



February 2013
Issue No 67



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Hartley Morris Men's 60th Year Culminates in final Morris Ring Meeting of 2012

by Terry Heaslip

Hartley MM's 60th season started out rather earlier this year on 1st April when, maybe appropriately enough, we were invited to join a contingent of East Peckham (Kent) parishioners to celebrate their town Twinning with Chereng in France. The French had particularly asked for Morris dancers and we are well known in the village for our singing sessions after dancing at the Bush, Blackbird & Thrush pub. The scene had been set as we loaded a barrel of (racked) beer on our coach as our contribution. This later proved invaluable as, whilst in Chereng, we had to process around the village twice, passing the only bar - which was closed.

At the end of April we were booked as usual to perform for two days at a Country Craft & Food Fair at the Hop Farm Family Park but heavy rain and strong winds rather dampened the proceedings. This also applied to our annual dawn (5.30am) performance at the Coldrum Stones on 1st May although the magic obviously worked as the day's tour was later blessed with some sunny periods.

Luckily our appearance at the Rochester Sweeps Festival the following Sunday

was a singing booking on the sailing barge Edith May moored at Rochester Pier. It was a cold blustery day but we spent several comfortable hours singing in the bowels of the ship with real ale, a warm stove and good company to hand. In addition to our weekly Thursday evening tours, the next big event was our annual weekend Ale on 8th - 10 June



Hartley Morris Men dancing at Ightham Mote during their hosted Morris Ring Meeting

Photo Steven Archer

which was blessed with the usual good weather. On Saturday the usual format ensued, two tours by vintage coaches both starting off in local breweries. The Sunday massed display and song session at Ightham Mote was followed this year by the bus taking everyone to Tonbridge Carnival where we joined the procession down the High Street before returning to base for a late lunch.

(..continued on page 10)

Squire's Capers I

Within days of dancing in as Squire, I attended my side's Day of Dance along with Exeter and Plymouth, together with several non-Ring sides. We were blessed with excellent weather on the day, and whilst we had a reasonable crowd, the large number of holiday makers failed to materialise. Straight after that I sailed for Spain and a rather belated holiday at a quiet time of the year.

My next planned event was to have been with Rutland on 20th October, but urgent family business kept me away. As a result, I was able to go on the John Govier Show on BBC Radio Devon from 10 to 13.00 on the Saturday morning. I guess not many heard the show, but it was great fun, and I ended up teaching Shepherds Hey to some of the studio guests, and from comments received, it all seemed to go down well. Also, I was able to go out with Plymouth on their famous Trafalgar Day walking tour of Plymouth on the Sunday. We started on Mutley Plain and gently made our way down through the 19th century housing and corner pubs in glorious sunshine, until we finally arrived on Plymouth Barbican, which is the only little piece of the city by the harbour that survived town planning courtesy of the Luftwaffe. Thank you Plymouth, it was great fun!

Moving into November always has the focus for me of Remembrance Sunday. This year, the 11th or Armistice Day did fall on the Sunday. However, I also accepted an invitation to a dinner at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton in Somerset to celebrate Taranto Night, on this occasion it was the 70th anniversary of the



The Squire of the Morris Ring, Robin Springett as a Moroccan Prince!

amazing attack by Swordfish torpedo bombers on the Italian Fleet at Taranto. We dined on the carrier deck, and were entertained by simulated landings and taking off by jet aircraft, complete with catapult steam and engine noise and smells. Next day, I was able to go flying with my brother-in-law in his Tiger Moth. Thankfully, despite aerobatics I managed to hold onto the meal from the previous night and my breakfast! In the evening we went to watch a demonstration by a very eccentric gentleman of free flying owls!

On Remembrance Sunday, I was in Dartmouth, taking part in the act of Remembrance. It is worth reflecting how many Morris Dancers were killed in the Great War; of course we have no idea of numbers, but very many for sure and we know that whole sides were wiped out in the so called "Pals" Battalions. Indeed, we should marvel that despite Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans, the Victorians and the Great War, we

somehow managed to maintain our Morris tradition through into the current century. In paying tribute to the fallen in the wars and conflict since the beginning of the 20th century, we should pause a while and remember the many, now largely unknown to us who we lost.

Sadly, we have recently lost Ivor Allsop, and others of course, but Ivor was a giant in his own time. The acknowledged expert on Longsword, a past Squire of the Ring and Ring Archivist for many years and our thoughts are with his family and friends. The turn out for Ivor's funeral on the 19th November was bordering on amazing. The North Chapel at the Grenoside crematorium was standing room only for the secular and very much Morris celebration of his life. Orchestrated by Bert Cleaver, tributes were paid to Ivor in the form of dance, song or eulogies by those who new him best. Some highlights were Ivor's Barnsley Longsword, Wath Morris, Handsworth Sword Dancers and a tribute by Malcolm Taylor from EFDSS. The contribution on behalf of the Morris Ring was given by Peter Halfpenny, immediate past squire, who knew Ivor for many years. After the celebration finished, mourners were invited to a wake at Wortley Working Men's Club, where the beer was wonderful, food superb and the singing compelling. Ivor would have approved! There were so many past and present Ring Officers around that the opportunity was taken to take several photographs, which will appear somewhere no doubt.

Looking forward to Christmas it will be a busy time for me, and invitations for 2013 are beginning

Squire's Capers continued

to fill my mail box. If I haven't responded within a week, please chase me, as I am amazed by the sheer volume of emails! Note I am away for 2 weeks in February. It will soon be the ARM hosted

by Whitchurch MM; if you are going to Australia, please try to get along. The Ring is trying to make the weekend affordable!

I should like to take the opportunity of wishing you all a Very Happy

Christmas and Successful New Year.

Wassail,

Robin Springett

Squire of The Morris Ring



Squire Elect, Robin Springett and out-going Squire, Peter Halfpenney perform their respective jigs, and Peter pins the Squire's badge to Robin's baldric.

The photos were taken in the grounds of Tonbridge Castle at the Morris Ring Meeting in September 2012, hosted by Harley Morris Men.

*Photos courtesy
Hartley Morris Men*



Britannia Coconut Dancers of Bacup

Derek Schofield made an annual visit to the Rossendale Valley at Easter.

by Derek Schofield

After the distinctly unseasonable, but pleasant, weather in March, it turned chilly over Easter weekend, but fortunately there was no rain to dampen the spirits of the Britannia Coconut Dancers of Bacup on their traditional Easter Saturday boundary-to-boundary outing.

The day started, as usual, at 9am on the town boundary with Whitworth, outside the Travellers' Rest pub. Only, the pub's not there anymore – it closed a few years ago, to be converted into offices of a financial and wealth management business. After a garland dance and the nut dance outside the "Financial Managers' Rest", the dancers assumed their traditional stance for the processional nut dance – two groups of four dancers, one on each side of the road, each group alternately dancing on the spot or processing down the road, accompanied by the line of silver



band musicians. It was hard for the followers not to walk in time with the music!

In spite of a few injuries among the dancers, they were still able to do the nut dance occasionally with twelve, instead of the more usual eight dancers.

And so the day progressed – stops outside former or existing pubs and clubs, Olive House residential care home, the fire station, old people's flats and the town centre. Traffic now prohibits a dance display in the middle of the road in the centre of town, but there's a pedestrianised area between the bus station and the Conservative Club

(now named as Th'Owd Con Club, to differentiate it from the New Con Club round the corner – perhaps one supports the coalition and the other doesn't, though politics doesn't seem to be at the forefront of Bacup residents' concerns today.)

A break for lunch, followed by more displays in the town centre, and then the dancers split into two groups (one with the band, the other with the English concertina players who otherwise wouldn't get a chance to play at Easter) to dance in the pubs (generally, behind the bar – there's more space there). Then the dancers head out west on the Newchurch Road through



Photos, Top:
Leader Dick
Shufflebottom, Easter
Saturday 2012.

Above, the Musicians

Left, Britannia Coconut
Dancers on Easter
Saturday 2012.

Derek Schofield took the
photographs on pages 4-5



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Britannia Coconut Dancers of Bacup continued



Britannia Coconut Dancers on Easter Saturday 2012.

Stacksteads to the other boundary – and another, long-closed pub. That was after 8 o'clock, so they'd been on the road for eleven hours. Eleven hours is enough for the youngest and fittest of dancers, but when your leader is 78 years of age, and has been dancing the same route for 55 years, there's no excuse for anyone younger taking it easy. Dick Shufflebottom continues to be an inspiration to his dancers. Quiet and modest, always shunning the limelight, Dick must have danced just about every dance, certainly up to lunchtime. 2012 was Ken Harvey's 40th Easter Saturday outing, and Martin McNulty's 25th. Martin had a double reason to celebrate, as his son Gavin was dancing out on his first Easter Saturday. At 27 years, Gavin is the youngest dancer for several years.

And there were more anniversaries. The two concertina players, Ian O'Brien and Harold Barnes,

each celebrated 40 years with the Nutters recently. Another concertina player, Allan Clarke, who is now 96, has recently been in hospital, but maintains a keen

www.coconutters.co.uk

interest.

Bacup is justifiably proud of its coconut dancers. The Leisure Centre (now called Bacup Hub) and the AB&D Centre organised special events, the Royal Court Theatre was open (and the Coconutters danced on the stage), The Natural History Museum had photographic displays and there's even a "Nutters Garden" in the centre of town. The dancers might attract visitors from afar, but the day is essentially a local celebration.



Left to right, Gavin McNulty (first year), Martin McNulty (25th year) and Ken Harvey (40th year), Easter Saturday 2012



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Letters To The Editor

To The Editor

From The Next Editor on a Superb Jigs Weekend

Well, it was quite a pleasant drive - no, really. The A50 is at its bosky best in the snow, and I wouldn't have missed it for worlds.

Last night Terry and I got as far as the Headington session, but I ran out of puff on the 'armonica and Terry - who's rather nervous of wide open spaces - kept running off to hide in the furthest corners of the Hall. Nonetheless, we washed up (we used eighteen plates each, just to keep a semblance of verisimilitude) and trotted down to the King's Head, where we kept both the locals entertained with some full-throated singing - shanties galore, bucolic ditties and all those songs that benefit from two-part harmonies (fortuitously). Terry consoled Nigel by pointing out how much we'd saved him on washing-up liquid, and while they were thus occupied I tried to interest Caroline in some Liverpool Lardy Cake (I've heard she's rather partial to a slice or three), but she avowed that she has lips only for the genuine Hampshire variety. The hussy!

Anyway, we stayed there until, ooh, must have been gone two ay-em easily, and hurrooed our way back up the road to the Hall. Terry presided over the bread pudding (must have been that ninth pint of Bass) and I hunted out the Scotch and handed it round. We kept the banter subdued so as not to disturb any one who'd turned in early, and there've been no complaints this morning, so it worked.

So, yes, this morning! After a good

kip (I didn't need my earplugs this year - bliss) I got up and took Terry a cup of tea, and he did the same for me. We went a bit silly with the trolley at one stage, but quickly mopped up and laid out things for breakfast. Terry could only manage five of his eggs, and I have to confess the seventh rasher nearly did for me, but they build 'em strong on Merseyside and we gradually got through what was left.

Fieldtown and Sherborne both went rather well, I thought - excellent playing and dancing - but then Terry returned from his morning constitutional and I had to start all over again. I can't pretend that we're looking forward to the Bledington session that much, as I've just seen how much lunch we've got to get through, but we'll do our best.

I'm more concerned about tonight's feast, though: who should sit at the top table? Terry thinks he should be in the place of honour because he paid up front while I'm just an ancillary worker and should concentrate on serving the meal. I told him that if we do it that way round he's also got to make the Immortal Memory speech which has to last a minimum of twenty-six and a third minutes (measured on the Willey Scale) and now he's sulking in the library pretending to read an erotic novel. Good thing I pretended to hide my hankies. Anyway, if I'm invited to, I fully intend to run through my entire repertory of Songs Stirring and Whimsical, which should give us long enough to let the Fricasee de Pilchardes Occidentale au Piquile Branstonne (served with Crunchy

Peanut Butter Medallions and Puree of Dew-Fresh Horseburger) settle a treat.

One good thing has emerged, though - we have so much grub left over that tomorrow's buffet lunch is taken care of, and if we can get up in time (subject to how wild things get in the pub tonight - I'm still hopeful of insinuating my lardy cake upon Caroline, despite what she said yesterday) to polish off Ascot/Oddington promptly (which has never been a problem in the past), we should be away by half-past eleven.

Obviously we'll sweep and mop, return all the keys, settle up with the accommodation secretaries and apologise for the state of the disabled toilet.

I have to own up: we can't find the Honesty Box for the beer payments. Terry says he thinks it got knocked under the stacks of chairs, but I can't see it anywhere. The best news is that we've managed to get through two of the barrels and have made a start on the third (though keeping some back, obviously, for the feast), so Dave shouldn't have much to do when he collects the empties. If I find the Box when we're tidying up tomorrow I'll hand over the contents when I'm next in your neck of the woods - less disbursements and other outlays, obviously - we did run out of toilet paper at one stage (and a very perilous stage it was, too), and a dash to Pasture Lane Stores was indicated.

Well, so far so good, and I think that this year's Jigs Instructional could be the most successful yet, judging by the feedback I've had from the

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The Morris Ring Circular Editorial



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New Squire, New Editor

So we welcome the new Squire, Robin Springett and wish him well in his two years in office. We say to Peter, the outgoing Squire that we wish him a gentle soft landing as he discovers his Squireship is now over. To the dancers off to sunny Australia have a safe journey and enjoy the experience. I am sure my successor as Editor, Tony Foard, will appreciate plenty of copy from that trip. Winchester Morris Men will be sixty on 11th March 2013 and the club will be visiting the pub where it started, The Eclipse Inn, in The

Square. Should be fun!

It is not always possible to include all articles, usually due to space and I apologise to Brian Pollard of Benfieldside for omitting his article on their overseas trip last year. I will forward this to the new Editor so he will at least have some copy for his first Edition. It is with a little sadness as I write my final editorial. I have thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of editing your magazine these last eight years, although I apologise for it being late

occasionally.

In this 'bumper' issue, I thank the contributors as well as thanking all the past contributors.

Please continue to support your Circular by supplying Tony with plenty of copy and in his new role I wish him well.

He is an excellent choice.

Contact for Tony:
thecircular@themorrisring.org
Happy Dancing!

H



.....continued from page 6

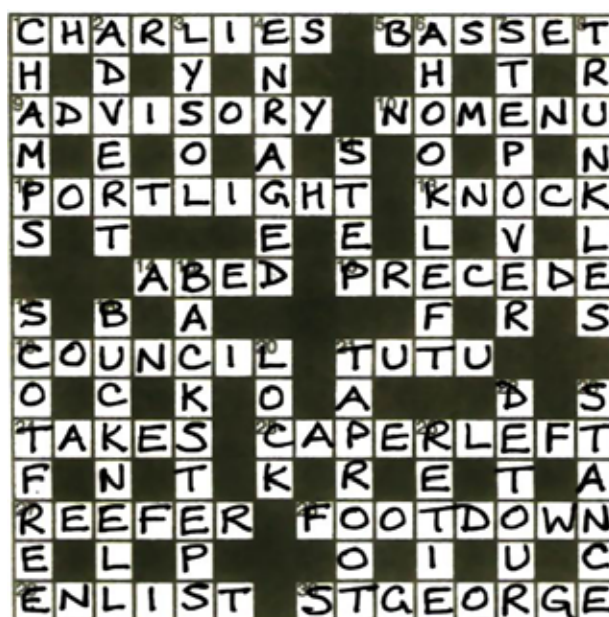
sample poll I undertook over coffee and biscuits this morning - half of those interviewed said it was really very good considering and the remaining 50% said he particularly valued the opportunity to learn so much from such skilled, talented and good-looking tutors and could I take my foot off his neck, please, as he was spilling his beverage.

We can't wait for next year's event!

Yours ever so,

Dan Frooty

Crossword Result



There were two correct answers, but both were disqualified- Peter Halfpenney for completing it before the plebs got hold of a copy, so shame on you; and the unnamed insider from Merseyside as it was a Scouser who compiled it. The Latter deserves the £42m prize but I had to return it to the Good Causes. Win some...Ed!

Ashdown Forest Morris Men: 40th Anniversary Tour

by Matt Beard

On Saturday 8th September 2012, members both past and present of the Ashdown Forest Morris Men gathered to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the formation of the side. Here's how it all went. As the wave of the early 70s Morris dance revival spread throughout England, in 1972 a group of like-minded young men, including members of East Grinstead Folk dance club, got together at East Grinstead Rugby Football Club (EGRFC) and formed a side to learn and perform some of the traditional English ritual dances of the Cotswold tradition. Casting around for a name for the side, what could have been more appropriate than to take the name of that part of the country over which they were most likely to range in performance? So it was that the Ashdown Forest Morris Men were born, and took for their colours the tones of the forest in autumn - green, brown and orange. Fast forward through the years, including countless heys, capers, rounds, stick clashes and the consumption of an estimated* 6100 gallons of Harveys bitter the Ashdown Forest Morris Men, still going strong, celebrated their 40th anniversary. To the best but somewhat faded recollection of those who were around at the time, the inaugural tour took in the Anchor at Hartfield, The Hatch Inn in Colemans Hatch, East Grinstead High Street, Standen House, a National Trust property in East Grinstead and finally the Red Lion in Chelwood Gate. After what was undeniably not the driest or the warmest of British summers, the 2012 dance season was brought to a close with our 40th anniversary tour recreating the inaugural tour of 1972.

The call was put out for members past and present to join us for this day of celebration and after a spring and summer spent chasing up as many contacts and leads as possible it was looking like there was a good chance that our 40th anniversary would be marked by the gathering together of 40 men from a total of 68 past and present members. As it turned out we had 35 on the day.

The day started where it would end, at the Red Lion in Chelwood Gate, where on a warm and bright



morning the men assembled to embark on a day of music, dance, beer and celebration. Thankfully the weather remained warm and sunny for the rest of the day. As transport for the day we travelled from stand to stand on a Southdown coach. I'm no coach spotter so all I can tell you is that it was green, it had big, curved roof windows and was very nice. However the souvenir programme that was produced for the day informed me that it was in fact a 1961 Southdown luxury model, fleet number 1722 and was originally used on nationwide tours. Anyway, it was everybody on the coach and off we went. First Stand of the day was at the Anchor in Hartfield. Once tankards were filled, although for some it was a little too early in the day for beer so cups of coffee were also on the go, the dancing began. We had one

notable spectator for this stand and that was founder member and first ever Squire Derek Usher. He was clearly delighted to meet members past and present and pleased to see that there was at least one new member (me) below the age of 41. Once the dancing was done it was down to the business of catching up and sharing a beer with old friends. Back on the coach and just a short drive up the road to the second stand of the day at The Hatch Inn, Colemans Hatch. The Hatch has been our regular Boxing Day dance venue for the past few years and always attracts a huge audience, leaving not much room for dancing however today the crowd was much smaller giving us a bit more room to spread out. It was at this stand that our mystical badger made his first appearance of the day. He's an ethereal creature of great

mystery, no one ever sees him arrive and no one ever sees him leave. In keeping with the strict timetable and the military precision for which the men of Ashdown Forest Morris Men are renowned, eventually someone decided it was probably about time we finished up our drinks and got back on the coach to make our way up to East Grinstead for the third stand of the day. As the coach rolled in to East Grinstead High Street with its cargo of men and musical instruments the Harveys bitter was starting to work its magic and the tunes and songs were coming thick and fast. For the stand in East Grinstead we danced on a conveniently recently paved area of the High Street in the older part of the town. Being late Saturday morning we attracted a sizeable audience, a mixture of our regular followers,

continued on next page.....

Morris widows and orphans and unsuspecting shoppers. For the most part the crowd appreciated the spectacle before them, however one young lad I spoke to was not impressed at having to hang around whilst his parents looked on. We danced outside the Casablanca Café who very kindly supplied free tea and proper coffee to anyone appearing in kit. It was now lunchtime so further refreshment -be it solid or liquid-was taken. With three pubs relatively close by a few of the men spent quite a lot of time working to balance the equation of distance to pub against quality of beer on sale and price of beer on sale, even going to the trouble of sending a scouting party out to each pub before making a decision. Fully rested and refreshed it was time to move on. The penultimate stand of the day was at Standen House, a country house on the outskirts of East Grinstead bequeathed to the National Trust in 1972, there's serendipity for you. Designed by architect Philip Webb it is decorated with William Morris carpets, fabrics and wallpapers. After some confusion and traffic congestion as a result of not knowing where to park everyone was off the coach and ready for more dancing. Dancing on the large green flanked by some impressive oak trees we attracted a good number of spectators who seemed to enjoy the entertainment. Once the dancing was done it was time to enjoy the warm afternoon

sun with tea and cakes, with the tea being on the house. The opportunity of a well-earned break, tea, cakes and the warm afternoon sun gave the men a chance (not for the first time that day) to practice the other great skill they possess, the art of milling about. Milling about generally involves the following things: a blank facial expression, directionless or aimless wandering in a very small radius and the reluctance to make a decision as to what to do next. As we had to give the coach back at six-thirty it was decided it was about time we headed back to the Red Lion in Chelwood Gate for the final stand of the day. Once back at the Red Lion the coach left and then men settled in for the final dancing of the day. Two sides were assembled face to face for a Vandals of Hammerwich, which when performed this late in the day runs the risks of much confusion in the hey when dancers 7 and 8 reach the top of the set as they need to remember where their set ends and not end up in the wrong one. Before moving on to a good meal, good beer and music and songs in the bar, one side of dancers were so impressed with their dancing efforts that they rewarded themselves with a Coronation Jig, any excuse for a Whisky. It was whilst at the Red Lion we also took a moment to remember and raise a glass of the Squire's pint to the memory of Steve Cairns, founder member and Squire for 32 years who sadly passed away in March

would be complete without a birthday cake and so it was we all tucked in to a mixture of plain and chocolate cake before rounding off the evening with music and songs. As the newest (this was my first season of dancing) and youngest member of the side it was a special day for me, not so much because of the connection with the past and past members of the side, I don't have that connection, but more so because of seeing the great friendships that have been formed and maintained, whether or not still dancing or still local to the side and the inspiration this provides to endeavour to make sure that future anniversaries are there to be celebrated. There are a few thanks to mention, our sponsors for the day Harveys of Lewes and The Hatch Inn, John Walden for producing the 40th Anniversary souvenir programme, the Red Lion at Chelwood gate for letting us take over their pub for the evening but most of all to all the past members who either made the effort to come and join us for the day or those who couldn't make it but sent us their best wishes. A very special thank you goes to Paul Carey for organising the whole day. In fact he made such a good job of it we made him Bagman. And finally, pictures of the day can be found on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/AFMM40 *As a tee total Morris man and only a recent recruit to Ashdown Forest Morris Men and to Morris dancing in general, I make no guarantee as to the accuracy of this figure however the waistline of some of the long standing members of the side suggests this figure is probably about right.

Matt Beard, Public Relations Officer (aged 40.25)



of this year. Once the dancing was finished for the day it was dinnertime and the Red Lion laid on a very nice Goulash. No birthday celebration

Hartley 60th Anniversary Year continued.....



Devil's Dyke Morris, right, and North British, below-dancing in, following election as members of The Morris Ring and their respective Squires collecting their Staff of Office from the Squire, Peter Halfpenney

The month of June was rounded off by our traditional tour of Shepherd Neame pubs in East Kent during which we bed down for two nights in the bar of The Gate at Marshside. Saturday was spent as usual touring Shepherd Neame pubs in the area on an open top bus followed by an extended singing session in the Gate on our return. A pleasant Sunday morning walk on the marshes helped clear the head before a final lunchtime display in the company of a few local Wantsum men.

The following day, Monday 2 July, was a complete contrast as we ventured out of our native

Kent to represent English culture at the Commonwealth Carnival of Music. This event was staged in Westminster Hall in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. The invited audience of several hundred included MP's, diplomats, and other dignitaries. We performed on the very spot from where The Queen, President Obama and Aung San Suu Kyi had recently delivered their respective speeches. To the best of our knowledge we were the first Morris side to have danced in this most hallowed venue in modern

times.

Kent to represent

English culture at the Commonwealth Carnival of Music. This event was staged in Westminster Hall in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. The invited audience of several hundred included MP's, diplomats, and other dignitaries. We performed on the very spot from where The Queen, President Obama and Aung San Suu Kyi had recently delivered their respective speeches. To the best of our knowledge we were the first Morris side to have danced in this most hallowed venue in modern

Later in July Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council invited us to represent local culture by 'entertaining' the crowds in Borough Green as the Olympic Flame was carried through. After dancing, the side formed a stick arch for the Police convoy and we were acknowledged by saluting officers as they passed through on their motorbikes. The Police car that followed them through can be seen on Youtube.

A week at the Broadstairs Folk Festival in the middle of August provided some relaxation for most of the side prior to presenting our 60th Anniversary Ring Members Meeting during the first weekend of September. This was attended by around 180 dancers and musicians and was our first venture into catering for a mixed meeting.



.....Hartley 60th Anniversary Year continued

In the event 10 female musicians attending who were adequately accommodated in spite of building works at the school causing some disruption to the facilities.

Despite advance planning we were rather taken aback when arriving at the school on the Thursday to erect a marquee and set up the 12 firkins of beer (which were all live) to find open trenches across the playground and main entrance. Luckily the offer of a few beers and bacon sandwiches was sufficient enticement for the site Foreman to get the trenches filled and tarmaced by close of work on Friday. Again we were blessed with good weather and five tours in two busses and a coach set off on Saturday morning. Two tours were combined on each bus but careful logistics meant they were each taken to different locations even utilising a steam railway. In fact one bus actually had a wedding booking during the lunch break, for which received a discount, but did mean its destination blind was showing Wedding Special.

This arrangement also meant that we could incorporate some mini massed displays during the day to which the officers were conveyed by minibus.

Speeches were kept to a minimum during the Feast to allow for Peter to pass over the Squireship to his successor Robin. This allowed ample time for festivities to transfer to the pubs in Wrotham village, our adopted home.

The Main massed display took place on Sunday on the lawn of Tonbridge Castle where Devils Dyke and North British Sword Dancers danced into full Ring membership. The Squire's badge of office was



ceremoniously transferred in the presence of the Mayor.

Following the display most of the attendees went to the Humphrey Bean, a nearby Weatherspoons pub, where lunch had been arranged. To say they did us proud would be an understatement. Tables were reserved for 124 and everyone had a choice of one of around 10 cooked meals on their menu. The system I had agreed with the manager worked like clockwork and during the session North British danced, Victory and others sang whilst the selection of 'reasonably priced' ales was adequately sampled.

It should perhaps be noted that not only was this one of the cheapest Meetings but no charge was made for beer/cider at the accommodation from 7pm Friday, most attendees enjoyed a cooked Sunday lunch and collections were in excess of £700.

As if all this activity was not enough for the side we had also accepted a booking to perform

for five days at the International Kite Festival in Dieppe only just over a week after the Morris Ring Meeting. Twelve men plus four partners, including one who was a guest musician from Woodchurch MM, set off on the 11pm ferry from Newhaven Tuesday 11 September arriving at 4am the next morning. With everything 'all found' we only had to pay for our beer so naturally we toured the local bars to find the best available. Our main 'official' commitment was a 30 minute stage performance each afternoon which we extended to around an hour by making use of the PA for some additional music and songs. The audiences were fantastic and seemed to appreciate our performances. We were also booked for a show in the Casino on Thursday evening and the main Dinner party on Friday. Of course we also managed some dances, singing and music around the town and on the return ferry Sunday evening.

The year is not over yet and we will have spent a day as guests of the Spa Valley Railway riding on their steam trains and sampling real ale at the Beer Festival they are holding in October in conjunction with CAMRA. We finish our anniversary year with Mummers Plays and then our Boxing Day tour rounding off a busy but enjoyable year. And who says the Morris is dying!!



Photos above: Massed dance, although all sets not doing the same sticking!

Left, The Hosts of the Morris Ring Meeting, Hartley Morris Men

*Photo's on pages 10 & 11
Terry Heaslip*

Bedford Morris Men - 80th

by John Frearson

Bedford History

Whilst the origins of Morris dancing are lost in the mists of time, those of Bedford Morris Men are well known. The Side was formed in 1932, in part, from members of Bedford EFDS, but more importantly, from ex-pupils of Clapham Road (now Livingstone) School, Bedford, who wanted to carry on with the Morris dancing that they were taught at school by their redoubtable Headmaster, Tommy Northern.

One of the staff at the school was Fred Hamer, who gave up football to learn the Morris, and would become Squire of Bedford Morris Men and later, Squire of The Morris Ring from 1950 to 1952. Bedford later produced another Ring Squire, David Welti.

The Bedford men have been associated with many events in Bedford and its neighbourhood, as well as representing the town and borough around the UK and abroad. The Side has been linked with Ickwell and its May Festival since 1947. That Festival started in the 19th Century and the Northill Mayers preceded it. The Ickwell May Morning tradition dates back some 40 years: Morris Sunderland, past Squire of The Morris Ring and, variously, a member of Letchworth, Bedford and Offley Morris Men, visited Ickwell one May Morning and a tradition started. Bedford Morris Men first danced at the Maypole at “dawn” on 1st May 1974. Both Letchworth and Offley Morris Men now dance as well, and with 100 or more spectators, it is a significant event. Bedford Morris Men dance Cotswold Morris on Wednesday evenings in the summer months.



In winter, disguised by blackened faces they dance Border Morris for a Christmas Tour; for the Boar's Head ceremony at the Swan Hotel on Boxing Day; and when performing the Branston Mummers' Play on Plough Monday.

On occasion the Side still dance a selection of North-West “Clog” dances, and in the past, used to perform the Rapper Sword dance of the North-East. A set of “Horns” (Red Deer antlers presented by the Duke of Bedford) appears on occasions for the Abbott's Bromley Horn Dance.

The 80th Anniversary

With an 80th Anniversary to celebrate, it was decided to expand the annual Bedford Day of Dance

into a weekend event and to give it a celebratory feel.

The weekend selected, 5th - 7th October, usefully and traditionally coincided with the Bedford Beer Festival - and the day

before, Anker Morris Men wrote on their Facebook page “Off to join Bedford Morris tomorrow to help them celebrate their 80th Anniversary. The question is ‘will we manage to leave the Bedford Beer Festival?’”

The event was based at the Bedford Guild House, which had space for indoor camping, and for those arriving on the Friday evening, food and beer was available until late. However, most then migrated to the Side's home from home, the Wellington Inn, which was only a few minutes walk away and provided its usual selection of a dozen or so “real ales” and a comfortable ambiance.

The weather forecast had been dire, and the wet summer was expected



n Anniversary Celebrations



to continue, however, the Saturday morning dawned clear, and whilst not the hottest day, it remained sunny and dry all day - yes indeed, the magic of the Morris! On the Saturday morning, the “campers” and the local Bedford men had a leisurely and hearty breakfast and later partook of coffee and doughnuts which were served to fortify the remainder who were arriving on the Saturday.

By 11am, once all the visitors had been accounted for, and with “returnees, retirees and country members” swelling the ranks and more Bedford Men than many had ever seen before, everyone was ready to start dancing off this initial excess! The guest Sides - all old friends - were Anker Morris Men from Nuneaton; East Surrey Morris Men; Letchworth Morris Men; and Manchester Morris Men. We were also joined by Bob Cross, past squire of The Morris Ring, and Paul Cross, both of whom had previously “joined” Bedford to help with numbers on a tour to Erlensee in Germany.

The first spot was the so called “Pigeon Square” in the town centre and the tour then moved to a site in Harpur Square, surrounded by the bustle of the Market. Two good spots and it was time for liquid refreshment and the tour moved on, slightly later than intended, to the 35th Bedford beer festival in the Harpur Centre.

“Bedfordshire Clangers”, a

specially commissioned batch of pastries with a bacon mix at one end and apple at the other, an all in one hand-held two course meal, were provided for lunch and washed down by a selection of ales. There was also a bit of dancing - despite the liquid distractions.

The programme then advised “Dancing in town again until we’ve had enough”. Three further spots were danced in town: outside Marks and Spencer; in Silver Street near the two stainless steel faces of the “Reflections of Bedford” sculpture”; and then outside the Swan Hotel, where the expected wedding party failed to materialise for their photo-opportunity!

As the guests all claimed to enjoy a “relaxed day”, it was time for a



cup of tea back at the Guild Hall, or a further visit (by the majority) to the Wellington Inn, where music was played and songs were sung - and, perhaps it should be mentioned that, as part of the rehydration process, further beers were sampled! Whilst the chance of further dancing spot outside was available, it seemed the rehydration alternatives were preferred!

By 7pm, the evening gusts were arriving at the Guild House, the barrels had been tapped and the contents tested. A number of Bedford’s senior members had been dancing during the day; some had been in the crowd and a good number more appeared for the

Feast.

The principal guest, Councillor Sylvia Gillard, Speaker of Bedford Borough Council, arrived and dinner was announced. After Squire, Ian Daye, had called the diners to order, and read out the apologies, including one from past Squire, David Welti, Angus Darling said Grace, and the Feast commenced, prepared by the ever tolerant and long-suffering wives, partners and friends making up the renowned Bedford Morris catering team. Especial thanks to them.

The meal started with Avocado à la Grecque, followed by a Ragoût of Beef, using Jersey beef from Cansford Farm, Cornwall, with Parsley Potatoes and Peas. A self service home-made pudding selection followed and a mouth-watering selection of traditional cheeses which remained available through the evening. Leicestershire’s Langton Brewery’s “Inclined Plane”, 4.2%, was provided from the barrels.

After the meal, the Loyal Toast was proposed by the Bedford Squire, and the Immortal Memory was proposed by John Frearson, Past Bagman of the Morris Ring. As well as the customary remembrance of Cecil Sharp, Fred Hamer was remembered as a collector of songs and dances and as a great founding influence on the Bedford side. After the Squire’s



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.....Bedford Morris Men 80th Anniversary

toast to the guests, Councillor Sylvia Gillard replied with some generous words and proposed the toast "The Bedford Morris Men - past and present".

A selection of Songs followed, during which the Loving Cup circulated. The Loving Cup was presented to The Morris Ring by Bedford Morris Men and friends, in memory of Fred Hamer, when he died in 1972. It is entrusted to their care when not required for Morris Ring events. It was appropriate that among the past Bedford Squires present was Fred's son, Hugh Hamer.

Before the formal procedures finished, the Bedford Squire

presented engraved glass tankards to three of his still active predecessor Squires, Adrian Besant, Les Skinner and Clive Haste, these presentations having been missed on the appropriate earlier occasions!

The tables were cleared, and dancing of the old favourites began, MC'd by another past Bedford Squire, Roger Dorman. Among the massed musicians, was Roger Nicholls, a past Squire, Foreman, Musician and Bedford honorary life member - and like Fred Hamer, an EFDSS Gold badge holder, and who had assisted Fred with both collecting and dealing with the music, when

Fred had become blind. Other past Bedford Squires present included: Derek Collins; Bruce Garner; Geoff Nicholson; Mike Sargeant and Simon Melvin - as well as those still active with the Side.

Dancing and conviviality continued until late, and for those staying the night, a cooked breakfast was provided on Sunday morning, before the great clear up. All in all a splendid event, which from the thank-yous received, was enjoyed by all who attended.

John Frearson is the Archivist, Bedford Morris Men, and Past Bagman of The Morris Ring.



Photos: page 13, Bedford at the Beer Festival, Page 14 left, East Surrey , middle, massed dance in Harpur Square, and right, bottom, Manchester close by; This page-above, top left, clockwise, Bedford, Anker, Bedford with 2 Crosse's, and Massed Dance

All Photos in this article are courtesy of John Frearson

Monkseaton Morris Men Weekend of Dance

14th – 16th September 2012

by Andrew Morris

Monkseaton Morris Men ran one of their largest and arguable most successful weekends of dance over the weekend on the 14th – 16th September.

The weather turned out to be better than expected with glorious sunshine on the Saturday although the dancing was about what was expected – sensational!

We had sides from Greensleeves, Westminster, Yateley, Moulton, Saddleworth, Utrecht and Redcar which meant two tours of around 50 men were organised.

The large numbers of dancers unfortunately meant that dancing was restricted to a couple of dances per side per dance spot but on the



Moulton Morris Men dancing at South Shields



Redcar Sword above and Saddleworth below at the King's Arms, Seaton Sluice

plus side this left a bit of time for sun bathing and refreshments.

One tour headed south to South Shields which meant we had to persuade Utrecht to go on yet another ferry but they seemed reasonably happy especially when the rum was handed round.



Dancing took place in King Street and outside the Town Hall before a well earned drink at the Maltings where we had difficulty getting the men away from the 6 draft beers and sport on TV. The lure of Lunch eventually worked its magic.

The other tour headed north to Morpeth where the appreciative crowds broke all records for their generosity and collecting tins rattled very happily.

Lunch at the Kings Arms, Seaton Sluice, saw all of the teams together performing under cloudless blue skies.

The afternoon some relaxed dancing at a couple of pubs before all teams had some tea home baked cakes back at the local school. The cakes were made by the wives,

girlfriends and daughters on Monkseaton Morris Men and prompted one of Saddleworth to comment that he intended to become a Mormon so he could marry all of the Monkseaton Morris Men's wives just for all of the cakes.

A mass show took place outside the Ship Inn, Monkseaton where it was noticeable that all of the teams raised their game and the dancing was again top notch.

The teams then retired to enjoy a feast prepared by Monkseaton's resident chef Jane Watson assisted by the wives, girlfriends and daughters of Monkseaton.

The weather on the Sunday prevented dancing outside however this did not stop the



teams dancing inside for the diners at the Monkseaton Arms

Then it was more food before the teams departed on their quite lengthy journeys.

Monkseaton would like to thank all of the teams who attended and for making it such a memorable event.

i n v o l v e d

Above, Monkseaton at the Monkseaton Arms, and below, Moulton Morris Men at the Ship

All Photos, Monkseaton Morris Men



The Squire's Capers II

As a curtain raiser to the spring I joined the Mother's Union. Not as a member, you understand, but I joined them at one of their meetings to talk on and demonstrate Morris dancing. Forging links with the local community is to be encouraged. It is always a worthwhile exercise as recognition can lead to all sorts of opportunities for bookings and recruitment.

As spring dawned, sadly the first time I donned kit was to attend the funeral of John Colbert, that much-loved Stafford Man. It was the first of several funerals of Morris notables that darkened 2012. A splendid turnout served to support John's family and to underline his popularity.

As is usual over the Mayday weekend, Harthill went on tour with Three Shires Ladies Clog, this time exploring the tourist attractions of Northeast Derbyshire. Highlights included a journey on the Butterley railway, dancing first on the platform for an appreciative crowd before boarding a handsome steam train and chugging a couple of miles through the Derbyshire countryside. It was unfortunate that, as the day wore on a bitterly cold wind kept folk indoors and the audience of one man and his dog was whittled down yet further when even the dog went home.

But what a change the following day! An early start in bright sunshine for the long drive up to Goathland in North Yorkshire was richly rewarded at a historic gathering of traditional Longsword sides. The Plough Stots hosted the weekend and were graced by contributions from Handsworth, Grenoside, Flamborough, Snark and the rare attraction, Papa Stour from the Shetlands. This truly was an awesome demonstration of Longsword from the sides at its very roots.

With the doors of the dancing season kicked open wide, I launched into a frantic spring and summer chock full of memorable weekends. North Wood opened the batting in May with their annual Day of Dance. Richmond-on-Swale hosted a similar low-key weekend just 7 days later in North Yorkshire. Again dancing in remote villages, the point was to enjoy our art, the scenery and the company rather than seeking out bigger crowds in the shopping malls of the larger towns. No feasts or formality: indoor camping in a village hall tucking into a fish & chip supper all helped to keep costs to a minimum and to entice even the most impoverished of

our brethren to fork out the attendance fee and come.

At the other end of the scale was the Chipping Campden National meeting in May. Set to be the biggest weekend gathering of the season, we all looked forward to dancing in the villages of origin of Cotswold Morris. Beset by organisational hurdles, Steve Felton faced all difficulties with fortitude and, with the support of Chipping Campden, Ilminster and Shakespeare, delivered a most memorable weekend. The weather was kind, the food excellent, and the dancing well executed. There is no greater joy than to dance Adderbury in Adderbury, Bledington in Bledington, Ilmington in Ilmington and so forth. I hope it will not be long before another side adjacent to the region organises another Cotswold meeting.

Over the Whit Bank Holiday East Surrey Morris Men have conducted an annual excursion to Rye and the surrounding area for over 50 years. In harness with Greensleeves and Barnsley Longsword this year they danced at no less than 17 venues over two and a half days. This is very much a family weekend and Lesley and I were very glad that we accepted a kind invitation to join them. So long have East Surrey engaged with the locals here that audience turn out to greet and support the Morris in great numbers. The picturesque dancing venues are the icing on the cake. I must compliment Bert Cleaver's contribution as, for three days, he played exclusively for Greensleeves, Barnsley Longsword and most of my jigs with hardly a falter. Stamina and breath beyond the call of duty!

I fled the shores of the English Channel early on the morning of 4th June for a pleasant drive up to Lichfield to join in Bower Day. The city is thronged with thousands of people for this event and memory of poor weather the previous year was dispelled by the sunshine and spectacle of 2012. Green Man's Morris conducted the proceedings and made all Morris participants welcome as they always do.

Unusually the annual Thaxted meeting was not the first national gathering of the season this year. Following two gargantuan efforts celebrating jubilee milestones, it was expected that their 2012 weekend would be a smaller affair and that it was. Size really doesn't matter and the atmosphere pervading

this annual pilgrimage was, as always, tangible. In my personal view all Morris Ring members should participate in and enjoy the Thaxted experience at least once. It is a Mecca for the Morris. Happy birthday to Chalice MM. They clocked up their ruby anniversary this year and what better way to celebrate their 40th than inviting enough Morris men to fill a bus and exercising their skills around the Somerset countryside. A homely barbeque courtesy of Dr Paul & wife Tinkie was a flavoursome start to the weekend. The rafters of their barn shook to some robust singing indoors whilst outside certain imbibers of the home-produced cider discreetly proved that their stomachs were not quite so robust! A pleasant tour on Saturday visited Weston-Super-Mare seafront as well as inland villages and thankfully the gathering clouds declined to spill their contents until the evening. The intended pre-feast dancing was eclipsed however by a deluge. On reflection it is miraculous that, in this summer of the wettest drought on record, this was the only venue I attended when a dancing display had to be cancelled. The power of the Morris eh? A stout breeze on Sunday morning dispelled the clouds and bright, warm sunshine encouraged an accomplished dancing performance in the park at Weston.

Following the success of the 2011 JMO national day of dance in Sheffield, it was nice to let someone else do the work in 2012. The turn of the Open Morris to organise led us to Stratford-on-Avon where some 600 performers enjoyed a grand day out. A heavy shower before the off did little to dampen spirits and aside from a couple of rather grotty shopping precinct venues (come on Stratford – with all those tourist dollars rolling in, surely you can smarten up these black holes?) it was a delight to entertain Shakespeare's stomping ground with our culture.

We cannot say that we were fêted by the organisers of the cultural Olympics during 2012. We eventually muscled in on the periphery where we could. Many sides engaged with the torch bearing processions and various appearances on local and national radio helped to bolster the image of Morris but disappointment that we were denied the opportunity to put on a massed performance was evident. The day was saved by Blackheath MM who, together with Bristol Rag Morris (Open), had been engaged to perform

The Squire's Capers II continued

as part of the closing ceremony of the games. They have to be congratulated not only for executing a splendid display under considerable pressure from the artistic director but also for keeping their involvement secret for so long. In mid July another anniversary loomed. Letchworth MM from our first Garden City hosted a National meeting in celebration of their 90-year history. Once again the weather threatened to send us scurrying for cover but thankfully we were able to dance through the heavy drizzle on the odd occasion when showers coincided with performance. Thoughtful provision of a gazebo at the only really damp venue ensured that our musicians remained dry. How did Letchworth know that it was going to rain at that exact spot and time, clever fellows? Theo and his team did a sterling organisational job over the weekend and their clockwork precision made for another memorable and comfortable event.

Hardly pausing for breath I galloped up to Buxton the following weekend with my home side to take part in the annual festival there. This jewel in the Peak District is a cracking venue for a coach-free day of dance. Our hosts, Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris Men, engineered the day to perfection. The sun shone, the company was delightful and dancing outside the Pavilion at the close of play was, as ever, a treat.

A rare opportunity to spend a weekend at home arose on the final weekend of July. Most of our sides enjoy regular or occasional engagements for charitable purposes. Harthill had opportunity to bring cheer to a local nursing home with a dance and singing display before moving onto our home turf, The Beehive at Harthill, where a weekend beer festival was in full swing. Ever willing to help and support local events, we drank as much as we could. Oh yes, we danced as well!

On 23rd July I had visited Mike Hammond in a hospice just outside Lichfield. Formerly an Escafeld man in Sheffield, Mike had joined Green Man's Morris on a work related move to the Birmingham area. I had known of his cancer for some considerable time but his worsening condition was reaching a critical point. It was to be only a fortnight later that we laid him to rest. His gentle personality and infectious smile made him popular with all and we were not surprised to

find an impressive number of mourners present that day to celebrate his life.

My summer had been hectic and it was with some relief that I retreated from weekend engagements for the lion's share of August. I also needed to gird my loins for the full on Saddleworth Ruchcart weekend over the August Bank holiday. It has been mercifully rare that the weather has rained on this parade and, although it was less than clement from time to time, we made a brave fist of it and soldiered on through several sharp showers. An awesome turnout of the host side saw some 24 men ranting outside The Commercial before launching the cart on Saturday. This was Saddleworth at their beaded best, and the cheers that echoed around Upper Mill at the flourishing finish to the Rushcart dance was deafening.

My Squireship was cruising to a close. Robin Springett, Squire Elect, was waiting in the wings, eager to lead the Morris Ring forward for the next two years and the traditional handover took place at the final National meeting of the year. How appropriate it was that Hartley Morris Men in Kent would host this. The first side I ever saw dance and that had ignited Morris interest in me. The side whence my predecessor as Squire of the Morris Ring had come. The side with which I have spent several happy weekends over the past two years. Proud of their heritage and reputation, Hartley pulled out all the stops to ensure that this event encapsulated all that is good about Morris; clockwork precision and a fine spirit and atmosphere pervading the gathering; wholesome food and beer; lovely singing opportunities; super dancing venues ending with a most memorable morning in the grounds of Tonbridge Castle. It was a fitting send off for me and a generous welcome to Robin. My diary has not been drained of engagements during the twilight months of the year. I have enjoyed a fine day of dance bathed in warm sunshine with Manchester Morris Men, a stimulating evening with Cambridge as part of their desperate recruitment drive and a very pleasant family party with Foresters MM to mark their diamond jubilee. I joined Rutland Morris Men for a particularly pleasant weekend in October and again visited Cambridge for their 89th feast. Three significant Morris gatherings have taken place in November. I travelled to Gravesend to pay final respects to my pal Martin Harris, Fool of Hartley Morris

Men who had come to the end of his long journey battling cancer. Successful Fools must have larger than life character and Martin had it in spades.

Just a week ago I attended the funeral of Past Squire of the Morris Ring, Ivor Allsop. I had been invited to deliver the eulogy on behalf of the MR and it was an honour to do so. He was a great contributor to the Morris Ring and a friend whom I have known for over 30 years. Some 250 turned out in tribute; testament to a much loved and highly respected Past Squire.

A much-needed happy occasion presented itself just a few days later. I tootled the few miles up the road to Barnsley along with some 50 other houseguests to raise a glass or several in salute to Bert Cleaver, Past Squire of the Morris Ring, as he celebrated his 80th birthday. How nice it was to dispel the gloom of recent loss with a real cause for merriment. I wish him well.

Likewise to all in this great and glorious organisation that is the Morris Ring. It has been a privilege to stand as figurehead for the past two years, working hard to better the strengths of the Morris Ring and to eliminate or marginalize its weaknesses. The 'back office team' of Charlie Corcoran, Eddie Worrall and Steven Archer has been a pleasure to work with and the steadying advice of the Advisory Council and the many wise men and women of the Morris world has helped to keep me on track. I extend my most sincere thanks to all who have supported me during my office

We have achieved a great deal in the past two years and I like to think that the Morris Ring is a stronger entity now than when I first aspired to Office. There is still work to do and I wish Robin well in his voyage over the next two years. I have just one piece of advice for him; never forget that there is a multitude of wonderful people in our fellowship and that there will always be one of them who can help find the solution to the Gordian Knot, however unapparent it may seem.

Peter J Halfpenney
Past Squire of the Morris Ring
November 2012

The Foresters, Nottingham's Other Legend

by *Stewart Thompson & Eric Foxley*

"Give us an F; Give us an O", shouted Mike Wilkinson to the cheering crowd. Fortunately somebody stopped him at that point. After all it was the 60th anniversary of the "Foresters Morris and Sword Dancing Club" and the men were waiting for their steak pies.

The Foresters were formed in Nottingham in 1952. At this time the side performed Cotswold Morris under the expert tuition of Frances Downing. The rapper sword dancing was taught and lead by Ted Ward. In 1956 the Foresters were admitted to the Morris Ring



at a meeting attended by a very young Eric Foxley who was then dancing with Thames Valley. A couple of weeks later Eric moved to Nottingham, joined the Foresters and is now the longest serving member of the side.

The Foresters now perform dances from twelve traditions and appear regularly at events in and around Nottingham. However, in an attempt to sample ale from every corner of the globe, members of the side have become national and international travellers. It is not uncommon to find a Forester dancing in North America and Australia. The side has also danced



regularly in Brittany, performing in small villages and on stages at large festivals. Next year the Foresters anticipate having a full side at the Adelaide Ring meeting. In the last ten years the Foresters have opened a gas powered electricity generating station, performed in a chemical works, tossed up a few brides, appeared at the Nottingham Beer Festival, cheered up a caravan site, got arrested by some soldiers from the Sealed Knot, danced on stage in front of the delegates at the



International Women's Institute conference, ridden on tandems whilst playing music at VeloCity, and a whole host of other things that would fill this edition twice over. The Foresters are also well known for their bawdy Plough Plays and harmonious singing. Ken Bramman, the side's fool, is often heard before seen at Ring meetings.

At their 50th anniversary some people said the Foresters couldn't last much longer. Despite five

members needing urgent or substantial medical treatment during the intervening years, all the side made it through to the 60th celebrations which were held on Saturday 29th September. Even more surprising was the standard of dancing. It had actually improved. Dolphin, Lincoln and Micklebarrow, with one representative from Broadwood, joined the Foresters for the dancing in Nottingham City Centre. This



was followed in the evening by a meal and a ceilidh, attended by all the ex-Foresters who could make it. Stewart Thompson, the Foresters squire, wound up the celebrations by inviting them back for the 75th anniversary in 2017.

You can see more pictures of the anniversary on the forester's website www.foresters-morris.org.uk. Use the links to find out what they are up to. If you are an early riser come and join us for our May morning celebrations by the famous Robin Hood statue at Nottingham Castle at dawn – about 5:20am. We may even offer you breakfast!

Stewart Thompson and Eric Foxley are The Foresters Squire and Bagman, respective;y.

Photos clockwise from top, Ted Ward circa 1967, Nottingham, 2011, an OWTU, May Day and Foresters in Wollaton Park, in 1969.

Copyright Foresters Morris Men

The White Horse Summer Tour Diamond Jubilee

by Steven Archer

On 25th August 2012 a line of people, dressed in various costumes, stood at the X3 bus stop in Fordingbridge eagerly awaiting the arrival of the 9.24 to Salisbury. Sporting more bus passes than is healthy for a morris side, they were the vanguard of the "August Morris Revival" setting out to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the first White Horse West Country Summer Tour.

The first stop was Downton for a quick practice outside the Red Lion; many of the men had not danced together for over 20 years. Then everyone back on the bus to Salisbury for a walking tour of the city, collecting more men on the way.

What a far cry this was from the original tours in the early 50's when John Burgess, Bill Bush, Roger Pinniger, Harry Ross, Francis Clayton, Ioan Jenkins, Jack Sleeman, Peter Boyce, Martin Westlake, Bert Clever and many others packed their tents and morris kit into their cars and drove off to Torquay for a week's camping and dancing. Here is a picture and press report of the first tour dated 20th August 1952.



They don't write reports like that any more.



A member of the crowd was heard to say "from the promenade I saw them dancing on the sands. Then they came up and danced on the prom. I'd never seen anything like it. I wondered who they were and what they were doing it for."



Some things haven't changed in 60 years.

In those days the men used to camp and dance round the area for a week but in 1954 they graduated to indoor camping in Kingskerswell Village Hall. John Burgess remembers the occasion when they befriended the chorus girls from Paington's end of the pier show and took them back for a party at the village hall. Jack Sleeman, an accomplished amateur magician showed the girls a few tricks. Yes those were the days John; fat chance of showing a chorus girl a few tricks now.

John also recalls dancing Laudnum Bunches at the Dartington Hall Summer School to music played by Winsome Bartlett, one of Cecil Sharp's musicians.

Frank Rhodes remembers he and Michael McNamara from Winchester Morris joined some of the tours. Collections from coach parties were so good in Widecombe that the following year the village bobby told them they could not collect because of objections from local traders who were losing sales. That's community policing.

In 1973 the tours moved to Sandy Balls, Martin Westlake's farm and evolved into "The August

Tour", held during the Bank Holiday week. It became a family affair so as to include the increasing number of children. Martin led the way with 6 of his own. Through association and invitation over the years, men from other sides were invited until there were dancers from Bathampton, Bourne River, Coventry, Cup Hill, Exeter, Martletts, Ravensbourne and White

Horse. This included 6 fathers and sons dancing, a children's sword



team, a broom dance and ladies clog as well as the core Cotswold repertoire.

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The White Horse Jubilee continued

There were daily tours to show off the increasing range of dances but there was always time for communal meals and silly games at the farm; team land skiing, egg throwing, piggy back and three

legged racing and the galley competition; some knees never quite recovered.

By 1991 the next generation were largely grown up and the stamina for a week's tour was fading and so the tours stopped. But with the 60th anniversary looming John Whelan and I decided to revive it for one more time. And so it was that 19 dancers and musicians from the original tour, including the Davey and Dauncey father and son duos, came for their final stop at Sandy Balls on that Saturday afternoon. Martin Westlake joined us; we entertained the crowd and once more drew in the local children for a dance,



then we finished with Bonny Green and a photo in front of the gypsy caravan.

Sadly this was the last time Martin came out. He died on 22nd September with this photo by his bed. Truly the end of an era but as John Wippell said "the New Forest tour should be kept alive in his memory".

Steven Archer is the Treasurer of The Morris Ring



All the photos were supplied by Steven Archer and are described or referred to in the article



Abingdon day of Dance

by Tony Legge

Records at St. Helen's Church, Abingdon, show that a Morris side was dancing here in 1560. At the end of the 18th century it is known that the Abingdon dancers went on an annual circuit, which took them as far as Richmond in Surrey. Early in the 20th century the visit to Abingdon by dance collector Mary Neal resulted in a visit to London by the then Mayor of Ock Street and a musician. The side appeared in the streets of the town in years prior to the Great War. Along with sides from Chipping Campden, Headington Quarry and Bampton, Abingdon enjoys the reputation of being a truly traditional "Cotswold" side.

Annually in Abingdon we still elect our Mock Mayor, the "Mayor of Ock Street" as the Squire of Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers. For many years members of the Hemmings family, first by Thomas, held the office then his son James. In 1937 James' youngest brother Henry became Mayor, followed by James' son Tom and then by Tom's nephew, Raymond. In 1964 Charlie Brett was elected, and in 1980 Leslie Argyll became Mayor, and was followed by Stuart Jackson (another Hemmings family member). The current Mayor is Roger Cox, whose great,



Abingdon battering their fool, Duncan Brown

great uncle, Charles Cox had been Mayor in 1896.

On the Saturday closest to the 19th June (i.e. the anniversary of the ancient Abingdon Horse Fair) a voting box is placed outside the Brewery Tap public house in Ock Street. All persons living in Ock Street receive a ballot paper before Election Day and are entitled to vote. The candidates for the election are usually members of Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers. At 4pm the votes are counted under keen scrutiny (The Mayor of Abingdon, the Town Clerk and the side's chaplain) and the result is publicly announced. The new mayor is invested with the regalia of the office and the morris dancers perform a dance or

serving Mayor then by tradition he is re-elected. The ceremony and dancing is carried out each year whether or not an election is held. The day's dancing is enhanced by the presence of invited visiting dance groups.

The Mayor's regalia consists of the Mayor's sash, sword, cup and the Ock Street Horns. It is said that in 1700 a farmer named Morris (perhaps the Abingdon benefactor John Morris) presented a black ox to roast in the Bury (market place) for some celebration. The people who assembled took up some form of dancing and an argument arose as to who should have the horns. This developed into a fight and the residents of Ock Street challenged those of the Vineyard for possession. This being the



Roger Cox, Mayor for another year

Brian Skyrme (for it is he!) learns the true meaning of Playford



two in his honour. Then the Mayor is chaired and carried down Ock Street and back. After tea the dancers perform in turn outside a number of the public houses in the town. The Mayor of Ock Street serves one year. If no one wishes to stand against the

west end of the town versus the east, a chalk line was drawn at the foot of the Vineyard and another outside the "Cock and Tree" in Ock Street. The fight began on the Bury (or Market Place) and those who drove or beat the other over the chalk line were to be the winners of the horns. Sticks, stones, fiery torches and bare fists were put into this grim tussle for ownership. The Ock Street men were victorious and through

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Abingdon day of Dance continued



The Winster King and Queen

successive generations the horns have remained in the possession of the Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers. The mayor's cup, it is said, to have been made from a club used in the melee. The sword is reputed to be an 1805 naval officer's sword.

The loss of many of the young men in the 1914 – 1918 war depleted the side, and dances were performed in private until 1935 when the side re-emerged and Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers once again taking its time-honoured place in Abingdon life. The establishment in the 1950's of Laboratories at Harwell and Culham and the resultant infrastructure saw Abingdon's population increase from 5000 to 30000+. In 1978 the side was awarded the Europa prize for Folk-art by the F.V.S. Foundation of Hamburg in recognition of its

outstanding contribution to British and European folk culture.

This year's election duly took place on June 16th, Roger Cox was re-elected Mayor of Ock Street for 2012/2013 in the presence of guest sides Winster Morris Dancers and The Vale Islanders, a Playford group based near Abingdon. The three sides danced

around the town from 10am until 3.30pm and the ballot was closed at 4pm. Voting results were: Roger Cox 93 votes, Robert Beaver 53 votes, Harry Knight 37 votes, Dave Beaver 17 votes, and so Roger, who has been Mayor since 2007, was chaired up and down Ock Street. Dancing resumed and carried on until 8pm, when the side and its guests retired to supper in Abingdon's old Abbey buildings.

2013's election is on June 22nd.



**Marching behind the Ock Street Horns
(carried by ex Mayor of Ock Street Stuart Jackson)**



Winchester Morris Men Walking Tour of Winchester

by Colin Andrews

I'd never really visited Winchester before. Exeter Morris Men regularly received an invite to the day of dance, and had accepted on the odd occasion in the past, but I'd always been 'doing other things'. No excuses this time.

The meeting, on first Saturday in September 2012, at a time of 10.30 am was sensible, in that we didn't have to get up at some ungodly hour for the journey,



and in fact we arrived with time to spare for a coffee.

As a veteran of many days and weekends of dance, I wasn't expecting much in the way of deviations from a standard format, but there were to be a few surprises in store which really made the occasion memorable and enjoyable. Firstly, instead of hordes of morrismen from umpteen sides there were just three – ourselves, our hosts, and Long Man from Sussex, whom we knew from previous events.

Secondly, the day started not with dancing but with a guided visit to the Royal Greenjackets Military Museum. This was something which I would have been very unlikely to have done



on my own initiative, but I found it very fascinating. So much so, that in spending time studying the exhibits I was frequently scurrying to catch up with our whistle-stop guide, and unfortunately only caught fragments of his well-informed commentary. The Winchester Morris Men had organised a number of good dancing spots; outside the museum, on a square close to the cathedral (where some of the North Korean Paralympic Team were sightseeing), down by the river, and by a cross in the main shopping street. Another unusual feature was a display for the residents of two sheltered homes in historic almshouses.

With the day scheduled, as I thought, with a feast in the evening,



Top, Exeter Morris Men in the Square left, Long Man at the Alms Houses and above, Winchester Morris Men in The Buttercross, all in the City of Winchester

Photos: Harry Stevenson

I was anticipating a standard ploughman's for lunch, so the generous and tasty roast was also unexpected. And the evening meal wasn't a feast as such but an informal gathering in a hall with an excellent two course buffet. It was a pity that Long Man missed out on this, setting off home as soon as the dancing had finished. With depleted numbers a pre-supper session in a real ale pub never quite got going. Despite some excellent singing and music from the Winchester Men after the meal, our long journey back to Exeter also meant that we were only able to make a token contribution to an evening of song and dance. I suspect also that the Winchester Men had to drink most of the barrel of ale themselves – but that's one of the hardships of organising a day of dance! I'd like to offer my thanks to Winchester Morris Men for setting up an inspiring and thoroughly enjoyable day of dance. They even arranged good weather.

Colin Andrews is a member of the Exeter Morris Men. Colin is also Editor of the Morris Federation Newsletter

Eulogy from The Morris Ring

Ivor Allsop, 1st August 1930 – 2nd November 2012

Delivered at Grenoside
Crematorium, Monday 19th
November 2012



Ivor Allsop was Squire of the Morris Ring from 1978 – 80, a post he described as a ‘Benevolent Dictatorship’. As a component part of any organisation or group activity, particularly at management level, one can approach such involvement from two directions. What can I get out of it, or what can I put back into it? It was the latter, benevolent approach that Ivor favoured and before, during and after his term in Office he dedicated much of his life to collecting and collating archival material for the Morris Ring. The work he did was outstanding.

Ivor was down-to-earth, unassuming and unpretentious. He was a little shy in front of an audience, but he also fought shy of too much pomp when he saw that in others. His approach was one of lower public profile but more one-to-one contact. Thus quietly and behind the scenes he was a source of great encouragement and support to so many in the Morris and folk world in general.

As a popular Squire, Ivor was inevitably invited to many a feast during and after his Office. Vegetarianism was not as common in those days and it was often the case that the plate of sliced meat and veg placed before him had to be whisked away, the meat removed and an emergency substitute found. All too often this was just cheese. The lightest snack so served was simply potatoes with a lump of cheese. The meal had however been jazzed up as a nod to haute cuisine – the potato had been mashed!

My personal memory of Ivor is viewed so often through a kitchen hatch. Attendees of the jigs instructionals in Sarrat and other such gatherings will remember him playing sous-chef to Bert Cleaver’s Gordon Ramsey.

Ivor was a member and honorary member of several Morris sides over the years, but his main love was of the Longsword Dances, some of which he introduced to the Barnsley Longsword Side, the side he helped form in 1968. Incidentally Barnsley joined the MR in 1972, receiving their membership staff at the Huddersfield Ring meeting from the then Morris Ring Squire, Mr Bert Cleaver. Another lifetime friendship forged through the fellowship of Morris.

His deep affection for folk custom and tradition is legendary and his knowledge thereof, if not encyclopaedic, was certainly extensive. If he couldn’t answer a folk related query directly from memory he was able to consult his extensive personal library and usually come up with a result. Author himself, his Longsword Dancing publication has become the sword equivalent of Bacon’s Black Book,* as the definitive reference.

Another work by Ivor never far from my hand over the past two years is the aptly if lengthily named booklet, ‘Information on Regalia,

Gifts and Doles together with notes on the Advisory Council, The Morris Ring Logo and the Morris Ring Archive’. This is a very readable and well-researched catalogue of the paraphernalia and customs attaching to the Morris Ring. These publications, as with all things Morris, are available from our Morris Ring Shop and of course come with free advice entitled ‘a shopkeeper’s view of how the world should be run’.

The Morris Organisations are not the only folk art groups that revere Ivor. His contribution to the world of folk has been recognised by the EFDSS by the award of their gold badge. Folk dancing was an activity he could enjoy together with his beloved Joyce Mary whose life we celebrated in this very place on Maundy Thursday just 19 months ago. Much of his time since then without Joyce by his side has been tough for him but he endured in his usual low-key, uncomplaining manner with the unfailing support of his son, Philip and Ivor’s many friends.

The debt of gratitude owed him by the Morris Ring and others is immense. Ivor will be held in great affection by all who knew him and the regard and respect he earned is underlined by the huge turnout today; testament to a great man.

There is another avuncular, jolly, white bearded gentleman associated with the approaching season. This year I think that the angels & Joyce will be enjoying a magnificent Xmas present from Santa, albeit a little early.

Peter J Halfpenney
Past Squire of the Morris Ring