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The Morris Ring *Circular*

Steve Adamson 1955-2013

Charlie Corcoran joined members of Steve's family, friends and colleagues to celebrate the life and achievements of the former Morris Ring Treasurer at his funeral in Shipley on December 13th

The high esteem in which Steve was held is clearly demonstrated by the attendance of 160 plus people representing 50 or so sides from all over the country and across all three of the Morris organisations who attended his funeral. In addition his family received many many more expressions of condolence and regret at being unable to attend.

Christine, Steve's older sister, and his twin Michael, set the scene – the funeral was definitely a celebration of BfB's life. His siblings both painted an amusing, poignant picture of someone who had been larger than life, for part of the time literally, in what they said. Steve had always, it would seem, a single-minded determination to do well at whatever he got involved with. Bob Carter, formerly of Boar's Head Morris and more recently of Great Yorkshire Morris, reminisced about Steve's early days in the Morris and Bob Cross spoke about more recent times. Peter Halfpenney led the singing of the *Holmfirth Anthem (Pratty Flowers)*, the Jockey musicians led a medley of Steve's favourite Cotswold tunes and there was a period of reflection while we listened to Pachelbel's *Canon in D Major*, but the most moving moment was listening to a recording of Steve playing *Nella Fantasia* by Ennio Morricone.

I recalled what Bob Bradley, of Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men, had penned as this summed up what so many others have said and written:

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Steve Adamson with admirers at Willaston-in-Wirral during the Liverpool Meeting in 2008. Little Willie prepares to collect.

Mersey Morris Men



p1 *Steve was one of Morris's real characters and someone who worked extremely hard for the Morris Ring as an organisation and for the benefit of dancers, musicians and fans throughout the land. As a team we didn't come across Steve very often, so didn't know him well. He was a significant presence at the Morris meetings that Horwich attended. We were aware of his work as treasurer, a difficult task in managing the income and spending of significant sums of money and in reporting clearly at Annual Representatives Meetings. We have been impressed with the way he developed the Morris Shop, so that it was able not only to respond to the specific, minority needs of Morris dancers, for bells, sources of fabric for baldrics and other wearables, but in the way he built up the stock of books and recorded music, almost impossible to find at the time in other*

"mainstream" outlets. On at least one occasion Steve loaded up his well-travelled car to bring the shop to one of the early Days for St. George in Horwich.

Although we didn't know Steve well it was obvious that behind the bluff, West Riding exterior, there was a quiet, serious, and thoughtful man.

From my personal point of view not only is Steve's passing is a great loss to the Morris—it is a great loss to me. Over the years when we were the 'civil service' of the Morris Ring, we developed a great camaraderie and friendship. We frequently travelled to Morris events together, with me squeezed into the 'Tardis' amongst boxes, bells, CDs and most importantly his industrial sized flask of Yorkshire Tea. On several occasions I arrived at our destination with tea stains on my whites—it is not easy to pour tea carefully when a lorry in front stops suddenly. Conversations on these journeys were wide-ranging covering almost everything. I now know a great deal about tanks and how they are different from mounted

guns; how pewter tankards are made—and how the handles survive when a house is gutted by fire (they fall to the floor when said tankards are hung from hooks around the wall and the body of the tankard melts in the heat); I know how to avoid paying water rates and how to construct a greenhouse complex on an allotment from stuff gleaned from skips. He was one of the first people I knew to become a disciple of ebay and I was constantly regaled with stories of bargains gained and deals struck. I regret that I did not take him up on the offer of a personal instructional in how it works. Ebay brings me back to the shop. Birmingham Pressed metal products; Irish and Indian sources of handkerchiefs; Elephant Records; black and blue books—the list is endless. When Steve embarked on a project there were no half measures. From one table to two plus extensions, the gazebo, the signs, the banter about his special offers – two for the price of three. Steve was a great friend of the Morris Ring and of all of us...he will be greatly missed.

Charlie Corcoran is Bagman of the Morris Ring

Vorest Gold!

David Blick, Gloucestershire's very own folk music dynamo, and founding Squire of the Forest of Dean Morris Men, is honoured by English Folk Dance and Song Society

Singer, melodeon maestro, dance caller, Morris man: folk *animateur* supreme David Blick started his adventures in the world of traditional dance and song in Coronation year, when he witnessed a performance by the Morris side he quickly joined: Northampton Morris Men. Fifty years on he celebrates his own elevation to greatness as an English Folk Dance and Song Society Gold Award recipient.

This highest honour in the Society's gift recognises "the very best in folk art".

Dave devoted those early years to exploring the wealth of the tradition and honing his performance and organisational talents; national service in Germany gave him yet another outlet for his enthusiasms. Dave returned to Northampton Morris Men in 1960, then teacher training in London gave

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David Blick with Baroness Janet Royall at the presentation of his EFDSS Gold Badge at Taynton Harvest Home on October 5th

Tom Mockford

Squire's Capers



Robin Springett, Squire of the Morris Ring, looks back on the latter part of the year.

The weather has been amazing this summer; for once we seemed to have a proper summer. For me, thoughts turned to 1976; obviously not as hot, but as settled. Its not often in the UK that you can plan a BBQ a week in advance, but this year we could. After Copenhagen and the Silkeborg Meeting, I took the train into Sweden to visit friends near the Fasltebo Bird Observatory so I could do a few days birding. The autumn migration should have been in full swing, but it had hardly started – blame it on the good weather – as the birds had hardly started on their journey south. Oh well, another time! Back home in Dartmouth, it was Royal Regatta, and the sailing, air show, fireworks etc were all in full swing. Good time to dance, with 50,000 visitors, but my side let me down and couldn't get 6 out to dance, so I watched the Red Arrows in the company of a past Squire and his lady, without the interruption of dancing.

The first day of September, a Sunday, was Dartington Day of Dance, which is held on the first Sunday of September (except next year) in and around Totnes. We always invite local sides, usually from South Devon, but this year we spread our wings and included Cornwall! Exeter, Plymouth and Trigg represented the Morris Ring, plus 3 sides from

the Fed. We mainly danced on the Plain and partook of Sunday lunch for £5 at the Dartmouth Arms. A nice relaxed day for everyone I think.

The following week found Iain, Tim and me off to Winchester for their walking tour of that handsome city. Winchester MM were joined by Long Man MM, Men of Wight and Ravensbourne MM. Nice friends, nice pubs, nice dancing and good weather; what more could you ask. When I was driving a coach out of London for American and Japanese tourists, Winchester was one of my favourite destinations. We danced outside the Great Hall, the Butter Cross, where we were grumped at by a stall holder in the

there it was to some almshouses for a wonderful cream tea (however, cream was a bit thin by Devon standards) where we had thunder and lightning, with the amazing sight of a fireball of lightning rushing down the street outside frightening all the smokers. Another great day!


The following weekend Julia and I took the ferry to Spain to spend 5 weeks on Gibraltar ringing migrating birds. We normally run the Bird Observatory there for a month in the autumn, but this year we had been asked to set our nets nearer to the north face of the Rock; so joined by various people over the period, and helped by the British Forces on the Rock, we put out 324 metres

of mist nets, and caught 1159 birds (plus 2 cats and a couple of monkeys). I popped back for the Advisory Council meeting in Sheffield, staying with our immediate past Squire and Lesley, who very kindly made their splendid house available for the meeting on Sunday 13th October. Thanks guys for coming and giving me the



Spring(ett)Watch Perfect timing at the Anker Ale

market and several other places in wonderful weather, until, after a guided tour of the Cathedral, came outside by the West Door to dance by the War Memorial, where our audience included a lovely lady the Deputy Mayor, but - oh dear! The weather broke, and we danced in pouring rain. From

benefit of your advice! To Gib from Manchester next day to finalise our ringing. The day after I got back to Devon it was back up to Sheffield with Iain and Tim for a weekend of Unconvention with The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts, where I was fed and watered quite royally  p5

pl him the chance to dance with both Ravensbourne and London Pride Morris Men; he also enjoyed singing at Islington Folk Club and Cecil Sharp House. In 1965, Dave's teaching career took him, wife Annie and their young family to the Forest of Dean and a lecturing post at the local college, where he taught engineering. Very soon Dave found himself dancing with Gloucestershire Morris Men, and also started the Forest of Dean Folksong Club. At Dave's prompting, the club's members began the revival of the once vibrant and widespread Forest tradition of Morris dancing. Dave was the very first squire of the resultant Forest of Dean Morris Men and remained their guiding light for many years.

Dave wanted a distinctive regional feel to the new side's kit, and he and Annie set out to research the rag-jacket costume which was peculiar to the Forest of Dean and favoured by no less a person than Alex Hunter, the Morris Ring's first Squire. Annie's degree in fashion design and Dave's feel for the tradition combined to successfully interpret archive material left by Sharp and by Wortley. The result was a practical rag jacket based on the traditional 19C costume of the village of Ruardean. The young side, now resplendent in their distinctive jackets, travelled widely under Dave's stewardship and were soon admitted to membership of the Morris Ring. Dave Blick's ever-present striving for the widest possible ownership of traditional dance and music inspired him and his fellows to establish the first Forest of Dean Family Morris Festival in 1972. The Festival, now in its 43rd year, was designed as an event in which not only Morris men but also their partners and children could participate. Countless Morris families, over the years, have relished their stay in the Forest, with many returning on numerous occasions. In 1972 David and Annie also

launched the Clearwell Castle Folk Club, a club frequented by folk luminaries such as Jake Thackeray, Fred Wedlock, and Swansea Jack among others. Just as important were new singers who were constantly encouraged by David to "have a go". Dave's engineering expertise and his love of traditional music were both called into play when, in the

and to date their efforts have raised over twenty thousand pounds for local charities.

In the 1990s Dave discovered that England had not been represented at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod for 20 years. He remedied this by forming an English folk dance group, Castiard, which has now represented England three times.



1970s, he collaborated with musician Jim Jones to design and create high quality three-hole pipes out of stainless steel. The result was a range of some of the best tabor pipes ever made.

Dave Blick then went on to research the Forest of Dean's Christmas Mumming. His efforts unearthed three plays, each one unique to the area: two were discovered in a local library and the third was handed to him by Jimmy Prosser, an elderly gentleman of Newnham on Severn. Not content with ensuring that this precious material was preserved by sending the scripts to the Vaughan Williams Folk Library, Dave also formed the Forest Mummies to bring the plays, once more, to life. The Mummies still venture out each Christmas,

Thanks to his coaching they have been placed as high as joint 6th in the judging.

David Blick continues to drive forward the traditional repertoire of the Forest of Dean's rich folk heritage, with seemingly no pause to draw breath. For half a century he has taught, led, cajoled and inspired generations of dancers, singers, musicians and players. His award of the English Folk Dance and Song's highest token of appreciation justly recognises the tireless work of a remarkable Morris man.

Songs from the Garden Room, a CD of 22 of his favourite folk songs sung by David Blick, is now available. Contact Dave Marcoveccio (dmarcoveccio@hotmail.co.uk, 07969 665 923) for details.

☞^{p3} (check them out on YouTube doing Vandals on the Dodgems). A day dancing in Sheffield centre was interesting, but we had surprisingly good weather; the worst rain was whilst we were being fed by J D Weatherspoon, and the afternoon, positively balmy. The feast was in a pub called the Shiny Sheff, referring to HMS Sheffield of WW2 fame; I knew the later one that was sunk by an Exocet in the Falklands. Anyway, the landlord looked after us really well, producing a feast of quantity, quality and variety to delight us all. On the way back to the Scout hut, the promised storm struck, and the Scout hut overnight on the Saturday was interesting, as it was under a conker tree and the gales kept conkers bouncing off the roof all night ... queue lots of small boys next morning searching for conkers! The South Devon contingent slipped away after breakfast, leaving the Unconvention to hold the AGM. Another wonderful weekend! Moving into November, I am

conscious of all the effort being put into Children in Need, but I am also aware of the terrible devastation in Sri Lanka and the likelihood that many sides will want to contribute to that appeal. I leave it up to the good judgement of you all of course.

My final away weekend this year was to Nuneaton for the Anker Ale. The weather forecast for the Saturday was particularly bad, and we were expecting a miserable drive. As it turned out, Tim and I drove up in pretty good weather and arrived at the Brewery Tap before almost everyone else! We enjoyed a couple of nice pints there, even if the "mild" was really a "porter" and then went to Dave Arrowsmith's where Pat kindly made us welcome until we were due at the Ale. OK, so I always bang on about how important it is to meet and chat with old friends, and this was no exception, but I was able to meet quite a few youngsters as well! The ale started off with Anker's old Squire dancing out and the new Squire dancing in; interestingly,

from their oldest member to their youngest! The dancing before the meal was fast and great fun, with a well judged programme of dances. After about an hour we stopped for the food and some excellent singing; followed by the second half of the dancing, which became very frantic at times. Good dancing, good beer, good food, what more can we ask for! The down side for me was the need to get up and leave by 05.30; it being Remembrance Sunday, and as a town councillor, I had to be in Dartmouth for the annual Remembrance event. As it turned out, we drove home in wonderful weather, the dawn over Stratford on Avon from the M42 was quite memorable, and I was indoors before 09.30!

I have declined all other invitations before Christmas, as I am off to The Gambia leading a bird watching trip. Back in time for Christmas with family, then Boxing Day and New Year to look forward to and the Dartington Mummings Play as well!

Greetings All! **Robin**

Morris Ring Officers celebrate the life of Ivor Allsop



There was an enormous turn out of morris and sword dancers at the celebration of the life of Ivor Allsop in November 2012, including many former and current Morris Ring officers, and I took the opportunity to drag them away from their pints to take the accompanying photograph, writes **Derek Schofield**.

L to R Charlie Corcoran current Bagman, **Bert Cleaver** Squire 1970-72, **Paul Reece** Squire 2006-08, **Brian Tasker** Squire 2008-10, **Robin Springett** current Squire, **Tim Sercombe** Squire 1996-98, **Mike Garland** Squire 1988-90 & Bagman 1977-84, **Cliff Marchant** Squire 2002-04, **Peter Halfpenney** Squire 2010-12, **Roger Comley**, Squire's Fool, **Bob Cross** Squire 2004-06, **Mike Chandler** Squire 1990-92, **Ray King** Squire 1984-86, **John Frearson** Bagman 1998-05, **Keith Francis** Bagman 1984-91, **Steven Archer** current Treasurer.

Geoff Jerram (Squire 1986-88) and Barry Care (Squire 1982-84) were in attendance but unable to stay for the photograph. Not present were surviving former Squires David Welti (1976-78), Richard Hankinson (1994-96), Daniel Fox (1998-00) and Gerald Willey (2000-02) and former Bagmen John Wells (1971-77), Chas Arnold (1991-95) and Tony Parsons (1995-98).

Derek Schofield is Editor of *English Dance and Song*, the magazine of the EFDSS



White Rose Morris Men marked their golden jubilee with a weekend to remember, writes Squire **Richard Fowler**

It doesn't seem two minutes since the 50th weekend," said someone. Two minutes? Blimey, it's ten years on and White Rose are sixty years old!

We took a chance and organised a weekend at the very beginning of May, hoping the weather gods would be kind to us (they were). We decided to invite friends, people we regularly dance with - although some we don't see for several years at a time - for a proper reunion. Joining us in Huddersfield that day were Kemp's Men, Hexham Morris Men, Rivington Morris, Persephone Morris, Southport Swords, Rose & Castle Morris, Silkstone Greens and Leeds Morris Men - all there to help us celebrate sixty years of White Rose Morris Men.

We had three coach tours: one along the Calder Valley to Halifax



At Linthwaite Hexham Morris Men

and Hebden Bridge, another to Emley and onto Cannon Hall, and the third up the Colne Valley to Slaithwaite ('Slawut'), Marsden and Uppermill. A nice day's dancing with a variety of styles and traditions, all of high quality. The weekend was based at Huddersfield New College and a

West Yorkshire Wonders

splendid celebration dinner was held in the (very nice) dining hall. White Rose men from as far back as the original side and others from later years attended. A poignant moment occurred when Cliff Barstow, founder of the side in 1953, saluted son Ned who in turn saluted 18 year-old son Joseph, who danced a double-jig (*Nutting Girl*) with his cousin

Liam. White Rose is a side with real family tradition! Music and bonhomie, with the occasional glass of beer, followed until the early hours.

Sunday lunchtime saw everyone dancing in front of Huddersfield Railway Station's neo-classical Corinthian façade, followed by fond farewells - till next time.



Not bad for sixty! Will Hampson facing and Doug Kell of White Rose Morris Men get steam up outside Huddersfield Station

Huddersfield Examiner

The Great Eastern Morris Workshop



Mike Stevens showcases a major innovation in youth dance

On the morning of Saturday 7 September nine young Morris dancers between the ages of 13 and 20 stepped into Mayfield Primary School hall in



First steps Mike Garland and students
Mike Stevens

Cambridge. Already members of Morris Ring sides in the east of England and each with at least two years dancing experience, several with much more, they were keen to meet each other and extend their experience of Morris in the company of others of their own age-group.

The workshop was led by Past Squire of the Morris Ring, Mike Garland of East Suffolk MM, with a challenging programme for the day.

After a short introduction the first session began. The aim of the session was to explore differences between traditions – wide sets –

narrow sets – different capers – hand movements.

The second session explored visual characteristics of set formation, horizontal and vertical movement and the performance as theatre. Dances learned during the day were Cuckoo's Nest, Bledington; Twenty-ninth of May, Headington; Black Joke, Adderbury; Rose Tree, Bampton; Shepherd's Hey, Wheatley; and Shepherd's Hey, Ravensthorpe (a stick dance).

The third session explored old ways and new ways in the development of dances. During this session the group divided into two to invent a new figure. This was followed by an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate jigs - *Princess Royal* from Bampton, *I'll Go and Enlist* from Sherborne and *Nutting Girl* and *None so Pretty* from Fieldtown.

The fourth session looked at a dance that was new to everyone. Audlem Banks was named by Bristol MM after the place where they made it up, but Mike referred to it by name of the tune that was used, *Banks of the Dee*, in the style of Ascott-under-Wychwood. Working in the columnar format the group identified and incorporated Difference, Movement and Theatre to create an impressive dance that was new to all a n d distinctively "Ascott" in style.

During the g r o u p discussion all of the participants arranged to e x c h a n g e

email addresses, collect feedback of the day and ideas for the future. By the end of the day all were

agreed that we had achieved our primary goal: "to develop friendship and mutual support in a cohort of boys and young men that can perform together and become a beacon for prospective dancers of a similar age".

If proof were needed of this, the very next day Kemp's Men of Norwich and Peterborough



Inspired David Dolby in action

Mike Jones

Morris joined with The King's Men for their annual walking tour of Thornham. Five of the workshop participants were present and had soon augmented their numbers to dance Bledington *Cuckoo's Nest*, Headington *29th of May* and Ravensthorpe *Shepherds Hey* to an enthusiastic reception by audience and other dancers.

The next week saw Kemp's Men and Rutland Morris Men tour the Bittern Heritage Railway Line into Norwich. The Eastern Daily Press quoted Peter Mayne of

Kemp's Men: "One of the great high points... was that we had some young people with us - one 14 and two 16 year olds who recently went on a Morris dancing weekend away in Cambridgeshire and were able to come back to show



High achievers Mayfield style

Mike Stevens

what they had learned."

We appointed a Child Protection Officer, Mike Jones of

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☞ *p7* Kemp's Men, who developed a policy statement based on the Morris Ring's published policy and including a section for a parent to set and agree the arrangements for their own child.

For local arrangements we



Graduation Cuckoo's Nest at The Old Coach and Horses, Thornham.
P. Phillipson

worked through the bagman of the local side, in this case Graham Cox of Cambridge MM. We were thus able to take advantage of the school relationship already in place and organise the day through a Ring member side ensuring third party insurance cover. We were also able to arrange to collect hot food, fresh salad, fruit and drinks for lunch.

All communications with prospective attendees were through their "home" side. Individual email addresses for under-18s were not used, for very obvious reasons.

Grateful thanks are due to my colleagues Graham Cox and Mike Jones, to Mike Garland for an excellent workshop and David Dolby for really danceable music. Thanks are also due to the Morris Ring for its generous financial support.

Mike Stevens is the Morris Ring's Eastern Area Representative

Bromley meets Bollywood

Ravensbourne Morris Men horse around with penguins and film stars. **Jim Pitts** tells all



It's not often you run into a publishing tycoon, a Nobel Laureate and a Bollywood Super Star on the same day, unless you are a member of Ravensbourne Morris Men. I have heard of Bollywood — who hasn't? — but what I did not realise at the time was that half a billion Indian males would have happily killed to have been in such close proximity to this Indian Super Star, let alone touch Her. This realisation only came when a bit later on, at a stand in London, a young couple came up to me and asked to be photographed with some of the RMM just because we had been in the same garden as Her! What was going on?

On the July afternoon in question, RMM were invited to dance at a wedding reception in a rather nice part of London, and I mean Rather Nice. A few beers and a good lunch were taken before we made our way to the "secret" location. "We are here to dance at the wedding reception!" I blurted out to this rather large chap with muscles on his muscles. "Let me check," he said in a strangely gentlemanly voice that you instantly knew did not allow for

any further elaboration. "OK," he said and we were put into a side room half the size of my house to await the call. "Would you like a drink while you wait for the guests to arrive," offered the maitre d', "and please keep as quiet as possible as you are a surprise." So after 2 picoseconds of consideration, we indicated that yes, indeed we would be able to accommodate a beer while awaiting the summons to perform, while continuing to marvel at this reasonably priced £12 million property.

Time passed by, the call came and we tramped out to start our stand in the brilliant sunshine of the garden. Already seated, anxious



Above it all Mrs M. & her supporters

to see us dance the traditional English Morris, were the parents of the bride, one famously known around the planet as the Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen. Fine, then appeared the happy couple. John Makinson cut a very distinctive figure as the Bridegroom, the noted Chairman

and CEO of the Penguin Group (worldwide) i.e. a publishing tycoon to boot. On his arm was the very lovely bride Nandana Sen (did I mention she was lovely?) and apparently she has

☞ *p9*

☞ p8 some presence on the Bollywood scene. Presence? "She's more famous than Jesus," as John Lennon would say!

So picture the scene: John Makinson, publishing magnate, hardly raising a sweat in Shepherds Hey, followed by Nandana Sen of Bollywood fame and the horse sidling up to each other and jogging about, really getting into the spirit of it all.

Then Nandana Sen volunteered to join us as our "rose" in The Rose Tree. Yes, the chosen six not only got to dance with one of Bollywoods Super-super stars, but got to grab her legs and hoist her up as well! In hindsight I really wish I knew this at the time as I would have savoured the moment even more realising that around 655,875,026 Indian males would have been actually really,

really jealous of little old me.

Still, I fully intend to milk this for all it's worth. So I am just off to the Raj of India for some free nosh in exchange of a copy of the photograph to go in pride of place on their wall with both the famous RMM and Dad, the Nobel Laureate (well this is Orpington, and every little helps!).

Photos: Ravensbourne Morris Men



The very reasonably priced Ravensbourne Morris Men and the delighted wedding party

...and Tinsel Town beckons Towersey Morris Men



Towersey Morris Men with Morris Ring South Midlands Area Representative Roger Comley, John Bush, Ashleigh and, erm, Pudsey

Towersey Morris Men

Dear Editor,

The mention of Pudsey in the last issue of the Morris Ring Circular prompts me to attach a photo of Towersey Morris Men with Pudsey.

Supplemented by John Bush of Whitchurch MM and Roger Comley, our area rep, we were hired as extras to appear in a feature film starring the other "Pudsey".

The photo shows us at the end of a day's shooting (not Adderbury) with the dog that won *Britain's got Talent* a couple of years ago and Ashleigh, his owner/trainer.

Regards

Tony Merry Bagman Retired

Towersey Morris Men

Following the mass excursion to Adelaide in March 2013, Morris Ring sides enjoyed hospitality a little closer to home during the year at meetings hosted by Thaxted Morris Men, Dolphin Morris Men, Martlets Sword and Morris Men and (just across the North Sea) Silkeborg Morris Men.

THAXTED MORRIS MEN 31 May-2 June 2013

336th Meeting

Images by **Steven Archer**



Quintessential Thaxted



Thaxted Flyer Toby Melville, airborne, Jon Melville, concertina. Squire of the Ring Robin Springett, far right, looks on (and up).



The massed display with host side Thaxted Morris Men, far left

Dolphin Morris Men 45th Anniversary 337th Meeting 21-23 June 2013 SUTTON BONINGTON

Matthew King, of Mersey Morris Men, offers a first-timer's tale of dolphins amidst the cowpats



I started dancing with Mersey Morris Men at the beginning of October 2012 having never previously double-stepped, capered or galleyed. It had been explained to me about the Morris Ring and the fun that can be had at their weekends away with lots of other Morris Men at what is known in some circles as a Ring Meeting. Now when I first heard talk of such things I was a little bit confused, as I wondered if I was going to be meeting Bilbo Baggins, Gandalf, Gollum and so on. And do you know, having now been to such an event, I wasn't very far off! The title of this piece promises tales of dolphins among the cowpats. And for

why? Well, in Nottinghamshire there lives a group (or should that be pod?) of dolphins. They are very nice, friendly dolphins and dance very well. They are the Dolphin Morris Men and they hosted my first experience of a Ring Meeting (or, as I now know to call it, a hosted meeting of Morris Ringsides. *Thank you, Mr Editor*).

The Meeting took place in the very pleasant, rural village of Sutton Bonington. It is a quintessentially English village with a couple of pubs, a couple of

churches, a couple of shops and cottages-with-roses-round-the-doors and it is surrounded by ruralness. This means fields. Unlike at my only other experience of Morris frivolity – the Forest of Dean Morris Men's Family Weekend – no extraneous wives/partners/family were invited. These are strict dancers and musician only events – and we were camping, in tents. Now I assumed, not unreasonably, that this would mean a campsite with proper pitches for the tents and



Sunday morning in Sutton Bonington From hosannas to hostelry

toilets and shower blocks. Oh no, not here. This was a field that was usually the home to what are I'm sure is a very nice herd of cows. The problem is that they had only vacated it the day before and large areas of it were still steaming. Once we had steered our way through these and found enough cleanish grass we made camp. The 'facilities' consisted of loos and showers of the porta- variety and a small marquee that had tea/coffee making facilities and a barrel of beer – arguably the only civilised thing there. Oh, and it

started to rain!

The weekend followed what I'm told is a fairly standard format, with a leisurely meal and a few drinks on the Friday evening and then off for a couple of coach tours on the Saturday with the addition of quite a lot of rain. On the Saturday evening I had assumed it would be similar to the Friday, but no. There was not just food nor even a meal – but a feast! We all had to stay dressed in kit and we all had to gather together at the same time. Tables had been laid in the church hall and we were waited on by members of the Dolphin Morris Men. There was even a 'top-table' for the Important People. I assumed these would be those who had had their own special coach throughout the day.

The food was very nice and the beer flowed very freely. We even all had our own bottle of specially brewed beer to take home. After the meal, sorry, feast, I was

getting ready for a stroll to the pub and a little nightcap, but was told I had to wait for the speeches. The first to his feet was the Squire of the Ring. He thanked us for coming and the

Dolphins for hosting the weekend. Then the Squire of Dolphins got up and thanked the Squire of the Ring and proposed some toasts. The first to the Queen (I hadn't noticed her come in) and then one to someone called Cecil Sharp. "But who he?" I wondered aloud.

Sounds of stifled gasps and old men fainting at my irreverence and lack of knowledge ran round the room. I was quickly informed that in Morris circles (or rings) he has God-like status, for it was he who spent a large part of

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👉 p11 his life gathering and writing down the dances and tunes that inform all we do.

Then someone else from one of the other sides got up and thanked the hosts for the weekend and then someone from the hosts stood up and thanked the thanker, and then someone else... you get the idea, I'm sure. Fortunately by about 10.30 the gentle sound of snoring roused people sufficiently for them to realise there was a pub to go to, so we did. Such, apparently, are the quaint traditions of these events. Another quaint tradition is that of the church service on the Sunday morning. The purpose of this is to bless the Staves. What? When a Morris side applies to join and is inaugurated into The Morris Ring, they are given their official Staff of Office. This consists of a length of broom handle about 2 feet long with some ribbons tied round it. At the service they are all placed on the altar in church and blessed by the vicar. And then, of course, the hosts do a little dance! Each side then had a couple of dances outside the church (in the rain) before the procession to the pub for more dancing and a hog roast lunch. But, this being Morris we didn't just walk to the pub – oh no! – we Winstered. Another gap in my knowledge! I was given a quick lesson in this ancient art. 'OK', I thought, 'I can manage that'. About 20 minutes and three-quarters of a mile later I was somewhat cursing whoever had come up with that mad idea! In the end, despite the rain and the speeches, I had thoroughly enjoyed what was a very good weekend and I look forward to many more in the future – I just hope that they are taken a bit less seriously! Dolphin Morris Men gave us a great meeting; congratulations on 45 years of magnificent music and dance, and huge thanks for making this first-timer feel so welcome.



Peter Davey reports on his side's golden jubilee weekend on the sunny south coast

On Friday 5th July the sun came out and stayed that way which provided a start to a fantastic weekend of friendship, fun and good dancing. The base was Westergate Community School which had good accommodation and each club had its own classroom, together with a room for female musicians, with the Martlets taking over the youth wing. The catering, of a high standard, was provided by Innovate, the school's caterers. Clubs started to arrive from 6.30pm with the bar opening at 7.00pm and the evening meal being available from 7.30pm. Soon everyone was booked in and settled into their rooms. It did not take long before there was a buzz about the place with a "song club" starting at 9.00pm in the room above the dining hall. Martlet's Steve Matcham asked

MARTLET SWORD & MORRIS MEN

60th Anniversary
338th Meeting

5-7 July 2013 CHICHESTER

school and made their way to the "Wilkes Head" where they found a beer festival taking place and soon there was more music and



singing taking place.

On Saturday morning the sun was shining we were all up ready for a hearty breakfast at 7.00am and then into costume ready for the days tours. The buses arrived at 8.45 ready for a 9.15 departure. One tour visited Chichester, Emsworth, Havant and Bosham. Another tour went to Itchenor, East Wittering, Chichester Yacht Club and the Chichester Canal Basin. A third tour visited Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Arundel.



At the Cathedral The host side performs

some local singers to come in for the evening and soon a good sing around was taking place. This was a new venture at a Morris Ring meeting which met with general approval. It will be interesting to see if this is taken up at future meetings. The men not wishing to sing danced in the hall under the leadership of Ken Hudson. Others found the back gate to the

At 3.30 all sides came to Chichester Cathedral green for a massed display of Morris and sword dancing. The Martlets had the honour of being the first side to dance, and their dance was *Old Trunkels*. This was followed by all sides performing a show dance with massed dancing interspersed throughout.

As local newspaper *The Chichester Observer* 📖 p13

p12 had it, "A heartwarming performance saw 200 morris dancers from all over the country. Men gathered to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Martlet Sword and Morris Men".

Following the massed display it was all on the buses and back to



Well organised! Squire of the Morris Ring Robin Springett with the author

Westergate for tea and coffee and a break before the Morris Feast.

At the reception before the Feast they welcomed Councillor Alan Chaplin, Mayor of Chichester, and Hazel Barkworth, widow of the late founder member Terence, accompanied by Brian her son-in-law. We all sat down for the Feast at 7.30 where we were treated to Leek and Potato soup, Beef and Ale Cobbler and home made trifle and fresh fruit. Our guest speakers were Robin Springett, Squire of the Ring (the Loyal toast); Geoff Jerram, Winchester (the Immortal Memory); Peter North, Squire of Martlets (Our Guests) and David Seaborne, Westminster who replied on behalf of our guests. Presentations were made to Festival Director Peter Davey for the organisation of the weekend and to Peter North for his membership of the Martlets for 60 years. No feast would be complete without the Squire of the Morris Ring inviting some of the visiting sides to give us a song or two.

Following the formal part of the evening coffee was served while the tables were cleared away to make room for some dancing,

Dartington showing us that they still had more energy than most of the rest of us.

Music and singing was led by Trigg in the school canteen which carried on into the early hours.

Sunday morning was another beautiful summers day, with an early breakfast and on to St Pauls Church Chichester for a 10.00 service. Robin Springett read a lesson and the Martlets danced *The Barkworth Lads* during the service. After the service it was over the road to the Festival Theatre for the final performances of the weekend, and what a stroke of luck they had! The men were due to dance outside the old theatre which is being rebuilt but to everyone's delight the contractors were in the process of laying a wooden pathway to the temporary theatre in the park which provided an ideal stage area. Once again the Martlets had the honour of starting the display this time with the *British Grenadier*. All the visiting sides performed a show dance with some massed dances mixed in, and with the last *Bonny Green* the celebrations ended.

Lunch was served in the Church Hall. Everyone said their farewells and the clubs departed

following a very enjoyable weekend of celebrations.

In attendance were Trigg, Great Yorkshire, Dartington, Men of Wight, Green Man's, East Suffolk, Ravensbourne, Ripley, Thaxted, Victory, Wessex,



Press button B and get your Great Yorkshire Morris back

Westminster, Whitchurch and Winchester.

An excellent video to near professional standards was made by Honorary Martlet, Tony White, and copies are available for £6 from Peter Davey (p.davey1@sky.com).



Line dancers Winchester Morris Men play it straight in Chichester



SILKEBORG MORRIS MEN

339th Meeting 23-25 August 2013

KØBENHAVN

Silkeborg Morris Men took their guests to Denmark's capital city for their meeting, as Bagman Jacob Christensen reports

After hosting a Day of Dance in Copenhagen in 2009 Silkeborg Morris Men decided to try out a full meeting in Copenhagen. Three English sides (Bathampton, Shakespeare and King's Lynn), Helmond from Holland, Pete and Jim from Ilmington, Chris from Durham Rams, the Morris Ring Officers and of course the host side from Silkeborg participated.

The weekend was blessed with beautiful summer weather. Friday evening was an opportunity to visit Christiania (notorious free-town with abundant supply of funny tobacco, uppers and downers). After supper most sides spent the evening dancing and mingling with the locals on the harbour area and pubs.

On Saturday the sides were on two different tours in central Copenhagen. This demanded a good deal of walking, but everything worked out well, and as true Morris Men everyone did

their part. The tours ended at the weekend church market by St. Alban's Church close to The Little Mermaid. The feast was held outside the centre of the city, but the British Ambassador, Ms. Vivien Life, found her way and

English Church, and the sides finished the weekend dancing on the church lawn and having a pint at the harbour. Silkeborg Morris Men were especially proud to present by far the youngest side, which could account for them



Sunday morning Along the Nyhavn to morning service

attended all evening giving an enthusiastic speech.

Sunday morning started with a long *Winsters Processional* along the old harbour (oddly called Nyhavn) past the Royal Palace with the Opera and old sailing ships as a perfect setting. The service was held in St. Alban's

seeing no problem in long walking tours and we rounded off the tour dancing an energetic *Upton on Severn* as taught us by Douglas from Wisconsin.

We are very satisfied with the way things turned out though hosting a Morris Ring meeting away from home presented a few extra challenges. Luckily we have Glenn from Kings and Uffe from Silkeborg living in Copenhagen to make many of our arrangements and not to forget Jacob – our young, energetic foreman. As always it is a pleasure to be around Morris Men, to enjoy their dancing, their spirit and their fantastic tradition for songs of all kinds not to forget some brilliant female musicians. Last but not least we would like to thank Robin Springett for guiding us safely and knowingly through the weekend.

Photos: Silkeborg Morris Men



Ringin' wet Ruud Verhoeven, squire of Helmond Morris Men, performs *Nutting Girl* in a moist corner of Copenhagen

Geoff Jerram, Past Squire of the Morris Ring (1986-88) and organiser of the Morris Ring's annual Jigs Instructional weekend, reflects on its changing role over the years



In my early dancing days, more decades ago than I'd care to admit to, I was involved in a group calling itself 'Sods Morris', as in Southern Occasional Days. The members, drawn from a number of clubs along the South Coast, had a common cause –to celebrate their youth with verve, vigour, and interpretation away from the constraints imposed by their clubs. We performed jigs and occasionally brought them together into a set thereby creating our own rules and style. It was from this dancing that my interest in Jigs evolved and has stayed with me ever since. I like to think the 'Sods' paved the way for today's teams like the 18-30s, the Jigs Crew, and no doubt others I haven't heard of.

The Jigs Instructional had its origins as an ongoing annual event in the 1970s, I believe, and was led by Bert Cleaver (Squire, 1970-72) and hosted by Greensleeves MM. Most of the early meetings were held at Sarrat but moved to Sutton Bonington in the 1990s hosted by Dolphin MM. I became involved in the late 80s teaching a couple of traditions

and occasionally as musician.

The delegates at that time were experienced Cotswold dancers who knew the set dances but had little or no

knowledge of solo dancing in the form of Jigs. Following the move to Sutton Bonington and the

availability of extra venues in the village the target audience broadened to encompass various levels of experience; we run parallel sessions for experienced dancers and for relative beginners. More recently we have encouraged absolute beginners using the Jig as a vehicle for learning to dance (as opposed to dances).

Whereas in its early days the Instructional's aim was specifically to teach Jigs and hence encourage their inclusion in teams' displays, the varying levels of experience and expertise we see now has brought about another subtle change of emphasis. We now spend more time on the steps and evolutions specific to the tradition being taught and use the Jig as a means of putting those movements into practise. This approach is used for both the 'novice' and 'advanced' streams although at the latter level it is assumed the dancer has a fairly extensive knowledge of the set dances and is able to adapt to the style being taught. This concentration on the fine points of the tradition, even

for the experienced dancer, has been famously described by one Past Squire as 'giving your Morris an MOT'.

It has always been the case that dancing is best learnt from an experienced dancer rather than from

some inanimate source such as a book. Lionel Bacon, in the foreword to his 'Handbook of

Morris Dances', states that it is not a primer—it provides a reference to what to dance, not how. At the time the book was written the only reliable source of guidance would be another experienced dancer from whom one could learn not only what, but how and why. With today's wide access to such sources as YouTube, etc, the edges may be a little more blurred, but for one major exception; namely you can't argue with or question a video. Discussions such as the established authority behind what is being taught, the reasons why a movement is performed in such a way, and the teacher's interpretation, form an essential element of the Jigs Instructional, an element that cannot reliably be carried by present-day technologies.

We do not set out to impose any specific style apart from a degree of conformity, solely for the duration of the weekend, so that we can establish common ground for teaching—('singing from the same hymnsheet' as the saying goes). It has always been recognised that dancers will bring their own club styles and interpretations. Our function is to teach the movements of the jig drawing on established



Giving ye Morris an MOT. A nearly alumnus of the Instructional?

p15 authorities of how dances used to be performed (Cecil Sharp, Lionel Bacon, the Travelling Morrice, and so on) as far as they are known. The dancers are free to adopt their own style, one of the attractions of the solo jig being, after all, to perform without the constraints imposed by a set dance and thereby allow a more expressive, even flamboyant, presentation. This approach differs slightly, I believe, from that taken by other workshops such as those run by the Outside Capering Crew, for example, who encourage deviation and the exploration of alternatives and embellishments.¹ The Morris Ring Jigs Instructional provides the groundwork based upon traditional sources and then lets the participants seek their own variants, perhaps with the assistance of these other workshops. To this extent they do not exert any influence on the work we do but arguably the converse may be true. I leave other to judge! And talking of Judging, I personally have always been suspicious of formal competition and have frequently emphasised, when asked, that Morris dancers differ from sportsmen and women in that we do not compete, beyond perhaps a little friendly rivalry. Judging implies a right or wrong, e.g. the winner has done something more correctly than the loser. This is not the case with Morris Dancing where there is no firmly established set of rules by

which one can be judged –or, perhaps I should say any rules evolve before they can become established. At best therefore such judgements are an adjudication where, in the opinion of the judge, one performance is more pleasing than another. Such judgements are, in my view, slightly dangerous because they carry a great deal of influence but are sometimes based on nothing more than a whim. In the case of the John Gasson competition I have seen a competitor win by use of what I regard as gimmickry bearing no relation to the dance.



Double jig 2: No, after you Ian Ambrose left and Ian Stewart of Dolphin Morris Men

Dolphin Morris Men

As I said, it's all down to personal view and in that case mine differed from the judges'. Who was right? I don't seek an answer to that but recognise I'll generate an army who'll disagree with me –which is, of course, my point. Having vented that particular spleen I was pleased, proud, to hear that one winner had previously attended the Jigs Instructional.² The Instructional weekend is hard work and involves sessions which start on the Friday evening then carry through to Sunday lunchtime. It has been noted that



Double jig 1: After you Winchester Morris Men's Albert Wilkins right with the author

Winchester Morris Men

we cover a large number of jigs, often all those recorded from any given tradition - too many to expect people to learn fully. We provide, as I have said, the groundwork and leave it to the individual to decide which tradition/jig to explore more fully and enhance to make it their

own. All the teachers and musicians are available for additional workshops, perhaps club or regionally based, outside the scope of this weekend and more specifically targeted to needs. These do happen on a fairly regular basis and frequently are open to all, ie. without the gender restrictions imposed by the Sutton Bonington facilities or Morris Ring Constitution.

Finally - the Music! The solo dancer requires a different musical 'expression' from the set dance and the music must fit the dancer much more intimately. In other words, no two jig dancers are the same (putting aside discussion about double jigs) and therefore a singular rendition of the music is unlikely to benefit multiple dancers. This poses a bit of a problem! While we have expert jigs musicians they are there for the benefit of the learner dancers. To provide help to budding musicians is a completely different venture and also requires the availability of expert jig dancers. Yes we have them as well but they're a bit busy! The Musicians' Instructional has attempted to help in the past but it is not a subject easily covered

Four foot, eight & a half inches* of scallops—and a cockerel

Eighty dancers and partners enjoyed Peterborough Morris Men's Day of Dance on a warm and sunny day on September 28th. Guests from Fenstanton Morris, The King's Morris, Rockingham Rapper, Bourne Borderers, Leicester Morris Men and not forgetting Morris Ring Area Representative Roger Comley started the day at 10am on Cathedral Square before heading out of the city on the Nene Valley railway.

The warm weather was a bonus and the crowd were delighted to see traditional dancing and even more delighted when, without warning, the water fountains that had been out of action most of the summer for repairs came on in the middle of a set.

With a train to catch dancers made their way up the high street calling at Town Hall, Rivergate and Charters. A 45 minutes connection time was taken at Charters where dancers and guests should have enjoyed a leisurely drink but the management of the bar opened 30 minutes late which cut down the opportunity to sample some of the fine ale.

A short walk along the river saw the dancers arrive at Nene Valley railway station in time to entertain the passengers alighting from the first stream train of the day before themselves climbing aboard. A new railway guard for the day, Tom's Cock, waved the green flag and the train headed off to Wansford.

Prior to lunch, which was taken on board railway carriages at Wansford station, two dance spots gave the dancers the chance

Peterborough Morris Men's Day of Dance was a great success, despite fowl play and some very fishy dancing, explains **Richard Simons**

to work up an appetite and make room for some beer.

Visitors to the railway who had turned up to see and ride steam trains were treated to traditional dancing while they waited for the next train to arrive — a "bonus," said one of the spectators.



Nene so pretty Roger prepares his audience for scalloping at Wansford

Further dancing at Wansford followed lunch before some of the dancers boarded the train for the short tip to Yarwell and it was here during the run around of the engine Roger Comley gave us his legendary and ancient *Manx Scallop Dance*.

After picking up the rest of the dancers and heading back into Peterborough, Ollie Simons (brother of Morris tart Matt) showed the passengers on the train that he could leap as high as



Wattle do now? Tom's Cock obliges

his brother during a solo jig, although he did use the carriage framework for leverage.

Back on Cathedral Square, this time away from the water fountains, the crowd were entertained for around an hour, even a yellow and green canary dropping in as Bourne Borderers danced, leading to comments about the smallest-ever Beast. *Bonny Green* wrapped up the dancing for the day and it was off for tea and home made cakes.

We were let down by our booked conference centre just two days before the event and, faced with the task of self-catering in an unfamiliar hall, we were all very grateful to the small team of wives who stepped into the breach on the day.

Peterborough Morris Men thank everyone and look forward to seeing you all next year.

*standard gauge, as any fule kno

Photos: Peterborough Morris Men

The Upton upon Severn Stick Dance, with the Morris Ring Bagman, second from right, in Peterborough's crowded Cathedral Square





Plymouth Morris Men, with Bagman **Joe Cumming**, were among the 160 people invited to Brest in late September 2013 to help celebrate the fifty years of the Plymouth-Brest twinning link

Plymouth Morris Men were among the 160 people invited to Brest to help celebrate the 50th anniversary on the Plymouth - Brest twinning link.

We represented the cultural part of the exchange along with the Plymouth Maids clog dancers, Wreckers Border Morris from South East Cornwall, the City of Plymouth Pipe band, the Devonport Park Community Choir and graduate theatre students from Plymouth University and the Barbican theatre.

We had already declared and handed over our cutlasses prior to boarding the ferry but the unfortunate Pipe band apparently had a bit of trouble over their Sgian Dubh with security. Furthermore an impromptu

music session was broken up by crew much to the chagrin of some (non-Morris) passengers, 'too much noise on a night ferry' apparently. This was to improve greatly on the return.

On our arrival at Brest we were met by a large number of Bretons, including many of the musicians and dancers we had hosted in the

Brest visit in May 2013. In what was to become a recurring theme, we were plied with food and drink at the reception point before being driven to our first dance spot which was in the huge Carrefour-led Centre Commercial in Brest. We shared spots for the rest of the day with the Maids and a couple of pipers from the band.

It was hot both in the centre and later outside. We danced to a large and appreciative audience in the centre. Almost as appreciative was the owner of the bar adjacent to our first dance spot although Carrefour also provided us with a large case of water and also an excellent buffet lunch in their staff restaurant.

had the staff, much to their own surprise.

We then headed for the more challenging assignment of the local secondary school, the Lycee Iroise, where the assembled group of teenage English students seemed likely to be a more difficult crowd? Not really, an early selection of teenage victims to dance *Not for Joe* with us followed soon after by a mass *Shepherd's Hey* got a most enthusiastic reaction and lots of photo calls before we left.

We then had the formal part of the evening, a welcome from the Mayor followed by a theatre performance from the above mentioned graduate students. Reactions among the side to this

ranged from enthusiasm to bafflement—that's culture for you!


It had been very hot, a heavy dance programme so perhaps we could all head for bed? No chance! Most of us ended up at an enormous garage party somewhere in the Brest

suburbs where we were entertained by the pipers and bombard players of Kevrenn St Mark, local melodeon band Dizoursi and our own musicians as well as getting to try some Breton line dancing. This lasted until well after midnight - hope the neighbours had a sense of humour.



Plymouth Morris Men by Pont Recouvrance in Brest
Chris Earl

Most of us ventured on the new tram system for a trip to our next spot, in a park before the assembled and initially, puzzled, pupils of 3 local primary schools. A couple of audience participation mass dances soon got them excited and enjoying the event. One of their teachers later reported that the children had thoroughly enjoyed the event as

 *p18* It was an early start the next day when we were participating in celebrations to mark the annual Foire St Michel. This is Brest's annual event,



The musicians excel - of course!

Tim Ingram

unique in France, which lets children sell unwanted toys in a market setting.

We did a bit of dancing then took part in a parade through the main avenue of market stalls before going back up to a lounging area where we were due to be fed (again!). By happy coincidence the food tent was opposite a tent selling hand-pulled beer from a local brewery (Coreff in Carhaix, highly recommended), so in the finest tradition of the Morris we set out to do our bit to assist economic recovery in the French brewing industry.

After a fine lunch and some more dancing, we had a further procession into the centre of Brest where we danced in a pedestrian square high above the river and opposite the Castle.

Once again we gathered an appreciative audience and an appreciative local bar owner!

We then had some free time, which some time to explore the culture and shops of Brest but others, sad to report, headed for the back room of another local (Irish) pub for another music and singing session. The Irish landlord was sufficiently enthused to offer the last remnants of the company free beer (Coreff again!) so long as he could join in on spoons. We felt obliged to accept his offer.

We then headed for a huge ceilidh which had been put on by the twinning committee which featured more singing and dancing. Bed was late again...

Next day saw a leisurely breakfast and, finally, a bit of sightseeing before a farewell reception at a local biscuit factory, honestly, then a trip back to Roscoff.

The ship back had a far more Morris-friendly captain, so featured all three sides dancing on the rear deck of the ferry 'Armorique' to an appreciative if sometimes bemused audience of both travellers and crew. Wreckers had used their time with the Pipe band to work out a suitable dance to be accompanied by pipes and drums which was quite spectacular whilst we added one of the ship's female officers to


our long line of extremely attractive 'Roses' with a spirited *Rose Tree*.

As night drew in, we went back inside where the Devonport Community Choir gave a half hour concert in one of the lounges. This turned into a three hour song and music session which lasted us back to Plymouth. It was agreed that the six hours had never passed more quickly. Our thanks are due to the Plymouth - Brest twinning committee for the invitation, specifically to our individual hosts who took us into their home and looked after us so well, to Brittany Ferries for their good humour and to the people of Brest who welcomed us, applauded us, joined in with us and overall gave us a weekend to remember.



Sharp practice in the Rue de Siam

Tim Ingram

 *p16* in open forum because the needs of the dancers vary. As things stand I know of no regular event specifically aimed at jigs musicians but I certainly recognise the need – as do the number of musicians who ask each year if the Jigs Instructional can help them. I expect this subject would be best handled on a more one-to-one basis. Comment and suggestions from experienced musicians (set dance or jig) would be welcome and, should an offer to host come

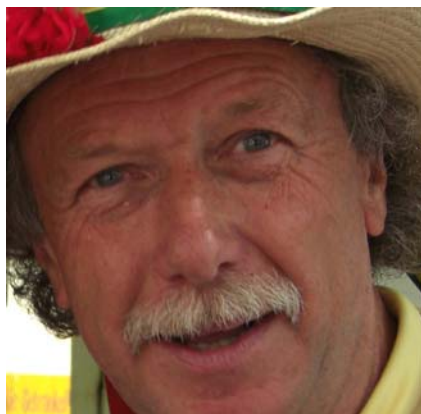
forward, I'll be happy to devise a programme with help from 'expert' dancers and musicians.

1 I quote these words from their website out of context but hope I have not misrepresented or given an impression which differs

from their author's.

2 Jack Worth of (among others) Bristol Morris Men won Sidmouth Folk Week's John Gasson Jig Competition (solo category) in 2010 and, with Fiona Bradshaw, the double jig competition in 2012.

Following a sell-out weekend in 2014, Geoff Jerram will be leading the next Jigs Instructional for the Morris Ring in sunny Sutton Bonington on **16-18th January 2015**. Provisional bookings are now being taken: contact jigsinstructional@themorrisring.org to secure "top-notch catering, music & the most knowledgeable and patient instructors" (a satisfied first-timer, 2014).



Bathampton Morris Men's recent jaunt to Lithuania resulted in a trip of compelling memories and gastronomic surprises, reveals **John Salmon**

Lithuania. So said the Bagman. And thus it was decided. Bathampton's end of 2013 season tour would be in this Baltic state. Questions immediately arose: how do you spell it? Where is it? Why, when you Google it, are more than half the pop-up photographs snow scenes?

A dozen men, led by Squire Martin Bayfield, flew Ryanair Bristol to Kaunas. The airport in the middle of a pine forest. The terminal a grey shed. The bus waiting, but first the driver had to go into town to collect some luggage. We drove through grey, dreary streets of ex-soviet blocks of concrete flats and quietly

crumbling buildings. Somewhat redolent of Slough on a wet November afternoon. But not quite as beautiful.

We had been warned to expect bad driving, but our driver was exceptionally proficient. He could eat his lunch, drink his beer, talk on the phone and drive us to Vilnius all at the same time. The architectural variety of attractive buildings in the old town from the last two or three centuries surprised us. Its claim

to fame was that once, wherever you stood, you would be able to see at least four churches. The Soviets put paid to that during their various periods of occupation but many restored churches are now well used. Gedima Castle atop the ramparts dominates the old town. We found the magnificent modern museum a useful free loop stop.

Richard, our first guide, was a star. As rain started to fall on a disconsolate group of men, kit covered by plastic ponchos, he led us to the Old Green House, the last wooden house in town and now a pub. Where we managed a couple of pints of Kalnapilis. When the rain eased we headed into the old town and danced before the Presidential Palace where the lady President might have been watching from behind

sat in a cellar around platters of food our host, the micro-brewer, kept bringing jug after jug of his different beers. Brewed either light or dark it ranged from a bright European lager to something more akin to a hoppy ale. What is not drunk is discarded into a brown bowl and rather disgracefully there were traces of beer in this bowl when we left. We had tasted seven different beers and the voices had risen in volume from polite chatter to three figure decibels into full song when the Squire announced, in a slightly slurred accent that sounded vaguely Baltic, that we should not dance in the afternoon for, although we might believe we are dancing perfectly, it might not look particularly well to any onlooker. Such a glorious lunch.



Bathampton Morris Men at Trakai Island Castle

We were taken out of town to the dramatic Trakai Island Castle. Here the Squire was so moved by the setting that he ignored his own instruction and we danced on the banks of the lake. No one fell in and the tourists (probably) didn't notice the glazed eyes nor differentiate between valiant

a moving upstairs curtain as we started the day with some gentle Bampton and our version of *British Grenadiers*. Which all prepared us perfectly for the Beer Tasting Lunch. As we

attempts to stay upright and well mastered footwork.

Dancing in the old town that evening was delightful. The people so friendly, locals and

☞ p20 tourists alike. "What part of Lithuania are you from?" they asked. Confused that our side's colours, yellow, green and red, are the same as those of their national flag. With cobbled streets lined with bars, intriguing beers at £1 a pint, English-speaking beautiful (and I mean beautiful) bar staff. This was Bathampton's heaven.

The last bus left at midnight and back at the hotel we found the bar opposite was open. The barman played a mean guitar, the shorts (when we learnt to pronounce Trejos Devynerios) was cheaper than beer and we settled down for a session of all types of music and goodness knows what alcohol until the early hours. And all that was just the first day.

The rest of the trip was similar. We danced at the fruit market where there were no tourists and a crowd of locals gathered. Our kit seemingly bringing a flash of colour to the grey streets and a smile to faces. We played melodeons on a bus designed for 14 passengers with nearly 30 on board. Stopping for a beer outside a nightclub, the off-duty strippers



stopped to watch our performances. At dinner one evening we were treated to rousing Lithuanian folk songs and traditional "joining in" dances.

The final day we went back to Kaunas where we found that the shabby streets gave way to another attractive old town. After a beer break, where more people drank coffee than beer – always a sign of a good time had by all - a

quick spot outside the cathedral.



The Chinese tourists rushed to take the photos but as always they took no further interest and buggered off without watching. I wonder what they thought they had photographed when they got home. The food at lunch maintained the variety and healthy options which we were surprised to have been offered throughout the tour, but a word of warning for those who may follow in our dance steps. Keep away from Zeppelins. The local dumplings, heavy and greasy, are not recommended.

Our hostel accommodation was simple, clean and good, with en-suite rooms for three or four men. The staff, once encouraged to smile, were friendly, pleasant and helpful. Our dance spots weren't disturbed in any way by police or officials (unlike previous experiences in Prague, Malta and Cataluña where we have been close to arrest). And we coped with the weather which was occasionally rainy but not cold or snowy. With thanks to Bagman Idris's superb planning abilities, arranging our five days at under £400 per man all inclusive, the tour was memorable for all the right reasons. And we can thoroughly recommend lovely Lithuania as a dance destination.

Photos: Steven Archer

Obituaries

Bill Holt

1920-2013

Bill started dancing with Bathampton Morris Men in 1968 and he remained a regular and active dancer until well into his 90th year. At his 90th birthday party in October 2010, at which Robin Springett represented the Morris Ring, Bill was given the title of "Father of the Side".

Bill continued to dance regularly throughout the first half of the following summer but then his health began to deteriorate and he only came out for special occasions. His last morris outing was on Plough Sunday in January this year; he didn't dance then but we're told that a few weeks earlier he'd given a solo demonstration for the other members of his sheltered accommodation at their New Year's Eve party!

Bill was an enthusiastic dancer, singer and raconteur. Truly one of the more colourful characters of the morris, he will be greatly missed.

Idris Roker

Les Chittleburgh

1949-2013

Les Chittleburgh of Isca Morris died suddenly on November 9th.

Les began morris dancing with Cardiff Morris Men, then in 1976 was one of the founder members of Isca Morris Men. He was a mainstay of Isca throughout, serving for many years as bagman or squire, and latterly as secretary. He was also the main organiser of the unforgettable Isca Family Weekends. Les and his wife were also Welsh folk dancers and ballroom dancers.

His funeral reflected his love of the morris. Isca men danced in with *Cadi Ha*, the musicians played *Caseg Eira* for the Commendation, and a massed *Constant Billy* followed outside.

Keith Lascelles

Michael Howley

1930-2013



It is with enormous regret that The Men of Wight announce that one of their founder members, Mike Howley, passed away in May 2013. Mike was a man of many talents and the many threads of his life were often held separately. He never boasted of his achievements and now that he is gone, it has been a slow process to gather all the information that has been needed to piece together this obituary.

Born in 1930 in Nottinghamshire, Mike worked in the library service and in July of 1957 had moved south and was working as Chichester Branch Librarian. The Chichester group of the EDFSS had been founded that year and several of its members worked in the library service. A fellow librarian (Brian Sopp, a founder member of Martlet MM) discovered that Mike was a competent violinist and persuaded him to join the Chichester Folk Dance Group as their musician. Mike soon after took up the accordion and for the following 13 years accompanied the dance group on their many visits to continental festivals, especially to Germany where his fluency in the language proved a great benefit. He became a committed core member of the group and was elected chairman. During his time in Chichester, his

flat was always a meeting place for the dancing/music making fraternity with endless cups of coffee being served. Maggie Tevendale (nee Dodd) of the Chichester group remembers: "Many happy memories remain of our annual May Day celebrations when Mike's home was the hub in the preparations for the procession through the city – a 6 am start with decorations to the Landau which would convey the May Queen and then wiring the flowers onto the sword lock culminating in the reward for hard work – a breakfast fry-up in Mike's small kitchen; we were then set up for the dancing day in front of us. His contribution to our lives with his sense of humour, endless fun and laughter and many lasting personal friendships will remain in our memories forever. Such happy days."

He maintained the contacts he made in Germany, Belgium and Austria throughout his life and made biennial visits to Schlitz right up to 2009 when his failing health precluded him from undertaking the 1200 mile car journey. Tributes have been received from a number of European dance clubs who fondly remember his playing and his company. The organisers of the Schlitz festival hold particularly warm memories: "Mike always arrived on the Wednesday before the Trachtenfest; for the Schlitzlander Trachten und Volkstanzkreis members this always meant 'now the festival begins'".

In 1959 Mike was invited to play for the Martlet Sword and Morris Men and quickly became the Club's principal musician and was squire in 1964/5.

In 1970 Mike transferred to the Isle of Wight where he became Deputy County Librarian and eventually Director of Cultural Service. In his public life he preferred to be called by his second name and so there was often confusion when trying to contact him at work unless you remembered to refer to him as Robin. His colleagues there remember him as 'a charming boss' and 'a very nice gentleman'. Mike was instrumental in introducing new technologies to the Island's library system – yes, computers! Shortly before his move to the

island, a group from the Sloop Inn Folk Club were exploring the idea of Morris dancing, having attended a workshop at the Christchurch Folk Festival. Hearing that someone had appeared who knew something about the subject, he was contacted and quickly was persuaded to run some teaching sessions for a mixed group from the local country dance club. With some persuasion from Mike, in 1970 'The Men of Wight Morris' were formed with Mike as their first Squire, and over the last 43 years the team has regularly performed across the Island and, through Mike's many contacts across the continent, in Germany, Portugal, France and Belgium.

Mike was a most helpful and empathetic teacher of Morris music and was a great influence on the playing of many Island and mainland musicians. His playing was firmly BM (Before Melodeons) and his lyrical style provided enormous lift to the dancers. Former Morris Ring Squire, Geoff Jerram, said of him, "I knew Mike from the mid-late 60s. He was without doubt the major influence and mentor in my early playing and one of the most helpful and empathetic teachers of Morris music I've met. I asked Mike to play for my dancing in and out jigs as Ring Squire; I know he regarded that as a great honour - he probably didn't know how honoured I was to have him playing for me."

Mike was the nominated musician for many Morris Ring meetings, including three such events hosted on the Isle of Wight and he was often called upon to play for many other Morris teams at one time or another. The picture shows him wearing the badge of office of Morris Ring Musician.

On a personal note, my abiding memories of Mike were those performances where, with just the slightest movement of his shoulders, he would indicate that something was about to happen. Next thing I would find that I was left holding the tune melody while Mike, with eyes half-closed, would be weaving harmony lines behind my playing. These occasions always ended with Mike proclaiming, "Beautiful tune Michael, beautiful tune." 🐾

p22 Mike's interests were not just confined to music: he was a director of both the Isle of Wight Arts Council and the Apollo Theatre Trust; he enjoyed painting, gardening, acting, he composed, co-authored and edited books about Island history, was a local TV and radio presenter and his voice can still be heard as an audio guide at Brading Roman Villa.

His funeral at Newport Myster was attended by many friends from The Apollo Theatre, the Men of Wight Morris, Oyster Girls Morris, Wight Bells, Island Cloggies, Martlet Morris Men and the Chichester Folk Dance Group as well as many other friends. In typical Mike fashion, the service had been planned well in advance with hymns all chosen for their significance to his life. The Men of Wight, in kit, danced *Four Crosses* as his coffin was borne into the church, a dance written by the men to a tune composed by Mike.

Mike was above all a consummate musician, in demand not only for his Morris music but for social dancing as well.

Mike Butler

RONNIE GODBOLD

1949-2013



Ronnie was a founder member of Hageneth Morris Men which was formed in June 1977 to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee at Haughley's 'fair and medieval fete'. During his tenure he enthusiastically encouraged

foreign trips, leading Hageneth on many trips to France, Germany and Belgium, and dancing at festivals, cultural exchanges and special events in those countries.

Never losing his love for the Morris, he remained a member of the side, continuing to dance on special occasions after 2002.

Elected squire for four years, foreman for many years and bagman/treasurer for over ten years, he took these positions responsibly, setting the benchmark for others who followed him as officers of the side. He also kept the side scrapbook from the start of the side until 2002, making it possible for later members of to appreciate Hageneth's history.

During his terms as squire and foreman he helped to develop a 'side style' which enabled Hageneth to enjoy great popularity with the public and other Morris sides. His vigorous dancing style made him an example that many people tried to emulate, but very few achieved. He greatly influenced Hageneth's distinctive, energetic style.

The last time Ronnie danced out was in June 2012, when Hageneth performed at a Haughley fair to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, thirty-five years after the side's formation. He danced with his usual enthusiasm and energy, not putting a foot wrong although he had not danced the Morris for over two years.

Many friends and relatives said goodbye to Ronnie at the West Suffolk crematorium, the United Reform Church in Stowmarket and at his 'wake' at the 'Meadlands' in Stowmarket, where Hageneth were joined by Mike Garland and Codge Barber from the East Suffolk Morris Men to dance Ronnie's favourite dance, *Orange in Bloom*. Sally Green, another founder member of Hageneth also danced *Orange in Bloom*. Hageneth then danced a border dance choreographed by Ronnie, *Speed the Plough*.

He will be sadly missed by Hageneth and the Morris community in general.

Brian Francis

Michael Blanford

1938-2013

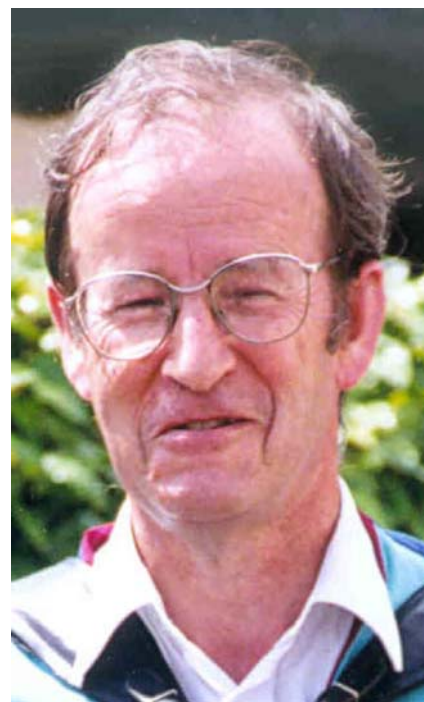



Photo: Hilary Blanford 2000

The Morris and folk music world lost a remarkable man when Michael died on 7th May 2013 after suffering, with his usual fortitude, from Parkinson's disease. It is simply not possible to write in a short article of his interests, musical ability and service to many clubs as an inspired musician, singer, dancer and supporter of related traditions, as well as his lifelong interest and player of hockey.

Michael came up to St Catharine's College, Cambridge to read Modern Languages in October 1959 and in his second year, he joined the Cambridge Morris Men and the Round. So started a life time of dedication to the Morris, Playford and English Country dancing.

The Squire of the CMM in 1960 was Robert Saunders, who had started dancing in the 20's and who greatly impressed Michael and he came onto his first Travelling Morris tour in 1961 as a fine bearded dancer and with other men on that tour met and were lectured to by Rolf Gardiner. After that he came on most tours, acting as Foreman on at least eight occasions. In 1963 he revived his piano playing, learnt as a young boy, to take up

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 p23 the piano accordion and to serve the Morris in that additional way. He remained an excellent dancer and for many years cycled on Travelling Morrice tours with his "machine" taken in a car. On these tours he not only led the music sessions in the pubs but soon took to joining in the singing with his own repertoire and carried on the songs sung by Arthur Peck, Russell Wortley and Webber after they had passed on. His repertoire and instant recall of tunes of all sorts and songs was astounding and admired by all.

After leaving Cambridge in 1962 he moved to London and joined London Pride Morris Men and country dance club. His professional life was as an accountant and after qualifying he worked for Peat, Marwick and Mitchell, now KPMG, before being recruited to Fisons Pharmaceuticals as their International Tax Manager because of his fluent knowledge of half a dozen European languages. His managers found him hard working, reliable and utterly dependable. He travelled all round the world and managed to combine trips to North America with Morris practices across the continent and was an important influence in the development of the Morris in America. He attended Pinewoods in the '60s, becoming a member of the Pinewoods Morris Men. He joined the first American Travelling Morrice Tour in 1976 and returned for later tours more years than not.

In 1981 he moved to Ipswich and joined the East Suffolk Morris Men and took part in country dancing and music sessions with Neil Lanham and also the Harvey Boys among many others. Following the tragic death of Graham Potter he took over the Editorship of *Mardles*, the local Folk magazine in 1994 and remained in very successful office until he moved to Kent. It was through this work that he came across Hilary Warburton of the EFDSS which led to their wedding in 1997 accompanied by a full folk cast.

When Fisons was taken over and moved to Kent, he and Hilary moved to Chatham and soon got caught up by Hartley and Wadard Morris sides and many local

musicians and dancers. Throughout all these years he continued to support Cambridge, London Pride and East Suffolk and would often drive miles and home again the same evening to play. He was a great supporter of traditional activities and had attended Bampton on Whit (Bank Holiday) Monday for nearly 50 years where this year they danced *Italian Job* in his memory at Churchfield House. He visited Bacup for many years and enjoyed other similar traditional activities. Michael had a prodigious repertoire of all tunes and could recall them at a moment's notice to get other musicians going. It was such a pleasure to dance to his playing, whether for a jig or set dance, as he was always watching the dancer, even if his well-known sideways stance did not give this

impression, and immediately adjusted the speed or the gaps between notes or bars to fit the dancer's steps. His medleys for such dances as *Bampton Side Step* and *Balance the Straw* including Christmas carols and *Beethoven's 9th* were always much enjoyed by audiences and the dancers.

He was a real English gentleman, possibly old fashioned and meticulous with his shoe cleaning. Although a private person in many ways he was always willing to play or dance as needed and to advise teach and pass on his knowledge to new or seasoned musicians and dancers. He will be remembered with other great Morris men and talked about for years to come, and we will always miss his quiet sense of humour and his huge support so willingly given.

John Jenner

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I hope, wherever you are in the world, that you enjoyed an exceedingly fruitful Yuletide of mumming, dancing, singing and playing, with even more to come your way in a happy and healthy 2014. **Wozzle/Tony Foard**