

# THE MORRIS DANCER

No. SEVEN\*\*\*\*\* AUGUST 1980

The Ring's first Autumn circular should carry the subscription rate for Issues 8, 9 and 10 (for Nov.1980, and March and August, 1981). The individual subscribers fill be written to by the editor.

The aim will be to cover costs, not to make a profit: but it should be known that the subscription rate set Last Autumn for Numbers 5, 6 and 7 (hopefully allowing or inflation) was insufficient to meet the increases in printing rates and postages that did take place.

Some copies of Issues One to Five are in stock; No.6 is sold out.

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Write to Ewart Russell,50,Mile End Road,Colchester,C04 5BX

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Past Squire of The Ring Douglas Kennedy, commenting upon the account of the Greensleeves club in Issue Six :-

N.O.M.Cameron, its founder, was a rare character. A cripple almost, and also an eccentric, he was a great help to me during my first years as Director. He was in the Dept. of Printed Books at British Museum and was editor of the E.F.D.S. News. He also kept an expert eye on the Library in the new Memorial building. His adage on the Morris coaching, viz., "Description rather than teaching" was aroused by the tendency of the 'teachers' to evolve their own short cuts to the 'style' of arm and foot movements for particular traditions. Since we were all using the Sharp 'Morris Book' Cameron could do his own interpretation! But for his disability he would have been included in the H.Q. men's side, for he had an instinct for the men's dances.

About the tough soldier Callender taking up folk dancing. I asked him once how it happened. He like the other rough-neck ex-soldier Billy Lee had seen the shows at the Kings Theatre Hammersmith, and came to classes to have a try. When Richard found he couldn't 'skip' to the Flamborough (and Maud was at pains to point this out!) he swore an oath that he would conquer no matter what it cost him.

Billy Lee had been captivated not by the dancing so much as the music, especially the Playford time and more especially Mr. Beveridge's Maggot.

4/3/80

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From Keith Chandler, 16th June, 1980

#### Morris Dancing in the South Midlands

##### A brief assessment of the source material

The editorial in the sixth issue of 'The Morris Dancer' declares that the intention of the magazine is "to put into print information that may not be on record elsewhere." The intent is laudable and if handled correctly would fill a much-neglected niche in morris scholarship. The sources for compiling a history of what has come to be termed "Cotswold" morris are scattered about in libraries and in private collect-

ions and much of the material (the Logs of The Travelling Morrice, for example) is virtually inaccessible to the researcher. Partly the problem revolves around the distrust of individual collectors towards a centralised storage repository in which material could be safely deposited; and partly in the lack of suitable publications in which to publish not only the source material but also the results of such research which may arise from it.

Both the Folklore Society and the English Folk Dance and Song Society are too diverse in their interests to present this type of material to any great extent, although the journals of both bodies have contributed many useful items in the past. As examples I would cite Manning's seminal work 'Some Oxfordshire Seasonal Festivals' in the 'Folklore Journal, vol.viii, 1897 (which also contains some historically priceless photographs of Bampton dancing on Whit Monday that year); 'Writings of "Jinky" Wells' in 'Folk Music Journal', vol.2, No.1, 1970; the invaluable reproduction of Butterworth's 'Diary of Morris Dance Hunting' in the same journal for 1977 (vol.3, no.3); and, of course, Needham's 'Geographical Distribution of English Ceremonial Dance Traditions' in the Journal of the E.F.D.S.S. for 1936, which provided the basis for the 'Geographical Index of the Ceremonial Dance in Great Britain', meticulously compiled by Cawte, Helm, Marriot and Peacock, appearing in vol.ix, no.i (1960) of that journal. A careful sifting of these journals and the magazine of the E.F.D.S.S., 'English Dance and Song', will turn up numerous items of greater or lesser importance, and yet there is no index (known to me, at least) which catalogues this basic source material. True, the 'Geographical Index' cites the most important entries in each case but omits the minor, yet invaluable, entries such as the obituaries of "Jinky" Wells (E.D.S. xviii,4) and Ormande Pleated (E.D.S. xviii,3), the Campden fool of many years standing.

The recent surge of interest in morris as a subject for historical study has stimulated the appearance of two magazines devoted to furthering this aim. 'The Morris Dancer' draws on material from clubs within the Morris Ring and is concerned with not only the morris as a traditional entity but also the history of the revival as reflected through the

development of those clubs. The source material at hand must be copious; and a good start could be made with the publication of the often informative sheets produced for Ring Instructionals. In addition it would be useful to have accounts of the associations made with traditional sides - in particular the part played by the Ring in the revival at Abingdon during the nineteen-thirties. With the first issue of its third volume, 'Morris Matters', too, has declared a policy of publishing more serious research and has made a start with the 'Biographical Index to Traditional Morris Dancers, Fools and Musicians' and Jonathan Leach's piece on the involvement of the Hemmings family with the morris at Abingdon. Both magazines show promise, yet their distribution is limited and the content and format of both at present is unlikely to arouse much interest or support from the academic establishment.

It is my intention here to suggest areas of source material which are less well-known and which might profitably be followed-up. As long ago as 1964, Roy Dommett indicated the importance of local newspapers as a source for compiling the history of the morris (see his manuscript in Vaughan Williams Library), and this has indeed proven to be the case on the rare occasions that this type of work has been undertaken. An extensive review and examination of a newspaper run would be a very time-consuming business, but the fact that a tradition has tended in the past to be performed at approximately the same time each year (mostly at Whitsun, but around June 21st at Abingdon and on occasions at Christmas time for the Eynsham side) makes the job considerably easier. References from this source are usually of limited usefulness beyond establishing dates which a given side is in performance, but occasionally they contain a slightly more elaborate account which makes them invaluable. I would include here the extended report of Mayor-making at Abingdon in the 'Abingdon Herald' for June 25th, 1870 (page 5), which contains the first written reference to a Hemmings as Mayor; 1899 accounts in most of the Oxford newspapers on Manning's lecture at the Corn Exchange in March that year at which the Headington Quarry side made its reappearance after a lapse of some twelve years; the obituary of the Adderbury fool

"Mettle" Castle in the 'Oxford Chronicle' for June 5th, 1841 (page 4); and a very important account of Whit Monday at Bampton in 1928 appearing in the 'Oxford Times' on June 1st that year (page 9) which gives the names of the dancers in both teams, lists the dances which were performed (including the newer ones introduced by Wells to his "young" team raised the previous year, 'Banbury Billy' and 'Quakers') and briefly examines the involvement of the Tanner and Wells families in the morris. The revival in popularity that the morris has undergone since the early sixties has, of course, meant that a traditional team is also likely to dance at periods other than the usual times. For the researcher this means a more complete sifting of the newspaper in question to record these references. Despite preliminary work (see, for example, Chandler, 'An Interim Checklist of references to traditional morris dancing and dancers in Oxford newspapers' - copies in Vaughan Williams Library and Oxford Public Library) there remains much to be done in the localities (on, for example, the 'Witney Gazette', 'Banbury Guardian', 'Stow-on-the-Wold Advertiser' and the 'Abingdon Herald') before a truly comprehensive checklist can be compiled.

There is still a considerable amount of oral collecting to be done in the villages where a traditional side has performed within living memory. Now that the possibility of discovering previously unrecorded dances is remote, the collector is able to devote his full attention to garnering historical data. Some fine work has been, and is being, done, including the interview with "Jinky" Wells made by the B.B.C. in 1943 and the subsequent work by Peter Kennedy in Bampton during the fifties; Doc Rowe's recordings at Abingdon in 1978; Bob Grant's collecting in Headington Quarry; Keith Green's and Dave Townsend's at Eynsham; and, of course, Roy Dommett's impressive and wide-ranging material garnered over many years. A sympathetic ear, a courteous approach and a preliminary knowledge of the tradition being worked upon is essential for this type of collecting, and it can often prove very rewarding, both academically and personally. In addition to noting historical fact it is important to record the social background of the informant and his beliefs

and attitudes towards the dancing. The material should then be checked against other evidence - newspaper accounts, dated photographs (many of which turn up in the area being covered) and the like - for the human memory is selective and sometimes fallible, especially where dates are concerned.

With the awareness of their unique position, three of the surviving traditional sides have devoted time and effort to researching into their history and each has produced publicity material for circulation. Since the issue of the sheet 'Headington Quarry and its Morris Dancing' in 1976 there has been considerable research carried out within the team and the definitive history of the Quarry side is currently being produced, under the auspices of Bob Grant. This will correct the inaccuracies over dates which is evident in the earlier work. At Abingdon, too, the Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers have compiled a brief history of the Mayor-making ceremony which contains a potted history of the fortunes of the morris in the town. Likewise, Mr. Hemmings Morris Dancers have recently issued a sheet which emphasises the importance of the Hemmings family to the morris in Abingdon. For a recent tour of Italy, the Shergold side at Bampton produced a similar piece on their own tradition, but it has not been distributed in this country. Nevertheless, it is a significant indication of attitudes towards their inheritance that these teams have in effect become their own publicity agents.

Visual documentation of traditional morris in performance has been patchy and sporadic over the years. Lionel Bacon appears to have blazed the trail with his filming of the Wells side at Bampton in 1935 and 1937 (a report on these films is forthcoming in a future issue of 'The Morris Dancer') and other individuals, notably Roy Dommett, have followed. Various television companies have filmed at Bampton and Abingdon, although the opportunities to see the results are rare, given the transient nature of the medium. Certain commercial film companies also possess footage (Pathe News, for example, filmed the dancing on Whit Monday at Bampton in both 1947 and 1957; and the Morris Ring has sponsored a limited amount of filming both traditional and revival dance

sides. The process is expensive and there are problems of availability to the researcher, but the recorded material is invaluable; and a better understanding of the available footage should come with the completion of Doc Rowe's index.

Personal information such as age, occupation, kin ties and the like may sometimes be uncovered by an examination of the parish registers and, for dancers active prior to 1871, the census enumeration books (the 1881 returns will be available next year, due to the hindering one-hundred year rule laid down by the government). There are, however, certain problems of interpretation when dealing with this type of source material; especially where there is more than one man in a given village with the name of a known dancer. In Leafield in 1871, for example, there are two men named Richard Pratley, either - or neither - of which may be the Field Asserts dancer listed by Manning. Other documents in the Public Record Office may prove useful upon examination - including the Criminal Assize Records. Certain of the nineteenth century dancers appeared before the magistrates on various charges ranging from theft (William Walton senior and the Flint brothers at Adderbury - see Michael Pickering's forthcoming book on the cultural life of the village) to breaching the peace (Wheatley dancer Edward Tombs for his involvement in the rioting on Wheatley Common in May 1870); and given the association with drink it seems likely that some dancers would have been arrested for drunkenness (Mary Neal recorded that one man told her that he had been "Mayor of the Morris nine times. The qualification for this honour... was to have been locked up three times in one year for being drunk and three times in one year for beating your wife..." - Kidson and Neal 'English Folk Dance and Song', 1915, page 142)

Folklorists elsewhere, and more recently in England also, have long been aware that a tradition means little when examined in isolation from the social and cultural milieu from which it has sprung and that attitudes towards and perception of that tradition, both by participant and spectator/sponsor - in the sense of contributing tangible rewards such as money or alcohol for the privilege of viewing a performance - are of especial importance to an overall understanding of

motivation, fluctuations in frequency of performance and the propensity towards decline or survival of a given side. The application of these techniques to the history of morris in the Cotswolds has only recently begun, and very little of lasting value has yet appeared. Oases in this desert include two publications from work undertaken at Ruskin College - 'Whitsun in 19th Century Oxfordshire' by Alun Howkins, 1973, and 'Quarry Roughs' Raphael Samuel's piece on Headington Quarry life from oral sources, which appeared in the anthology 'Village Life and Labour' 1975. More typical are the popular effusions which masquerade as guides to customs and folklore, and those books containing random anecdotes about rural life which find a ready market in this technological age. Perhaps the most significant contribution to come out of this movement, which centres on nostalgia for the simple life, is the realisation of the importance of early photographs, many of which have been saved from destruction as a result. As I see it, the progression to a more academic approach to morris history lies in a greater awareness and understanding of the sources; and I make a final plea to all collectors to make available the fruits of their research.

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Issue Six had an article by Roy Dommett on The Sherborne Morris. Keith Chandler wrote, 12th March, 1980,

Further to Roy's notes on the Sherborne morris: George Simpson was certainly born in 1848 or 1849; but I am a little confused to the reference of James as his younger brother. The 1851 census enumeration books for the village recorded the Simpson family thus:

William	head	47	Farm labourer	(born Sherborne)
Hannah	wife	illeg.		(born Aldsworth)
William	son	10	Farm boy	(born Sherborne)
James	son	8	Farm boy	(born Sherborne)
Thomas	son	7	Farm boy	(born Sherborne)
George	son	1		(born Sherborne)

Now from this we can see that George had an elder brother named James as well. If the man visited by the Travelling Morrice was this brother then he would have been near to a hundred years-old at the time. It is not uncommon for there

to be two sons in a family bearing the same Christian name, but this is a problem which needs clarification. In the same year we find William Harper, one of the pipers, then aged 14 and working as a sawyer. The surname is consistently spelt Hooper in both the census returns and the parish registers for Sherborne. Given the ages of these men and others formerly in the side who were visited by the TM prior to the second war I don't think that 1883 is at all improbable as the date of the team's collapse. After all, George Simpson would have still only been 34 years-old in this year. There should be records of the Simpson brothers joining the police force (although I find the story of the name-change a little strange), but failing that it would be useful to know the birthdate of Taylor, the pupil taught by Simpson. Anything in the TM logs about the Sherborne dancers other than the brief biographies to be found in the 25th anniversary booklet?

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From Past Squire of The Ring Lionel Bacon, 7th March, 1980

Fred Breunig's Editorial in the American Morris Newsletter (quoted in The Morris Dancer, No.6) makes interesting reading, and leads me to ponder, for the hundredth time 'Why do we dance?'

Let me say straight away that I do not think that in England the restriction of public shows to limited seasons would solve the problem of 'overdancing' - indeed it might exacerbate it. I suppose it may be true that if all Morris shows were confined to the springtime neither Local Authorities nor local residents would feel as overwhelmed by it as they may in a few areas where it is liable to occur throughout six months of the year. On the other hand, if all the Shows which at present are spread through six months were concentrated into say six weeks, the impact upon localities at risk of 'overdancing' would be very much greater, and the risk of resentment and resistance correspondingly so.

It is not entirely clear to me from Fred Breunig's Editorial whether he is suggesting that Clubs should refrain from public displays except during a very limited season, or whether they should stop dancing altogether. Probably he intends the former, though some of his comments do seem to

convey the impression that Morris Men would do better to come fresh to the dance each Spring - "in between there is time for other aspects of one's life". I believe that some at least of the traditional sides of which we have knowledge used to meet together to practise for only a very limited period - perhaps as little as a week or so - before embarking on their seasonal displays. It would of course be possible for any Club to decide to do this, provided that it were willing to limit its repertoire to the dances of a single tradition - as of course did the traditional sides. But this leads to the broader question - 'Why do we dance?'

What do we expect from our dancing? Some men, and some Clubs, it seems, have as their primary objective the present-ation of dances with a high degree of technical perfection -comparable perhaps with some semi-professional groups of foreign national dancers. Such men, and Clubs, are likely to restrict themselves to a very limited repertoire, perhaps of a single tradition; to practise to a high degree of drilled perfection; to be punctilious in their dress and presentat-ion; and ruthlessly demanding of a degree of skill and dedi-cation which would mean in practice the exclusion either from the Club or at least from its demonstration side of all but the most polished performers. This is the one extreme. At the other one has known of Clubs whose leadership (and hence whose membership) avowedly dance solely for the fun of the thing; who are willing and anxious to have a bash at any dance of any tradition and to dance it in public when it is only very imperfectly mastered; and who see no great merit in achieving competence in their dancing or their music, or a high standard of dress or presentation, since 'we only dance to enjoy ourselves'.

Perhaps I have over-painted these pictures, a little - but not much. For my part I am by nature, conviction and experience a compromise man. We do dance for our own pleasure. It is our hobby. Our dancing should be a joy and not a burden. Our Club should be a fellowship of enthusiasts, not an exclusive clique of technical experts. On the other hand, it is surely the experience of those of us who have been long in the dance that greater personal pleasure comes from greater expertise and from greater audience appreciation.

So then, as it seems to me, a balance has to be struck between on the one hand presenting to public audiences a polished, competent display in which the inherent dignity of the dance is clearly respected, and on the other presenting enjoyable, relaxed and varied dancing as the expression of a harmonious Club. The level at which this balance will be struck will vary from Club to Club, since Clubs are bound to differ from one another (and even within themselves from time to time) in the capacities and wishes of their members.

To return to the theme of the American Editorial, I know that some men have laid great emphasis upon the ritual nature of the Morris and upon its origins (which frankly are more than hazy) as a fertility rite. If one attaches import-ance to this aspect of the dance, then it is perhaps logical to advocate restricting the Cotswold Morris to Spring; and it would be equally logical (on the basis of maintaining trad-ition) to present only dances from a single tradition, to use only a musical instrument which is known to have been assoc-iated with that tradition, and in every other possible way to adhere to such practices as are known of the chosen tradit-ional side. To me, this is laying an undue emphasis upon the Morris of the past at the expense of the needs of the Morris of today - and I would favour striving to present good, lively, obviously enjoyed Morris, with as much variety in the dances as the Club can perform well, to any audience which will appreciate it, at any time of the year.

So where do we go in the matter of 'overdancing'? Surely the first requirement is to be wholly sensitive to, and considerate of, all the people who may possibly be affected by any display that we put on - the authorities, the local residents, shoppers, tourists, traffic...and other Morris dancers. A site that "has more dancing than the local people or Town Council will tolerate" is almost certainly one where there has been some bad or inconsiderate behaviour by Morris dancers. So long as Clubs ensure that their behaviour is 'tolerable' they will be tolerated - and welcomed.

Closely related to the problem of 'overdancing', though quite distinct from it, is that of 'Club territory'. The Ring has, over the years, repeatedly urged its associated Clubs to



tinguish it from the University club. Since that time there have always been two independent clubs in Oxford bearing the city's name; and fortunately relations between them have always been friendly and mutually supportive.

For the sake of completeness we should mention the Oxford City Police Athletic Club Morris Dancing Troupe which danced between 1923 and 1926; and the British Workman Morris Dancers, based in Headington, who flourished during the 1930s.

Of course, the above does not pretend to trace the long, complex and honourable history of the Headington Quarry Morris Dancers, except in so far as it impinges on the history of the Oxford clubs.

#### THE YATELEY MORRIS MEN      Germany, 1979

The Yateley Morris Men made their first tour abroad as a group when, from 7th to 10th September, they visited the Black Forest area of West Germany.

The trip was the result of a three-year long association with a folk group in Buhl (near Stuttgart in the district of Baden) who contacted the Yateley Morris Men through an international cultural exchange organisation. The Buhler Menti, as they are called, are in fact the town's historical society, and they all dress in local costume on their public appearances. The Society has several branches, including a dance group which performs social mixed dances. A small group from the Buhler Menti visited Yateley in 1977, and so it was decided that a return visit was about due.

On arrival at Buhl railway station, after a flight to Strasbourg, the Yateley Men were welcomed by the Buhler Menti. As the numbers were somewhat in excess of the Germans' original estimate (21 Yateley Men as opposed to the half-dozen Buhler Menti who had visited England earlier) they did some negotiating with the local unit of the French Army (which normally occupies that part of Germany) and the Morris Men found themselves booked into the barracks of the 32eme Army Medical Unit.

It just so happened that weekend was the occasion of the "Buhler Zwetschgenfest" a celebration of the plum and grape

harvest, which are the main local agricultural products and which constitute the well known Black Forest wine and schnapps.

The celebrations started on the Saturday evening when the Yateley Morris Men were given the honour of performing at the festival's opening ceremony. They then proceeded to the Grand Market Hall where a concert was taking place by the many Fanfarenzeug ( a type of marching band ) that had gathered in Buhl that weekend for their SW. German championship. The Men again performed before an audience of several thousand this time and it was here that the local press said later that they "livened up what was becoming a far too serious affair." (The atmosphere was getting rather intense as several bands were trying to outperform one another.)

The weekend festivities culminated in a procession through the streets of a hundred or so groups and floats. The Yateley Morris Men were given pride of place, and besides intriguing the locals with their dancing, also puzzled them with the antics of their fool and horse (who had a tremendous appetite for German beer). The Men's final performance of the weekend was when they danced for the patients at the local hospital.

The Morris Men were very well looked after by their hosts and everywhere they went they were well received by the locals, who had never seen such a spectacle in the area before. Communication was a bit of a problem, as only a few of the side spoke German, and most of the locals only had a smattering of English; but often the few words in both languages, gestures and some perseverance succeeded.

Before departing that evening on the Orient Express, which was specially stopped at Buhl to pick them up, the Yateley men were presented with many bottles of the local schnapps and wine to bring home. Left behind were a lot of German people, "whose opinions," (to quote the local newspaper "Badisches Tagblatt,") "of the serious, conservative British have been considerably changed by the visit of the Yately Morris Men."

DAVID BERRYMAN

From Barbara Sunderland, 7th March, 1980.

Are comments from Morris wives acceptable?

We read the Greensleeves history in 1976, when it was published, and we went to the Ladies Night to celebrate the Golden Jubilee as Morris was Squire of The Ring then. We were very interested in the sentence "At some time during 1948, Greensleeves danced in a convent." That sentence is not quite complete. Greensleeves danced for the students of Digby Stuart Teacher Training College, Roehampton, a college run by the Society of the Sacred Heart. The college had been St. Charles, Ladbrooke Grove, until the war. On return from evacuation it moved to Roehampton and was re-named. I am not quite sure when the M.M. came. I was a student there from 1947 to '49. I have a feeling it was '49 rather than '48 but cannot be sure.

Olive MacNamara was the link. She and her sister Rhoda were members of Lumps of Plum Pudding and Olive was an old student of St.Charles. She came to her old college to teach some country-dancing, and brought the morris men (we all turned out in P. E. kit, brown divided skirts and blue and white striped shirts and plimsolls.) I remember Gordon Neil and a gentleman who now dances (or did) with Woodside. This was the first Morris dancing I had ever seen, and I was thrilled! I was very puzzled as to how our Reverend Mother (P.4,Issue6) had known Cecil Sharp until my father reminded me that at one time the Society of the Sacred Heart had a convent in Headington. By the way, you don't mention that the elephants were pink! (P.20,Issue 6)

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From HARRY DE CAUX , of the Thaxted Morris. March, 1980

"Very soon after we came to Thaxted, my wife started the morris dancers." Thus wrote Conrad Noel, sometime Vicar of Thaxted, in his autobiography. He was referring to the years 1910-11.

Just over ten years earlier, on Boxing Day morning, 1899, Cecil Sharp had had his famous encounter with the Headington Quarry Morris Men. Later Mary Neal, searching for dances to teach the girls of her Esperance Club in London, was

sent by Sharp to William Kimber, who taught her many of the Headington dances for her girls to perform. And in one of their public performances the girls were seen by a much impressed Miriam Noel. Miriam asked Mary Neal to send a dance teacher to Thaxted: along came Miss Blanche Paling, and the Thaxted Morris was born.

That was early in 1911. But was that really the beginning? There are persistent stories of dancing in Thaxted long before that time. Conrad Noel, and others, tell of a broom dance which was still being performed at the old "Carpenters Arms" in Newbiggen Street, and he says also that " many of the dances which had only just lapsed in practice were well remembered by the older inhabitants." Noel goes on to tell a rather puzzling story of "one of the hand-bells which was supposed to have belonged to an old morris dancer, was treasured in a certain family, and so delighted were they when Miriam started the dancing again that they presented it to her."

Then there is the tale of Alfred Bishop, as told by Reg Groves in "Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement": "Conrad Noel discovered that old Alfred Bishop who lived at The Cottage opposite the church, had played the fiddle for the Thaxted Morris team until that team had broken up somewhere around the turn of the century."

What was that team, and what dances did they do? Clearly, they would not have danced Cotswold Morris, for it was unknown outside its own territory at that time. The dances may, perhaps, have been of country or social type. There is, however, another possibility: Molly Dancing. The late Russell Wortley wrote: "It is indeed quite possible that Molly Dancing was traditional in Thaxted - I have definite evidence for it at Great Sampford, together with plough-dragging, on Plough Monday, until about 1900. For Thaxted I have clear evidence only for taking the plough round on the evening of Plough Monday (from a man of 77 in 1944) - again he was speaking of the turn of the century or before." Russell Wortley continued: "It seems to me highly likely that the "old morris dancer" of Thaxted who originally owned the handbell given to Miriam Noel was in fact a molly dancer ("molly" and

"morris" are interchangeable terms in this area, the former being more commonly used)".

Do the roots of Thaxted Morris go much deeper into the past than 1911? I think it is very likely that they do. Can any reader throw any further light on the matter?

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#### Stansted and Hartley Morris Men

Stansted is a rural/commuter village in N.W.Kent, just off the A20, and some 25 miles from central London. During the 1930s Will Thorne (who danced in the EFDSS National Demonstration Team of those days) came weekly to Stansted to instruct a group of local men in the morris. This group developed into a club and danced at local fetes and similar events in the way customary at that time. As far as I am aware they were never formally associated in the Ring nor did they attend any Ring meetings. Meetings ceased in 1939 and the group did not reform after the war.

During the winter of 1950/1951 Ian Scott-Walker, at that time at Swanley Horticultural College, got together a number of men, including two of the Stansted side, to dance the morris. At the time the only other morris club in N.W. Kent was Ravensbourne, some distance away. The initial practice was held at Swanley Village Hall, Geoff Metcalf of Ravensbourne giving the instruction. Shortly afterwards Ian Scott-Walker left the district and dropped out of the picture.

One of the Stansted men, "Seph" Sephton, provided the impetus to keep dancing going. Practices were moved to Longfield, Seph became Bagman, George Crouch Squire, and Geoff Metcalf continued as instructor. Before long the name Hartley had been adopted (Hartley adjoins Longfield and is close to Stansted) and the costume of red braces with rosettes was in use - red, white and blue because it was Festival of Britain year. High crowned hats with ribbons were worn, but in due course dropped out of use as they were made of papier-mache and difficult to maintain in wet weather.

A modest standard of dancing was reached and a normal programme of tours and displays was carried out. The club

became associated in the Ring in 1955 and attended a Thaxted meeting. About this time Geoff Metcalf ceased dancing with the club (his priority was Ravensbourne).

Normal activities continued until about 1960, when Seph retired from work and left the district. It became difficult to get a side together and at its own request Hartley was removed from the list of Ring clubs and returned its stave to the Ring. Nevertheless the remaining members continued to meet once a month for practice in George Crouch's garage, although no public shows were given.

It was Bob Tatman, formerly of London Rodney, who joined Hartley following the demise of Rodney who was largely responsible for getting the club active again. He became foreman and Squire (?) but details of these developments and of the more recent history would be better obtained from the present flourishing club.

It should be mentioned that the "Sephton candlestick" used at Ring feasts was presented to the Ring in memory of Seph by his daughter, Mrs. Lee, with the request that it be kept in Thaxted church (Seph considered Thaxted to be the Mecca of morris) and made available to Hartley whenever they require it.

Notes by Past Squire of the Ring Geoff Metcalf, written February, 1980.

(The candlestick, in a fine carrying box made for it at Squire of the Ring, Alan Brown's school at Hexham, always has been in the possession of one of the Ring's Officers; and is taken by him to Ring Feasts; where the candles are in the colours - up to four - of the host club. ED.)

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#### THE AMERICAN MORRIS NEWSLETTER

Fred Breunig, the Editor, wrote, in his letter of the 10th February, 1980 :-

# Subscriptions to the American Morris Newsletter are available to anyone for the bargain price of two dollars per year. Overseas subscriptions should add two dollars for airmail delivery or fifty cents for surface mail. Please make all checks in U.S.funds payable to 'American Morris Newsletter'

and send to Fred Breunig, R.D. 1 Box 9A, Putney, VT, 05346, U.S.A."

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From Gordon Ridgewell, Hertford: "Hertfordshire Mercury, 15/7/77. The day's events faded out with Standon Morris Men giving a display."

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Thames Valley M.M., report on the 1979 dancing: "Saturday 23rd June. The organisers of a fete in Worcester Park asked us to dance at local pubs before dancing at the opening of their fete and again during the course of it. This we did with a side mostly apprentices but with several seniors; later in the day we went on to the all-night party in Hardwick Barn. Here we danced the morris, performed the mummers play, did the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance, watched the sun rise and went for a swim."

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From 'The Leyland Morris Man', March, 1980

"At Preston we met Hoghton and Jockey M.M., and once more ran into trouble with the Deputy Warden of the Shopping Centre: he hadn't been informed of the show by his superiors and refused to accept the letter of authority thoughtfully carried by David Thompson. However, when asked how he intended stopping the two dozen or so Morris Men who were, by now, cavorting about his hallowed 'patch' he accepted the situation with very bad grace.

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Ring's Log Book 1 Thaxted, 5th - 7th June, 1936

Kenworthy Schofield then showed cinematograph films of the dancing at Hampton; to do this all the accumulators in Thaxted had been marshalled, and just sufficed to work the apparatus.

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Log Book 1. Thaxted 11th June, 1938

On Sunday morning moat men were present at the church service at 9 a.m., and for the first time a dance was performed in the church - The Rose, before the procession of dancers