



SQUIRE: Emma Melville
Email: squire@themorrisring.org

BAGMAN: Rob Evans
Email: bagman@themorrisring.org

TREASURER: Clayton Francis
Email: treasurer@themorrisring.org

Newsletter No. 139

December 2025

Page

- 2 Future Events
- 3 Squire's Massed Dances
- 4 Squire's Musings
- 6 From the Bagman's armchair
- 7 Application for candidacy for Squire of the Morris Ring 2027
- 8 Supporting letter for Squire candidate
- 9 Obituary for Keith Francis
- 10 Obituary for John Miller
- 11 Notices

Future Events – 2026

January 17th 2026 The Cotswold Jig Instructional

Sutton Bonington, probably the best Morris workshop in the UK if not the World. See the Morris Ring website for details, be quick as it is half full already! jiginstructional@themorrisring.org

March 7th 2026 The Annual Representatives Meeting

The ARM will be held again this year at Oak Farm Hatherton .

You can find the application form on the Morris Ring website at:
https://themorrisring.org/files/arm_application_documentation_2026.docx

Cecil Sharp's first meeting with William Kimber, musician of Headington Quarry Morris Boxing Day 1899 painted by the aptly named Anthony Morris



Squire's Massed Dances

The following are the massed dance choices I would like to see people doing together over the next two years.

Vandals of Hammerwich (Lichfield) (In chorus, show both times)

Lads a Bunchum (Adderbury)

Laudnum Bunches (Headington)

Valentine (Fieldtown)

William and Nancy (Bledington)

Young Collins (Oddington)

Riggs of Doom (In the style of Bampton) - this is a special privilege to be able to include this dance written by Utrecht Morris and I have included the music below for those of you unfamiliar with the tune. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByJUXfZ4LQ8>

v0.2.1 20160525

13. Riggs of Doom

Bampton

Frans Tromp (2002)

A(AB)4

♩ = 150

(wordt vervolgd op volgende bladzijde)

13. Riggs of Doom

(vervolg)

Dans ontworpen door Mik Lammers (2002).

Contact your area rep if you need help and support with learning any of these dances.

Cheers

Emma

Morris Ring Newsletter No 139 December 2025

Squire's Musings – December 2025, Emma Melville

The Summer is over, the Christmas celebrations loom on the horizon and 2025 is nearing its end. The time has flown by with all the events and days out I have managed across the summer and autumn.



During August I spent a day in Stratford-upon-Avon with Shakespeare, compered their massed show – this time with a loud hailer (smaller crowd but less buses than Thaxted!) – and gave the mayoress ‘badge envy’ as hers was rather smaller than mine.

Then, after a family trip to Islay to relax in the scenery, visit a few distilleries and see if three children under 18 months old could manage 2 days of car journey, we were off to Saddleworth for the Rushcart.



I worked out that I think my first Rushcart was 1981 and though I haven't managed every single one since, I think I must have completed about 40. So it was a real honour to stand on the front stang as well as to speak in the church about what the weekend means to me, and to the wider morris community.

I then headed off to Ripley with Dolphin to celebrate their 100th year of dancing in Ripley. A slightly damp day! But lots of friends and we avoided dancing in the worst of the rain.



Next was Peterborough with First Class Stamp – another chance to try and take my teeth out with a large badge! This is a lovely day – I can recommend it if you haven't been. It is particularly nice for the Appalachian team who set up in the sunshine in a lovely square in the centre of the city and relax there while the various tours come to join us. At the end of the day



there is a massed show and then a massive quantity of cake in the church.

We headed to Suffolk at the end of September to join East Suffolk for Inertia Reel's last performance (the band Dad has played in for many years). Three squires of the ring in one family is I think something of a record! Getting them all together in one place, even more so.

In October I had a lovely day out with Whitchurch for their day of dance around some beautiful countryside and then their annual feast with some more excellent home made cake (there are definitely some morris teams who should enter bake off). This was followed by a day of dance around Birmingham centre for Jockey's Day of Dance. Due to a sudden shortfall in Anker attendance we joined the scratch team for the day and enjoyed playing for a different set of dances. Thanks to Lou (of Devil's Dyke) for leaping at the chance to lead a quite eclectic mix of dances.



Barely pausing to get my breath back

I leapt into

preparing chillis for 70 people for Anker's ale (more fantastic cake) and then headed off for a

really superb evening with Wath Morris for their annual feast.



Yesterday Anker danced at the Dickens Event and Christmas Light Switch on in Atherstone. An event which the new organiser unfortunately referred to as 'Dickfest' in her emails until it was pointed out that this might not be wise. #

As the year draws to an end I am looking forward to too many team Christmas meals, Christmas day with grandchildren, Boxing Day dance out (as I am sure many of you are), Saddleworth sword dancing, and then hard practising ready for the freezing plough tour with The Bullockers around the Leicestershire countryside. I think last year was something of a record at minus 6 but gallons of mulled wine helps to keep the inside warm even if the fingers are frozen to the keys.

I hope you all have a good Christmas and New Year and leap refreshed into 2026. I look forward to seeing you at many more events in the coming months.

Emma

From the Bagman's Armchair

Dear Friends

The warmest of seasonal greetings to you all as we head into this, the most festive time of the year.

Since our last newsletter we have seen the 49th Saddleworth Rush Cart meeting; this was held on the August bank holiday weekend and was a spectacular occasion as always. Saddleworth weekend is always a great time with some fabulous dancing on display, with plenty of opportunities to catch up with old friends and make new ones.



September brought the Dartington day of Dance in Totnes: if you have not been to this then you really should; it's a well organised and joyful day in a beautiful and welcoming small town in Devon. The informal Friday and Saturday evenings in the very accommodating pubs are also some of the best you will have.

Peterborough Day of Dance had at least ten sides turn out, including First Class Stamp - the Ring's first Appalachian dance side, who are a treat to behold.

October brought the Whitchurch Morris October fest. This is along the lines of a traditional weekend with bus trips, lots of dancing and wonderful food; Whitchurch always look after you very well indeed at their October fest!

We are now entering 'Ale' session. Mumming plays abound at this time of year and I'm sure lots of you will be involved in them - and then, of course, Boxing Day, which has always been a traditional dance out day and a favourite, full of jollity and good will. Boxing Day, as I'm sure you know, marks the occasion of Cecil Sharp's faithful meeting with the Headington Quarry Morris in 1899. This meeting led to Sharp's interest in collecting English folk dances and, along with notable others, fuelled the Morris revival of the early 20th century. So Merry Christmas and a happy new year to all of you from the Bagman of the Morris Ring and Thaxted.



Application for candidacy for Squire of the Morris Ring 2027



Dear Morris Ring,

I am declaring my candidacy for Squire of the Morris Ring. As current Treasurer, I have dedicated the past seven years to upholding the values and traditions of Morris dancing, and am confident that my experience, expertise, and unwavering commitment to our shared passion will enable me to lead the Morris Ring during my tenure.

I have successfully spearheaded significant transformations, including the implementation of a web-based subscription and administration platform. Furthermore, I played a pivotal role in securing the waiver of membership fees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, the Executive Officers and I introduced a 5-year grant funding programme, releasing some of our funds. This is designed so that member sides apply to promote Morris dancing that will have an impact at a Local, Regional, or National level.

My vision for the Morris Ring blends reverence for our rich heritage with a proactive approach to adapting and expanding our reach. I envision a future where the vibrant spirit of Morris dancing permeates many communities, attracting new enthusiasts for this great tradition.

Collaboration is paramount in achieving these goals. By strengthening our ties with the Open Morris and Morris Federation through the JMO, we can harness our collective strengths and magnify the impact of Morris dancing on a broader scale. By pooling our expertise and resources, we can elevate the visibility of Morris and introduce its enduring beauty to a wider audience.

I am confident that we can preserve the essence of Morris dancing while simultaneously expanding its reach and impact on future generations. I am honoured to have served the Morris Ring and hope to further the legacy of this cherished dance tradition.

Yours sincerely,

Clayton Francis

East Surrey Morris Men - Ewell St. Mary's Morris Men - North Wood Morris Men

KENNET MORRIS

c/o fools nook
10 Willowford
Yateley
Hampshire
GU46 6HQ

CONTACT: C P de Courcy
TEL: [01252 501182](tel:01252501182)
MOB: [07881 400282](tel:07881400282)
EMAIL: webmaster@kennetmorris.com

12 November 2025

RE: Supporting Clayton Francis' application for Squire of the Morris Ring

As the new squire of Kennet Morris it is my privilege to propose Clayton Francis of East Surrey Morris Men as next Squire of the Morris Ring on behalf of our club.

Having danced with East Surrey for well over 20 years, 8 of which were as Bagman, Clayton is steeped in our world, both in his dancing prowess and in his regard for our traditions and history. As East Surrey are not dancing on a very regular basis he is also dancing out with both the Ewell St Mary and Northwood Morris teams.

Kennet have known Clayton since we first adopted him at a Saddleworth Rushcart many years ago and we have regularly enjoyed his company in dance ... and feasting, ever since – proper fellowship.

I have worked closed with him in my role as Web Editor as he's very competently dealt with the challenges of being the Ring Treasurer since 2018. We feel sure he will also bring his dedication and organisational skills to the position of Ring Squire, together with a few new bright ideas.

We recommend him to you.

Peter de Courcy

For the Kennet Morris Men

KEITH FRANCIS (AKA Wilf)

Keith was an excellent Bagman for the Morris Ring, certainly during my term as Squire, but more than that, he was a very dear friend for many years. I was very pleased to be able to spend time with him during my PhD study and this was his early Morris history that he shared with me.

Keith's introduction to Morris Dancing was at St Peter's Church School in Earley, in Reading in 1946, at the age of ten. The Headteacher taught boys the dances of Headington Quarry, and Keith remembered Hunt the Squirrel and Rigs of Marlow. When he went to Reading University in 1957 he met Whiteknights at a Ceilidh and joined them for three years, visiting Intervarsity gatherings around the country. Paddy O'Neill taught them both Morris and sword dancing, and as Paddy was also a member of Kennet Morris Men Keith joined them as well.



After Reading Keith went to Leicester for a post-grad year and stayed for four years. He joined Leicester Morris men and was taught by Griff Jones, who became a great influence on Keith's dancing. He then moved to Sheffield and joined the Sheffield Cutlers, and Escafeld, and danced Cotswold and Rapper. While he was there, Keith met Ivor Allsop who was dancing with Handsworth, and Ivor and Joyce became life-long friends. With Escafeld Keith went on a two-week tour of Brittany, dancing at small folk festivals, and he thought that Rumford Morris men were also on the tour.

At this point I asked if it might be easier to talk about clubs that Keith had not known, but he wasn't finished. From Sheffield he moved to the Nottingham area and encountered the Foresters and Derby Morris men, just at the time that Jim Melville was beginning to introduce his own dances based on the Bledington dances. But after only a couple of years Keith moved to Ledbury in 1973 and there met Dave Jones and Silurian.

Keith spoke passionately and at length about Silurian. The history of that club has been detailed in other places, but he made interesting observations about the development of the team in those early days. He was very honest about the problems that they often brought upon themselves, but he said that having danced with them and enjoyed what they classed as 'Border' dances he wouldn't go back to any other form of the dance. He thought deeply about Morris dancing and in the course of a long and fascinating afternoon he touched on the meaning of tradition, why he felt that there was no such thing as 'Welsh Border Morris', and how he felt that teams should concentrate more on dances from their own area.

For so many years Cynthia and I were pleased to have Keith as a dear friend. We enjoyed his company, and I particularly enjoyed long conversations about the dance and the characters that we both knew. We were always pleased to receive the summer postcard from Greece or Italy that detailed his travels into the ancient classics. We went to Leicester when he danced out from being Ring Bagman and we were really pleased that he came to Dartington to see Adam dance in as Ring Squire. He was a very private man but we got to know him well and as I've been playing through my recording of our discussions, and listening to his voice, we both just said quietly that we'll miss him.

Mike Garland

John Miller

His bells may be silent, but his heart sings on.

King John's Morris Men regretfully announced that John Miller died peacefully on Monday the 27th October. He had suffered from cancer for a couple of years, but the disease finally started to get a real grip over the past weeks. He had no pain at the end, and was with his family.

John Miller was born in Southampton on the 4th July 1949 and grew up in the Thornhill and Bassett areas of Southampton.

After leaving education at 15, he served his apprenticeship as a Carpenter and Joiner. He worked his way to a lengthy and successful career in house building, winning multiple awards as Senior Site Manager before his retirement in 2019 aged 70.

A lifelong Saints FC fan, he also enjoyed Speedway and Rugby along with most sports.

John enjoyed many aspects of life, being particularly passionate about history, theatre and music: especially English folk which he sang regularly and with fine voice.

A member of King John's Morris Men, he travelled the world and the UK with the side. Despite his oft-noted lack of height, King John's Morris Men have lost a big contributor. John was Squire for a total of fourteen years (1983-1988, 2000-2007 and 2014-2016), and Bagman for five years (1980-1983 and 1988-1990) during the side's 50 years. His contributions to their dancing, singing, mumming and music are fondly remembered by all at King John's Morris Men. He shall be greatly missed.

Notices

Associate Morris Ring Members The Saddleworth Woman's Morris and Clog have applied to the Ring to become full members, this application has been supported wholeheartedly by the Thaxted Morris Men who have had the pleasure of The Saddleworth Woman at their weekend and seeing them many other events. They dance to a very high standard and display all the best elements of friendship excellence and camaraderie that the Morris Ring are renowned.

Their application the full membership will be voted on by the Ring member clubs at the ARM on the
7th March 2026

Morris Ring Publications

Matt Simons: Editor of the Morris Dancer
matt.j.simons@icloud.com

On-line Links:



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

The Morris Ring Google Group (MRGG). Private Forum for debate or announcements. <https://groups.google.com/group/the-morris-ring>

Contact the Morris Ring Bagman to register to use.

Morris Ring Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/TheMorrisRing>

Morris Ring Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheMorrisRing>

Call for Contributions

Any items of urgent Morris-related news, please send to me at bagman@themorrisring.org for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

If you have any photographs, you can send them to Duncan Broomhead, the Morris Ring Photo Archivist (duncan.broomhead@btinternet.com). Charlie Corcoran, the Keeper of the Morris Ring Log Book, is keen to receive stories about Ring events, both the formal and the quirky (Charliecorcoran7@ntlworld.com).

the MORRIS RING
founded 1934