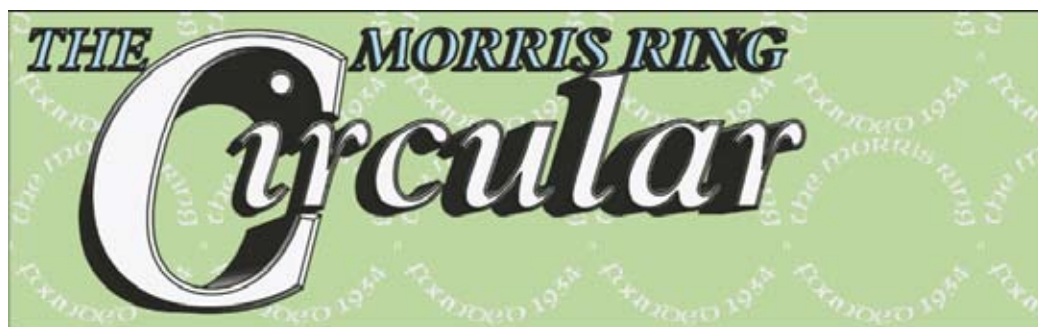




September 2011  
Issue No 64



## Blue plaque honours Morris Legend

### The Squire

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A MORRIS dancer from Headington whose chance encounter with Cecil Sharp triggered the revival of the tradition across the country has been honoured.

The descendents of William Kimber were among 200 people who gathered in St Anne's Road, Headington, for the unveiling of a blue plaque on the home he built for his family in 1905.

On Boxing Day 1899, Kimber and the Headington Quarry Morris Men were out performing to earn some extra money.

Folk song collector Cecil Sharp was staying at Sandfield Cottage in the village, and when 27-year-old Kimber arrived with his concertina and dancers, Sharp asked him to return so he could write down the tunes.

Sharp's work of recording and noting down folk songs but his noting of recording

dances, did not resume until in the early 1900s and introducing them to the wider public.

It prompted a huge revival in morris and folk dancing, which had been in decline, and Kimber dedicated the rest of his life to promoting traditional dances.

On Saturday, 28th May, 2011 Kimber's

great-grandson Chris Kimber-Nickelson, 36, from York Road, Headington, marked the unveiling of the plaque with a solo morris dance, accompanied by his ancestor's famous concertina.

Chris remarked "It is nice that he is being recognised with a blue plaque, because it is important to remember these things.

"Our dances are important local traditions, and it is good they are kept going. I am proud of the family connection."

And Kimber's granddaughter Julie Kimber-Nickelson, 72, added: "He was a stern man, and not the type of grandfather who would bounce you on his knee, but once he knew I could play piano it changed completely.

"He said he could not read music, and asked me to read it for him."

She said the family always danced regularly, in a tradition passed down through the generations.

English Folk Dance and Song Society chief executive Katy Spicer commented "Kimber is a hugely important figure.

"The chance meeting in 1899 was the first time Cecil Sharp had come across traditional dancing, even though he had already started collecting songs.

(...continued on page 9)



**Chris Kimber-Nickelson and his mother, Julie, William Kimber's granddaughter, after the Plaque's unveiling.**

*Photo Copyright HQMM*

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## Squire's Capers

The more riveted of our readers will recall from the last publication that all was going swimmingly with this Squire's job until a tsunami hit us in the form of the Equality Act. I certainly don't want to rake over those coals and bring the hot embers back to life but this report would be incomplete without a brief synopsis of the issue, the way we dealt with it and the final conclusion.

The debate as to the role of women musicians in the Morris Ring had been a delicate issue. Generally a blind eye approach had been adopted although it did erupt into debate on more than one occasion. If there is one positive aspect born of the advent of the Equality Act, it was that we were forced to deal with this division of opinion once and for all. Were we right to air the debate on the Google Groups? I still think so. By allowing all those that wanted to contribute their viewpoint over the four months or so leading up to the ARM to have their say and by using this channel to clearly disseminate the facts, legal interpretations and available options to our membership at large, we discharged our obligation to the democratic ethos of our organisation. It also took a great deal of steam out of what could have been a very prolonged, tedious and divisive ARM. Yes it was an uncomfortable gestation but the preference of our majority was stated emphatically and unequivocally and the birth was thus considerably less painful and prolonged than that it might otherwise have been.

The 'New' Morris Ring should provide something for everyone. Clubs with women as musicians can say so without fear of impeachment. Sides that want

to take their women musicians to Morris Ring meetings will have that opportunity but sides that wish to run all male events locally or nationally are still accommodated. We have spent considerable time looking at what won't work. Let's put all that behind us now and concentrate on putting the new regime into practice, making it work to the mutual benefit of all.

My social and events calendars have, as might be expected, been pretty chocker with invitations flooding in from all quarters of our realm; all opportunities to meet up with friends old and new (mostly old!), to dance, sing and quaff, to visit regular haunts and to explore fresh territory; to immerse oneself in the glory and comradeship of our fine art.

The first of these was the 18-30 gathering at Packington. It was refreshing to bask in the enthusiasm of our young bloods. Excellent dancing and singing not dispirited in the least by the torrents of rain that baptised the participants during the Sunday lunch session. The Advisory Council meeting on that Sunday was most constructive and I am grateful for the wise counsel imparted, for the contributions of those who attended and to the 18-30 group for arranging the venue. I have little to report from the AGM of EFDSS in November other than I was pleased to travel down to Nuneaton for the usual helping of bonhomie at the Anker Ale feast the same evening.

The AGM of the Open Morris a fortnight later was an opportunity to reinforce that hostilities between the three JMOs are firmly filed under 'redundant' nowadays and this was later reinforced in Birstall in February at the JMO AGM. We are working together on a

number of projects nowadays to the advantage of our constituent members and the betterment of Morris nationally. Thanks here to Leicester MM and particularly 'Chef' Corcoran for the excellent feast in Birstall and for hosting the JMO AGM the following morning.

Morris 2011 kicked off for me by joining Jockey MM for their Plough Day walking tour of Birmingham City centre. As at Thaxted and Saddleworth, the local side have done a remarkable job to educate all in the ways of the Morris and it was refreshing to perform for interested, appreciative and knowledgeable audiences. This is all part of the process that encourages fertile ground for recruitment and is an example to us all. (*see page 13, ed.*)

With Birmingham at our backs we made our way northwards to Stafford for their feast that evening. Emphasis here is on good food and good company and if you like roast beef of the finest quality and the sight of a dessert table groaning under the weight of calories, then you need to bribe the right person to secure your invitation for next year. Luckily Stafford, I am available in 2012 whatever date it falls on!

The Ripley MM ale was its usual riot of great company, super food good humour and wholesome ale. Some 100 souls gathered for what must be one of the largest feasts on the calendar. Even Saddleworth popped in for a swift glass of sherry!

Our thanks proclaimed once again to Mendip MM for the military precision of the arrangements for the ARM. Here was a meeting heralded as the Armageddon of the

*continued on next page*

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## Squire's Capers continued

Morris Ring but thankfully common sense prevailed and a milestone meeting of Morris Ring members passed in a dignified and constructive manner. The convivial atmosphere at the evening feast was one of the very best I have ever encountered.

If you like Morris dancing, you will like the Devil's Dyke ale. The dance list was nailed to the wall, nearly 40 dances in all, and by the end of the evening the participants were pretty-well nailed to the floor. To the man who proudly proclaimed, "I did every dance" I can only say, "You idiot!"

More good company was enjoyed at Saddleworth's annual ale where formality is not *de rigueur* so much as controlled anarchy washed down with lashings of good ale. "We don't do Cotswold Mr Squire. Sort it will you?" These guys know how to party and if you've not booked your ticket for the Rushcart this year (with our very own treasured Treasurer Eddie Worrall riding Jockey) then engrave in your diaries, "I must be in Saddleworth 19th – 21st August without fail!"

Bank holidays seem to be under threat from our present beloved Government. They've messed about with the dates next year to accommodate celebrations of the Queen's Jubilee and are talking of scrapping May Day altogether or moving it to October. I ask you. How can you have May Day in October? "To better promote tourism," we are told. In order to combat this lunacy I tripped down the M1 in April to attend a meeting in Parliament chaired by Ivan Lewis MP (Bury). Surprisingly representatives of leisure activities and trade unions expressed their dismay at the culling of Bank



**The Squire in contemplative mood at the Joint Morris Organisations National Morris Spectacular in Sheffield, on May 14th 2011.**

*Photo Roger Comely*

Holidays whereas corporate representation from such as the CBI railed against the suggestion that we lobby to retain May Day and push for an additional holiday in October. Charlie Corcoran committed a serious chunk of his precious time earlier this year to compile a list of Morris and folk related activity taking place on St. George's Day and May Bank holidays. This was an interesting and useful tool for advertising our activities to all and sundry. Harthill Morris alternate in hosting the May Day tour with Three Shires Clog & Garland whose turn it was this year. It was nice to kick off the season proper surrounded by my teams colours as I was getting too used to being the only yellow and black on the bus. Our excursion around North Notts. in glorious sunshine

was a lovely curtain-raiser for the spring & summer programme.

The following day we attended a cinema presentation of the Tim Plester film, "Way of the Morris." It is a personal view of Tim's family association with Adderbury village and the 20th century history of its Morris teams. This film is much less frivolous than "Morris, a life with bells on", truly poignant in parts and a richly rewarding experience. I strongly advocate encouraging your local cinema to host a screening

On 14th May we saw 800 dancers descend on Sheffield for the JMO National Morris Spectacular. More bells than at campanologists' conventions, ribbons like an explosion in a haberdashers and more face paint than the Forth Bridge could use in a decade. The atmosphere that pervaded Sheffield that day was tangible and there was quite simply a smile on every face in the city centre, dancers and audience alike. The day underlined that co-operation between the JMOs is certainly desirable, probably essential and definitely FUN! Those who in the past have questioned the ability of the Fed & Open to match the exacting performance quality standards demanded by the Morris Ring need not fear. Our brother/sister umbrella organisations have come of age and in some departments can now teach us a thing or two. Can't wait for Stratford 2012.

There are several sides in the Morris Ring who state, "We don't do Ring Meetings." I think this is a great pity and it is to be hoped that future such events will be more diverse in character as a result of the recently adopted changes to our constitution and that such absentees will be tempted to sign

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## Squire's Capers continued

up. This year we have already experienced differences in Ring Meeting flavours and I have found this very refreshing. First of the season was hosted by Moulton MM. Based on the annual Moulton village carnival it certainly had a very home-grown feel about it. Such is the familiarity of Moulton villagers with Morris through the presence of their local side that, as one man put it, "It's one of the few places you can walk about with your bells on and not get stared at or called Morris." The host side performed to a high standard and were supported admirably by the attending guest sides. We truly felt at times that this was our very own village.

Lichfield Bower Day on 30th May this year was hosted by Green Man's MM as is customary. This is another of those areas where the local Morris side are held in high regard by dint of their contribution to community activity. The good humour of my peers, spectacle of the event and enthusiastic support of sizeable crowds as daft as us for turning out in conditions of pouring rain that would have Noah reaching for his Wickes catalogue made it all worthwhile. The day was fun, the company was great, the afternoon tea excellent and you can put me down for next year please GMM. At the other end of the Ring Meeting scale was the annual Thaxted bash. Not just any old meeting mind you but the centenary of their foundation. As you might expect, Thaxted pulled out all the stops for this one; formal and predictable in format but with tweaks and embellishments that trumpeted its importance as a landmark historical event in its own right. The knowledgeable crowds that thronged the streets in

front of the Guildhall were treated to a kaleidoscope of varying Morris tradition culminating in the crepuscular performance of the Horn Dance to a stunned and eerie silence - truly magnificent! One of the many highlights of the weekend was the feast enjoyed by over 400 men and guests in Thaxted church. You can't re-enact that evening. You can only reflect and later be proud to say, "I was there."

Best sing of the season so far was probably at the Hartley MM weekend of dance, Friday night in the Rose & Crown, Wrotham. The home team know how to put a tune together and backed up by such as Victory MM and others there was no raucous carolling here but a regal feast of carefully harmonised musical entertainment. Saturday tours around Kentish villages on vintage coaches gave one the opportunity to purchase beer at as little as £3.60 per pint at one stop – not quite so much of a snip as the free ale dispensed during the visit to a local brewery. The traditional Sunday morning visit to Ightham Moat for further dancing and again a splendid sing in the courtyard was yet another pleasure to savour.

For some time now there has been a clamour for a Ring Meeting with quality accommodation. Wath-upon-Dearne MM were brave enough to grasp this nettle and attempted to stage a Ring Meeting based on hotel accommodation astutely negotiated at £25 pppn. Total cost each for the weekend was £100, just about £30 more than the generally anticipated rate nowadays, but sadly insufficient take-up demanded that the plan had to be abandoned and Wath fell back on plan 'B', a family day of dance touring local 'Pretty Villages'. As usual, a sequential Ring Meeting

number had been allocated to Wath and we encouraged them to go ahead with the event styled as a Ring Meeting. After all Ring Meetings started out as single days of dance. It was a wonderful day attended by Wath MM and Harthill Morris, families, Morris Ring Squire, Morris Ring Bagman and two Past Squires. There was no formality; the format kept the price to a pittance and it showcased the attraction of holding a low key, one day event in harmony with our Morris Ring roots. One point of note was that for the very first time and officially sanctioned by our newly reformulated constitution, a female musician contributed to the proceedings. In fact it was all rather enjoyable. (*report page 24*)

The Green Oak dance weekend resurrected last year has already become famed for its 'Brownies camp fire' feast. Accommodation is provided courtesy of the Auckley Scout hut and the top class buffet style nosh is consumed sitting around the campfire. Another unique experience! Then out come the guitars and banjo for a campfire sing-song and ... "another logic problem anyone?" "Noooooo!" Of course you can always forgo the campfire for an indoor symposium on 'the role of imaginary numbers in higher mathematics'. Applications for next year's conference please to North Wood MM! The traitorous cross-border dancing excursion into North Notts. on Saturday was balanced with a visit to Hooton Pagnall (Yorkshire) on Sunday morning. This is truly one of England's most attractive villages, closed to traffic for the Victorian market that stretches along the contour of the hillside overlooking the glorious beauty of God's

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## Squire's Capers continued

County. The whole was another must do annual pilgrimage.

I have danced at Chipperfield in the past as a stop on a St Albans Ring Meeting but I have never attended that hallowed common as a guest of Greensleeves MM before. It is of course the venue for their annual weekend of dance, this year extended to be a Ring Meeting. Whilst the regularity of the event makes it much easier to organise, it is hard to make provision for the unforeseen and unexpected. I must firstly praise Bert Cleaver and his kitchen assistants for

coping brilliantly in the face of disaster. On the journey south from Barnsley, Bert's car towing his trailer loaded with apparatus and victuals for the weekend was rear-end shunted on the motorway and his arrival at Chipperfield was both delayed and minus a quantity of our quartermaster's ingredients. The salvage operation was masterful and our fare was duly presented to Bert's usual high standards of quality. The efforts of the whole team were greatly appreciated by all their guests. The threatened rain over

the weekend made a pathetically poor attempt to manifest itself with just a couple of light showers during the tours every time Long Man danced. How do you do that, guys? Greensleeves were elegant hosts and the lingering memory of the weekend was the quality of dancing which varied from good to impeccable.

Well, that's the diary up to date. I must away and pack my toothbrush for the Rutland Ring Meeting. Can't wait.

Peter J Halfpenney July 2011



**Dolphin Morris Men dancing at the Black Horse Inn, Chesham Vale, during Greensleeves Morris Men hosted Ring Meeting, with Long Man Morris Men and Winchester Morris Men. More in next edition**

*Photo Harry Stevenson*

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## The Morris Ring Circular no 65

Firstly, I am most appreciative of all the contributors to this 64th Edition of the Morris Ring Circular. Without your contributions we would not have a Circular.

For the next edition I would like to publish articles on the 2011 Morris Ring Meetings. I have a short article from a Thaxted man

but it would be good to have some reports from other attendees as well as photos of the weekend.

So, if you attended Moulton or Rutland or Greensleeves, please pen an article or even a single memory of the weekend, it will get published. Talking of which, if you have already sent in an article

that is not included in this edition it may well be included in the next edition.

Copy date for next issue is 31st October 2011

Regards  
Harry Stevenson



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# The Morris Ring Circular

August 2011

Issue No 64



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## Letters To The Editor

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From Bill Holt

Dear Mr Harry Stevenson

I wish to make some corrective comments about the article kindly sent you by S. K. Archer about my 90th Birthday, and published in The Morris Ring Circular No.63 (dated March 2011 ?) on pages 6 & 7.

You are unlikely to publish anything, except maybe a line or two, of what I say below; but I do want to make the record right and enhance it with some additions.

Brigadier William Slim's indignity (page 7) was not his being targeted by a Fiat biplane (bullets make holes whencesoever they come!), but by being chastened on the back-side rather than on the front-side. When he and others sprinted out of harm's way, his foot caught in something and held him in the flight-path. I met the new Viscount a couple of years ago. His Dad was punctured by 3, not 1, bullets. However he recovered and, as many will know, later commanded the British, Indian, East and West African and some other troops, who brought the Burma campaign to a victorious conclusion. He was created a Viscount and promoted to Field-marshal.

When Bill Slim became hors de combat, command of the 10th Indian Infantry Brigade devolved, not on the shoulders of an inexperience Second-Lieutenant! Responsibility fell in fact on those of the Lieut.-Colonel commanding a battalion of the Highland Light Infantry, because that officer must have been senior to the Lieut.-Colonels commanding the two

Indian infantry battalions in the brigade; also under command was a Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, commanded by a Lieut.-Colonel.

Steve Archer, the 'undercover reporter' from Ravensbourne Morris, disguised in his Bathampton kit at my BMM 90th Party, did not say that one of the two Queen's Officers (page 6) was Steve's own son, Russell Archer, who, as a boy, had like his father danced with the Bathampton MM, and who, as an officer in The Royal Engineers, had won a Military Cross in Afghanistan. (There is a photo of HM the Queen pinning it on his chest!). The other officer is Russell's fiancée, a lady commissioned officer in The Royal Corps of Signals.

Russell, with five other young men, had converted two Toyota 4x4 Land Cruisers to ambulances, and had driven them all the way as a gift to a hospital in Malawi. They recorded their adventures on a 'blog'. They needed access to a fairly copious source of baksheesh to oil various palms to ease their progress through some countries of the Near East! The notion of Charity seems foreign to Egyptian minds. Six stalwart young men of military age, driving UNPAID, "must be up to some mischief!" Security sleuths were assigned to follow their every move, but were conspicuous by their inability to dodge into hiding behind thin trees! Their route took them through the Sudan and through the mountains of Ethiopia (see page 7).

Present with his fiancée, both in mufti, at my 90th BMM party, Russell had just returned to continue his training as a pilot in

The Army Air Corps; this time on flying helicopters.

With this story you can shame anyone who dares suggest that Morris men are 'Tinker-Bell Fairies'!

I have enjoyed reading in The Morris Ring Circular about 'The 1/2d being dubbed as the Squire of the Ring' and other events at the Castleford Ring Meeting, the Jasmine Revolution, Rapper in the USA, the Longsword tradition, the Welsh Border and the Silurian Morris, and the other articles and all the photos in your March 2111 edition of the Morris Ring Circular.

All the best, W.M.D. (Bill) Holt.

(Glad you enjoyed last issue. I think on the web edition original typo said March 2010, but managed to correct in time for printer; ed.)

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From Joe Oldaker, Anker Morris

Hi Harry,

An item you might consider for inclusion in the Circular:

Rugby Art Gallery recently ran an exhibition of Morris themed photographs. On March 5th Anker MM (with local team Braybrook) danced inside and outside the Gallery to promote the exhibition, and show Morris live, garnering some good local publicity. I attach a photo of Anker's Toby Melville, dancing Princess Royal, Fieldtown jig in the Gallery.

The photo is by the professional photographer who did the exhibition, Faye Claridge.

*(continued on page 7.....)*

# The Morris Ring Circular Editorial

Editor: Harry Stevenson 59 Oliver's Battery Road North  
Winchester Hampshire SO22 4JB  
01962 855911 trunkleshs@btinternet.com

## Transparency, Respect and Fairness

It has been a transformational year for The Morris Ring. Following the Equality Act, the Morris Ring has succumbed to the pressure of the 21st century and admitted clubs with women musicians as members. The vote at this year Annual Representatives' Meeting (ARM) was overwhelming. The Squire's resolve in this matter was steadfast, wholly forthright and firm. The Squire was also adamant and allayed the fears of many at the ARM by stating: 'The constitution

is now clear and uncompromising. If sides have female members who dance, they will not be at one with our constitution, their indemnity insurance will become invalid and such a side will have to abdicate from MR membership.' Nevertheless when a member side transgresses and a female dancer takes to a set, as occurred during the summer, the officers' investigated and announced the matter closed. Many clubs feared the 'thin edge of the wedge' was apparent when

the constitutional changes were introduced. That wedge has now been firmly put.

This edition has been somewhat later than anticipated but work and holidays have prevented its completion. Please accept my apologies. Therefore the copy date for the final edition of 2011 has now been extended until 30th November, 2011.

(....continued from page 6)

Cheers

Joe Oldaker

### Photo

Toby Melville dancing inside the Rugby Gallery. We are indebted to the photographer Faye Claridge, who owns the copyright. Many thanks Faye.

Hi Harry

Sorry to be a bit 'picky' but there is a caption error on page 10 of the recent Morris Ring Circular. The biggest picture is of Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris Men, NOT Lincoln and Micklebarrow as stated.

We can no longer aspire to be the Ring side with the longest name, but we can still claim to be the most hyphenated Ring side!

Love the picture of the Gnome at Eden too - just wait until I get my hands on the photographer!

Best wishes

Arthur McArdle, Bagman, Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris Men



(Apologies to both sides and for the quality of the printed photos, ed..)



# New Horn Dance Discovered

*by William Partridge*

The folk of Headington Quarry were truly amazed and delighted to receive a music transcript believed to be a long lost tune of the Headington Quarry Horn Dance. "It has been long accepted that Headington has a unique place in the dance tradition of this fair land and this secures that position", said Dave Townsend, the Squire of the Quarry dancers.

The transcript was discovered at an old country house some thirty miles south of Oxford, known as 'Pinewood'. A visit was made by the men and to their astonishment eight sets of horns were produced for the dance. Carbon dating was inconclusive but tests revealed that the horns came from the Pinewood estate.

Such was the quality and detail of the tune that the men soon set to and re-created the intricate steps and movements aided by the versatile Quarry musicians. There followed intense training for the eight men selected to perform the dance for the first time in living memory.

The big day came. It was the 29th May. This was very significant because Headington Quarry dance a very special Morris dance called "The 29th May" The venue chosen was a large country house, which boasts some spectacular stables and a yard. The whole place was



turned into a village fayre with stalls, bunting and cider bar. A very enthusiastic crowd of some 200 or more awaited the arrival of the horn dancers. Among that number were some very well known personalities and actors including Neil Dudgeon.

The dance was met with great enthusiasm and applause, although one man in the audience, believed to be the leader of some obscure religious cult demanded that the dance be stopped claiming it was "profane and un-godly". This did not deter the men for one moment, as they were intent on finishing the full dance. After all, they were promised a substantial payment from Mr. Bentley who had invited them to the event.

Such was the importance of the occasion that the whole dance was filmed. It is understood that it will feature on ITV 1 sometime in the autumn, entitled 'The Night of the Stag'

It is hoped that the horns will soon find a home in the Quarry. One idea is that they will hang in the village church and maybe used on special occasions.

(Could I emphasise that this is a scene from a Midsomer Murders episode due to be screened in the autumn and bears no relation to any dance tradition')

Will Partridge, one of 'The Eight', is Bagman of Headington Quarry Morris Men

All Photos courtesy Headington Quarry Morris Men





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## Kimber's plaque...continued from page one



“Kimber spoke to Sharp, explained the dances and the tradition, and they became friends right up until Sharp’s death.”

She said that without Kimber, many dancing styles, including ceilidh dancing, could have been lost for good.

The house’s owners, doctors Alistair and Parveen Reid, said

they were honoured to have the plaque unveiled.

Dr Reid said: “We have been here four years, and only found out about this a year ago . It was a bolt from the blue.

“It is fantastic to have a bit of local history associated with the place, and quite an honour to have everyone at our house.”



**Joint Morris Organisations: Sheffield: May 2011**  
Left to Right:Cliff Marchant, Past Squire of Morris Ring,  
Waters Green Morris from Macclesfield, and Triskele Sword  
from Sheffield      *Thanks to Roger Jackson for the photo's*



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## Lest We Forget

*by Peter J Halfpenney*  
*Squire of the Morris Ring*

A sad duty I have been called upon to fulfil on too many occasions over the past year is the attendance of funerals. We seem to have lost more than our fair share of colleagues this year. We lament the passing of:

**‘Milky’ Keith Davis** (Mansfield MM), a larger than life character whose personality and dance style can still be detected in Harthill Morris and Ripley MM with whom he had close connections.

Harthill Morris have said farewell to three members past and present this year. **Russ Parker**, a founder member, **Ron Webb**, long-time

Old Man (Chair) of our side who was finally released from the chains of Alzheimer’s disease and **Tony Bamford**, a present musician.

Mersey MM (and formerly Liverpool MM) lost a long serving luminary in **Jim Jones**, well known in the NW area.

**Joyce Allsop**, hugely supportive wife of Past Squire Ivor, a lady well known, much loved and admired in Morris and folk circles.

**Mike Steel** (Grenoside, North British and Mortimers).

**Tubby Renolds** (Bathampton and Bath City).

**Chris Skates** (Bagman of Wantsum).

**Colin Street** (Past Bagman, Adderbury MM).

Bristol MM have suffered the passing of both **Paul Woods** and **John Maher**, our Overseas Bagman and brilliant architect of the Morris Ring website, in the space of three days, both from cancer.

There will be others I’m sure that have left us this year and all have our respect for their individual contributions to our movement. On behalf of the Morris Ring and its members may I wish the families of the departed our deepest sympathy and our best wishes in finding the strength to come to terms with their losses.

*(John Maher and Paul Woods obituaries on pages 12/13 )*

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## The Fertility Cake

by Peter Rollason

I have been associated with the Morris for more than 60 years but in the past few years it has become impossible for me to continue to dance. As decrepitude crept up on me I started to use the Fertility Cake as a means of maintaining contact with the Dance - and found it to be not only a useful adjunct to the Show but also a reasonably lucrative contributor to the Bag. Since then I have noted the activities of other Cake Bearers and find that in most instances that they are not making as effective a contribution as is possible. This is not to denigrate what is being done as I understand how effective a PR Function it is, and how frustrating it can be not to be able to join in with the dance. Let me explain. Generally the Cake Bearers that I have seen seem to be carrying a long sword (which is quite long and cumbersome) on which a beautiful home-made cake which has been lovingly made by somebody's wife, and complete with a pattern of almonds on top, is impaled in its round cake tin and looks after a while as though an animal has been chewing at it. (How else to say it politely?) The bearer has carried out his PR function as a contact between the dancers and the audience but I doubt that the best use is being made of the cake itself - the ingredients of which can be quite costly. I have taken this situation a few steps further and whilst actually GIVING the cake away (which doesn't need a collector's licence) I usually get a return on average of some £10 / £1 cost of cake; given quite voluntarily by members of the audience - even to the extent of coming after me to make a contribution, very occasionally to the extent of



### The Fertility Cake paraphernalia

producing a note - but still waiting for a 20 !!! There is no secret to this, just a little mechanical forethought plus a little applied psychology. **Firstly the Fertility Cake** itself. I have found that a block of currant and sultana fruit cake of good quality (no cherries - they're too sticky) roughly 6x3x2" weighing approx. 300gm can be bought for about £1, (altho' Sainsbury's has stopped carrying this particular product). I say bought since the cost of ingredients for a similar size is a lot higher, also it is very difficult to make a cake that is as moist and sweet as a bought version. These latter attributes have a definite bearing and produce compliments from the 'consumer'. This block is then frozen to make it easier to cut into 12 slices and, wrapped in clear plastic bags of (3+3), 6 cut blocks will fit quite comfortably into a large ice cream box and can be returned to the freezer for future use. I usually find that 2 Blocks is adequate for a large local evening show, but a session such as at Thaxted recently utilised 11 blocks. (I don't know what the collection was over that week-end

but it certainly weighed heavily) N.B. Wrap the box in newspaper to soak up condensation if the whole box is being taken for a whole W/end or large show. Bagmen / Treasurers will complain about the cake crumbs, but these are easily removed by washing in a bowl of water, dried on a towel and counted. In practice I actually give each recipient about 1/4" square of cake and am complemented on its quality in a number of cases !! Perhaps the quantity sounds a bit mean but the implication is that 'only a little is required' to be effective - and helps the cake to go a long way - but more of distribution later. Should a Cake Bearer prefer to be 'traditional' and use a home-made cake I would suggest it be made in a square tin so that it can be cut up easily and used economically. Another advantage of having the cake in slices is that the remaining cake on the sword still looks presentable

**The Sword.** I use an antique French bayonet. These can frequently be found in antique shops, not terribly expensive and it only needs to be bought once. The advantage is that, although it probably weighs as much as a sword, it is a lot shorter, more easily handled and is more easily packed away when not in use. This is pierced thro' a circular flat bottom flan tin. In my case the tin has a red velvet skirt trimmed with a lace edge on the bottom and the top is tied round with coloured ribbons. (Mine are green and yellow - the colours of the Green Man that I represent) The point of the 'sword' is drilled to enable another 'purse' to be appended and flowers to adorn the point as well. I also have coloured ribbons and two large bells on the end of two of them. These

*(continued on next page)*

announce my approach as they ring on the sword. Additionally I have a pierced, chromed, inverted metal plate above the cake tray to act as an umbrella for when it rains. It also serves to protect any cake left on the tray, and the collection when the men stop dancing. In practice I have also found that another purse hanging from the tray helps for those who want to put in a note but don't see the purse at the top. I also have a leaflet explaining the 'Tradition' of the Fertility Cake for those who want more information – It saves time in getting round the audience and optimising the perceived value of the cake.

**The Patter.** "I see, you're one of the starving millions of ..... " (to a child). If the child is very small, I give it to the parent to pass on. "I can see you haven't had a little nibble this morning !! " – to a young(ish) lady. Or being a bit rude to a well built man - "I don't know about giving you Fertility Cake ...". "Go on, live dangerously!!!" "Would you like a piece as well?" "You're not having a Headache tonight ?" And to the husband "Well, I tried" or "She hasn't said no." Or, if he/she puts his/her hand in his/her pocket/purse, "I see, you're having a little grope already !!" Obviously every cake bearer will develop his own approach but it must be in a light hearted way to maximise its effect and not risk offence. In all cases the comment is given with a smile, and any contribution to the collection is always acknowledged with thanks – no matter how small... Since the general public tends to be reluctant to accept offers from strange men in the street – especially when dressed in 'funny' clothes – the individual may initially refuse, then I cajole them into 'living dangerously' – but if a third attempt doesn't work I wish them good luck and go on to

the next person. Never push more than three attempts – or it could be misconstrued as harassment. In the situation where a person is refusing legitimately i.e. diabetic, gluten free, nut allergy etc. I always say "Hold out your hand" and put a small coin from the tray saying "so long as you keep that you'll never be penniless"- which is also good PR and makes a minute difference to the Bag. The tray is always 'seeded' with a small handful of coin to start with at any show; and if the 'collection' on the tray appears too large / heavy, it can always be reduced into a convenient shopping bag.

**Perception/Interpretation of the Sword** – as an instrument used to perform a sacrifice, from which the person approached is invited to partake. Effectively this represents a circle of life, death and re-birth. The sword, decorated with ribbons and flowers at its point to show that it is being used for a constructive (?) purpose, has made a sacrifice on the altar (cake tin) so that the recipient is enabled to live on – and reproduce – to perpetuate the cycle. An alternative representation might be that the sword is the penis of the sun, the flowers and purse at its point as sperm and scrotum, the cake tray as the hymen of Mother Earth and the cake itself as the fruits of Mother Earth. Fanciful maybe, but who knows what may be considered as an interpretation of the life cycle before the developing concepts of very early 'religions'. A similar sort of interpretation may also have prompted the concept of the Green Man. Prior to the advent of 'popular' modern religions; it must have been recognised that some force greater than man had made the world as it was, and without knowledge of anything 'higher' than man, possibly envisaged the green man. A potential

interpretation here might have been initially a form of worshipful religion which subsequently also developed a system of law to enable a community to live together. Pro-claimation. The above is a personal view of how I have been able to continue in active association with the Morris through an exploitation of the Fertility Cake. It has enabled me to act legitimately as a go-between the Morris and our audiences. There is a story to be told and something of interest to attract some of the gelt (money) from out of people's pockets without actually asking for it – but without detracting from the activities of a formal collector, which should still be part of the show. (The two are complementary and the one does not necessarily detract from the other – in whichever order!!) After all, someone has to pay for our practice hall, petrol to arrive at the show, and our rig to dance in. 'What are you collecting for?' The answer should be "Us" which is met with more enthusiasm than "Beer for the Morris Men" – that's a phrase to be used by a volunteer member of the audience!! Anyone who wishes to adopt any of the above observations is welcome to do so – I hope it may help to swell your bag in addition to being a worthwhile PR exercise. Irrespective of any of the above PLEASE smile, use a silver spoon or similar to present the piece of cake making it a ritual (not using fingers – which I have seen), and don't wear sunglasses – it looks too menacing and tends to frighten children.

Peter is a member of Whitchurch, Offley, & Bedford M.M.

Ps Three Men standing out.... First one says, 'Windy, in't it?' Second one says, 'Nah, it's Thursday!'

Third man - 'So'm I, let's have a beer...." (See page 15 for two different responses, Ed..)



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## John Maher 1938 - 2011

John Maher, who was Overseas Bagman of the Morris Ring for many years, was diagnosed with cancer on one of his kidneys in May and died peacefully in the Bristol Royal Infirmary on 18 July.

After a degree and doctorate in Chemistry at Imperial College, John did post-doctoral work at Chicago. Returning to the UK in 1965 he became a lecturer in the Chemistry Department at the University of Bristol where he continued to work until his retirement in 2003. John was an expert in a number of areas including Electron Spin Resonance spectroscopy.

John saw the potential of computers and the internet long before most people. He introduced computing to his chemistry students in advance of most other Chemistry departments, and developed the first website at Bristol University. He was a lifelong lover of Morris, folk music, song and country dance and danced with Bristol Morris for over 40 years. Over the last few years John had done less dancing



in set but made the Bristol Morris Horse his own and Horse's antics were a huge attraction, particularly for children.

In addition to being Overseas Bagman, John was also the Webmaster for the Morris Ring website. Over many years John put a huge amount of time, energy, creativity and ingenuity into the site and developed it into an excellent resource. Following his death, his family have had a number of emails from sides and individuals expressing their appreciation for the help John had given them in his role as Overseas Bagman.

Apart from Morris and folk music, John had many other interests. He loved classical music and attended concerts regularly. He enjoyed cooking and was a fine cook – for many years his navratan has been an essential and much appreciated part of the Bristol Morris Men Christmas Ceilidh. He loved walking, poetry and took a serious interest in political issues, contributing over many years to charities such as Amnesty.

John made an enormous contribution to Bristol Morris and to the Morris Ring as Overseas Bagman and Webmaster for many years. We will all miss him very much

His daughter Joanna is continuing the family tradition of the Morris. She was a founder member and continues to dance with Pecsætan Morris in Sheffield.

Our thoughts and condolences go out to John's family: his wife Geraldine, daughter Joanna, her partner Chris and the grandchildren – Joseph, William and Robert.

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## Paul Woods 1948 - 2011

Anyone who has seen Bristol Morris dance over the last 35 years or so will probably remember Paul Woods announcing the dances as vividly as they remember the dancing. Paul danced a lot, but he also announced in a unique style with a wicked sense of humour which made contact more effectively with an audience than anyone else I have ever seen. And he could announce in French, German and Spanish !

For 35 years Paul devoted a huge amount of time and energy to



Bristol Morris and had an enormous influence on the side's style, caring

deeply about the standard of dance and performance and serving as Bagman and Squire several times. Amongst other things he was largely or solely responsible for the introducing the family camping weekends, the Bristol Morris Christmas card, the unforgettable Uncle Happy Christmas Raffle and keeping in touch with ex-Bristol Morris Men.

Despite problems with his knees in recent years, Paul very rarely missed a practice or a dance-out, and he continued to dance as often

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as he could, even after he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last summer.

He was passionate about morris, folk song and dance, and sang regularly at folk clubs and after-dance sessions. In addition to folk music, he enjoyed a very wide range of music and had an

enormous collection of CDs.

He worked in the library of Bristol University from 1971 until his retirement in 2009 Paul created the Bristol Morris website when many of us had no idea what a website was, and he was an enthusiastic user of sites like Facebook which he used to keep in regular contact

with friends throughout his illness.

He died peacefully on Sunday 17 July at St Peter's Hospice.

Bristol Morris Men will miss very much Paul's announcing style and humour, his energy and enthusiasm and we offer our thoughts and condolences to his wife Sandra.

## Morris at the Mac

by Pete Simpson

Like many clubs Jockey MM are trying various means of recruiting with various degrees of success.

Towards the end of last year the club's Squire, John Rose applied for a Grass Roots grant. The process seemed quite simple, even involving a change to the club Constitution, and to our pleasant surprise we ended up with £2,200 to run 2 Morris Taster sessions.

From the start we included Glorishears of Brummagem, a local woman's side with whom we have had close links for many years, to add balance to the event as it had to be open to both genders.

It was decided to go for a premier location in Birmingham. Known to most locals with easy access from all parts of the city, good parking and we hoped good facilities (and we could afford it). We hired a room for 2 days, one in February on a Saturday and the other on a Sunday in March, at the Midland Art Centre (MAC) in Edgbaston.

A cheap pay as you go phone was purchased and an Email address set up as contact points for interested parties. It was decided to ask for a £5 refundable deposit to give people the extra incentive to turn up (a good idea).

We structured the day, starting about 10am with warm up exercises and

a demonstration dance, then Jockey teaching a simple jig followed by a short talk about the Morris then Glorishears taught a Bidford dance. Time for a chat and answer any questions before lunch.

Glorishears then taught a Bampton dance and JMM a Headington dance.

We finished the day, about 3pm by recapping all the dances. The 2nd event was on a lovely sunny day and we managed to do the recap in a public park backing on to the MAC.

In short we enjoyed it and it has helped to cement a bond between JMM and Glorishears, but has it attracted any new members to either club or the Morris?

Only time will tell.

As part of the grant John had to fill in an 'End of Grant' form (which I have available via email:



**Morris**  
at the MAC

**"Like to dance?"**

Want to improve your fitness?

Curious about Morris dancing and its origins?

The Jockey Morris Men of Birmingham, in association with Glorishears of Brummagem Women's Morris are offering two whole day taster sessions on:

**Sunday 27th Feb 2011**  
**Saturday 19th March 2011** 10am - 3pm

Join us at M.A.C. Canon Hill Park, Birmingham, for a fun day of dancing to live music. No previous experience is needed just a willingness to try traditional Cotswold Morris.

Though the sessions are open to all adults, regardless of age and ability, children over 12 accompanied by a responsible adult are also welcome, each session is stand alone and you only need to attend a single day. The sessions are free but places are limited, so please **BOOK EARLY**. The £5 booking fee will be refundable on the day.

For further information or to apply for a place  
telephone: 07922586310 or  
email: [FastDave@jockeymorris.org.uk](mailto:FastDave@jockeymorris.org.uk)

Keep Fit  
Keep Active  
Keep Healthy

SP4  
fully accredited by  
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in partnership with the Charity Commission

Birmingham & Black Country  
Community Foundation

Grassroots  
grants

[simpsonfam@btopenworld.com](mailto:simpsonfam@btopenworld.com)) and answers many of the questions as to the success of the day.

Pete Simpson is a member of Jockey Morris Men and the West Midlands Area Rep..

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## **‘Ace food with some useful dancing thrown in’**

*by David Clampin*

In 1988 the V & A courted controversy with their advertising campaign pointing to ‘an ace caff with quite a nice museum attached’. Whilst I hope my own aping after the creative genius of Saatchi & Saatchi will not land me in similarly hot water, it was just this that came to mind as I trundled homeward after the Jigs Instructional Weekend at Sutton Bonington over the weekend of 21 to 23 January.

Perhaps I ought first to put into context the derivation of this piece. On Saturday evening, in the midst of this event, a moustachioed gentleman sidled up to me in the excellent King’s Head and asked of me if I was ‘a virgin’. Somewhat taken aback, as you might imagine, I was quickly able to compose myself, despite the half of Doom Bar that I had been nursing from much earlier in the evening, to seek further clarification. Thus it came to pass that what might have been a mode of instruction that I had not anticipated on subscribing to this weekend’s activities transpired to be something much more innocent as I was earmarked to write a summary of my experiences as a first time attendee at this gathering for this august journal.

The first thing that struck me was the bonhomie and outstanding arrangements that characterised this entire weekend. Despite my tender (Morris) years I am well accustomed to the notion of General Morris Time which frequently characterises the coming together of groups of men inclined towards this activity but there was nothing of the sort in Sutton Bonington. Amidst the lush Nottinghamshire

countryside, a charming village hall had been set aside for our purpose and, whilst those of us who had purely turned up for the pleasure (?) of this weekend acquainted ourselves further with the charming landlady of the King’s Head, a quietly efficient body came to life behind the scenes in an effort to tend to many of our needs.

Our Master of Ceremonies, in the guise of Geoff Jerram, got things formally underway with a warm welcome and a clear outline of what to expect. However, he was soon eclipsed in my memory as the first of the high points of the weekend was brought before us in the form of supper! Now, you may gather there is a theme developing here, my headline gives it away a bit, but I feel due recognition ought to be given to Albert Wilkins and his trusty band of galley slaves, not least his right-hand man, Ian Small, who over the course of the weekend produced some truly memorable meals. Perhaps it is naivety on my part to suggest this is anything out of the ordinary but in the context of the event overall this was an unexpected surprise on my part.

Putting that to one side, we were afforded little respite before being thrust into what, after all, we had all come along for: to learn a bit of dancing! For most of the sessions that followed, a simple division was made between basic and advanced, with additional ‘intense’ instruction on a virtually one-to-one basis being offered at a beginner’s level. Being a relative novice, I elected in all cases to follow the basic programme. In each session the level of instruction was excellent with instructors displaying great stamina, and patience above and

beyond the call of duty. Whilst it is most unlikely that you will come away from this weekend as an accomplished dancer of jigs should you have no pre-existing knowledge but what you will gain is a taste to practise and explore further; the basic outline of several jigs; and, perhaps most importantly, a refined understanding and improved ability around several of the key components of Morris dancing. Concentrating for an hour and a half on the rudimentary of a specific tradition will do wonders for your basic stepping, the idiosyncrasies of your galleys and hook legs, and which way should you be waving your hankies!

Friday evening, after supper, brought Oddington: for my part a revelation and one which will need a good deal more revealing before I can take that any further! It was then considered appropriate to support a local business in the form of the aforementioned hostelry before turning in for the night. The following morning we were gently awoken with the ministrations of Don O’Farty, ably assisted by Paul Reece, and their lyrical tea-trolley. I thought my eyes deceived me as I was brought tea in bed, a service so greatly appreciated that they were met with thunderous applause on the Sunday, although that might have had something to do with the previous night’s prune based dessert. Then onwards and upwards to a smashing cooked breakfast before really cracking on with the dancing.

Saturday brought Fieldtown, Bledington, Bampton and Sherbourne, in each case teaching fundamentals as well as leading/dragging us through at least one complete jig. Along the way there

*(continued on next page)*



were welcome breaks for tea and coffee, and a fine luncheon, leading up to the grand crescendo of the Saturday night feast! 'Feast' was to prove an apt word given the proportions and quality of the food, alongside those more formal aspects that really made this evening an event and something to fill even the most lacklustre Morris Man with pride. Alongside the appropriate toasts and speeches, each measured and properly brief in the circumstances, we were regaled in song and humorous verse to bring things to a jolly conclusion, before retiring to the King's Head.

With the dawning of the last day came a choice of cooked breakfasts before an introduction, courtesy of Ray King and Green Man's Morris, to the peculiarities of the Lichfield three man jig: there is nothing quite like the feeling of finding yourself

held aloft around the upper thighs in a small village hall as local church bells call the parishioners to worship. This was followed by a bonus Ascot session and the final taught session of Headington, a cause of regret for those who had earlier opted for the kippers, had they not already done so. The final, formal event of the weekend took the form of a reprise which was a useful revision amidst the plethora of dancing experienced over a packed weekend.

A final, generous, buffet lunch brought things to a close before we all went on our way. From my perspective, there were numerous highlights over the weekend but the overall effect was to stoke up my interest in dancing and, it might be hoped, improve my abilities in this regard, not necessarily with the idea of being in a position to present jigs in public come the

summer, but at least to polish aspects of my dancing which should improve my performance within the side. To have the opportunity for such a concentrated exposure is a rare luxury and this makes this weekend worthwhile alone. But, there is much more to it than this, it is not all hard work, although it is fairly physically demanding, there are plenty of opportunities to share experiences and frustrations with like-minded individuals, there is a sense of comradeship amongst those who attend, and there is some pretty outstanding grub! Given the opportunity, I certainly hope to be able to attend next year, I believe the date has already been set for 20 to 22 January, and would urge anyone who might be considering it to give it a go.

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## Fertility Cake Responses

I wholeheartedly agree with the collecting 'for the morris men'. We should make no apologies for collecting.

However, I had hoped we had seen the back of the 'fertility' rubbish. There is no historical evidence for any connection between morris and fertility rituals. Prof John Forrest clearly showed us that this was a romantic Victorian scholarly construct.

The sword in the cake and morris dancing both have much more interesting stories to tell without reinforcing a stereotype, which

in my mind serves us more harm than good.

Stephen Rowley

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Our collector has been distributing fertility cake for many years. Some years ago we danced at a folk club over Rugby way and the fertility cake became the centre of attraction to several young married ladies who were keen to start families. We thought no more about the incident until nine months or so later when we made headlines in the Sun newspaper over the baby

boom our cake had caused. The team bagman received numerous requests for pieces of cake to be posted off to recipients keen to encourage nature and we had letters back to tell of its efficacy. It's all in the mind you know...this fertility rubbish, but I doubt our fertility cake does more harm than good, much more likely the other way round and certainly so when it is also tagged as 'good luck cake'. We await the first generous lottery winner to contact us.

Barry Care

*(See article on page 10. Originally on the Morris Ring Google Group-ed..)*

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## Around May 1st with Kennet Morris Men

*by Peter Jones*

Life is who you know, not what you know. So it is with the Kennet Morris Men (KMM). Not only do we regularly dance in the village, which was home to Kate Middleton, but one Stalwart member, Michael Booker, lives next door to and drinks at the Bladebone Inn in Chapel Row, Bucklebury; hence we were invited to dance at the village celebrations on Friday 29th April, starting at 8:00AM.

Our first encounter with the media was being asked to provide a background to a BBC slot to show that something was going on; we were to look active and wave flags and handkerchiefs. So we stood around talking rhubarb,, forcing laughter at Peter Jones' jokes (again) and supping on a traditional KMM ice cold G&T - this being provided on the day by our squire, Tom Gregory (only 31yrs of age but possessing a fine appreciation of tradition). It all went down well, as part of it was for the radio. Didn't we do well?

Up until the Big Event at 11 o'clock, shown on the TV in the marquee, there wasn't much going on :- a look alike Queen Elizabeth II put in a majestic appearance; as did a rather youthful looking King Henry VIII and his latest wife Catherine Parr (why? - no idea!!). At one point the King was having a relaxed smoke when our resident marathon runner, Dave Tindall, reminded him that smokes had not been invented in his time - the King rather testily told him to "frolic off". There were various duck races and the KMM amused themselves with some dancing. All this time, the world media and press, complete with very expensive equipment, were hoping that

something would happen to justify their presence. You could spot the "foreign charlies" as they wore new tweeds and new jeans. As one local lady remarked "who wears new jeans?". So we were interviewed for French television (in French) thanks to Howard Swinyard; for Spanish TV; BBC One and Two; CBBC "Newsround" (to be shown after Shaun the Sheep) and also for Korean TV (in Korean) again thanks to Howard.

At 9 o'clock, the MC announced that he beer tent was open, serving West Berkshire Brewery ales and, after a brief stampede, the KMM formed an orderly rabble in the

from Adderbury. This was while our fool (Peter de Courcy) was fooling around and posing for the world media; our resident Matron (Clive Allen) did some nursing around no, don't go there! - and started a duck race for the world; and Dobbin the horse did some dobbin about for the world media and frightening children, with his trainer Jack Smee. At one point Dobbin also approached King Henry and was also told to "frolic off"; he was heard to reply that he had been told to frolic off by better kings than Henry VIII.

Oh yes, the Royal Wedding started, with the WAGS installed in the



**Photos: Left  
Kennet posing  
with Kate  
Garraway**

**page 17,  
top: Friends  
of Kennet  
enjoying the  
Beer Festival in  
Reading**

queue. There followed a mad rush of world media to photograph the KMM drinking these fine ales. Then the hog roast and bacon sarnie stand invited us to breakfast - again there was a mad rush of world media to photograph the KMM eating a most welcome bacon sandwich. Whilst we were at our ease, we were pounced upon by world media for our personal comments of the day; we wished the happy couple a long and fruitful life together and all the luck of the Morris. To create the impression of activity, the KMM did some more dancing, including "Haste to the wedding"

reserved seats inside the marquee, along with the vast village populace (circa 200) watching the proceedings on the TV. KMM were left outside the tent to amuse ourselves, with the world media. But it gets no better, as we were also booked at the Cottage Inn - the pub in Upper Bucklebury - for the afternoon. Here, on a recently grassed over ploughed field, was even less going on! So we were asked to dance, to be interviewed again and stand around and watch ourselves on the big screen laid on in the beer garden. So, after a lot of preparation, combing

*(continued on next page)*

## Kennet continued



of hair, adjustment of make-up and practicing of “Haste to the wedding” (twice) we went live for ITV. Local people saw the results later that evening. Being in the London region, I saw the Queen Elizabeth look-a-like sitting in front of the pub drinking a pint of Guinness! You may think that we had done enough for Morris for a while? However, Brian Jones, KMM since 1967 and CAMRA member, helped to organise the Reading Beer & Cider festival and we were coerced into attending to dance on Saturday 30th April. We were announced as the “Internationally famous Kennet Morris Men, brought to you at great expense”! It surprising what free entry and some free beer tokens will do!

As usual there was a captive audience, with some interesting sites posing in the spring sunshine. Many people asked if we had been on TV yesterday, surprised as they thought we were dying out (Morris sides that is not the KMM). Yes, you may take a photo and, yes, you may have our autograph... again, there were lots of people wanting to join in the dancing (funny how they disappear in the Autumn when practice starts again..). We did four sessions through the afternoon and finished off with a instructional for the public of Shepherd's Hey, Adderbury, with lots of enthusiastic and excited punters jumping around. It's a pity that we can't accommodate all those Irish

nurses in the KMM ranks. Eight of the “out of towners” camped the night at the festival, to the accompaniment of industrial vacuum cleaners clearing up the detritus of the day, beer barrel moving and the staff having after hours parties. This was not for the after hours drinking - honest!! It was because we had our next dancing appointment at 5:30 AM, 1st May, in the Forbury Gardens (just behind the prison). A couple

in along with a few members of public and then re-locked the gate. We then proceeded on the allotted “safe path” to the central mound to dance ( you really can't make this sort of thing up!).

16 KMM sang the Reading Carol “Summer is a comin' in, loudly sing Cuckoo” (first recorded in 1513, but not on vinyl!). There followed some enthusiastic and joyful dancing; at least as good as would follow a beer festival; an uncomfortable



**The Castle Mound, May Morning as the sun rises over Reading Jail**

*All Photos Kennet Morris Men*

of the CAMRA guys who were wandering around at that time (not sure if they had even been to bed) came with us and brought some flagons of beer with them. What beer? “You can have dark or light”, it was free and many thanks. We started with the traditional official unlocking of the gate to the gardens, entering and re-locking the gates; dressed in full protective gear (high viz vest, heavy gloves, torch and a medical sharps disposal container) he did a scan of the park to check that it was free from sharp things to complete our risk assessment. He returned and let us

night; a 5:30 am start and appalling dance surface of 3” deep gravel. The standard of dance could, at best, be described as having been “rambunctious and educational”. Having had the traditional ice cold G&T (we are getting into the habit - we were next to the Reading Abbey) we gave a good rendition of “Bring me sunshine”. We left the park, locked the gates (wondering why there were so few public around) and returned to the Beer Festival site to de-camp; proceeding at 7 o'clock to the local Wetherspoon's for the

*(continued on next page)*



## Kennet continued

traditional post dance breakfast - full English and a mug of coffee for under a fiver. Can't be bad. But what is this, more Morris dancing? Yes, the annual KMM May bank holiday tour - taking in the Goring Heat Almshouses; entertaining the public at Goring Lock on the Thames and then on to the village of South Stoke to support the crowning of the May Queen at the village fete.

The Alms houses are set amongst beautiful bluebell woods and parkland way above the Thames on the heath. The area on which we dance here is set with round cobbles - after the ploughed fields and gravel on which had previously been dancing, we were getting quite used to it. After being well received by the patrons and the trustees, we were told that the surface was dangerous; it was against the Health and Safety Act and would be replaced next year. A pity since it was laid down over a century ago.

Goring Lock proved to be ideal setting by the Thames: boats running through the locks, running water over the weir, lovely river and spring sunshine. For the first year that we can remember, the grassed area was mown, hard and not a worm in site (they're keen morris dancing fans and frequently surface once we start). Towpath

walkers and locals mingled with Dobbin and the Fool to be part of the Morris. People have been

help the day along. As usual we went down well with the public. Over the four days of the holidays,



**Photos, left  
South Stoke  
May Fayre**

**and below, The  
Dancers - South  
Stoke Maypole  
Team, Ecole  
d'Entrevignes  
(visitors from  
Rhône-Alps,  
France) and  
Kennet.**

attending for years as part of their May bank holiday. During one stick dance, the squire dropped his Hankies; the first person to pick them up was his father, "just like when he was at home" was the comment.

South Stoke, three miles north of Goring, has been having a village street fete for many years; not quite what it was, but they are still trying hard. Centred on the village school, the children crown their May queen, do country dances and dance around the maypole. A local silver band, live music duo and the KMM were there to

the KMM have been able to field at least two sides on all occasions. This is only to be expected of international stars of TV, the press and the rest. Without our fine musicians we would have been nowhere; our stalwart Bagman, Jon Holmes, leads on the piano accordion and Bob, Robin, Jerry and Matt back him up on melodeon with Max on the Bass Harmonica. Various other instruments appear après Morris, as do the fine voices of the "Kennets" (available for Weddings, etc). If it weren't for all of these lads, Morris would die out.

Royal Wedding has caused a community spirit to appear which was just under the surface. We hope that the KMM have contributed to this and perhaps will provide some new interest in the Morris as a whole. As a lady at South Stoke remarked to me "When I saw you on TV, it made me proud to be English!"

Howard Swinyard transcribed this into electronic format and he describes Peter Jones as a Luddite. Both are Kennet Morris Men. (Howard-I am extremely grateful-ed)



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# Datchet Border Morris The Day of Dance and the CD

*by Roy Fenton*

A fiftieth birthday is a good time for making resolutions. For Datchet Border Morris, these included holding the club's first day of dance for some years, and making a CD. Now the club's base in the village of Datchet has much going for it, including a half-hourly train service to Waterloo. It boasts a commodious and friendly WI Hall where the side has practised for most of its fifty years. And just 50 yards away is the estimable Royal Stag public house. Dancing on Datchet Green can command an audience numbering several hundred on Boxing Day. But having just this one viable dancing site did restrict the possibilities for a day of dance. And being directly beneath a flight path into nearby Heathrow did limit the duration of recording takes to the intervals between aircraft landing, which can be under two minutes. Patience and perseverance overcame the aircraft noise issue



**Datchet Dancer's  
celebration ale.**

when producing the CD\*, but not the day of dance problem. However, Datchet is one stop on the train from Windsor, which is awash with tourists and shoppers on summer weekends. The town has some excellent dance spots, yet is compact enough for a comfortable walking tour. Moving seventy Morris dancers to Windsor on South West Trains was indeed

a challenge, but the estimated £10-per-person cost of coach hire persuaded the organisers to give the train a try. Local bodies were contacted and 25th June 2011 set as the date for the day of dance.

## **AM tour**

Receiving a single order for seventy tickets proved to be something of a surprise for the clerk at the Datchet booking office on an otherwise sleepy Saturday morning, especially when the customer was in full Border kit. It was also something of a challenge for the family who came in to book their own journey but who found the printer spewing out our seventy tickets at a funereal pace whilst their 10.20 to Waterloo grew ever nearer.

Meanwhile, Datchet's day of dance guests were being plied with hot drinks and bacon butties at the WI Hall, from whence they disgorged for the day's first massed show on Datchet Green. The mix of sides attending meant that, as well as Datchet's Border dances, the audience could enjoy rapper from Hoddesdon Crownsman, Northwest for Taeppa's Tump, Cotswold from Off-Spring, Thames Valley and Greensleeves and occasional Longsword from the last-named. Oh for such a varied repertoire at the average Ring meeting, your correspondent sighs.

Getting seventy Morris men and women on to the 11.17 train to Windsor proved less of a challenge than expected. However, getting six sides off the train and organised into two tours did threaten to disrupt the business of Windsor Riverside Station. (I'm not the first commentator to compare organising Morris dancers to herding cats.)

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**Greensleeves dance The Rose, Fieldtown in the morning's massed show.**

*All Photos Datchet Boarder Morris*



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## Datchet Border Morris continued



**Hoddesdon Crownsmen rapping in Peascod Street, Windsor and below, Off-Spring dance beneath the Windsor Wheel.**

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No-one who dances in Windsor need ever go unobserved and unphotographed, such is the density of tourists. But as the collectors found, it is more difficult to extract from the onlookers coins and notes bearing the head of she who lives at the local castle. One explanation is that the tourists, ferried in by the chara-load, are so well provided for by their tour operators that they need not carry local currency. Or perhaps what is needed is the babel-fish ability to collect in any known language.

Many tourists simply point their camera-phones at the set and move on, especially when they see blacked-up Border dancers. This prompts the question, just what explanation do they give when showing their holiday snaps to friends back in Osaka, Seoul or Kaohsiung? Perhaps South East Asia believes that everyone in England dresses up in Morris kit

on Saturdays.

### **Pub lunch: a digression**

After two stops in Windsor, it was time for lunch. Although this tourist town does not lack places of refreshment, it proved singularly difficult to find two which would feed and 'water' thirsty dancers. The local branch of a national pub chain, renowned for its inexpensive real ale and refusal to allow live music, was approached first. Offered a guaranteed 40 lunches and an estimated 80 pints, they expected to be 'too busy'. Another town centre landlord enthusiastically agreed to cater, but his 'phone number quickly became unobtainable. When reconnected, the new tenants told us in a distinctly non-Home Counties accent 've no longer do vood'. A third landlord cheerfully agreed to a reasonable price for sandwiches and chips, only to find his kitchen staff demanding he increase his

estimate by 140%. With local knowledge and perseverance, places were found to eat well and within our budget. But it is hardly surprising that so many pubs are shutting, when their proprietors are happy to turn away over £300 worth of business. Digression ends.

### **Windsor PM**

After lunch the sides were swapped between tours so that Off-Spring and Thames Valley joined Datchet for the next three stops, whilst Greensleeves and Hoddesdon met up with Taeppa's Tump. Designed to ensure as much variety as possible for participants, this exchange added complications to the programme in order to avoid sides revisiting stops.

Only at one stop was a distraction encountered. A fair was in full swing in Windsor's Alexandra Gardens, complete with a fairground organ which had been booked to play. Its proprietor was determined to honour the contract, and only for five minutes would she desist from grinding out a tune to allow us to dance. Needless to say, the Morris

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## Datchet Border Morris continued



**Thames Valley in Windsor Royal Shopping Centre and below, the evening sun shines on Taeppa's Tump Northwest Morris on Datchet Green.**

sides' massed melodeons emerged undaunted.

Various pubs and tearooms offered rest and recuperation before the Datchet train departed at 5.51pm. However, it is rumoured that some ladies from Taeppa's Tump define rest and recuperation as shopping. There's no accounting for tastes.

### **Datchet PM**

Back at Datchet tea and cakes awaited the returning performers. The 3rd Slough Girl Guides Company and their leaders paused from preparing the feast to capably provide, if not a high tea, at least one of impressive altitude. This was sufficient refreshment to get the sides outside again for one last massed show on Datchet Green, benefiting from the sun which since noon had been shining, on both the righteous and unrighteous. If modesty permits its mention, a highlight of the show was the closing Custard-pie Dance by three members of Datchet, the Cross Hand Polka from Comberton providing a suitable accompaniment to the slap-stick.

About 50 men and women stayed for the feast, another tour de force by the Guides. Guests received

not only excellent food and drink but also gifts of the Datchet CD\* and a bottle of the celebration 'Datchet Dancer' ale. To minimise beer-miles the latter was locally sourced from the Windsor and Eton Brewing Company. Guests and hosts were randomly scattered at the tables, and given a series of puzzles to amuse them between courses. Another of DBM's fiftieth birthday resolutions was to develop its singing, and the après-feast entertainment began with the shanties from the Datchet Whalers (an alternative spelling of the last

name has been proposed). With only two clubs sufficiently quorate to do a set dance, and a number of spouses present, the active part of the evening comprised social dancing, with music ably provided by the various sides' musicians.

Feedback on the day from guests and DBM themselves has been overwhelmingly favourable. Although the inevitable post-mortem has identified a few matters to tweak, it is highly likely that there will be another Datchet day of dance well before our 75th anniversary.

### **DBM: a biographical note**

Datchet Border Morris was formed in 1961 as Datchet Morris Men, and admitted to the Ring in 1966. A successful day of dance was held to celebrate their 25th anniversary in 1986 (at least two members of the side and one guest attended both the 25th and the 50th). Faced with declining numbers in the 1990s, Datchet decided to replace Cotswold dancing with Border. This was partly to ensure that a show could still be put on if only four dancers turned out. The newly renamed Datchet Border Morris also agreed to accept



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of their wives describes as 'diversification'.

With the welcome relaxation of attitudes to female musicians, it is hoped that Ring sides will see Datchet Border Morris more often in future. Perhaps even at the next Datchet Day of Dance?

\*'Surfing the Scrapbooks', a mixture of Morris music and memories, is available for just £6.00 from all good Morris shops at a Ring meeting near you.

Photographs by Harrie Hayward, Dave Legg Chris Pooley and Brad Seel.

lady musicians. However, DBM was and remains resolutely and constitutionally committed to the principle that only men should dance in the side.

A welcome result of adopting Border was a healthy increase in numbers. Indeed, in an area

rife with mixed clubs of various Morris persuasions, DBM are one of the only sides of all-male Border dancers. Its attraction has led to some sharing of members with other clubs, notably Greensleeves, several of whose men have come along for what one

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**Above left: Datchet Border dance Craven Stomp, and below they pose on Datchet Green.**

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to Bolsterstones village, at 1000 feet above sea level this offers some panoramic views of the Pennine foothills. An excellent performance from both sides was followed by Wath Morris setting what they believe to be a new World Record of 7 morris men in an old fashioned red telephone box. In the absence of proof to the contrary Wath claim this as the New World Record and throw down the gauntlet to all you portly dancers out there to try and beat it. Our next stop was deeper into the Pennines at High Bradfield and on the first day of high summer,

this was probably the only place in Britain with precipitation. However, the very gently drizzle didn't stop our intrepid teams and once again the views were to die for, overlooking the famous rebuilt Dale Dyke Dam which, when the dam-head collapsed on 11th March 1864 killed 250 people as the waters swept down through Sheffield. A demon jig by the Squire of The Morris Ring, Peter Halfpenney, accompanied by past Squire of The Morris Ring, Bert Cleaver on pipe and tabor, was surely one of the highlights of the day.

Our final stop of the day was at Low Bradfield (as you can imagine, this lies in the valley below High Bradfield). A final show was completed and into the pub for home made meat and potato pie and peas and more singing. An excellent musical ending was rounded off with a joint Holmfirth Anthem

before each team went their separate way home at 7.30. An excellent day out was the general verdict – A Ring Meeting? Well officially yes, the Ring Squire and Bagman were there, as were the silver candlesticks, though they never left the comfort of *Charlie's* boot. Financially, the most expensive ring ever planned morphed into a ring which cost just £10.00 per man. It is for the membership to debate whether this is an alternative for the future or whether it was just an aberration, but from Wath Morris' point of view, we had an excellent day and we'll be doing it all again around midsummer next year, give us a call if you're interested (but don't wait until 10 days before!!!) Pictures of the event can be seen on our website : [www.wath-morris.co.uk](http://www.wath-morris.co.uk) (go to the link at the bottom of the home page).



**Harthill Morris Men top and above left; The Squire, Peter Halfpenney and musicians, left.**

**The Bagman, Charlie Corcoran, above. Wath-upon-Dearth MM in the bar and right.**

**All photos from Tim Binns**





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## The £10 Ring Meeting

### The meeting that never was

by Tim Binns

In early 2010 a call went out from Brian Tasker, then squire of the Morris Ring for a team to organise an additional ring meeting for 2011. As a team with a fairly robust membership, and having worked up a ring meeting plan only 3 years before, Wath Morris volunteered and were accepted as host for the 328th meeting of the Morris Ring. Our pitch was that there must be other teams in the country, like us, who would willingly pay for a little comfort and some of the finer things in life like a comfortable bed, a personal shower and a night's sleep. We accordingly planned a meeting based on Wath's own 4 star hotel offering twin rooms with en-suite facilities, TV's etc a full weekend of dance with feast etc and all for £100 per man. Alas, two other teams were also accepted as hosts for meetings in 2011 and instead of a dearth of meetings we ended up with a glut. The Ring officers gave us excellent support in marketing this "up-market" meeting, but in the end there were insufficient takers to proceed. Wath Morris decided to revert to their annual Pretty Villages tour (traditionally on the same weekend) and opened up the opportunity to any



**Harthill at the Wortley Arms and below, Wath, in a fine line**

interested sides to join them. In November 2010 the meeting was formally cancelled from our end and Wath set about organising the annual family event until 10 days before our Pretty Villages tour we had an email from Harthill Morris Men asking for details of our weekend and saying they had a team coming!!! Clearly there had been a major breakdown in communications. Pretty Villages has never been a weekend and with 10 days notice our diaries were full of alternative engagements. Harthill were most understanding and agreed to come along for the day (using their own transport). On the following Wednesday 3 days before Pretty Villages, we received an email from Charlie Corcoran, Ring Bagman, asking us for details of the weekend and what colour candles we wanted. A hurried flurry of emails established that although we would be doing exactly what we do every year on the Pretty Villages tour, this year it would be the 328th meeting of the Morris Ring.

Setting off on Saturday morning at 10.00 we met Harthill Morris at our first pitch, the RSPB Nature Reserve at Old Moor, Wath. The weather was fast improving as we performed our first set in the courtyard to an appreciative, if select, audience before retiring to the first floor terrace for our first meal – Bacon Butties. The next stop was the magnificent Wentworth Castle, described as "a remarkable and almost unique example of Franco-Prussian architecture in Georgian England". Here our hosts provided tea and biscuits to fortify our flagging strength as we put on a comprehensive - and much applauded - set against a magnificent backdrop looking over beautiful South Yorkshire rolling hills and valleys. Lunch next – yes you are getting the picture – this is a gastronomic day out – at the Wortley Arms, a celebrated local gastro pub. Excellent dancing was followed by some equally good singing in the bar and the chips just kept on coming. A leisurely lunch spot was followed by a trip across the valley

