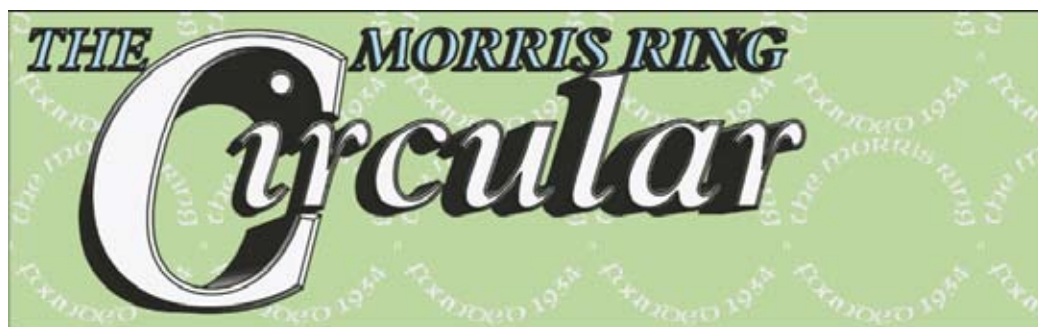




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Tasker bows out for a 1/2p at Castleford

by Barry Evans

An early start to the weekend for some, saw Brian Tasker (Squire of the Ring) Barry Evans (Squire Castleford Longsword) and Malcolm Ramskill (Castleford Musician) arrive early Friday afternoon at Thorpe Willoughby Junior School, this being the campsite for the weekend, but were there to spend the whole afternoon teaching a class of children about various aspects of the Morris and it's traditions, the session was greatly appreciated by all the children and staff taking part, at the end of the teaching session we were asked if it would be possible for a demonstration at the schools afternoon assembly, so enough men were rounded up and in mufty the Boosbeck Sword Dance was performed for the whole of the school with shouts for an encore, whew! What a worthwhile and satisfying start to our weekend. In late afternoon preparations were well under way for the arrival of the motley crew known as Morris Men, the beer was set up with three different brews on hand pump, the food was ready so as they say the show began, the end of the night saw 99% of men disappear to the one and only local pub (luckily it does have decent beer) the landlord after the weekend enquired when were we having another event? We were already thinking he must be joking. Saturday arrived a little dull, but all were in good spirits, and after a hearty breakfast we boarded the two double decker busses ready for the day ahead. One morning tour visited the historic centre of York after a spot in Selby at



the Market Cross, whilst the other tour visited the small villages to the south east of the city of York. Both tours met at the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington for lunch, the tour leaving York in the morning were lucky enough to see the last remaining airworthy Vulcan Bomber shortly after take-off from Elvington, as it carved its way elegantly across the sky, what a sight to see. After lunch in the NAAFI some found a little time to wander very quickly round some of the exhibits, dancing in these surroundings and backdrop was certainly different and one team had a low level fly past of a Lancaster Bomber during their performance, I think the Lancaster got most of the attention. The afternoon tours were reversed from the morning with one tour in

(..continued on page 3)

Squire's Capers

Turn up at a few ale feasts, say a word or two. Go to the Ring Meetings, say a word or two. There's the ARM and a couple of Advisory Council meetings, say a word or two. That's about all the Squire of the Morris Ring does. Well, that was the job description in a nutshell. Sounded like a breeze. Worth giving it a crack I thought and so it was that some fourteen months ago I threw my cap (or bowler in my case) into the Ring (no pun intended) and put myself up for candidature.

The months up to March 2010 and the ARM flew past and I returned home from Stafford proud in the realisation that sufficient of my friends and acquaintances in the Morris Ring had adequate confidence in me to cast their votes in my favour and thereby promote me as Squire Elect. The poll had been very tight and I must remark that Robin Springett, who found himself in the unenviable position of runner-up by just one vote, was an absolute gentleman in defeat and has been most generous and supportive of me since. Thank you Robin. I'm sure that your time will come.

The honeymoon period as Squire Elect is a strange time. One has suddenly become very important, treated with great deference wherever one goes and yet has nothing whatsoever to do. Oh except turn up and say a word or two of course! I got around as much as I was able, accepted as many invitations as were possible and started the unenviable task of trying to remember the names of every man that ever donned a Morris costume.

The Thaxted Ring meeting brought its usual joy to the start of June and was followed by a most convivial



weekend in Kent with Hartley. Green Oak kicked off July with another lovely weekend (pig roast and campfire singaround – a must-repeat occasion) and Chapel-en-le-Frith rounded off the same month with an excellent day contributing to the Buxton Festival. In August I ventured to Upper Mill to take part in the Saddleworth Rushcart, a first for me and another must-repeat experience. “One wheel on my wagon, and I keep rolling along...”

I first met the Trigg Morris Men



Peter Halfpenney dancing in at Castleford

Photo: Barry Evans

as Squire of Harthill in 1986 when we hosted the Ring Meeting based in Worksop. They were obviously hugely impressed 'cos just 24 years later they organised a Ring Meeting of their own and invited me back – the delay must have been in the meticulous planning! They are a most gregarious side and it was a weekend full of those memorable little cameos that make the difference between a good 'un and a corker. Scarcely had the engine time to cool from the trip home when it was off again to Selby for the last Ring Meeting of the year ably hosted by Castleford Longsword. As is customary, the Meeting was hugely significant being the venue at which the retiring Squire danced out and I danced in. Many friends inside and outside Morris had travelled an appreciable distance to lend their support on the Sunday as Offices were exchanged and I must express my gratitude for their encouragement. Indeed I must thank so many colleagues old and new for the kind words and confidence expressed in my ability to discharge this Office in a manner productive for the future prosperity of the Morris Ring.

And since aspiring to Office? Well, a very pleasant weekend with Rutland, turn up say a few words, Advisory Council Meeting, turn up say a few words, 18-30 weekend, turn up say a few words, EFDSS AGM, turn up say a few words, Open Morris AGM, turn up say a few words. All just like the job description...

then the bloody Equality Act happened ...

Peter Halfpenney
Squire of The Morris Ring

...The Morris Ring Meeting, Castleford

(.....continued from page one)

York and one round the villages, it was certainly very pleasing to visit Escrick and for Castleford to dance the Escrick Longsword dance in its home. Both tours met at the Greyhound Pub in Riccall for the last free for all spot of the day, teams could either dance, sing, play or just drink if they preferred, this was a spot for relaxation and pure self-indulgent enjoyment. What was interesting all day was that



due to forward planning and use of a mobile phone East Surrey always managed to have beer on the bar top at every stop waiting for them so not having to form an orderly queue to acquire the golden liquid.



After having had a good feed at the feast and the resultant singing, playing and pantomime, informal dancing was begun. At one stage we were joined by some local youths who were encouraged to join in and ended up enjoying themselves and appreciated the camaraderie that exists in the Morris, although I suspect that initially their reasons of joining in were to try and blag a beer. Sunday was a much better day and following breakfast we headed off to Selby Abbey for the church service. Although the church at this time had a temporary vicar he made us very welcome and had done some research into the Church and the Morris, he quoted old documents relating to the Church buying Kit for the

Morris Men in his introduction to Castleford Longsword who dance the first two figures of the Boosbeck Sword Dance as part of the service, we wonder if this is a first for sword dancing? The massed dance spot was just outside the main West door of the Abbey at the Market Cross, we were joined by most of the congregation and the Vicar, all enjoying the colourful spectacle of those



assembled. The show culminated in the hand over of the Squire from Brian Tasker to Peter Halfpenney, I am sure those present witnessed the swelling of pride in Peter and the audible sigh of relief from Brian. After lunch back at the village hall everyone drifted off homewards with a smile on their faces and very happy memories of a weekend in Yorkshire.

Photos from Castleford:

front page: Brian Tasker dancing out as Squire of the Morris Ring; page 2: Peter Halfpenney receives staff of Office as Squire of The Morris Ring; this page, clockwise from top: Manchester, Hartley, Richmond on Swale and Leeds.

More photographs from Castleford Ring Meeting overleaf

Photos from Rosemary Simcox and Catherine McArdle.



Castleford Ring Meeting-more photographs



Photographs from top left, clockwise:

Ravensbourne, St Albans, a double jig, Ripley, Manchester, Harthill, East Surrey and a massed dance

*Photos:
Rosemary Simcox and
Catherine McArdle.*

Dancing America Rapper Tournament

by Brian Tasker

The first Dancing America Rapper Tournament was held in Cambridge, Massachusetts over the weekend of 22/24 October 2010. It was organised by Tom Kruskal, the man behind the Great Meadows organisation which has sent teams to compete at the Dancing England Rapper Tournament in recent years.

Fourteen sides entered: ten from the USA, two from England, one from Scotland and one from Canada, making fourteen sides in all. The English sides were Sallyport and Thrales and the Scottish side was Mons Meg from Edinburgh. The competition was organised on similar lines to Dert with judged performances in four bars. Before the competition Sallyport said that they didn't mind if they won or not as long as they beat Thrales! Thrales said that they didn't mind if they won or not as long as they beat Sallyport! The winners were Thrales, with Candy Rapper second and Sallyport third. Only three points separated the top three. Sallyport claimed that it was the unicycle what won it for Thrales. Candy Rapper have entered Dert on a number of occasions and they won both the Centenary Class and best youth team in 2009.

The event continued on the Sunday morning with a series of instructional sessions and talks. The first instructional session was a five man version of the White Boys dance from the Isle of Man. It was a very well constructed dance and very different from the six man version danced by North British which in turn is very different from the version danced

by the Perree Bane dance group in the Isle of Man. This was followed by Sallyport who taught the Swalwell dance. The last session was given by Orion Longsword who attempted to teach us some of their incredible "Take Five" dance. I can confirm that it is just as difficult as it looks, the transitions from one step to another during the dance being particularly tricky.

I attended Dart with Sallyport. We made a week of it by staying on for a few days and enjoyed three brilliant evenings with New England sides. Rhett Krause, the man who wrote the sword locks appendix in Ivor Allsop's book of longsword dances, made all the arrangements for us and kindly let us stay at his house in Amherst.

On the Tuesday night we went out with the Marlboro' Morris Men and a rapper side called "Flesh Wound". It was an amazingly warm evening and we danced at several spots around the town of Northampton. Sallyport wanted to dance the Poppleton longsword dance and as we had only six dancers I had to do it. I had had the benefit of a few practices including one at the roadside on the way to Amherst, but I was not confident. At one point in the dance I had to run round the set back to place and every time we performed the dance the others shouted out "Go Brian go!" Once I went round the set in the wrong direction but it didn't seem to make any difference.

On Wednesday we travelled up to Brattleboro' in southern Vermont to meet up with Jack in the Green, a Cotswold side, and Marlboro' Morris and Sword which is the ladies' side which at one time were linked to the Marlboro' Morris

Men. We finished the evening at McNeil's bar where the tables were cleared for us to dance. It was another great evening made even better by the beer produced in the micro brewery being served using British handpumps.

On our last day we visited Mount Holyoak, a local beauty spot. The warm weather meant that the fall was late and we were able to appreciate the colours of the leaves on the maple trees. In the evening we caught a bus out to a bar to join a folk session and were surprised to find that the bus was free. I wasn't completely happy about this because I think that free buses should be a privilege for the over 60s. That evening we were joined by Juggler Meadow, a Cotswold side, and two more rapper sides. The landlord so enjoyed our performances that he gave us all a shot of Jack Daniels before we left. Later that evening we tried to get into the Amherst Brewing Company's pub but they were very fussy about ID. I showed them my bus pass but they refused to accept that this proved that I was over 21. We had a great week in New England. The local sides were so welcoming and we all felt that we are part of the same folk scene despite being thousands of miles apart.

Tom Kruskal has decided to organise another Dart in 2011. The local rapper sides were at first unsure about entering a tournament but were won round and most of them entered. Now that they have seen how it all works I am sure that they will enter again next time round and hopefully there will be more sides from the UK.

Bill Holt's 90th Birthday

by S K Archer

On 9th October Bathampton Morris Men celebrated the 90th birthday of one of their active dancers, Bill Holt. Bill has danced with the side for some 42 years, regularly performing during the past season. Bathampton were formed in 1934 from a boys' side based at Bathampton School and taught by Mrs Oakey. Their club badge is a cartoon of the Wyf of Bath by Sir Osbert Lancaster. The event was witnessed by an undercover reporter from Ravensbourne Morris. Here is his report.

Wyf of Bath SHOCKED, AS MAN BECOMES FATHER AT 90

Yesterday Bill Holt made history by becoming Father of the Bathampton Morris Men at the age of 90. The Wyf of Bath was unavailable for comment as was Mrs Oakey who always considered the men to be her boys. This shock news was conveyed to Bill by Squire Alan Greer (age too young to be of note) at a private, male-only ceremony in the upper room of the Kings Arms in Bradford on Avon.

MAJOR HOLT BRINGS B-O-A TO STANDSTILL

Previously Bill, or Major WMD Holt as he was known in the Indian Army, amazed the crowd in Westbury Gardens with a selection of Cotswold Morris dances before parading over the bridge to The Shambles. Cries of "keep an eye out for WMD" briefly brought traffic on the bridge to a standstill until the confusion was resolved.

ROBIN PROMOTED (from farthing) BY MISSING 1/2d



The birthday lunch was attended by Robin Springett, South West Area representative of the Morris Ring, deputising for Peter Halfpenney, Squire of the Morris Ring. Robin had the pleasure of hearing Bill's comprehensive history of the Africa campaign of 1940 (volumes 1 & 2), particularly focusing on the push into Abyssinia. The proximity of the Italian proprietor of this restyled gastropub added a little zest to the story.

Later, having had most of his address pre-empted by Bill, Robin enjoyed

having the rest of it corrected for historical inaccuracy. Bill demonstrated the Highland fling and gave a talk on the differences between the Scottish and English dance traditions. He then followed his lively execution of the sailor's hornpipe with a rendition of "It's a Long Way to Tipperary". Singing went on into the small hours of the afternoon until they drank the pub dry, clocking up another British victory over Italian efforts to run a foreign operation. Peter (or P1/2p as he is known) can only lament at missing such a piece of Morris history.

QUEENS OFFICERS BRING BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FROM BATTLEFIELD

Earlier in the day 2 officers from HM Forces were seen conveying birthday greetings in a private ceremony outside the Riverside Inn. Dressed in civilian clothes, an unreliable source has revealed that they were bringing congratulations from Her majesty and recognition of the role Bill played in the

(continued bottom next page)

STOP PRESS

At our ARM in Clevedon the proposal put forward by Horwich Prize Medal MM to slim down the numbers of the Advisory Council was adopted with a large majority (76%). The result of this reshaping of our 'think tank' will be that the area Reps have greater opportunity to influence the Squire's thinking, hopefully in line with the wishes of the Morris sides in their areas.

There are many experienced sages who will become 'Past Members of the MR Advisory Council' and we should not forget the significant contributions that they have brought to our cause over many years. Sadly our ARM debates overran and this denied us the opportunity to give

recognition and public thanks for their past service. The Morris Ring would not be the formidable organisation that it is today without the wise council that they have afforded Squires over the years and on behalf of all MR members I should like to give hearty thanks and three cheers for their past participation.

It is the Squire's prerogative to invite or co-opt non members to Advisory Council meetings to provide information and advice in specialist areas so don't hang up your thinking caps just yet, Gentlemen; you will be called upon again from time to time I am sure.

Peter J Halfpenney
Squire of the Morris Ring

The Morris Ring Circular Editorial

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An Historic ARM: The Morris Ring's bloodless Jasmine Revolution

The 2011 Annual Representatives' Meeting of the Morris Ring was historic in more ways than one. Firstly, the 'Rumford Proposal' was carried by over 4 votes to one—allowing, under the Morris Ring Constitution, women members (as musicians only) for the first time. The fact that many Morris Ring sides have had women musician members for many years, it was the Equality Act that spurred the Officers of the Morris Ring to Act, offering three alternatives. All were rejected in favour of the Officers' recommended option, incorporated in the amended 'Rumford Proposal'.

The second motion that was passed concerned the composition of the Advisory Council (AC). Previously, all past officers were automatically

members of the AC indefinitely. Now the AC is made up of the three most immediate past Squires of The Morris Ring, any other past officers (currently a past treasurer), the three elected officers and the Area Representatives. Incidentally the later are elected by the area sides, although often unopposed. The Squire can invite whom so ever he wishes to Advise him (or her). Past Officers now have a maximum 6 years on AC.

The following are no longer on the AC are :

Past Squires—Cliff Marchant, Gerald Willey, Daniel Fox, Tim Sercombe, Richard Hankinson, Mike Chandler, Mike Garland, Geoff Jerram, Ray King, Barry Care MBE, Ivor Allsop, David Welti and Bert Cleaver. Past Bagmen—

John Frearson, Tony Parsons, Chas Arnold, Keith Francis, Mike Garland and John Wells. Past Treasurers—Richard Sinclair, Roger Baker and Barry Care.

Over the years, as many Morris Ring Squires will vouch, they will have appreciated in their time advice, not just from the above list but from all past officers no longer with us. They are all to be thanked for their wisdom, advice and indeed their time '... to consider how best to further the objects of the Morris Ring...' Due to the over-running of the ARM, those thanks were not expressed. (*See Squire's letter, page 6*)

Finally thanks to Mendip for hosting the event so efficiently, with excellent food, beer and a sense of fun.

(continued from page 6)

Africa campaign when he briefly took command of operations after Brigadier Slim (later Viscount Slim) was shot in the bum by a Fiat biplane. Can you imagine the indignity—shot by a Fiat! However the story has been corroborated by one of the officers who has just completed an extensive tour of Sudan and Ethiopia.

Bill is expected to attend practice next Thursday as usual.

all photos S K Archer

Photos: page 6, top, Bill Holt with medal.

Below. Bill with Bathampton Squire, Alan Clyde and Robin Springett, Area Rep.



Longsword Past, Present, and Future: an optimistic view

by Andrew Kennedy

Longsword is a midwinter tradition, with the season falling chiefly between Boxing Day and Plough Monday (or thereabouts). 2010 was the centenary of the beginning of Cecil Sharp's researches which led to the publication of *The Sword Dances of Northern England*, and the commemorations were, appropriately, centred on Sheffield.

The traditional dancing season is still widely observed in Yorkshire in particular. Teams such as Handsworth and Grenoside can be seen out on Boxing Day; others, such as Barnsley and Saddleworth (assertively Yorkshire whatever the boundary changes might suggest) are out on the weekend between Christmas and New Year; the Kirkburton Rapier Dancers tour on New Year's Day; while the Goathland Plough Stots, Claro, and others attend Plough Blessing services. This, of course, is to fail to mention the many other teams which dance out over this period in Yorkshire and across the country. Whilst we regard it, rightly, as a traditional dance form, longsword has been very clearly shaped by those who collected, promoted, and 'revived' it. Cecil Sharp himself had certain preconceptions which limited his researches. The Vaughan Williams Library has a collection of postcards which were returned by Yorkshire clergymen in reply to an enquiry of Sharp's in December, 1912, as to any traces of sword dancing in their parishes. He had already collected the longsword dances of Kirkby Malzeard, Grenoside, Sleights and Flamborough and he would presumably also have

collected the longsword dances from Escrick*, Handsworth, Ampleforth*, Askham Richard* and Haxby*. This enquiry focused only on villages to the East of the Great North Road (A1). Subsequent, but less systematic, investigations have shown that there were sword dances well to the west of that; in particular there is a whole series of indications that the dance was well-known in Cumberland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and even Sharp's own enquiries turned up evidence of dances in the hinterland of Workington and to the west of Bolton (Lancashire). It is to be regretted that he chose not to follow these up.

Sharp edited and 'corrected' his notes before publishing them in three parts in the years 1911-13, just before the heavy casualty rates of the First World War led to the end of many dance teams, sword and morris alike. The existence of such a recent publication, however, inspired the first of many waves of revival. That which occurred in Goathland in 1922, for example, was due to the influence of other folklorists such as F.W. Dowson and J. Fairfax-Blakeborough. There were several competing agendas here: Sharp and his colleagues, for example, saw the opportunity to promote a healthy and innocent activity which would propagate an idealised vision of Englishness, and to rescue a noble tradition from the villagers who would debase and vulgarise it. This interpretation was not only taught up and down the land, but was the basis for judging the early sword dance competitions, from about 1924.

The villagers themselves were

more interested in preserving a sense of their own unique identities, and this sense remains particularly strong among the Yorkshire-based teams, whenever founded. The line between tradition and revival is a blurred (and probably meaningless) one: Redcar Sword Dancers, for example, started dancing the Greatham dance around forty years ago, based on the accounts of men who had danced with the original team. In time, however, they have moved on to develop their own, very successful, Eston and California dance, which has triumphed twice in recent competitions. The Kirkburton Rapier Dancers started in the 1970s with some rudimentary references and part of a calling-on song; they have been both productive and innovative, and it is certainly true to say that they have developed a distinctive style which runs through their nevertheless varied dances.

Many teams have, in fact started with a dance they learned either from notation or from another team, and have gone on to develop their own dances as their confidence and skill increase. (It was ever so). In recent years there has been a greater willingness to experiment more boldly. One strand is the increasing number of dances for five performers. This originates in part from the records of five-man dances having existed in places such as Bampton (near Carlisle), Elgin, and arguably Arkengarthdale. More recent five-man dances include that done by Claro. An additional appeal has been the possibility of continuing to dance when numbers are short, and for rapper teams to adapt easily to the format.

One change is the decline of the sword play, of which the dance was the climax. This can still be seen every New Year's Day in Monkseaton, for example, but seems to be getting rarer.

Other innovations involve variations of rhythm, step, and music, the most striking example of which would be the dances of the Orion Sword Dancers, from Boston, who bring a very American sensibility to the form. Nevertheless, Orion's dances can be seen in Britain, performed by teams such as Wigan's Seven Stars Sword and Step Dancers.

The older dances continue, however, often kept alive by teams who would consider themselves Morris dancers first and foremost. (The question of whether sword is a form of morris dancing can be left for another day). Something to regret is that all too often these teams will only bring out their longswords when they think there are no 'real' sword dancers about; this is an unfounded distinction, as demonstrated by photographs of the Goathland men in Cotswold kit in the inter-war years. It is not impossible to break down these barriers, however, as has been seen at the Sword Dance Union's longsword tournaments.

The SDU was created following

a meeting in Preston in 2005, and while it exists to promote both longsword and rapper, its most notable achievement to date has been the establishment of the annual SDU Longsword Tournament. This was done partly in emulation of the Dancing England Rapper Tournament, which has flourished along with the whole rapper tradition. There was a feeling that longsword needed a focal event along the lines of the competitions which used to take place in Newcastle, Darlington and Whitby, partly to challenge the dancers to put out their best performances, but also as a forum for discussion, comparisons, innovation, and the forging of social connections between all those with an interest in the dance.

The Tournament has taken place at Kelham Island Museum, Sheffield, in 2006 and twice in Derby, in 2007 and 2008. In 2009 it was hosted in Sheffield by the Handsworth Sword Dancers. It was held again in Sheffield in 2010 this time hosted by the Grenoside team. One excellent feature has been the number of young teams which have taken part, some well-established but others created especially for the event. This reflects work done both by existing adult teams, such as Ryburn and Wype Doles,

and also the sustained education programme which has been going on in schools across the country and which justified a day of their own at the 2004 International Sword Spectacular Festival, in Whitby. Indeed, the number of younger dancers gives the lie to any suggestion that longsword is facing a demographic time bomb. Some teams reach a natural end, while others refuse to adapt and survive, but long-established teams such as Flamborough, Handsworth, and Goathland all have their lads' sides to keep the tradition going, alongside the newer groups of young dancers and, indeed, the many teams of mixed ages. This, then, is the new generation which will assure the future of longsword dancing.

*These sword dances are to the east of the Great North Road (A1) but as they were published in *The Sword Dances of Northern England* Part iii. Pub. Novello & Co. Ltd. London 1913.

Andrew is the editor of the longsword journal "Rattle up my Boys". He wishes it to be known that the views expressed are his own but he is indebted to Ivor Allsop for checking the facts.

The Silurian Dancing Instructional of The Welsh Border Morris at the ARM

Silurian Morris Men undertook the Instructional of the Welsh Border Morris, which I attended with about twenty in total. The first dance is the apparently well-known Upton On Severn Morris Stick Dance. Silurian were well represented in numbers, both as dancers and musicians, and in full kit and with blackened faces. It was a vigorous session lasting well over an hour, creeping into our Area Reps Meeting. We were

taught the sticking and then quite quickly, the four figures: Morris-rounds, Allemande- a back-to-back, Three Top-a hey in threes across the set, and Sides- a hey in threes on the side.

After mastering this exceptionally well we were then taught a 'getting-off' dance called Cleehill. Not particularly long, with vigorous sticking and a practical and exciting way to exit a show.

Thanks to all at Silurian Morris

Men: the band were much appreciated as were the teachers and the other dance members who assisted and encouraged. It was a shame that the second session did not materialise (due to ARM over running) as it would have been good to dance them again.

On behalf of all who attended, again, many thanks.

Harry Stevenson
Winchester Morris Men

324th Meeting of the Morris Ring at St Austell.....

The Final frontier *by Paul Beaumont*

So - after a rather pleasant journey it turned out to be a very pleasant weekend. Friday night was spent in a brewery. Sadly no lock-in but I seem to recall we choked down a small nightcap when we got back! Saturday dawned and we had a civilised start time.

We found our coach and set off for Fowey (pronounced Where?). We were dropped at the edge of the town and given clear instructions that the bus would not be picking up from the same place. We walked down to the little harbour where we were greeted by a decent sized and very appreciative crowd. One thing I hadn't appreciated was the number of Morris men who belong to the British Legion! However,

very useful for getting Tribute at £1.90 a pint. A delightful start to the day. We all then headed for the coach.

Well - when I say all - that was a rather unwise assumption made by the vast majority, including our own North Wood men. It became clear that the clear instructions about the coach were not as clear to all as we thought. "Where's Collingwood!" we cried. He was contacted by phone and mission control tried to guide him to the mother ship to no avail. Our very own Captain Oates went out on the thankless task of finding him. Eventually they re-appeared and we set off for our lunch stop in Luxulyan.

Two surprising things about the lunch venue. Firstly, the incoming landlady used to be a resident of Thornton Heath (part of our

'hood). Secondly they provided us with the finest lunch I have ever eaten on a morris event. We did a bit of dancing and a bit of chatting then back on the bus.

Next on to Tywardreath. Another fine pub although, sadly, the sausage shop was shut. Again a laid-back demand on dancing suited us all and the arrival of the Dartington youth mob brought forth a mixture of relief and envy. We ended up with lots of other people at a rather damp Eden Project. The suggestion to dance where we could find some people was altered so we could practise where there weren't any! Well it seemed to pay off in the show dance!!

Paul Beaumont is the North Wood Fool



Top: Lincoln & Micklebarrow at the Eden Project and left, leaving Eden

Photos: Jim Hutchins

Right: A Gnome at Eden

Photo: Robin Edwards



.....324th Meeting of the Morris Ring continued



Dancing photos clockwise from top left: Men of Wight, Dartington Boys, and a massed dance in Bodmin, Winchester, Musicians, Men of Wight, Harthill in Wadebridge, Winchester, Whitchurch and Thames Valley in Bodmin. Above right: the editor caught snapping at Bodmin (by Clive Du 'Mont) and Trigg Morris 'Rock'

Photos: Harry Stevenson

.....324th Meeting of the Morris Ring continued

by Roger Hancock

Due to a shortage of Ring Meetings in 2010 at a late stage Trigg decided to run a meeting for 100 men, and it proved to be popular and considerably over subscribed and in spite of increasing our numbers to 125 we still had to refuse a couple of sides.

It was based at Poltair School which offered excellent accommodation and catering and a large Sports Hall for sleeping, as well as the field for tents and hard standings for the campervans. In addition to that we were only 100 yards from St Austell Brewery where most of

Dartington Men had arranged for their boys side to visit for the Saturday and a Tour of Tours was arranged so that they could see and show off to all of the visiting sides, and they also ended up at the Eden Project.

On returning to base, saffron cake and clotted cream was provided before the men prepared for the feast that was substantial meal. Sadly service for some men was rather slow as there had been a problem with the loss of the gas supply that caused problems in the kitchen as you can imagine, so, things could have been worse!

Top table for the feast comprised The Squire, Brian Tasker, The Bagman, Charlie Corcoran, The Squire Elect, Peter Halfpenney, Squire of Trigg Ian Chanter, and 'guests' Trigg's Lady Musicians, Viv Champion & Lyn Ford (who are Associate

Members of the side). Speeches were relatively short except for The Immortal Memory by Past Squire Paul Reece of Thaxted & Trigg who drew on many themes including Morris History in Cornwall. The Feast ended with just a few items of song as the seating was becoming uncomfortable! After the Feast most men remained on site with time spent in a mixture of Dance, Music & Song. Our lady guests had



intended to withdraw, but were invited and/or persuaded to remain by Brian T and therefore remained to contribute items to the evening. On Sunday Morning we rose to heavy rain which led to the procession to be a damp and hurried affair arriving at St Austell Parish Church early for the service. The service proved an eye opener for some of us not used to screens and projectors as aids to worship. Emerging apprehensively from church we were pleased that the rain had more or less stopped, and this enabled Trigg to dance their Wenford Bridge in the style of Bucknell as dancing was not permitted in Church.

Men then walked in procession in improving weather to White River Place a new shopping precinct in the centre of town for the main show, where all sides performed individually as well as collectively. By this time the weather had



the men spent their Friday evening in music and song.

Rutland were late arrivals, having almost reached St Austell in ample time they stopped for refreshment at a pub on the edge of town only to find that their minibus had lost the engine oil through a hole in the sump. They arrived in remarkably good spirits and wondering about their return journey.

There were four Saturday tours by coach around Mid Cornwall and each included a town, a village, a countryside venue and a coastal site on each tour. Each of the tours had a specially selected site where a very good lunch could be taken, and two of the tours finished their afternoon with some time at The Eden Project.



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improved which was a relief, so a good show was put on for a considerable crowd.

After the show we all adjourned to the Church Hall for a good lunch put on for us by the good people of the church. Sadly Rutland had to miss the end of the show and lunch to hurry off to collect their replacement vehicle.

Someone else missing from lunch was Winchester Man and Past Squire Geoff Jerram, having rushed off the pack his tent now it was dry, but had lost his note of the lunch venue, and driving around had not managed to find it, or any

men.

In the last issue you will have seen pictures of the future, present and past Squires, we should mention here that there were other past incumbents with us during the weekend in the guise of Geoff Jerram, Tim Sercombe, Daniel Fox, Cliff Marchant and Paul Reece, but they were not featured!

Trigg had invited their two lady musicians



to be involved in a limited way during the weekend, but hope this was not the basis for all of the recent discussion regarding the standing of the lady musicians.

Photos, Opposite page: right, top-Lincoln & Micklebarrow, bottom, Grand Union, middle North Wood, in a tea-cup pose!; This page, left, Grand Union; below, Lincoln & Micklebarrow, above, North Wood in another pose

Photos, Jon Wimhurst

Paul Reece's Speech at Trigg

by Paul Reece

On this the 40th year of Trigg Morris Men and the launch this weekend of '5000 Morris Men' at the South Bank, London, I will pursue the twin themes of Morris in the Wilderness and Morris Men are Mad.

The West Country provided a rich source for folk song, however the sole dance collected and published in the final part 5 of 'The Morris Book' by Sharp in 1913 is the Processional Helston Furry Dance, although Furry or feast dances

were common place in Cornwall, including here in St. Austell in 1913.

While perhaps the very earliest reference to the Morris in Britain is from 1466 at Lanherne in Trigg's dancing territory, John Forrest considers the processional dances of

Cornwall and North Wales to be the most ancient dances. Both of these areas are great sources of slate, a commodity in which Cecil



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Sharp's father James traded. At Altarnun church about 10 miles across Bodmin Moor from the slate quarries at Delabole the bench ends have elaborate carved dancers with swords and bells, a musician and a fool, dating from around 1540. At St Columb, 10 miles west of Bodmin the parish records known as the Green Book of St Column have references to the Morris from 1585.

The connection between mining, quarrying and the Morris, the relationship between the dancer and the earth and the 'life' below and the 'life' above, including the weather, have been postulated by John Kirkpatrick and others. Cornish stone circles and rows have names denoting dance connections, although the reference to 'dancing maidens' is probably a corruption of the Medieval Cornish word 'medn' meaning stone. Boys who washed the tin ore with their feet ankle deep in water were called, lappiors, the Cornish for dancers, while Tom Lappiors were spirited dancers, acrobats, tumblers as well as tin dressers. Lead ore was similarly washed in places such as Winster.

Whether from Cornish slate or Cotswold stone the processional path to Headington Quarry, Sharp, the quarries of the Rossendale Valley, the Britannia Nutters, Winster and to us is a very powerful one in the reawakening of the Morris and Morris led communities. As we leap skywards using the earth as our springboard we are making an important connection and union, not least bringing together and balancing our physical and mental selves in well being, our bodies and our spirits, the first steps in achieving true health.

Morris taps into the psyche of folk memory and keeps alive that all important therapeutic thread of identity, expression, animation and where we belong as part of communities and their cultures. For Trigg this has expressed itself in going into the wilderness of dry villages that have lost their pub. Here they set up their stall at the cross roads, offer free beer to the community, put on a display of Morris dancing and let Ian Chanter weave his inimitable magic in explaining what Morris dancing is all about.

When I first met Trigg some 30 years ago they still had dancing their chief luminary and founder member Chris Penton, then aged 70, who would be a 100 today if he was still alive. Chris had first been a member of St Albans Morris Men and in 1953 a founder member and first Squire of Thames Valley Morris Men, the same year in fact that Chris Ridley joined them as a dancer, though both were musicians and helped out with playing for the side when their regular musician was unavailable. While Chris Ridley is regarded as a living legend and practically an immortal in Trigg, the folk movement in Cornwall and of Thames Valley MM as their president, it is on Trigg's chief mentor, the warmly remembered psychiatrist Chris Penton that I wish to dwell. Pete Marlow I believe worked under him, but all who came under his spell were greatly influenced by him and remember him with particular deep affection.

Chris Penton was a Lt Colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps where he became Assistant Director of Army Psychiatry and in civilian life until his retirement

Director of Army Personnel at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough developing the techniques of personnel selection particularly those used in choosing candidates for officer training. I will be making recommendations at the next AC that these are used for the selection of our next Squire of the Morris Ring.

On retirement Chris wished to return to clinical work but stipulated on his speculative application for the post of Assistant Psychiatrist at St Lawrence's Hospital, Bodmin that he was only interested in the job if there was a local Morris side. Whether this was for recreation, psychiatric research or therapy we are not entirely sure, but as luck and the Gods of Insanity would have it there were people in the hospital and outside who wanted to start a Morris side. The hospital was used for practices and one of Trigg's dances, 'Old Carew', was named after the Carew ward and another 'Wenford Bridge' after the bridge close to where Chris Penton lived.

Equally mad was the fact that Bodmin had had a flourishing footwear industry from medieval times until the 20th Century supplying the surrounding quarries and mines and St. Lawrence's Hospital workshop carried old stocks of scoots and toe plates to the delight of local scoot or step dancers up until the late 1980s. So what was affectionately 'the madhouse' was secretly a kind of Cornish Cecil Sharp House, an underground Trefusis or Trelawney that attracted dancers and sparked Trigg's beginnings as a kind of early do it yourself care in the community dance outfit, perhaps more on Barry Bucknell lines than

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those of Barry Care.

Interestingly in the early Morris or Mattachin dances denoting combat with swords of Christian against the Moors, as carved on the bench ends at Altarnun Church, the word Matta also denotes mad or fools dance. According to Carew, at St Nunne's Well, Altarnun, the waters fed St Nunne's Pool, which was used as a kind of plunge pool in the cure for madness. Such pools or bowsenning places were commonplace for curing madmen. It is highly likely that the migration of these dances through Europe followed the pilgrimage routes via ports such as Looe. Roger Comley's shell and bedpan are not therefore as mad as they seem.

Testament to how well Trigg was put together and run is that Trigg's founding Bagman, Roger

Hancock, is still doing the job, surely a record in the Ring for both service to a Morris side and sheer madness. The membership may be as mad as ever, but the work they do in their distinctive individual celtic ropework baldrick designs taken from the celtic stone crosses of the region promoting the Morris in Cornwall and beyond is truly inspiring. Almost as well travelled as the Cornish saints, miners and engineers they have danced and sung in Brittany, Sweden and California as well as the length and breadth of that other country beyond the Tamar.

Chris Penton helped start something special here and nurtured with real passion and commitment away from outside interference, a club that is truly one for all and all for one. All of you here I'm sure

can remember a Chris Penton figure in your own side who make such a difference. They have a vision which many on the outside would call mad, but with backing and sustained effort create such a meaningful flowering in the wilderness and thus contributing to Sharp's dream of returning the dance culture of the people to the people.

Let each one of us here work together and carry forward their work and in drinking a toast in silence to the immortal memory of Cecil Sharp remember also these absent friends and key workers in the Morris who have gone before and provided the bedrock on which you dance today and secure the Morris dance for the future. Thank you.



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Paul Reece at Bodmin

Photo: Harry Stevenson



Trigg Hosted Morris Ring Meeting Scrapbook

photos by Jon Wimhurst

