



The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 13 – May 2000

Greetings,

Hopefully, this is not an unlucky issue number. The dancing season is with us again. We have had another successful ARM, and we congratulate and welcome **Gerald Willey** of **Shakespeare** as Squire Elect. He will dance in as Squire at the **Chalice** Ring Meeting.

Our commiserations to the other two candidates – certainly neither were losers; it is the Ring's strength that we had three quality candidates. Hopefully, they will try again [together with other aspirants], whilst perhaps counting their blessings for a quieter two years for the present!! Remember that it is now time for us all to think of candidates for two years hence. For success, it appears that a sustained campaign is required and Gerald's efforts in this respect bore fruit on his second attempt.

I have included my mobile number into the Header, for those who have mislaid it, and do not receive the reminder on my Emails. Naturally, for routine telephone calls, I prefer these at home, ideally between 8 and 10pm. Email continues to be more efficient for short queries etc.

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

- The **Revised Directory** for **2000 – 2001**
- An **Application Form** for the **Fieldtown Instructional** in October.
- Your copy or copies of the latest "**Morris Circular**".

The Minutes of the **ARM**, [and of the Advisory Council] will be in the next mailing].

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].

ARM 2000 – A SUMMARY.

The **2000 ARM** was hosted most capably by **Ripley** in Derby. The Minutes of the ARM are included in this mailing. As mentioned on the opening page the **Squire Elect** is **Gerald Willey** of **Shakespeare**. A record number of Sides that could not attend, used the postal vote.

There were two “**Formal Resolutions for Discussion**”. The proposal to raise the subscriptions, as proposed by the Treasurer at the last ARM, was passed with little problem.

The proposal to amend the voting areas to even out representation was not carried. It was suggested that the areas could more usefully follow the various Government Regions and this might assist any applications for grants etc. [Possible wishful thing!!]. Whilst the areas were never intended for use in this way, there was a feeling from the Meeting that this could be a useful approach and it seemed sensible to review this possibility. The Meeting felt that equality of representation was not, in itself, a major issue [since when have we been democratic anyway!!!]. First considerations suggest that this will not produce too many difficulties – except for the Area Representatives: there is an implication that Members may require them to do rather more than in their traditional role. No doubt this will be discussed further at the Advisory Council and in due course at the next ARM!!

Daniel's Can of Worms and the survey results were discussed. The Meeting resolved [after a straw poll, which was itself subject to a vote whether such a poll might be taken!] to leave matters alone for the moment and to take no specific actions. This seemed to recognise the conclusions established by the Squire's survey, as being the facts of the matter.

The social element was as usual as important as the business meetings. A fine range of Saddleworth Ales [a choice of four, including the gloriously strong dark “Shaftbender”] at modest prices. The feast was prepared by the families and supporters and speeches were brief and songs excellent. After the ARM, **Derek Schofield** of **Manley** presented a talk on Sharp, Kimber and the Centenary. On Sunday morning, **Ron Shuttleworth** took a session on Mumming and Ripley performed their Christmas Play – which is now part of tradition and helps collect vast sums for charity each year.

THE NEXT ARM

Dartington are the hosts for the next ARM from 30th March to 1st April 2001. “The first-choice venue was regrettably judged to be too small when it was realised how much space the BFB required to display his wares!”. To which said Treasurer responded “Now that is strange. I would have thought that the “Dome” was quite big enough!!”

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - RING MEETINGS – 2000

12 th - 14 th May	RICHMONDSHIRE RING MEETING
2 nd - 4 th June	THAXTED RING MEETING
23 rd - 25 th June	ANKER 25th ANNIV. RING MEETING
21 st - 23 rd July	CHALICE RING MEETING

All the proposed forthcoming Ring Meetings are listed on the Inside Front Cover of the Directory, which is included with this Newsletter mailing.

INSTRUCTIONALS

Fieldtown Instructional - 6th – 8th October 2000. This will be held at Harberton, nr. Totnes in Devon. An Instructional on a tradition that too many think they “know”, but that has not been dealt with for a time. After the success of their inaugural Day of Dance at the same venue [see Newsletter No. 11], **Dartington** have been persuaded to share the delights of Harberton [and the Church House Inn]. **Bert Cleaver** will be the Foreman, no doubt **Greensleeves** will be assisting. The cost will be £33.00. An application form is enclosed.

Fools and Animals Weekend [and ?Instructional?]. **27th – 29th October 2000.** Another not to be missed weekend - this year it is planned to hold it at Cecil Sharp House. Details from Eric Presley - application forms with July Newsletter.

Jigs Instructional 2001. 19th – 21st January 2000. Bert Cleaver has once again imposed on **Dolphin** and chosen Sutton Bonnington as the venue for the Jigs Instructional. An application form will be available later in the year.

MILLENNIUM DOME

At last – **SUCCESS** – limited maybe, but **SUCCESS**. After many frustrations and a final ultimatum and appeal to the new Dome Director, our “Domemaster” **Paul Montague** has been able to persuade them to let in the Morris on the last weekend each month. This does however mean that the Ring has only two weekends to fill – with a limit of 60 people on each occasion. Monty will have contacted those interested so far – the dates are: **27/28 May** and **28/29 October**. Dependent on existing interest, and if there is still room, he might be able to fit in a couple more sides, so if you are still available on those dates, contact Monty **NOW**.

OTHER EVENTS

The National Pipe and Tabor Festival goes INTERNATIONAL: **7th -11th June 2000** in Gloucester,. A Symposium will be held on Friday 9th June. The main attractions will be over the weekend 10th -11th June. An announcement and a call for papers for the Symposium has already been sent to Side's Email contacts. For further details contact:- Stephen Rowley, Tanronen, Lurks Lane, Pitchcombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL6 6LL. Tel: 01453 763181 Email: srowley@dial.pipex.com.

If your side has a pipe and tabor player – **let him know** - and show him the enclosed leaflet!!

MORRIS SHOP

Please note that Steve Adamson now deals with all mail order items. Mike Chandler can still handle “Black Book” by-mail sales [assuming that you do not need any other items in the same order, in which case Steve has a stock] – this saves double handling and associated costs.

Jockey have produced a CD “Five More Men” featuring “dances, songs, tunes we like to perform and a Welsh Border selection”. Recorded with the help of a barrel of “Speckled Hen” at the “Lamp Tavern”. Now doubt it will be on Steve's stall at events various.

WEB NEWS

There is a new on-line Morris Magazine at <http://www.capers.co.uk/donkey/>. The many Articles published include **Headington's** Boxing Day, and the "Nine Daies Wonder"

Greensleeves have been trying to register a new web site name but discovered that www.greensleeves.org.uk is a chain of old-people's nursing homes. They knew were getting on a bit, but.....!! They have now selected <http://www.greensleevesmorris.org.uk>

Sides with Email contacts will have received some Bagman's E-News in February. The mailing included an appeal for sources of Straw Hats from Letchworth; details of the Gloucester Pipe and Tabor Festival; Upton's web page details [for pictures of the **Original Welsh Border Morris** tour]; a request for a Side to dance in Spain and another for a Side to be involved with a Passion Play in Greenwich [not at the Dome!!].

Email does give us the chance to advise Sides of events that are happening prior to issue of the next Newsletter, or where we can not justify circulating a large amount of hard copy material. If your Side has not advised an Email contact, or if the number is changed without notification, then you will not receive this until the next Newsletter.

CHARITY EVENT

Malcolm Smith, Squire of **Shakespeare** is making a charity bicycle ride in June in aid of Mencap. He intends to ride 500 kilometres in 5 days from the Great Wall of China to Tiananmen Square in Beijing. He needs as much sponsorship as possible to make the whole thing worthwhile, and invites all Ring Sides to sponsor him at 'so much' per kilometre or send a donation. For more details, contact him on: 01789 840519 (home); 01789 842965 (office/fax); or E-mail: Malsmith@btinternet.com.

ANNIVERSARIES

Dudley Binding in apologising for absence from the ARM indicated the reason was the 35th Anniversary Dinner of **West Somerset**. They were formed in April 1965.

Helier are celebrating their Silver Jubilee. They first performed at the "Battle of Flowers" in 1975. An Anniversary Ale is planned for the late May Bank Holiday.

A THOUGHT

Eddie Dunmore recalls, about 10 years ago, a Spring Bank Holiday at Bampton and finding himself standing behind two ladies from the village. The conversation went something like:

"Young X is out this year, dancing with Y"

"Oh yes, I saw: he's Morris on his mother's side you know, not his dad's"

Eddie says "My feeling was then, and still is now, that the episode summed up the difference between what they do and what I do".

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE FOR EFDSS

The English Folk Dance and Song Society has appointed Phil Wilson as its new Chief Executive. Phil Wilson's appointment started on 14 March and he was a guest at the ARM.

Phil Wilson was born in Lancashire and trained as an engineer. In England he was a member of the Dalesmen folk group and **Darlington Mummers** before emigrating to Australia in 1976 where he worked as an engineer and as a State Government Manager as well as being a well-known festival performer, singer, instrumentalist and dance caller. Until very recently, he was the MD of the National Folk Festival in Australia, and turned it from a loss-making event attracting 8,000 people in 1992 to a financially and artistically successful event attended by 42,000 in 1999. At his initiative, it is now preceded by three days of traditional music and dance workshops. Phil was also an adviser to the government on an arts strategy for Canberra, sat on the arts grant funding committee and acted as adviser to several community arts projects, festivals and arts centres. He organised a national festival organisers' conference which led to the formation of Folk Alliance Australia.

ARCHIVAL MATTERS

The last Squire of **Luton Longstraw** - **Bill French** - has handed over a further fascinating collection of material relating to the Luton Side that was active in the 1950s and 60s. He had already handed over the Log Books, Photo Albums and the Staff of Office into **Bedford's** care for the Morris Ring Archive. Luton had always considered that Past Squire **Fred Hamer** of Bedford had been their "inaugural member". Bill is now moving house and has "made space" by donating his kit: including his Squire's baldrick [with "straw-splitter" symbol of office]; and his straw boater with badges. Also in the collection: the Side's Collecting Box [made from the last Luton Bus Company Driver's Straw Hat]; the Account Book and copies of AGM Minutes; Programmes and Feast Menus for Morris Ring Meetings; and EFDSS Journals and the like. There are also Folk Song and Folk Dance books, 60 records [mainly 78s] of folk [and a few Morris] tunes. As he clears his house Bill anticipates re-locating further items including photographs and negatives. The latest material fills important gaps in the Longstraw history – further material is awaited with eager anticipation. Hopefully an article can be produced for a future Morris Dancer.

EXTRACTS FROM DARTINGTON AGM MINUTES – rashly posted on the web!!

"Lionel was disappointed that he had not been asked to report on our horse.

"Robbie asked if situation was stable.

"Nigel asked if he had his oats lately.

"Ziggy suggested that we get on with the mane business.

"Chris F. asked if we have to be saddled with this."

"We should not drift into inappropriate dress. We were reminded of previous discussions about Reebok boots being painted white at the top so they look more like shoes but those responsible ignored this request ... It was suggested that wearing sunglasses can look sinister. Wearing mobile phones is acceptable but only for receiving instructions from the squire."

TELE – MORRIS

Norris Winstone pointed out that the TV programme “Feet First” also included **Kemp’s Men** dancing at the Gressenhall Folk Festival. Rumour has it that **Jockey** danced on the Gary Rhodes programme – details are being sought!! In between times, The Squire was filmed for GMTV before he drove up to **Ripley** for their feast. It was broadcast on 31st January and “if you blinked you missed it”. “The Fast Show” on BBC2 in February, featured **Richmondshire** and they got into the credits! The “Wimbledon Poisoner” included a fete scene with a Morris side. *Alan Jeffries* [**Greensleeves**] later confirmed that this was **Ewell St Mary**. He wondered why Greensleeves weren't asked, since it was filmed in Wimbledon!!

Ken Hamilton says “This spring, Channel 4 plan to show a series from Turn On TV called “Post-modern Pastimes”, about young people with “old fashioned” hobbies. Morris dancing is, apparently, one such: an episode centres on Morris dancing (and specifically **Oakworth Village**). The Squire was recorded providing facts and figures about Morris dancing to accompany this programme, which will be broadcast in May.

Malcolm Smith, Squire of **Shakespeare** forwarded a short notice request from Channel 4 TV who wanted Morris Men for part of the new title sequence for "The Big Breakfast" show. The Bagman circulated this by E-mail to local Sides in case they were unemployed. Shortly afterwards *John Beecham*, Bagman of **St Albans** replied “For your information the shoot took place as advertised and the material goes out from the end of March as part of the titles sequences for the next three years possibly”. They had been approached quite separately!!

Howard Mitchell [formerly **Bedford** and **Manchester** - and possibly still open to offers in the Derby area!!] saw a piece on Midlands Today [6 March] recommending Morris as a way of keeping fit. The side featured was “probably **First Sedgely**”, who “did a good job of portraying a standard English side and the Squire did a good job of attracting all ages and abilities despite stupid comments from the pub-goers who were interviewed.”

Norris “*The Morris*” *Winstone* [“87 and still going strong”] wrote to advise that the Norwich Record Office has set up an exhibition of Will Kemp memorabilia. Three **Kemp’s Men** attended the opening. They were featured on BBC “Look East” on 15 March dancing in Norwich cathedral Close. *Nigel Wimhurst* danced a Kemp’s Jig, composed for him some four years ago by Norris, who played on this occasion. *Colin Sleath*, who is responsible for the Norwich end of the “Nine Daies Wonder” was also featured.

Shakespeare appeared in procession in a two-part TV film called “Happy Birthday Shakespeare”, on his birthday weekend. Apparently it was about a tourist bus driver in Stratford-on-Avon. One of the tourists said a dancer had a heart attack: *Malcolm Smith*, their Squire, reports “Not a single Shakespeare man had a heart attack, and as far as I know neither did anybody else. We all had a very enjoyable and interesting day. Yes, day - the measly little bit of airtime you saw took 8 hours to film! Amazing, isn't it?”

WHY MORRIS?

Norman Stanfield of **Vancouver** noted on the Web, that Robert Graves, in his rambling book, *The White Goddess*, speculated that the word “morris” is actually derived from “maris” as in “Mary’s” men. Having not come across this one, others may be equally ill informed!! Yet another answer to the “Why Morris” question when going round rattling the box.

BOXING DAY - 1999 [your activities continued!!!]

Patrick Harries, Bagman of **Wessex** reports "You may be interested to know that we revived the custom of dancing on Boxing Day and the side had an excellent time at Cerne Abbas, our "HQ". Not only that, but there was an excellent Bag!"

Dolphin danced at The Jolly Sailor, Hemmington. [No further details available!!]

A copy of the Newsletter handout that *Michael McNamara* of **Martlet** sent to the media resulted in an eight minute interview about Sharp and the "revival" for BBC Southern Counties Radio on Boxing Day.

Helier danced in King Street, until the heavens opened and "Queen's Delight" became "an aquatic exercise". "A retreat to the North of Jersey and Greve de Lecq saw a warm welcome and refreshment for wet dancers at Le Moulin de Lecq" [Quotes from the "Jersey Evening Post"].

Paul Montague, Bagman of **Yateley** reports on their, now traditional, Boxing Day performance of dancing and Mummers play outside the Dog & Partridge in Yateley. This was given over exclusively to dances of the Headington tradition including Bean Setting, Rigs o' Marlow, Drawback, Blue-eyed Stranger and Laudnum Bunches. Their youngest member, *Michael Badeley*, aged 10 years, led a jig (massed version) of Shepherd's Hey to finish.

"The large crowd, probably attracted by a combination of splendid weather, an article in the Parish magazine about the significance of the date and flyers to the same effect in local doors were treated to a toast of mulled wine. After a short speech, the audience joined in a silent toast to Cecil Sharp, other collectors of the 20th century and absent friends. Many of the audience expressed their thanks afterwards for the effort we expended in making the day a special one!"

OTHER NEWS

Dolphin hosted the Jigs Instructional in January at Sutton Bonnington; it was led by *Bert Cleaver*. The Squire reports that it was "another energetic weekend of almost non-stop dancing under the watchful eye of Bert and his fellow instructors." At the Feast, two of the candidates aspiring to be Squire of The Morris Ring proposed toasts.

Also on this occasion, *Steve Daniels*, long standing Bagman of Dolphin stood down, having held office for over 10 years, a Dolphin record. He was an essential part of the Dolphin catering operation, at Ring Meetings and Instructionals. In an emotional ceremony the Squire of the Ring *Daniel Fox* presented Steve with an inscribed tankard. Dolphin Deputy Squire, *Martin Morley*, presented a "special award" from the Dolphin men. By way of thanks Steve, fighting back tears of joy, uttered the immortal words: "Yer daft boggers". Friends have denied that he is being treated for tee-totality at a clinic in York. [With thanks to *Mike Wilkinson* and the Dolphin Website].

Roy Stubbs of **Anker** reports that they have featured in the Beano again. The English Morris was in a fight with a Scotsman; and contained the caption "Don't underestimate the power of the Morris"! He asks, "Is this Scottish edited magazine becoming Nationalist! He has written for permission to use the material in lieu of payments for use of their kit in the last "Morris" edition!! They have since received a reply, and good wishes [but no sponsorship] from the Beano, who indicate that one of their cartoonists is a Morris dancer in the Norwich area.

Cumberland normally gathers at the Kirkstile Inn to wassail the apple trees. This year they assembled in the car park to find the place closed!!! Instead they went to the Wheatsheaf at Lorton. There they had several Apple trees, lighting and even slabs to dance upon. [For more details and photographs visit their new web page – it is linked from www.TheMorrisRing.org].

Northampton's Ale for once did not provoke snow, which is normally de rigeur. The normal buffet – complete with hot chilli relish, to combat the expected adverse climate was available.

Woodside Feast [Friday 28 January] was attended by **Aldbury; Grand Union; Letchworth; Mayflower; Offley;** and **Yateley**. The Ring Squire and Bagman and the Area Representative, **Tony Ashley [Anker]** were also present. Plenty of dancing with a pre-organised dance schedule to ensure a brisk progress. Excellent cottage pie [and red hot chilli sauce provided by Grand Union!!]

The Squire and Treasurer were at **Ripley** and the Bagman at **Uttoxeter** on the following day.

There were in excess of 150 men at **Ripley**, with Sides or representatives from: **Adlington; Anker; Bristol [John Maher]; Exeter; Green Oak; Harthill; Isca; Kennet; Micklebarrow; Saddleworth [Richard Hankinson]; Shakespeare; St. Albans** and **Victory**.

Gerald Willey [now Squire Elect] suggests that there was “Feasting and Drinking 6.30 – 9.00; Dancing and Drinking 9.30 – 12; and Singing and Drinking 12 – 3.30”. [He seems to have missed a drinking session from 9 – 9.30 and had rather an early night!!] The Squire's notes took some time to materialise, which suggests that it was an excellent evening. His diary indicates that a toast was proposed to the “Ripley Virgins” which included The Squire who managed to drink from the loving cup without pouring beer down his front – or was he thinking of the **Kennet** Feast!! Among the songs, **Rose and Castle** sang a Morris recruiting song in the style of “To be a Farmer's Boy”

The **Uttoxeter** Feast was attended by representatives from **Boar's Head; Chester; Coventry; Green Man; Jockey; Lichfield; Mersey; Stafford** and **Whitchurch** [Past Squire **Mike Chandler** – and a stock of honey!!].

Generous portions [and even larger seconds] of braised steak followed by sponge pud and cheese. Beers from the Museum Brewery [courtesy of its recently retired Director, **Adrian Wedgewood** of the host side] included Joules 2B [4.1%] and a dangerously strong Millennium Magic at 6.5%. The Bagman was able to thank the side – and made reference to some menus of past Feasts from the **Ewart Russell** archive. A relaxed evening of dancing followed – the pain being eased by the stronger brew!!!

Winchester Feast [5 February] was well attended by Sides from **Chalice; Dartington; East Surrey; Kennet; King John's; Victory;** and representatives from **Bourne River; Mendip** [Past Squire **Tim Sercombe** in an alternative kit]; **Jockey [Richard Sinclair]; Silurian [Keith Francis]**, and **Wantsum** [the Area Rep – **Mike Austen**],

This year's Feast had a Middle-East theme menu and various delicacies were consumed, washed down by an out-of-theme, but excellent, “Pots Ale” [3.8%] from The Cheriton Brewhouse – their stronger “Diggers Gold” [4.6%] appeared later in the evening.

Two of the candidates for Squire were present and “on their feet” – **Cliff Marchant** [who proposed the Immortal Memory - “What would you do if some chap in a collar and tie arrived at your dance spot with a notebook!"] and **Gerald Willey** who proposed the vote of thanks to the Host side.

A selection of songs followed and during the evening show dances and jigs were interspersed with the general dancing. It was good to see Winchester had four youngsters, two of whom, 11 year old twin brothers **Edwin** and **Toby Shaw** danced the Bampton double jig “Princess Royal”.

The Squire attended the **Leicester** Feast in February: he reports that this was “catered excellently by the home side, to whom contracts for catering at Ring meetings should be offered. It was especially good to see **Royal Lancashire** Morris Dancers and **Preston Royal** Morris Men dance as a side. Both sides are struggling for members and have decided to join together to form **Royal Preston**.”

Mendip were hosts to the Ring Musicians' Instructional in February 2000. There was an excellent response and instruction was provided by *Jim Catterell (Thaxted)*; *Mike Chandler (Whitchurch)* and *Allan Jarvis (Leeds)*, with assistance from several others. The social interaction, pub evening and Feast were all in the best traditions of the Ring. Many congratulations to *Clive Du'Mont* for masterminding the renaissance of this event after its rest of a year or so, and Mendip for all their support work..

The **Kennet** Ale Feast [19 February] was full of noteworthy items – although the excellent selection of ales did mean that some of the notes from later in the evening are difficult to decipher. Sides present included: **Cup Hill**; **Winchester**; **Victory**; and **Yateley** with representatives from **Dartington**; **Man Friday** and **Thames Valley**. Various show dances were displayed [Yateley's Eynsham “Poacher” being lively] as well as a selection of jigs. These included: Bampton “Nutting Girl” from Cup Hill, and another Bampton offering from Winchester; and a Fieldtown “Princess Royal” from *John* and *Matthew Culf* from Dartington. A 12 man Valentine was even more ambitious than the now commonplace 8 man version – **Jockey** take note!!!

Cup Hill donned “black tie” with handkerchief over the arm and trays of glasses to dance their “waiter morris” prior to dinner. They then unpacked candelabra and fairy lights to adorn their table, now resplendent as the “Cup Hill Diner”.

Dinner included a graded chilli selection – from veggie through mild to hot – with extra hot sauce for the aficionados. A selection of breweries in Oxon and Berks [Ballards; Becketts; Brakespeare; Butts; Nyewood and West Berkshire] were represented by seven Real Ales [a full listing would turn this Newsletter into the Good Beer Guide!!]. The “Kennet Ring Meeting Fellowship Cup”, a “puzzle” cup was passed and the Ring Squire [with guidance from the Bagman] managed to avoid a soaking – others were not so lucky [or didn't cheat!!].

After John Barleycorn from the hosts; Winchester gave us the flying trapeze and the venerable [?venal?] Squire “Pleasant and Delightful” – “...and the sharks they play melodeons, at the bottom of the sea...”

A highlight was the presentation, by *Peter Jones* of Cup Hill to *Dave Bernard* of Kennet, of a pickled egg: but what an egg !! – a pickled ostrich egg. [Boiled for 1½ hours – pickled for 6 months]. It was sufficient for all present of brave disposition and iron constitution.

The **Devil's Dyke** Ale [11 March] had a well-filled hall with representatives from some 14 Sides. A pre-planned dance programme kept things moving inexorably and exhaustingly. A brief rest was allowed for a selection of sausage stews, washed down with reviving Ales from the local Lidstones Brewery [Rowley Mild 3.2%; Session Bitter 3.7% [particularly recommended]; and Suffolk Draft 4.3%] - all excellent.

The Bagman became ensnared in a Swaggering Boney that turned out to be a single set quasi-show dance – and should have been left to those younger, fitter and sober!!! An inelegant “caption contest” photo appeared the next day on the DD web-site!!

John Price of **St Albans** noted on the Internet that **Ripley** recently taught them a version of Vandals for 16. “The formation was two sets of 8 men, side by side: but the orientation of the sets changed through 90 degrees every few bars, which had one dancing first in a north-south set, then in an east-west one with a different group of men. Quite a feat of navigation and mental agility to survive it, which we never quite managed.”

St Albans' membership has expanded a little in the last few months, with the acquisition of a Morris man from Cheshire, the return of two older members, and the arrival of a young Scottish dancer whom they hope will convert nicely to real dancing. "If any more men join, we will need to ask The White Lion to extend our favourite room in the pub - at least on Monday nights."

The Officers were spoiled for choice on 25 March, with invitations to Feasts or Ales at **Icknield Way, Letchworth, Lichfield, and Ravensbourne**. After several planning meetings and flurries of E-mails, The Squire attended Ravensbourne; the Treasurer was at Lichfield and the Bagman was at Letchworth. Icknield Way had been inundated by Officers last year and so was allowed a bit of P&Q.

Guests at **Letchworth** included **Anker, Bedford, Woodside, Etcetera** and representatives from **Cambridge** and **St Albans**. A lively evening of dancing, lubricated by the Potton Brewery's Phoenix [3.8%] and Shambles [4.3%]. The Soup/Beef Stew combi-dish [do you want a bowl or plate?] was followed by an indecently rich Bread and Butter pudding and cheese. After which the dancing became somewhat more ponderous!!

Sem Seaborne of **Icknield Way** provided notes on their evening. "Just a brief report to let you know that we had an excellent time at Lain's Barn on 25/3/00. We had a strong turnout of teams this year from Abingdon (Mr Hemmings), **Oxford City, Bampton (TBMD), Crendon, Winchester, Yateley, Kennet**, IWMM Boys and representatives from **Whitchurch** and **Offley (Ben)**. It was good to see strong dancing teams with a return of familiar faces such as **Geoff Jerram** and **Monty Montague**. The dancing was of a very good standard particularly from Winchester and Yateley.

This was the first year we have not been able to serve ale from our local brewery (Morland) which has been closed by Greene King. Oddly we had the same number of barrels from Hook Norton but they were all gone by 9-15pm!! [*Not surprising really! Ed.*] Support was speedily obtained from the Abingdon Arms.

After eating I explained the circumstances of our creation of the "**Michael McArdle** Trophy" to be awarded to the best young dancer of the year. This year it was awarded to **David Andrews**, Michael's friend and fellow dancer for the last 11 years. He is also our best "old" dancer but he's still under 20! With the approval and acclaim of **Lawrence Adams** of Arnold Woodley's **Bampton** team, David gave us the Bampton Jig (Princess Royal) accompanied by a new young dancer **Paul Saveall**.

There were some good songs in the following entertainment and concertinas were busy from **Steve Code** (Bampton) and the IWMM 3 Stooges who gave a 3-part harmonic rendering of "Elizabeth Clare". This was followed by a display of luminescent juggling by **Ben** from **Offley** who also juggled some machetes whilst walking over an unfortunate Yateley volunteer. How does the Ring insurance apply to this type of event?? [*They are NOT covered – only any non Ring audience is!! Ed.*]. Dancing continued at a furious pace and nobody seemed to want to go home.

The **Ravensbourne** ale is recorded in some brief extracts from the Squire's diary. "Note to future guests - remember to take your own knife and fork if you do not like eating with plastic (it saves on the washing up). Two memorable aspects: a very potent fruit salad and an instant folk club. If you sat in the circle you had to do a song or a story. I did not see what time it finished."

There were no clashes of events for one of the last events of the closed season, the **Harthill Ale Feast**. A full contingent of Ring Officers attended, together with representatives from: **Anker; Escafeld; Green Ginger; Green Man; Green Oak; Isca; Jockey; Richmond** and **Ripley**.

A fine Feast of Soup; Cold Meats and salads; and puddings or cheese, was washed down with a selection of Ales - Greene King IPA [3.6%]; Fullers London Pride [4.1%]; Batemans XXXB [4.8%] and Twaites Daniel's Hammer [5.3%] – whether this latter ale had any connection with the Squire is uncertain, but it was of a goodly strength for such an occasion - and apparently conned "as a free sample" by the balloon modeling Harthill Fool from an obliging brewery rep!!!

The toasts and brief speeches and songs followed. The Squire proposed the Immortal Memory, linked with the names the late **Mick West** and **Alan Byatt** of Harthill. The Treasurer of Harthill introduced the Swaledale anthem, sung by the Harthill Men in Alan Byatt's memory. Songs from the Sides included: The Nobleman and the Thresher [Escafeld]; John come down the Backstay [Green Oak]; Hail and Toe [Ripley]; and Sweet Rose of Allendale [Richmond].

The Treasurer of the Ring, **Steve Adamson**, was prevailed upon to play his whistle; after his bag had been fetched and unpacked across the top table, the necessary instrument was uncovered and music was made to general acclaim.

The tables were cleared and dancing commenced. The evening was typified by the speed of the playing, the only compensation being that Orange in Bloom came out at the pace preferred by the Bagman, rather than the somewhat funereal pace so beloved of Ring ensembles!! This speed, and the lesser number "show dances", led to rather more dances being danced than expected by the MC!! However, the Squire, **Daniel Fox** [accompanied by Past Squire **Roy Yarnell**] gave us a jig, a Fieldtown Ladies Pleasure to [it appeared] the Bledington tune.

Late in the evening bread and dripping and black pudding were served to fill any crannies and the evening finished with a rendition of Harthill's farewell anthem, The Pratty Flowers. A splendid evening [with accommodation and full English in the morning for those so wishing].

Horwich Prize Medal's Day for St George was a week early to avoid clashes with Easter events that coincide this year. Eight sides attended: Besides the hosts, there were teams from **Earlsden; John o'Gaunt; Mossley, Rose and Castle** from Northants [and including various **Northampton** and **Moulton** Men] and **Saddleworth. Preston Royal** and **Royal Lancashire** were in attendance in their combined format as the newly instituted **Royal Preston Morris Dancers** – still in their separate kit [the new kit will be complete soon], but dancing well together and with fine enthusiasm. Non-Ring Sides Rumworth and Wriggley Head were also in attendance.

For the second year, there was untraditional sun – but tempered this year by a bitter wind. Some 18 gallons the available ale were consumed before the procession set off – and there still seemed to be a roaring trade at the [frequent] pub stops on route.

A collation of web reports by **John Price** and **Sandy Glover** of **St Albans** indicate that they danced a lunchtime session at The Lytton Arms, Old Knebworth, Springfest 2000 beer festival - simultaneously celebrating Easter, St George's Day, Shakespeare's birthday and the existence of good beer!! "This was the latest in a long series of twice-yearly beer festivals, at which St Albans have danced for some years. An immense number of beers, in excellent condition, and all at the perfect price to the Morris. We even had sunshine." Sorry I missed it [/you]!!!

Wessex were also dancing on Easter Sunday, at Cerne, "waking up the locals at lunchtime and gradually subsiding into the Royal Oak, which has been our home these many years".

Rutland "the only side to be the exclusive Morris reps for a whole English county, are dancing at every pub in the county during 2000, beginning at dawn on 1st May and finishing in October" – that's quite some pub crawl – must get details!!

A QUOTE !

With current debate at the ARM fresh in our minds, **Geoff Jerram** submitted a pertinent snippet from the Morris Ring's Second Log Book. This relates to a Meeting at Thaxted in 1949: "In the course of this meeting **Alec Hunter** told us that he had danced to a tune played by a woman for many years, and all the other married men present laughed in sympathy rather than in derision."

THE NINE DAIES WONDER

Finally – some brief mentions of the re-enactment of the “**Nine Daies Wonder**” completed in eight consecutive days for the 400th Anniversary - rather better than the 12 separate days over a period of four weeks by William Kemp in 1600. A fuller report will hopefully be available in the next Ring Circular.

The Squire, *Daniel Fox*, saw the dancers off in London, and danced with **Thaxted** on the Tuesday evening as part of the Morris support. The Bagman was a guest of **Peterborough** on the Thursday lunchtime in Thetford and had the pleasure of meeting members of the Kemp family who were in attendance throughout the week. At one of the early evening spots, there was opportunity to have the privilege to buy the dancers a round upon all our behalves – they have done much to raise the profile of the Morris during their endeavours. The weather had been disappointing but it moderated during the final morning. It was a privilege to join the supporters following in the dancers as they entered Norwich. The flask of chilli vodka that was passed to the guests was either the “wonder” itself, or a very necessary foot tincture!!

Many congratulations to all those who completed the course. Ring Side members who danced the full distance were *Peter Cole* of **Lichfield**; *Steve Conneely* and *Dave Stewart* of **Kemp's Men** and *David Marr* of **Coventry**. Special mention and congratulations to the organisers *John Tarling* of **Rumford** and *Colin Sleath* of **Kemp's Men** who co-ordinated and organised the event. Indeed John Tarling also travelled the whole route on foot, leading the way – but modestly suggests that he only danced some of it – a fine effort indeed.

At the finish the six full distance dancers [plus an American “nearly all the way” man who had slipped off to do an occasional bit of touring, and John Tarling] danced a Lichfield “Vandals of Hammerwich” before the Mayor of Norwich. He was supported by a splendid Town Crier who proclaimed the contents of the scroll carried from the Lord Mayor of London by the dancers. The Mayor unveiled a plaque at the point where Kemp jumped over the church wall to finish his endeavour. In full finery – including plumed hat he joined the dancers in the final leap over the Churchyard wall – no britches were split on this occasion however!! A final Kemp's Jig was danced and the participants then slipped into the adjacent hostelry for some refreshment [including a splendid dark mild [Bateman's DM] at a safe 3%]. A celebratory Feast followed, when engraved commemorative tankards were presented to those who completed the course – and a specially brewed ale, “Kemp's Capers” [3.6%], from Bartram's Brewery was consumed with gusto [Honest, I was there for the dancing !! – Ed.].

A full listing of marshals and support crews is probably impossible: but Kemp's Bagman, *Peter Salt* is understood to have walked the whole route, whilst directing the traffic around the dancers. *Dave Bennett* of the late lamented **Benfleet Hoymen** was “provisioner” ensuring his refreshment wagon was always waiting in convenient lay-bys, and *Tim Sercombe* [self-acclaimed “Ring Representative [or was it “Reprobate”?] in Residence”] was one of the drivers of the back up and safety bus – travelling the whole route at dancing pace.

A great many Ring [and other] Sides supported the venture by dancing at the main stopping points en-route. **Congratulations to all Sides and individuals** who supported this venture in whatever way – it was a wonderful event and a great showcase for Morris – and a fine example of co-operation between Sides and the other Morris Organisations. Hopefully at least some of the media will have taken note of the endeavours of the Morris.

FROM THE SQUIRE

"I was asked by a doctor for the name of a women's morris ring (*sic*) near Thaxted that the doctor could pass on to one of his patients. Patient confidentiality prevents us from finding out what was the illness and whether the cure worked.

"The summer is looking busy and I look forward to your company in the coming months as I come to the end of my term of office. I know that Gerald will get the same encouragement and support that you have given me over the past two years."

Continue to flourish

Daniel Fox

IN CONCLUSION

The next Newsletter is due in mid July. Meanwhile enjoy the dancing season. Hopefully the surfeit of rain in the early months will allow dancing to proceed in more favourable conditions this Summer - without causing drought!!

I look forward to seeing many of you at this year's Ring Meetings and other events.

Please continue to send copies of your programmes and any other information of interest. Without your material I would have to write far too much myself. Hopefully, this will also allow us to produce an additional edition of The Circular so as to give a more permanent publication of some of the material currently included herein.

Ceaseless in pursuit of News, I contacted **Shakespeare**. Naturally, I would be including details of Gerald's success in becoming Squire Elect. However, I suggested that any suitable news or "scandal" would always be welcome!!

I received the following response " ... "Gerald" and "scandal" aren't two words you normally use in the same sentence, but rest assured, if there is any dirt, we'll dish it." Ah! you loyal correspondents. Gerald - as Daniel will advise - you have been warned !!! Welcome aboard!!

I look forward to hearing from all of you.

Wassail,

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring

The Bagman's Newsletter - No. 13 – May 2000 - SUMMARY

ARM 2000 – The ARM was hosted most capably by **Ripley** in Derby. We welcome **Gerald Willey** of **Shakespeare** as Squire Elect. He will dance in as Squire at the **Chalice** Ring Meeting. The proposal to raise the subscriptions was passed; that to amend the voting areas will be reconsidered. Daniel's Can of Worms and the survey were discussed; the Meeting resolved to leave matters for the moment. **Derek Schofield** presented a talk on the Sharp/Kimber Centenary and **Ron Shuttleworth** took a session on Mumming; Ripley performed their Christmas Play

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - Fieldtown Instructional: 6th – 8th October 2000 with **Bert Cleaver** / hosts **Dartington**, at Harberton, Devon. **Fools and Animals Weekend: 27th – 29th October 2000** planned to be held at Cecil Sharp House. **Jigs Instructional: 19th - 21st January 2001** with **Bert Cleaver** / hosts **Dolphin** at Sutton Bonnington. **National Pipe and Tabor Festival: 7th - 11th June 2000** in Gloucester.

MILLENNIUM DOME - SUCCESS - we have weekends **27/28 May** and **28/29 October** to fill.

CHARITY EVENT - Malcolm Smith, Squire of **Shakespeare** is making a charity bicycle ride in June in aid of Mencap. He intends to ride 500 kilometres in 5 days from the Great Wall of China to Tiananmen Square in Beijing. He needs as much sponsorship as possible.

ANNIVERSARIES - a 35th Anniversary for **West Somerset** and **Helier's** Silver Jubilee.

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE FOR EFDSS – details of Phil Wilson, the new Chief Exec, who was a **Darlington Mummer** before travelling to Australia, where he directed their National Folk Festival.

ARCHIVAL MATTERS - The last Squire of **Luton Longstraw - Bill French** - has handed over a further collection of material on the Luton Side that was active in the 1950s and 60s.

TELE – MORRIS – details of TV appearances include: **Kemp's Men** on "Feet First" and on BBC "Look East" for the Will Kemp exhibition; **Jockey** on the Gary Rhodes programme; The Squire filmed for GMTV; **Richmondshire** on "The Fast Show" on BBC2; **Ewell St Mary** in the "Wimbledon Poisoner"; **Oakworth Village** filming Channel 4 "Post-modern Pastimes"; **St Albans** making a new title sequence for C4 TV "The Big Breakfast"; **First Sedgeley** keeping fit on Midlands Today; and **Shakespeare** in "Happy Birthday Shakespeare".

BOXING DAY 1999 – Further reports from: **Wessex; Dolphin; Martlet; Helier;** and **Yateley**.

OTHER NEWS – The Jigs Instructional hosted by **Dolphin** and the Musicians' Instructional hosted by **Mendip**; **Anker** featured in the Beano; **Cumberland** wassailed apple trees; Ales or Feasts at **Northampton; Devil's Dyke; Woodside; Ripley; Uttoxeter; Winchester; Leicester; Kennet;** and **Harthill; Royal Lancashire** and **Preston Royal** join to form **Royal Preston; Horwich's** Day for St George; and at Easter **St Albans** at a beer festival and **Wessex** in Cerne; finally **Rutland** are dancing at every pub in the county during 2000.

THE NINE DAIES WONDER – was completed in eight days for the 400th Anniversary of William Kemp's feat in 1600 - dancing the full distance **Peter Cole** of **Lichfield; Steve Conneely** and **Dave Stewart** of **Kemp's Men** and **David Marr** of **Coventry**. Congratulations to organisers **John Tarling** of **Rumford** [who also did the whole route on foot, leading the way] and **Colin Sleath** of **Kemp's Men**

IN CONCLUSION - The next Newsletter is in mid July. The Squire looks forward to your company in the coming months as he comes to the end of his term of office. Enjoy the dancing season. I look forward to seeing many of you at this year's Ring Meetings and other events.

Wassail,

John Frearson, Bagman, The Morris Ring