belonged to the late *Ivor Howard* who folk danced, and possibly Morris danced, in Bedford [his wife took the note]. His son-in-law, Paul Roberts, gave it to an interested neighbour, *John Warren* [sometime **Whitchurch**, but an occasional musician for various clubs]. John, in his turn had lent this and other items to *Adrian Bull* of **Bedford**, and copies were made and interest expressed. In view of this, John Warren turned up at a Bedford practice and donated the original programme to the Ring Bagman – for use as he felt fit! He also suggested that some of the other material might be coming our way – he was invited to visit and play along whenever he wished, and we bought him a pint of mild for his troubles.

MORRIS SHOP

Steve is keeping up to date with favourite CDs in the shop. Latest CD in stock is “Maypoles to Mistletoe”, the latest Martyn Wyndham-Read with **Broadwood** Morris Men. The shop also stocks CD's from **Sydney**, also **Abingdon** musicians; **Grand Union**; and *Phil Underwood*. A list was in the last Newsletter, and is available via the Morris Ring Web-site.

ADDENDA – i.e. CORRECTIONS and APOLOGIES!!

Apologies to *Graham Wood* of **Yateley** who became a rather more venerable former **Bedford** Man, *Graham Wild*, in my report on the Bedford Beer Festival.

Apologies to **Dartington** for i) Misplacing one of their Church House Inns, it was Harberton (not Halberton) and ii) misnaming the Goss Challenge boat.

OTHER NEWS

A technical enquiry from **Mark Swingler** of **Peterborough**, was sufficient excuse to deliver some papers and join them for practice. A nicely sprung floor and real ale on the premises provided an excellent ambiance for practicing a selection of Bampton, Lichfield and Bidford.

Ian Heighton of **King's Morris** reports on the **Peterborough** Day of Dance and the dance spot on the Pontoon [last year's pics of said pontoon at **www. [REDACTED]**]. "This year managed massed Banks of the Dee (Fieldtown), Nutting Girl Jig for as many as could get on, followed by Bonny Green. The dancers were fine but the musicians found it a bit hard going".

Roy Stubbs reports that **Anker** featured in Ballboy in Issue 2993 of **The Beano!!!** It seems the artist "highjacked" their distinctive kit. He rapidly contacted them and demanded recompense for intellectual copyright. "It is so similar that we presume it was copied from photos or film of us or copied from the website. we thought therefore you would like to make a contribution to our side for the use of our kit on this one occasion in your publication. As you may be aware the hats and ribbon for baldricks are not cheap. For our Jubilee year we would like to replace some of our worn out articles and it would greatly help our funds for this extraordinary expenditure. Cheques should be made payable etc ... We look forward to a speedy and mutually satisfactory resolution of this matter."

Sem Seaborne of **Icknield Way** reports upon a memorial to the late **Joe Marns**.

"You may recall the sudden death of Joe Marns in Jan 1998 (see obituary in The Circular Spring/Summer 1998). Joe was a local councillor, school governor, esperantist, organic gardener, orchestral musician, Folk Dance Club Organiser, Dance Band leader, etc. but above everything (of course) was the Chief Musician of IWMM for over 30 years and Life President when he died. He had also been Squire and Foreman for a number of years. In their infinite wisdom the Vale of White Horse District Council needed little persuasion to have a lasting monument to Joe's achievements and they chose (with our help) to name a new housing development after him – MARNS HEY. The development is quite close to where Joe lived (and regularly tramped the pavement and pressed the flesh on behalf of the Labour Party).

"On Saturday 28th November the development was opened, with much broadcasting on Thames Valley FM, by IWMM. A small marquee was erected and local dignitaries, councillors, officials of the Vale Housing Assoc., residents, friends and relations of Joe attended the opening ceremony. The event opened with a speech from the Chairman of The VHA praising Joe's work and we did our specially composed dance "Jolly Joe Marns" followed by the appropriate "Happy Man". This was followed by eating, drinking a barrel of Wadworths 6X, some more dancing and Joe's favourite song "The Man Who Waters the Worker's Beer".

"It was a pleasant occasion with three of Joe's grandchildren present and the weather was favourable. More particularly its nice to know that someone who did more for traditional dance and music in S. Oxon than anyone will not be forgotten and bureaucracy can still respond (at least in Oxfordshire)!"

The **Isca** Millennium Ale and Feast provided a welcome interlude at the Star Inn at Llanyfangel, "miles from anywhere". Full sides from **Ripley** and **Yateley**; representatives various from **Adlington**; **Bedford** [the Bagman]; **Hartley**; **John of Gaunt**; and **Sweyn's Ey**.

Ring Mumming Archivist, **Ron Shuttleworth's** Christmas card, included seeds of the "Fleabane" a plant that Ron wishes to reintroduce – whether we all need, or have, fleas is unclear!!! It seems his version can grow to 6 foot or more. I await reports of progress from his friends.

The **Packington** Ale – in commemoration of the Brussel Sprout! – was attended by representatives from **Anker; Cambridge; Coventry; Jockey; Lichfield; Man Friday; Ripley; Rutland; Shakespeare** and **Stafford**. Various toast and speeches followed an excellent Feast. The Bagman provided the “Immortal Memory” and found a way to connect Cecil Sharp and the Centenary with said Brussel Sprouts. Songs followed with a concluding few words from a very welcome guest **Geoff Thompson** [**Handsworth Sword**, but also a Packington founder member] back briefly from the USA for the occasion and some of the Sheffield carols. He spoke of links with **Pinewoods** and the early Morris in the US; finishing with one of the traditional carols “Awake, arise, good Christians”.

“Red Leicester” [**Leicester** in Raddle] performed Border dances at Market Harborough Victorian Fayre. Dance spots both inside as well as outside shops various – the Oxfam shop having the best “free eats” – they know a set of charity cases when they see them!!! The rain forced us into a pub as the evening finished, and then we retired to a less crowded country pub where Leicester appeared to be well known – the sandwiches were stacked high.

The **Mendip** Ale [17 December] was attended by **Bristol, Chalice, Exeter** and **West Somerset** - resplendent in new baldricks – another kit to remember!! There was also a full house of Ring Officers. An evening of dancing, with an intermission for the pie and cheese buffet, washed down by the Bath Brewery's “Bellringer” [4.2%]. Songs followed: Bristol gave a fine two part “Rolling Home” and **Bob Cross** of Chalice his “traditional” “The Holly and the Ivy”. The show dances included Lichfield from Mendip [“Castlering”] and an interesting “Ring of Bells” from Chalice, with short sticks and a multiple sticking – a nice variation!! Chalice also gave the Fieldtown “Lass of Richmond Hill” – no doubt to show the Bagman how he had messed it up at their practice [an earlier volume refers!!!]. Bristol performed another double stick dance, their “Weyhill Fair” in the style of Bledington. It was good to see a number of youngsters present, particularly with Bristol. Later Bampton Highland Mary – was danced to Little Town of Bethlehem, more usually associated with the Adderbury dance. Exeter appeared in police helmets and red noses with truncheon/sticks, to dance an Adderbury Truncheons – or was it Trunkles – or in fact “The Buffoon”!!

This year's annual **Welsh Border** tour met up at a revised location as the River Severn got to the pub first!! Breakfast at the Oak at Hallow allowed any Mendip-ian hangovers to be treated with “full English” and a pint or few of the Malvern Hills Brewery's Bitter [3.9%]. The tour then embussed for White Ladies Aston; Pershore; Upton upon Severn and Worcester and danced the appropriate dances at each location plus a selection of other Border dances. Some 50 dancers and musicians, including a number of past and present Ring Officers participated. The organisers were up bright and early to be interviewed on local BBC radio – and this resulted in a BBC camera crew finding them at Upton upon Severn. A report appeared on the BBC Evening News over a wide area [well the Bagman's secretary saw it in Rugby – which spoiled his chances of any overtime claims that weekend!!].

Brackley celebrated the 40th Anniversary of their refoundation with a Ladies Night on 18 November 1999. The Side was reformed in 1959 at Magdalen School, Brackley, under the guidance of a new master, **Roger Nicholls** [formerly of **Oxford University**]. Roger later moved to **Bedford**, and is still very active there as Bedford's Foreman and as one of their musicians. He was amongst those present at the celebratory evening, along with other Bedford representatives and those from **Anker, Cambridge, Whitchurch**, etc

BOXING DAY - 1999

House of Commons: -

An Early Day Motion was posted by Bob Russell MP. He is the son of the Late **Ewart Russell of Colchester** [Ring Bagman 1959 – 1971] [to date it has 16 signatories]. It reads:

“That this House pays tribute to Cecil Sharp for his unrivalled services to English folk dance and song; notes that it was on Boxing Day 1899 that he commenced saving morris dancing from oblivion through a chance encounter near Oxford with the Headington Quarry Morris Dancers; acknowledges that in the succeeding years Cecil Sharp was able to save for posterity many of England's native ceremonial dances; recognises that over the past 100 years morris dancing has grown in popularity and that today there are more participants than at any other time in its history; and on the occasion of the centenary of the event leading to the revival of morris dancing wishes all member clubs of The Morris Ring further success and enjoyment in the future.”

An article also appeared in the Peterborough column of the Daily Telegraph.

Headington Quarry Morris Dancers – 26 December 1999: -

The Squire writes “A hundred years ago it was snowing on Boxing Day. In 1999 it was cold and did not rain until the dancing had finished. **HQMD** danced as close as they could to Sandfield Cottage in what is now Horwood Close, where there is a plaque to commemorate the chance meeting of Cecil Sharp and HQMD.

“A reasonable crowd of friends and neighbours watched and listened as **Bob Grant** introduced the dances. The first dance, Bean Setting, was danced by the oldest men, in kit that replicated the kit of HQMD 100 years ago – white, not blue, caps. The younger men then danced Laudanum Bunches in today's kit. There followed the repertoire of Headington dances, each introduced by Bob Grant with an explanation of why we were there.

“The family of William Kimber was represented. His great grandson, **Chris Kimber**, danced a jig, Shepherd's Hey.

“The dancing was followed by a celebration lunch, to which HQMD had invited friends and supporters from the world of Morris. The guest speaker was **Nibs Matthews**, former Director of EFDSS and Past Squire of The Morris Ring. The entertainment including fiddle playing and songs from **Jim Gordon**, aged 91 who had played with William Kimber.

“The proceedings ended with the presentation by the Squire of HQMD of a personalised Morris stick for each member of HQMD and one for Nibs Matthews and for The Squire of The Morris Ring. Mine was inscribed “Squire's Squasher”. The sticks were cut from an ash tree in the Headington Quarry.

“The day had begun with a church service and ended with a ceilidh in the Mason's Arms.”

Eddie Dunmore wrote for the Internet. “It was a glorious day at Headington to see the current team, dressed as the team was in 1899, re-enact that meeting exactly 100 years ago. All the usual suspects were there: we had brought Roy & Betty Judge, Derek Schofield & his lady were there, as were Nibs Matthews, Mike Heaney, Ron Smedley and lots more. Headington also invited us to the commemorative lunch that followed.” An illustrated report will appear in the Spring Circular, due for publication next April.

Elsewhere on Boxing Day: -

Alan Dandy updates on **Stafford's** Boxing Day - First dancing as traditional with **Uttoxeter** in Uttoxeter market square at Noon, Laudnum Bunches at 12.30. In the evening **Peter Morgan** was interviewed on Shropshire Radio (also linked-broadcast through Staffs, Worcs and Herefords) on the Kimber - Sharp meeting. Travelling with the recent CD he had the opportunity to broadcast William Kimber's voice and concertina!

Mick Buckley, Bagman, **Ripley**, reports "We started as tradition decrees at 11.00 am on Ripley Market Place - once again the coldest place in Britain - a snow shower chased us into the pub before we danced. The first dances took place inside. This year our Fool and Squire decided that all dances at this first spot should be in the Headington tradition to mark the centenary, and we kicked off with Bean Setting, followed by Rigs o' Marlow. By this time the weather had improved and we returned to the Market Place to dance Blue Eyed Stranger and Laudnum Bunches. The tour continued to The Thack in Riddings at 12.00pm and then progressed to The Red Lion at Fritchley where Lillian treated the assembled company to game stew and other traditional fare. Songs and tunes followed in the usual Ripley fashion."

Sem Seaborne of **The Wantage Mummers** aka **Icknield Way**, made their customary appearance on Boxing Day at the time honoured locations of Faringdon Market Place, Wantage Market Place and The Hatchet, Childrey. The Wantage Traditional Play was performed to large crowds with much merriment and enhanced loathing for the French Officer (Beau Slasher) this year, baiting the crowd with his French Beef and buckets of cow food (merde). The weather was bright and sunny for the first two performances but significantly colder and wetter in the Childrey Hollow. Nevertheless the Landlord served up hot mince pies and spicy ale and a jolly session kept going in the Hatchet until 4:00pm when the Mummers retired to Uffington for an excellent meal. Around 300 people watched the play and raised £330 for Save the Children Fund. One Yarnton lady paid £5 for a copy of Beelzebub's speech! This will be put with donations to **Michael McArdle's** memory; he was a Wantage Mummer, to bring a total donation to children's charities of £1000.

Steve Ashcroft, **Greensleeves** reports "The St Stephen's Day tour went very well. As usual we started at the Royal Hospital for Neurodisability in Putney. One patient started discussing with our foreman the possibility of using wheelchair-bound Morris as a form of dance therapy! Both subsequent pubs (Rose & Crown, 12.15 and Crooked Billet, 1.15, both in Wimbledon Village) had very-much-better-than-usual crowds, because either a) it was a bright morning, b) it was Sunday, c) there was b.-all public transport, d) we'd managed to get something into the local paper about the Sharp/Headington centenary, or e) any combination of the above. They were very appreciative, and the 1999 version of the ancient, traditional Wimbledon Mumming play (that we wrote five years ago) was warmly received. Because I'm Doctor in the above, I was only able to join **Thames Valley** at the last stop, but ... their (longer) tour had also gone very well. The last stop was curtailed by rain ... "

Bedford danced as usual on Bedford Embankment and then at the Swan Hotel. They attended the Boar's Head ceremony and sang the Boar's Head Carol to the assembled throng. After the Mayor's address, and following a few words of historical context and introduction, they danced Laudnum Bunches [which had been danced also at the two previous spots]. A border dance followed appropriate to the season and the kit being worn. Was this the only Headington being danced on Boxing Day blacked up and in border kit?? A party followed at the Ring Bagman's. **Ray Fuller** of **East Surrey** was a guest at the proceedings – in trouble again, no doubt, for visiting Mum and not being out with his own Side!!!

Rumford celebrated by dancing at the King's Head, West Tilbury [a hamlet, north of Tilbury itself]. Among other dances, they performed Laudnum Bunches, Constant Billy and Rigs of Marlow (a long-time favourite of the club, which used to specialise in Headington).

Ken Hamilton, Bagman of **Oakworth** in a note to the Web Discussion List on the space needed to dance Morris revealed that they celebrated in the wards of Airedale Hospital dancing the Bower processional (Lichfield) in between the sections of the ward, then in between the beds. Sticking was curtailed by the curtain rails overhead. Their Fool introduced 2 nurses as extra dancers [Oh No!!], bringing the total to 8 plus 2 musicians in a space probably about 5ft by 7ft which made for a cosy dance. Short sticks were used!!

AND INTO 2000

Commenting on dancing in confined spaces **Rodger Molyneux** reported that **MC Morris and the Knuckle Rappers** danced in their smallest area when they “danced out” The Greyhound, Carshalton for its renovation closure. At great danger to life and limb (and that was just the audience) they danced in a 5ft by 4ft space. Their final dance was Upton stick, the chorus becoming a grand melee. The audience loved it.

Twelfth Night and **Leominster** were out wassailing. A crowd of 200 processed with fiery torches from the Riverside Inn at Aymestry to an orchard where bonfires were lit and libations made. Dancing followed and the shotgun blasts into the trees brought down a brace of peasants – Morris magic ensured that they were already conveniently tied together at the neck!! There was a mummers play and more dancing at the pub before all transferred to a ceilidh at the village hall. The Bagman recalls dancing Bledington “Ladies Pleasure” despite a formidable mix of the local Woodhampton beers [and their Raven's Head Stout] as well as two local ciders. Thanks to Leominster's Bagman, **Tony Locock**, for accommodation.

Also on the Web, Keith Leech noted that **Long Man** organised a superb apple wassail. There was dancing, “.. the old tree was well decorated and we all threw our cider on it crying wassail, guns were fired and fireworks let off in the tree, drums were banged and then into the pub for a mummers performance by **Merrie England**, in a 2m x 1m space I swear! Then a stupendously good sing for two hours and copious amounts of Harveys Bitter.”

Several Ring Sides were at the Straw Bear Festival at Wittlesea on 8 January. **Peterborough** [who had kindly invited the Bagman and the Area Rep, **John Tarling** from **Rumford**] were near the front of the procession following their plough. Also present: **White Rose** [a good way from Yorkshire]; **Leicester** [raddled up as Red Leicester]; parts of **Thaxted** within Good Easter Molly; **Stevenage Sword** [providing fine rapper in pubs and chip shops – with the fastest Newbiggen that John Tarling had ever seen!!!]; **Rutland** [so well disguised that no one saw them – **Steve Tunncliffe** advises that “Rutland were in border mode - black faces and ratting hats! We seemed to do rather a lot of standing about or dancing to not many people, ... but it was a nice day.”]. In the crowd a good selection of **Greensleeves** [including Past Squire **Bert Cleaver**] having a day out; and representatives from **Ashdown Forest** and **Northampton** – and no doubt many more!! A chance to see a wider selection of Morris styles from “street theatre” to classic Cotswold, something for all tastes from both Ring and non-Ring sides. A fine sunny day and a good time being had by all.

That same evening, another full house of Ring Officers at **Stafford's** Feast suggested that there were no competing events for a change!!

The **Stafford** Feast had representatives from **Coventry** [fresh from their own Sword Tour]; **Jockey** with Past Squires **Roy Yarnell** and **Tim Sercombe** [who had their Plough Tour that day]; **Shakespeare**; **Uttoxeter**; **Whitchurch** [Past Squire, **Mike Chandler**], **West Somerset** and **South Shropshire**. **Peter Morgan** of Stafford gave an well considered study of Sharp and Kimber, having been requested by Stafford's Squire to "make a little more" of the "Immortal Memory" in view of the Centenary. Stafford's Bagman, **Alan Dandy**, had produced a Commemorative Candelabra for the occasion. The design incorporates a Stafford Knot of stainless steel rope, three candle holders and on the copper base plate inscriptions commemorating the Centenary of the 1899 meeting, and Stafford's 2000th event in 1999; an 1899 half-crown and an 1999 £2 piece decorate the stem. A fine piece of work, which saves **Jack Brown** having to loan his candelabra for the annual Feast!!

On the net, **Norman Stanfield** reported that **Vancouver** "had a grand time" on Plough Monday. They have retrieved a "grand old sheer" from a local farmer's garden, which they haul about by passing sticks through the framework and lugging it around, with a school bell and melodeon providing welcome good cheer. They process from their "local" passing through a market noisily announcing "penny for the ploughboys, only once a year". They perform the Bassingham play and traditional Molly dances - the Mollies doing double duty! One of their musicians jumped in with a jovial tune every time there was a lull between the dances and the play. A light coating of snow gave the correct ambience.

Cambridge danced Molly during the day on Plough Monday: starting in Comberton where many of their dances were collected and then moving on to Cambridge. In the evening they danced Cotswold at Balsham where the Plough Boys were carrying on their traditions.

Steve Tunnicliff of **Rutland** indicated that on Plough Monday, they danced outside the pubs after Belvoir Mummers mindlessly interpolated inside. "It worked well enough for us last year, though I can't honestly remember if any of the audience followed us outside: didn't really care much, either, we weren't really doing it for them".

Bedford performed the Branston [Leicestershire] Plough Play and danced at three crowded venues – collecting a record bag!! Representatives from **Aldbury** joined them at the traditional last spot at Stevington to enhance the music and song. It was midnight 'ere Bedford's traditional last dance, "The Quaker" was performed by eight Men - with the good ale assisting an unusually complex hey and change place figure that Sharp would have found challenging to record, and surpassed even the Lichfield hey in complexity !!

Derek Schofield reports that **Chipping Camden** was on Radio 4's "Open Country" on 13 January. As well as interviews and music, there was discussion and demonstration (on the radio!!) of the difference between the **Ilmington** and Camden stepping.

Fifty two weeks to the day after his last visit, the Bagman called in on a **Chalice** practice for some keep fit!! This is presumably now classed as a tradition event!! The Vandals variant mentioned under the Mendip Feast was sprung upon him with nearly [but not quite] disastrous consequences for the fingers!!!

Northampton Ale for once did not herald the return of snow. Full sides from **Devil's Dyke**, **King's Men**, **Rutland** and English Miscellany; representatives various from **Anker**, **Bedford**, **Brackley**; **Peterborough** and **Rose and Castle**. A solid evening's dancing with a pause for the usual excellent buffet, with various spicy delicacies. King's Men performed a double jig – the participants both back on form after their bypass operations various!!

Bristol has become involved with an “On-The-Line” contact with the group Sidjancoro close to Bamako in Mali. The contacts are being set up via Christian Aid, and an article will appear shortly about this in their magazine. This is supported by the Channel 4 “On The Line” programme and a photographer was sent down from London to expend several rolls of film at their practice evening [in kit of course] to provide background. Bristol hope that there will be more publicity about this on radio and TV, and in the press. Whether they are intending to rush off to this central African Republic to dance seems rather less certain!! - but they are the first folk group in the UK to be involved in such a link.

FILLERS

From *Dave Pearce* after some protracted discussion on the Net on the role of percussion in the Morris, and the problem with drum beaters various.

Question: You are stuck in a lift with Hitler, Stalin and a bodhran player.
You have a gun with two bullets in it. Who do you shoot?

Answer: The bodhran player twice. You need to make sure !!

David Jackson of **King's Morris** notes that the 100 lines being written by Bart Simpson at the start of TV's “The Simpsons”, read “*Bagman is not a legitimate career choice*” - and I was hoping to take it up full time - Oh Damn !!! – who would like to do it next year ?!!

IN CONCLUSION

The next Newsletter – due in late March – may be delayed to include some or all of the following: - Minutes of the ARM; the next Morris Circular; the updated Directory and any greetings from the Squire Elect [who will, hopefully, be at the various Ring Meetings this year, before dancing in at Chalice in July].

This slight delay will, hopefully, also allow me some extra time for “the day job”, dealing with the new [hopefully equally flexible!!] regime as Rugby Cement settles down under new owners [Ready Mixed Concrete Ltd] and as we commission our new £150 Million cement works at Rugby and introduce its products to customers.

As we go into the Millennium, this modest publicity and my grateful thanks to Rugby Cement are well deserved, considering their flexible approach to my Ring activities over the last two years. Hopefully RMC will be equally so !!

Wassail,

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring

The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 12 – January 2000 - SUMMARY

The ARM - 31 March to 2 April 2000. Hosted by **Ripley** in Derby. Does your representative know your views? **Nominated Squires - Cliff Marchant of Chanctonbury Ring; Bob Pierce of Gloucestershire; and Gerald Willey of Shakespeare. A progress Report** from The Squire on the "Survey on Women Musicians".

IN MEMORIAM - Jack Thompson, Letchworth and Offley died on Monday 6th December 1999. **Tom Camp, Bishop's Stortford and Thorley**, died on 3 November 1999 aged 83.

RING MEETINGS – 2000 – UPDATE - Chalice was well over-subscribed, but have expanded. **Richmondshire** and **Anker** also over subscribed. **Thaxted** has space, apply NOW.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS – Musicians' Instructional, 11 – 13 February 2000. National Pipe and Tabor Festival, Gloucester, 9 -11 June 2000. World Millennium Festival of Sword Dancing - Whit Weekend 2000; Nine Daies Morris before Easter; Hastings Jack in the Green – 28 April – 1 May 2000.

OVERSEAS EVENTS - John Maher, has a list of festivals that require Morris Sides and **Helmond** needs a Side in Belgium **27 - 29 May 2000.**

ANNIVERSARIES – Brackley and Rumford both celebrate 40th Anniversaries.

There is a **BOOK REVIEW** of "The History of Morris Dancing 1468 – 1730"

ARCHIVAL MATTERS - an early picture of Morris on the Web; **Wessex** has 8mm film of the Blue Dragons Morris in 1970; **Just Acquired:** a copy of the programme for the opening of Cecil Sharp House in 1930, with a contemporary shorthand note of some of the speeches.

OTHER NEWS – Reports on practices at **Chalice, Peterborough** and **Bristol**; a Day of Dance at **Peterborough**; the **Welsh Border** and "Red Leicester" tours; Ales/Feasts at **Isca; Packington** [with *Geoff Thompson* [Handsworth] back from USA]; **Mendip; Stafford** and **Northampton. Icknield Way** on a memorial to the late *Joe Marns*; and **Anker** feature in *The Beano!!!*

BOXING DAY 1999 - a House of Commons Motion, and Reports on **Headington Quarry**; also activities at **Stafford; Uttoxeter; Ripley; Icknield Way; Greensleeves** and **Bedford.**

In 2000 - Leominster wassailed on Twelfth Night, as did **Long Man** and **Merrie England** Mummers. **Peterborough; White Rose; Leicester** [as Red Leicester]; **Thaxted** as Good Easter Molly; **Stevenage Sword** and **Rutland** were at the Wittlesea Straw Bear – the crowd included **Greensleeves, Ashdown Forest** and **Northampton.** Plough Monday activities from **Vancouver; Cambridge; Rutland; Bedford** and **Aldbury.** **Chipping Camden** were on Radio 4; **Bristol** interfaced with Mali via Channel 4's "On The Line" and "Christian Aid".

Also mentioned: **Adlington; Anker; Bedford; Brackley; Bristol; Cambridge; Chalice; Coventry; Devil's Dyke; East Surrey; Exeter; Hartley; Jockey; John of Gaunt; King's Men; Lichfield; Man Friday; MC Morris and the Knuckle Rappers; Peterborough; Shakespeare; Ripley; Rose and Castle; Rutland; South Shropshire; Stafford; Sweyn's Ey; Uttoxeter; West Somerset; Whitchurch; and Yateley.**

Wassail,

John Frearson, Bagman, The Morris Ring