

ISSUE 70

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The Morris Ring *Circular*



Adam Garland, Squire-Elect of the Morris Ring, shows the way outside Ely Cathedral
Steve King

Devilishly good!

Devil's Dyke Morris Men helped launch the Morris Ring's 80th year in style by welcoming member sides to the glorious Fenland city of Ely for a "model" event, says Robin Springett, outgoing Squire of the Morris Ring. Read about the weekend in "Squire's Capers" on page 3 and see more pictures of high enjoyment amidst the flatlands plus your photos from other events on pages 16–17.



How did it all start?

John Jenner of Cambridge Morris Men takes us through the crucial twelve months which paved the way to the founding of the Morris Ring, and reveals the significance of a level crossing at Little Downham.

Cambridge Morris Men's minute book yields some fascinating insights into the founding of the Morris Ring, and though much of this has been published elsewhere, this seems an appropriate moment to share my summary of extracts.

These notes should be read in conjunction with the extracts from the First Logbook prepared By Walter Abson in 1991, particularly Appendix 4 (pages 47-50) and Arthur's Poem (see page 6 of this issue of the Morris Ring Circular)

In a document dated 21st July 1934 Arthur Peck wrote:

On Thursday October 5th 1933 on their way back in the car from a visit to Ringstead to view the mill, and later at supper in the Corner House (Café); Joseph [Needham; then Squire of CMM] and A. were discussing the position of those Morris dancers, who have been with the Travelling Morrice on tours, but are not Cambridge men. The only provision for attaching such men to the CMM was by means of honorary membership. But up to the present honorary membership had not been specially associated with participation in a tour simply or necessarily, and there

seemed no good reason why there should be a sudden great increase in the number of honorary members of this sort such as would become necessary. J however was very anxious to get these men attached in some way, particularly Alfred Cobb of Sapperton. Indeed one might say that the whole idea is due in the long run to Alfred Cobb having taken part in the tour of 1932. At a meeting of the resident Morris Men held in the Squire's rooms on Thursday November 2nd 1933 the whole position was discussed and A. suggested a federation of Morris Men Clubs, as an alternative to making isolated hon. Members of the CMM. Conway suggested that a good name for the federation would be the Morris Ring. J. accepted this idea, and set himself to bring the Ring into existence. From this point you know the history of the development.

Arthur always spoke of this journey, and particularly the wait at Black Bank station, as the start of the Ring. The car was Joseph's fine ancient Armstrong Siddeley. He was never able to explain why it was so, when according to his poem, written in 1955, it had happened some five months after the November 1933 meeting. However, after I found the above document in the CMM archives in the late 60's, he admitted that he had completely forgotten about

that preliminary visit to the Mill (in order to confirm that it was suitable to host a week of morris instruction,) and then confirmed the earlier date. He added that they had, due to the delay in waiting for the train, arrived back in Cambridge too late to go into College Hall, but needed food before the Morris practice that evening, at which they told the men of their discussions and arranged for the subsequent meeting for November 2nd. This being written at the time by one of the few men who were involved in the whole process must be considered the correct version.

From the CMM Minute Book
Thursday Nov 2nd 1933.

A meeting of the resident morris men was held in the Squire's room in Gonville and Caius College at 4.00 p.m.

Those present were The Squire (Joseph Needham), The Bagman (Arthur Peck), Jan Durrant, Conway Waddington, Reuben Heffer, Russell Wortley.

A conspectus was taken of various morris dancers who from time to time have associated with the Travelling Morrice during one or more of its tours, and suggestions were made for admitting some of them Honorary Members of the Cambridge Morris Men – that is, really, to begin fresh class of honorary member whose membership need not necessarily begin with

Squire's Capers



Robin Springett, outgoing Squire of the Morris Ring, ploughs into the dancing season

Christmas and New Year was a mixed bag; fabulous day to dance out on Boxing Day, and wet as hell on New Years Day, but the Dartington Mummers did get an outing both days; once in the street, the other time in the pub!

Hearing what a brilliant day out the Jockey Plough Day Tour was, I signed myself up, and with Tim Sercombe in tow, we caught an early train from Exeter, getting us into New Street just before 11. We were met and rapidly escorted to the site of the first dance spot, in the Bull Ring Shopping Centre. We were hosted by Pete Stevens and family to a really brilliant day.

The plough was there, already assembled, but later in the day, we did witness it being taken apart and put in the back of a car! Amazing to think that not much more than 150 years ago, a plough much like that would have been ploughing fields in the area. Good weather, good humour from the shoppers – even from the gentlemen handing out the Koran, who obligingly turned down their own loud speakers while we danced! Thanks to Jockey Morris Men of

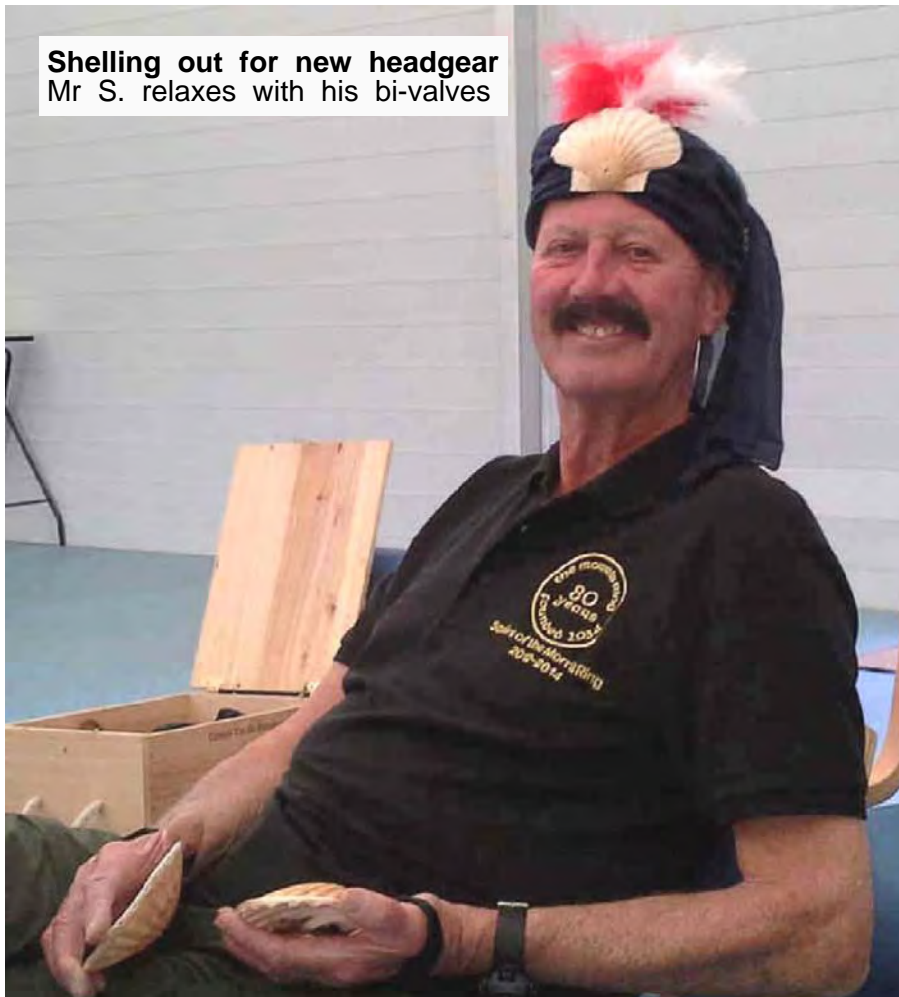
Birmingham and the others taking part for a really good Day of Dance. Having said our goodbyes, Tim and I were picked up outside Moor Park station by Iain, who had been at work selling his wares nearby, and we set off for Stafford Feast. I waxed long and hard last year over this feast held in the Victorian splendour of Church Eaton Village Hall, so will keep it brief this time, but this is feast of gourmet quality and gargantuan proportions, and is definitely for meat eaters!

their hospitality and hard work on behalf of all the visitors. It pains me to admit that I spent a portion of my life working in Stafford and didn't discover this excellent bunch of guys – my loss!

The following weekend saw me making the long journey (well, it is from South Devon) to Sutton Bonington for the Jigs Instructional weekend. It was a very long time since I had been to one of these intensive weekends, not just a jigs instructional, more an MOT for your dancing! I was really looking forward to the weekend. Now this was January, and the weather was really quite kind (unlike the last time I was here last July for Dolphin Ring Meeting when we camped in the mud and rain). From the numbers attending, those contributing with instructionals and working behind the scenes, cooking and washing up, had to work at full stretch all the time to ensure we all had a great time.

This weekend was started long ago by Bert Cleaver, Past Squire of the Morris Ring, and we were fortunate enough to have Bert

Shelling out for new headgear
Mr S. relaxes with his bi-valves



Good fun, good food and beer, but most of all, good company! Thanks to the Stafford Morris Men, and especially John Edwards and his wife Carol, for

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with us as guest of honour at the Feast. Thank you everyone who contributed for a really enjoyable weekend, and to Tony Foard for his admin. If you have never been to this weekend, do consider it; the instruction is second to none, and the "crack" in the King's Head alone is almost worth the journey!

This year I am Chair(man) of the JMO; a post that rotates annually amongst the 3 Morris Organisations. This year the meeting was to be hosted by Leicester Morris Men, and by kind co-incidence (ahem!) the night before was the Leicester Feast, to which I was lucky enough to have been invited. In past years, I have been to Winchester Feast this same weekend, and going to Leicester Feast was a new and very enjoyable experience for me. I never cease to be amazed by the culinary skills of those in the Morris; not sure why I should be, probably because of my own lack of expertise, but if you get an invitation to the Leicester Feast, go! However, on to the JMO meeting on the Sunday. The Ring was represented by me, our Bagman and Treasurer; the Fed and Open both had two representatives as is customary. We had a very useful discussions around Days of Dance, Instructionals, website and the JMO charity, BBC Children in Need. It was agreed that DoDs were successful and popular and would continue on the basis of one national event, but sides hosting their own DoDs which are open to all would be encouraged to consider naming them as Regional JMO DoDs. The first such would be on 17th May in Warwick, hosted by Shakespeare Morris Men. It was hoped other sides would follow suit. In the case of instructionals, all three

national organisations would encourage member sides that hosted them to make them available across the organisations. Some like Fools and Beasts already was, and Letchworth's Theo Thomas would be running Morris Musicians Workshops in the autumn, at a very nominal cost. One or two other hosted by the Fed and Open were also available to all. Turning to the website, agreement was being sought to have one or more pages hosted on a commercial website, specifically for JMO information, and the Morris insurance scheme, run on behalf of the Morris by the Open's Michael Stimpson, who briefed those present about updates to the public liability policy. It was also agreed to continue the JMO charity for at least another year, and a presentation would be made to the BBC of the money collected this winter, a sum in excess of £2500. As your Squire, I am delighted to report the continued good relations and cooperation between our three national organisations; it is particularly important when looking at regulations like the traffic and marshalling problems currently being experienced, but whenever a Morris side or organisation is dealing with the press or other outside body, we need to ensure that information and any lessons learned can be shared quickly among all our sides, and cooperation is the way to achieve that.

On the 28th February, Dartington MM held their annual quiz evening; this is when we host an evening of convivial entertainment and invite our friends from Exeter MM and Plymouth MM to join in. The winning quiz team of 6 people sets the questions for the following year. This year over 60 people attended with

questions being set by Plymouth MM. It was great fun, and I am sure sides across the country do something similar. DMM also held their annual Ceilidh on 22nd March; this time to raise funds for September Ring Meeting. Whilst I am on about my own side, don't forget to let the Ring Bagman know about the regular dance events your side runs for the Calendar of Morris Events to be published on the Ring website.

March brought the ARM impeccably organised by Hartley MM. This was a most enjoyable weekend, with amazingly good weather. I won't dwell here on much, as full details will be in the



Newsletter and online, but the display and instructional by Seven Champions Molly Dancers was most entertaining, as was the singing by their "musicians". I was pleased that they all elected to join us at the Feast. My sincere congratulations to Adam Garland on his election to be your next Squire of the Morris Ring.

Last year, the season started with a very early Ring Meeting, but that was in Adelaide, South Australia, with the chance of much better weather. Exactly one year later on 4th April we were to gather in Ely, for

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attendance at the Annual Morris and Feast.

It seemed better, however, not to follow this course of admitting isolated members of other groups, who happen to have taken part in a tour, but rather to invite other groups and clubs as corporate bodies to join with us in forming a sort of informal federation, to be called THE MORRIS RING.

It was decided to write to morris men at Oxford, Letchworth and Thaxted asking their opinion about this proposal, but not to invite traditional steams such as the Chipping Campden Men.

It was understood that the formation of the Ring would not imply a general invitation at all the members of the other groups, say, for a tour organised by one group, but that its purpose should be to enable the various groups of morris men in different parts to keep in close touch with one another and occasionally to join together for dancing.

The proposal itself and the replies received to be put before the CMM at the Annual Feast next April.

One other important incident that should be recorded & that is the discussions which took place about the projected formation of the Morris Ring. Many of the details were fully discussed & preparations made for the inaugurating (or rather instituting) of the Ring on the following Saturday.

Sat April 14th 1934

Meeting in the Bagman's rooms in Christ's College. Present 22 members also Alec Hunter (Hon Member).

A certain amount of speech then took place about the proposed Morris Ring; Joseph outlining the main

points of it and the purpose which it was intended to serve. It was agreed that it would be best that the head of the Ring should not be permanent, but should change say every year or every two years, the other officer to be a secretary, who might hold office for a longer period. At this point Conway Waddington proposed and Arthur Peck seconded, that the Morris Ring be instituted; this was carried unanimously and the Squire then declared the MORRIS RING instituted, the subsequent stages to be the constitution and then the inauguration of it. The following to be the six constituting clubs; subject to their consent (already signified in most cases) Cambridge, Oxford, Letchworth, East Surrey and Greensleeves; and these to arrange for making a constitution and for the inaugural meeting. The provisional squire or head of the Ring and secretary to investigate whether the Nene Valley Morris Men be included among the constituting Clubs.

The Squire (Joseph Needham) proposed and Tommy Adkins seconded that Alec Hunter be the Chief or Squire of the Morris Ring for the preliminary period; and the Bagman (Arthur Peck) proposed and Perceval Hornblower seconded that Walter Abson be the Secretary of the Ring for the preliminary period. Both of these were unanimously approved; and it was agreed that the other five clubs be communicated with, hoping that they will concur in these preliminary steps to bring the Ring into being.

It was agreed that at the forthcoming morris week-

end at Thaxted in June the Ring be explained to those present, as something already in being, and an outline given of its nature and purpose. The inaugural meeting of the Ring to be held later in the year.

On Saturday June 2nd some of the men congregated at Thaxted to attend the week-end of dancing there. At 9.0 'clock in the evening there was a meeting at Mrs King's house of representatives from five out of six of the foundation Clubs of the Ring (CMM, Thaxted, Letchworth, East Surrey, and Greensleeves; Oxford unfortunately was not represented), together with Alec Hunter and Walter Abson, the proposed Squire and Bagman respectively of the Ring. A draft constitution was discussed and some alterations agreed upon.

The following day, Sunday, Alec spoke to the men who were attending the week-end and outlined the proposals for the Ring. In the afternoon another meeting of representatives, augmented by Douglas Kennedy, Joseph Needham and Kenworthy Scholfield took place in the vicarage garden, at which various suggestions for wands of membership and other insignia and ceremonies were made. The draft had by now assumed its final shape and the RING had been constituted.

Sat October 20th 1934

A number of men drove from Cambridge for the Inauguration and Inaugural Meeting of the Morris Ring at Cecil Sharp House, lent for the occasion by the EFD&SS through Douglas Kennedy.

The inauguration took place in the following way. The representatives of the Clubs were seated in an inner circle,

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surrounded by the other morris men looking on. Kenworthy Schofield asked Douglas Kennedy to preside over the meeting and as no other nominations had been received Alec Hunter and Walter Abson were declared elected Squire and Bagman respectively of the Morris Ring. Whereupon Douglas Kennedy, after holding the wand of office in hand and addressing it for 20 minutes presented it to the Squire, and a minute book and cash book to the Bagman. Tea followed, then dancing; and supper with ale was provided by the EFD&SS and speeches by Alec, Douglas, William Kimber and others. About 60 or 70 morris men present, including 27 CMM.

The gates that inspired Needham and Peck?



Black Bank Station in June 1963, shortly before passenger traffic ceased and where, thirty years earlier, the idea that became the Morris Ring sprang into life.

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THE MORRIS RING

Once, from the Wolds of Norfolk's far-fam'd Shire
Two ancient men, upborne on buoyant Tyre,
Homeward returning o'er the fenny Plain
Came to a Place where Rails of steam-fed Train
And publick Highway at one Level met;
Here were the barring Gates against them set,
To that swift Train to give unhinder'd Way
Which runs from Liverpool to Parkeston Quay.
There then, perforce they halted; first, to view
The puffing Vehicle so shortly due,
And second, when the Gates re-open'd stood,
To take again, refresh'd, their onward Road.
Black Bank the Place: well may that Name be noted,
Place where high Plans and Policies were mooted,
For there, beside that fen-surrounded Station,
Uprose a deep and pregnant Conversation,
Speech that ere long should issue into Act,
Thought into Deed, and Figment into Fact.

Yet, Muse, I would not on thine Eloquence
Presume, nor on my Readers' Patience:
Short be thy Tale: the Ring was instituted
With Speed, and two months later constituted,
Six Clubs conjoin'd, six Clubs in Conclave met,
The Form for future Times' Expansion set;
That self-same Year, as it drew near its Fall,
To the great Gathering inaugurall
Came threescore Men and ten, from far and wide.
Unanimous, in Session dignified,
In Confidence and joyous Expectation,
They swiftly wrought the Ring's Inauguration;
A noble Squire they chose, a Bagman too,
One to preside, the other Sums to do;
To one a Staff, with fittings silver-plated,
They gave to mark how high his Rule was rated,
And to the Bagman, as his Place he took,
Cash-box of steel, and calf-bound Minute-book.
Well augur'd Ring! Now more than Years twice ten
Have pass'd since that first Conference of Men;
Years good and bad, years when our Hopes ran low,
Years when our future Prospects brighter glow:
Long may your fortune wax, your Power endure,
Built in Men's Hearts upon Foundations sure!
The passing Seasons your Estate enhance,
Confirm the Dancers, and promote the Dance.

Arthur Peck 1955

CONTRIBUTED BY JOHN JENNER

And the winner is...

Adam Garland, East Suffolk Morris Men, was elected as the next Squire of the Morris Ring at the A.R.M. earlier in the year. He owns up to a morris-spent infancy, youth (and adulthood, as well).

I was born at a very young age in 1973, the second child to Mike and Cynthia Garland, and from that moment on I was in and around the folk world – both music and dancing. A photograph exists of me as a baby reaching for my father's pint-pot!

As I grew up, my childhood was accompanied by the paraphernalia of The Ring Bagman and I spent many hours watching the old Gestetner printing Ring address lists whilst spreading thick, gloopy ink all over the kitchen floor.

However, the one thing that was missing from all of this was the big pointing finger, "you WILL become a dancer!" I was always allowed to make up my own mind as to whether or not I donned the bells. But, even at the age of eight, I could tell that this was a way of life that I would happily choose to accept. The use of the phrase 'way of life' is deliberate; Morris is more than just a hobby.

I joined East Suffolk Morris Men in the winter practice season and was told that I could not dance out until I was as tall as the shortest man, thus avoiding potentially embarrassing and somewhat painful incidents whilst in stick dances. I have always been eternally grateful to Des – some of you may know him as 'the little man with the Hobby Horse'!

And so, in the summer after my ninth birthday I was to be

seen in brand new sparkly bells in and around the villages of Suffolk. I attended my first Ring meeting in 1984 and have not looked back since.

One event that I will always remember is my eighteenth birthday. A 'surprise' do, I thought I knew what was coming but little did I know to what extent. Ikniel Way,



Top man The new Squire of the Morris Ring

Devil's Dyke and Harthill brought complete sides, along with representatives from sides too numerous to mention here. We danced and played the night away and at about four in the morning the dominoes started.

My time at College in Cheltenham studying for my degree was a small inconvenience between evenings with Lassington

Oak, Gloucester, or Forest of Dean. I even inflicted myself upon Bristol on a couple of occasions.

In the thirty-three years I have been dancing I have made many good friends and had countless excellent days/weekends out all over the country; from the depth of Cornwall, to the far north, I even saw some dancing in Forres near Inverness one summer.

I have had the pleasure of being part of 'once per year' sides such as the One Day Wonders, and the Hinkley Bullockers, and other groups from outside the Morris Ring; the Portland Poklers from Nottingham, Barley Brigg, Green Dragon Border and Pretty Grim in Suffolk to name but a few.

Now, looking back over the thirty-three years as a member of numerous Sides, having been to many Ring meetings, Days of Dance, Ales, Feasts, and instructionals (I even ran a workshop at the

Beasts and Animals Weekend many years ago on how to behave like an animal (no smart comments, please!, and yes, Henry is still going strong). I am happy to say that the reasons for me joining East Suffolk, the impressions I had as to how it would be, have been reinforced over and over again. I can say without a shadow of a doubt that I would not change one minute of it.

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Henry the Hooten Horse, Adam Garland's *alter ego*, supervises an earlier model of Morris Ring Squire. The family resemblance is barely noticeable...

There is one word, which may be a little over-used at times but is not lessened by this use, which conjures up the joy and friendship, the colour and the laughter, that holds it all together and that we all need to remember; Fellowship; the Fellowship of the Morris.

Over my dancing career I have been with East Suffolk to many places in Europe and it is quite obvious that The Dance is in many cases received better on the continent than it is here in England. I am pleased to see, however, that recently there has been a slight change in attitude towards Morris. People seem to be enjoying the dance more and more and understanding that as English and traditional - something we should embrace.

Since the election at the ARM, I have been asked numerous times what I am going to be doing as Squire. My response

comes in three parts.

Firstly, in order to maximise the visibility of the Morris I am keen to continue working with the other organisations; the Open Morris and The Federation, to create a combined front to the world. The recent JMO day in Cambridge was a superb event and wherever I went in Cambridge everyone was smiling and laughing; both dancers and audience alike.

This leads nicely into the second part of my answer which is to try to increase recruitment. All members of all sides should be respected and applauded irrespective of age. However, we all know that new and younger recruits are crucial. By working with the JMO and advertising Morris as much as possible, by being seen out and about we can all play our part in trying to get as many new dancers as we can.

Thirdly, I would say there is something of the utmost importance which should not be overlooked; to get out there and just put on some really good, top quality dancing. I like to see new traditions being developed but would urge you all to remember the older traditions and let these inform your modern developments.

As a final thought, I would ask you all to consider the following questions; do you know your own side's history? Who formed the side, when did this occur, who designed your kit, and so forth. Similarly, how many members of your side really understand about the work of Cecil Sharp, Mary Neal, the Esperance movement, and the big names whose work led to the formation of the Ring: Arthur Heffer, Kenworthy Schofield, Alec Hunter, Joseph Needham *et al.*

I ask these things as, too often, I hear interested members of the audience ask questions about Morris and the Ring and the answers they are given are, to be blunt, a whole load of hooey; incorrect at best, and at times blatantly made-up. If someone out there is interested, it is worth having members of your side who can give factually correct answers. Let's work with those people who are interested and maybe draw them further in!

So, that's a little about me. I hope to see as many of you as possible over the course of the next few years; continue your excellent work in performing Morris to the very best of your ability; let's get out there and show Morris at its very best.

Galley Right

Adam

For rare footage of two Squires of the Morris Ring in full cry, wander over to youtu.be/RB1_JN9sH-Q and marvel at the grace and poise of Mike Garland and Adam Garland at the 1988 Felixstowe Folk Weekend.

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a Meeting to be hosted by Ring new comers Devil's Dyke MM. I confess to closely following the weather forecast for a week before the due date, but by the Friday morning, it was clear that we were likely to have good weather up until Saturday night, but after that, it would be touch and go. I left home at 10.45 to meet up with Iain and in really nice warm sunshine, we made our way east and a little north. It was Friday of course, but I don't expect we were prepared for the miserable, slow journey, finally arriving just about 19.15. I had clocked 328 miles and taken more than 8 hours – oh, the delights of living in deepest Devon! We took a little while finding exactly where to park and find reception, but once that was established (by going the wrong way along a one way street!), we were warmly welcomed and shown to (palatial) accommodation in a mediaeval building belonging to Kings Ely, a public school associated with the cathedral. Not much time to settle in, as food was ready between 7 and 8, in yet another mediaeval building called the Monastic Barn – no prizes for guessing its original purpose, but the bats were still there and flying about whilst we ate! Saturday tours started at 09.00, and we eventually got back at 18.30. Nice day, nice pubs, good company; maybe if I was being picky, just too many stops, but as the Squire's tour sampled both tour A and Tour B, it was probably just me? Sandwiches for lunch was a novelty, and to me they were just about right; after a full English for breakfast and a feast in the evening, why do we persist with a hot cooked lunch? OK, I know some will disagree, but it just seems gross to me! The sandwiches were great too! I also liked the tea and rock cakes put on by



the Methodist ladies; what a treat! Another treat was to come to the Fens, visit 7 pubs and only have to endure the sight of a Greene King hand pumponce. Time for a shower and change before the Feast – nice! Peter Taylor the Squire of Greensleeves had rushed away at the first pub stop of the day, because his Dad, Bob had become seriously ill; we learned on getting back the sad news that his Dad had died during the day. A moment to contemplate our own mortality – Bob had been a long term member of Greensleeves, and our thoughts went out to the Taylor family in their loss. The food at the Feast was very professionally produced and served by the school catering team. It all went smoothly, and the Ring Squire-Elect got some practice when he organised the entertainment with the coffee. After the Feast, most seemed to gravitate to the Undercroft in School House for very spirited dancing and general merry making.

Sunday was a fairly relaxed 09.45 start and we processed the few hundred yards to the main door of the Cathedral, before taking our seats. Ely Cathedral provokes such awe with its size and beauty; even the lantern over the altar appears to just hang in space. The Dean was very welcoming to the Morris, and after the service, sides gave a display of dancing which achieved a high standard, despite the blustery weather. Amazing what can be achieved with an audience! Shaun the Shop had set up his tent whilst we were in church; finding a spot out of the wind. There was a display dance from all 9 sides present, a jig and 5 massed dances, with a final and second dance from our hosts. A large audience had begun to dwindle, but enough stayed to the end to applaud the dancers and musicians.

So, there it is, another summer of the Morris under way. We got away with good weather Saturday and acceptable weather Sunday. A very new side to the Ring has organised

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and run a highly successful event, for which they deserve great credit.

I have stressed before that under the changes brought in by my predecessor, there is no longer a "right" or "wrong" way to run a meeting. I have encouraged sides to consider a meeting for under £50, in the style of the Moulton MM weekend perhaps, but we are yet to see it happen, although Saddleworth Rushcart is under £50. The Devil's Dyke MM formula is a tad more traditional and may well be a model for the future, given that many Morris Ring members now seek more comfortable accommodation and have the disposable income to pay for it. Indoor camping was eliminated; it used all the facilities of a modern boarding school: accommodation, showers, and catering. Something similar has been done for ARMs, but not Ring Meetings, I think?

Most of the labour by the hosts was eliminated, and extra costs were carefully controlled – sandwiches for Saturday lunch and what our American cousins call a "no host" lunch on Sunday (i.e. you pay for your own).

I heard only nice words from those attending; very well done, Devil's Dyke Morris Men. You may have opened a new chapter in the annals of the Morris Ring – I congratulate you all, not just Nick Kerry and Randall Scott, who deserve praise too! There is really no excuse for even small sides out there to not organise a successful event! Finally, please don't forget to order your 80th anniversary rugby, polo or tee shirt from www.snappycrab.co.uk.

Robin

Stuck for a song at your next ale or feast? Fret not – this timely ditty guarantees maximum ingratiation with that very special guest.

As plained to Dan Frooty



The Battle Song of the Fifty Thousand Morris Ring Squires

Tune: Old folks, young folks

The Morris Ring's been on the go since nineteen thirty-four
To serve our native dances, mummers' plays and more.
Our leaders are all worthy, be they sinner, be they saint;
We love them when they're in the right – but more so when they ain't!

*Old blokes, young blokes, everybody come,
Come and join the Morris Ring and make yourselves at home.
With swords and sticks and handkerchiefs,
Spread out across the floor,
We're goin' to dance the Morris like we've never danced before.*

Hunter was the first Squire, he kept us all in check.
After him came Schofield, Kennedy and Peck,
Callender and Hamer, Metcalf and Cassels.
Then Cassie, Phillips, Matthews and Bacon shook the bells.

Nicholls, Brown and Venables. then Cleaver made the top;
Fleming next, then Sunderland, Welti and Allsop.
Father Kenneth Loveless came to lend a hand,
And Care, King and Jerram were followed by Garland.

Chandler, Yarnell, Hankinson, Sercombe from the west;
Messrs Fox and Willey, well, they also passed the test;
Marchant handed on to Cross and Tasker followed Reece,
Halfpenney, then Springett - and now Henry's at the crease.

Tho' down the years New Britain's tried to set the dance aside:
"We've got no room for old stuff. Give us novelty!" they cried,
The Morris Ring stayed stout and firm while others stood and fussed;
We do not dance because we *may* – we dance because we *must*!

*Old blokes, young blokes, everybody come,
Come and join the Morris Ring and make yourselves at home.
With swords and sticks and handkerchiefs,
Spread out across the floor,
We're goin' to dance the Morris like we've never danced before.*

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Thelwall Morris Men's **Sam Addison** reflects on this year's Morris Ring Jigs Instructional

It may be said that the beginning of wisdom is the realisation of just how little you actually know. After 10 years of dancing I thought I knew something about the Morris. After the Jigs Instructional, I may now be considered to be a touch wiser. The weekend is structured like a ring meeting where you arrive on Friday, dance on Saturday, feast Saturday evening, dance Sunday morning and depart after lunch. There the resemblance stops. At the Jigs Instructional the emphasis is on work. You are there to learn and the skilled instructors know just how to challenge you to do better than you thought you could. We were a group of 38 delegates with a wide range of ages, experience and fitness

but we were all catered for and are all now better dancers for the experience.

Following a welcome on Friday evening it was straight into a 45 min session on Headington Quarry and started with basic stepping on the spot. By the time we got down the pub at 10.00 we had earned our pints. The next day dancing started at 9.00 and by 5.15 we had completed four traditions (Bledington, Sherborne, Bampton and Fieldtown) at an hour and a half each and I had used up 4 (now wet) tee shirts. I have never attempted 6 hours of dancing in a day before. After the feast, with commendably short speeches, we DID NOT DANCE. This did not deter some brave souls who attempted Vandals in the crowded pub using cocktail sticks. We did, however, enjoy some fine singing at the feast and afterwards in the pub with a little friendly rivalry between the two rooms.

9.00 Sunday and we were dancing again! This time we rattled through Ascot and Oddington by 10.30 (now running out of tee shirts). After a tea break it was back to Headington for 45 mins followed immediately by a half hour of reprise of the traditions. This consisted of one jig from each tradition which was attempted by those still able. By my estimate this was 60 percent of the learners with the remainder injured or too shattered to take part. The weekend was wrapped up with a (seated) feedback session which discussed the

publishing of videos taken (don't without permission!), opening up the weekend to Open Morris and Morris Federation members (attendant problems over mixed sexes and venue), and training of musicians and instructors.

During the weekend we must have covered between 15 and 20 jigs in the various traditions. Am I now able to perform a jig in public? No way! But I do have a much better understanding of what might constitute a performance and some of the techniques/tricks to make it look better. I also have a better knowledge of those traditions covered which will inform my dancing and, possibly, in a few months time after lots of practice, I may be able to perform a solo jig creditably.

I went to the Jigs Instructional intending to learn a jig. I left it so wiped out that it took me two days to recover. Would I go again? Of course I would and would recommend it to any morris dancer who wishes to improve. I would, however, issue one caveat. You may, as I did, see a jig performed so superbly by a young man who danced so elegantly [Aw, shucks! Give over! Ed.] that you cannot aspire to even approach that level. This will either inspire you with hope for the future of the Morris and spur you on to greater endeavours; or you will be so despondent that you will give up dancing forever! You have been warned!

The 2015 Jigs Instructional takes place 16-18 January - see separate notice on page 14 of this issue or visit the Morris Ring website for details.



The Morris Ring's Eastern Area Representative, **Mike Stevens**, looks back on a fruitful start to the dancing season

With Easter falling late this year Easter Monday was surprisingly warm and sunny in the micro climate of North Norfolk. Several of us from Peterborough joined The King's Men on their familiar tour to the Rose and Crown in Snettisham, the Norfolk Lavender Centre and The Lifeboat Inn at Thornham, ending with music and songs in the pub.

On Sunday 27th April, St George was celebrated at the Rose and Crown in Hundon, Suffolk, in an event organised by Belchamp Morris and attended by fellow Morris Ring side, Hageneth MM. Other local sides also attending were Fenstanton Morris, Haughley Hoofers,

Springtime in the East

Green Dragon (how appropriate for a St George occasion!), Bury Fair and Little Egypt (the one in Suffolk, not the larger one in Africa!). Despite having strayed too close to Haverhill, my navigator (*sic*) regained our route to the village where I found Hageneth ready to dance with not one but two new dancers, Ben and Sean. For a first outing they were reassuringly competent at stick dances. Also dancing was Dave Evans who is one half of the Morris correspondent of Mardles*, the magazine for everything folk-related in Suffolk. The other half is his wife Gill Brett. Thanks to Grahame Stephens of Belchamp for his welcome. So that was April – next is May! On May morning the men of Peterborough Morris danced at the Custom House on the Nene river bank to wake the dawn. Convenient as the dance site is, opposite the Peterborough nick, I'm



Belchamp Morris Men round up an audience for St George in Hundon
Vaughan Goldsborough

rose as if to order and then we were off to an early breakfast at the Market cafe.

Next day, several of us helped a local primary school, Heritage Park School, to celebrate their heritage with some Morris. Every class in the school performed a different country dance and a small group gave us a Maypole dance. We provided bells and baldricks for a dozen youngsters to



Heritage Park Primary School pupils prepare to tangle with some local customs

pleased to report that there was no call for a police presence to control the thronging crowd, just a few faces at the window. The sun

dance Getting Upstairs from Hinton. The event was coordinated by Gary, their sports teacher, who joined us and all the assembled children

☞ p12

for a final Morris dance. House points all round!

On Bank Holiday Monday, 5 May, Peterborough Morris performed at the Golden Pheasant in the village of Etton. We had previously danced there on the evening of St George's Day and the landlord, also a George, was very keen for us to be part of his Bank Holiday bash. Good weather prevailed and we worked out a turn and turn-about with the jazz-rock band. All this, and May not a week old!

As a post-script, it occurs to me that the above Ring sides: Belchamp, Hageneth, The King's Men and Peterborough have each gained one or two new dancers this season. Everyone is aware of the need to recruit but I think that each has done this by getting out there, being visible, doing what they do and being who they are. I hope it continues to work for them.

Photographs by Mike Stevens unless otherwise indicated



Put to the sword

Brian Tasker sees the return of sword dancing to the Ashdown Forest

I got to know the Ashdown Forest Morris Men while I was Squire of the Morris Ring [2008-10]. They are a very friendly bunch and their repertoire and dancing style is noticeably different from that of the Hartley Morris Men, a side I have been a member of for many years. I decided two years ago to make the break and join them. After a year I tentatively asked if they were interested in learning a longsword dance. They were so I introduced them to the Boosbeck dance which I learned during my time with Castleford Longsword in Yorkshire. It is always tricky introducing a new tradition to an existing side as not everyone is likely to be interested. We decided that those who wanted to learn the dance would meet for half an hour every week immediately before Morris practice thus not intruding on Cotswold

☞ p14



☞ p13

time. This has worked very well and we now have a team which can perform the dance as part of a Morris display.

Some long standing members of the side have told me that back in the 1970s they tried dancing longsword. The story as related to me is that there was an EFDSS folk dance group in East Grinstead which formed a sword team. They were called the "Greenstede Men", after the Saxon name for the land on which East Grinstead now stands.

The team was taught by Francis Hawkins, a member of the East Grinstead club. They danced for about five years between 1963 and 1968 and included Flamborough and Kirkby Malzeard in their repertoire. Francis learned these dances at a week long EFDSS course in 1950 which included social dance,

Playford and Morris as well as sword. The Greenstede Men only danced at parties run by the folk dance club and never in public.

The club was reformed in 1972 with the objective of learning the Cotswold tradition and they became the Ashdown Forest Morris Men. The green waistcoats worn by the Greenstede Men were given to the Ashdown musicians and their swords were also passed on to the new side.

Bob Birch, the first foreman of Ashdown, was not a sword dancer. Nevertheless, he tried to continue the tradition of dancing longsword but they didn't get much beyond working out a lock and trying to learn part of the Ampleforth dance from the dance notation. The initiative did not last long and the swords were put away and now nobody

knows where they are. Efforts to trace them continue as it would be good to dance with these old swords again.

I think that sword dancing will continue to be part of the Ashdown repertoire. After a year dancing the first two figures of Boosbeck it would be good to teach them another dance. I am considering the Escrick dance (another part of the Castleford repertoire), but this may be a bit long. An alternative is the five man Elgin dance. This would be appropriate as Andrew Kennedy, who wrote the dance, lived in East Grinstead for some years and is well known to some members of the side.

A fuller version of this article appeared in the September 2013 issue of Rattle Up, My Boys, the longsword enthusiasts' magazine.

JIGSAWE 2015!

SUTTON BONINGTON

16-18 JANUARY 2015

The Morris Ring invites colleagues to its Annual JIGS INSTRUCTIONAL in bosky Nottinghamshire - perfectly timed to counter the excesses of Yuletide and bring a New Year glow to the hips. Using the solo dance as a vehicle for instruction, this event will give you a good basic grounding in the art and science of Cotswold Morris in general and the Morris Jig in particular. There are parallel streams for both improving and experienced dancers, plus special sessions for **BEGINNERS** (hurrah!) covering the basics of the dance.

At a cost of only **£47** per man, the Jigs Instructional is great value for money and offers

- COSY indoor camping (including showers)
- REALLY GOOD food from Friday supper to Sunday lunch
- DELECTABLE beer for the Feast
- EXPERT and PATIENT instruction
- the MOST CONVIVIAL company
- and a PUB that you'll want to take home

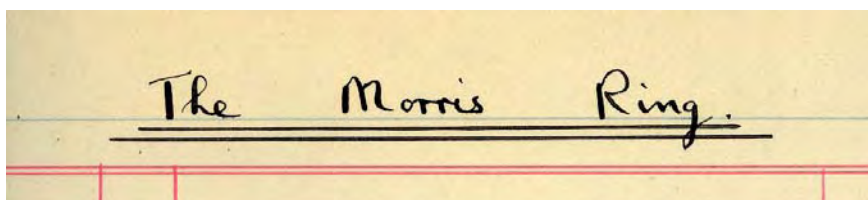
Generous discounts for first and second time participants!

Register your interest NOW! Your side's Bagman has details, see the Morris Ring website, or email jigsinstructional@themorrisring.org.

SOLD OUT IN 2014 – DON'T DELAY!

A view from the Treasury 80 years on

Steven Archer



When Walter Abson dipped his pen in the inkwell, wrote this title on page 1 of the first accounts book and meticulously underlined it, he could not have imagined that its image would be digitally scanned, photographically manipulated and published on the World Wide Web 80 years later. Yet the way he laid out the accounts followed a format equally recognisable by Mr Micawber and any accountant practicing today: Income and Profits, Expenditure and Losses.

Mr Micawber's mantra "Annual income £20/- expenditure £19/19/6d, result happiness" was clearly in the forefront of Walter's mind because by the end of the second year he had amassed the sum of £10/16/2d for the Morris Ring. This was a considerable sum when wages were £3 per week, a pint of beer cost 9d, a Brough Superior was £180 and a two bedroom terraced house in London would set you back £300.

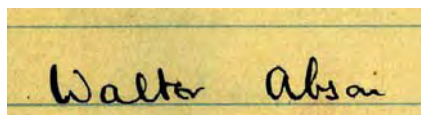
Meetings were a considerable source of income at the start. Thaxted 1935 £1/18/3d, Stow-on-the-Wold 1935 £2/14/-, Thaxted 1936 10/9d, Wargrave 1936 17/10½d although the Grasmere and Cecil Sharp House meeting of 1936 lost a total of 19/-. However, the outstanding success was the collection at the 1936 Thaxted meeting of

£9/4/10½d. That is equivalent to £560 today. So colleagues, there's your challenge for the future!

Other items I noticed were the cost of the money box, 7/6d (same as a marriage licence) and Kenworthy Schofield for ciné film, 10/6d (same as a top hat). A delve into our recently digitised archive should reveal what he managed to capture on the celluloid.

It's surprising just how much you can glean from a couple of pages of old data. Well it surprised me anyway. If you are under the age of 30 you may be a bit lost with all this £.s.d, ciné film and a Brough Superior but be assured it is nothing to do with pre-war drugs, French porn and sexual deviance. Just ask one of the old men in your side about it and he'll be able to bore you for hours about the good old days when.....

In memory of



Bagman
1934-46

Steven Archer is Treasurer of the Morris Ring and a member of Ravensbourne Morris Men

Morris Men embrace the Olympic spirit

In March the organisers of the Sainsbury Sport Relief invited **Ravensbourne Morris and Sword** to join a list of largely unknown celebrities to perform on stage to a crowd of 60,000 at the Olympic Park, writes squire **Steve Taylor**.

In a well rehearsed and carefully choreographed programme Ravensbourne planned to wow the crowds with a performance of Morris, Sword and music. Well, that was the plan.

Despite being given the prime slot of 12.37, following the Pearly Kings and Queens "Knees up, Mother Brown", a biting north wind depleted the eager crowds in front of the stage. A sharp hail storm heralded our entry and as we launched into Skirmish, the Glastonbury-sized audience rapidly diminished to a few hardy WAGS, offspring and grandchildren. There were rumours that Katy Price (aka Jordan) was doing a few laps of the Velodrome on her bike, though why that should make a difference was beyond the ken of the older men.

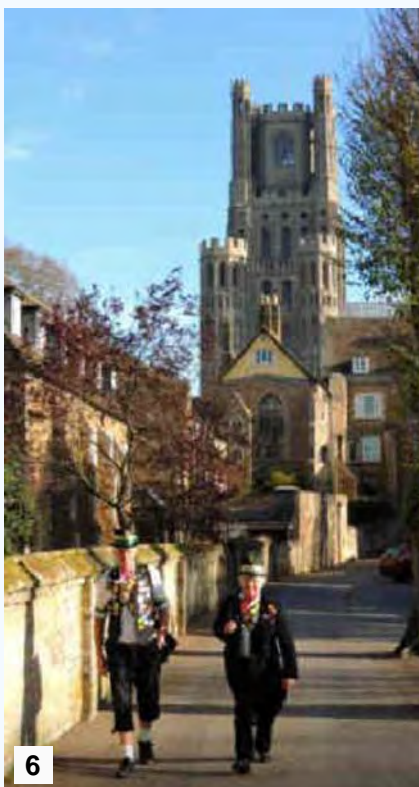
Some referred to the Velodrome as the cyclotron, but others pointed out that a cyclotron is a place where physicists search for the Higgs field, a force which imparts great mass on otherwise insignificant bodies; nothing like what was happening in the Velodrome.

The organisers generously provided plenty of sustaining refreshments and a nice warm dressing room which the Ravensbourne men enjoyed sharing with a troop of cheer leaders. "It was certainly good to get our hands warm after the biting cold on stage," comments Steve.

See photo on page 17

A Gallery of Morris

Images of the dance across the land



Meeting of the Morris Ring at Ely, 4-6 April, hosted by Devil's Dyke Morris Men.
 1 The massed display 2 At the feast 3 Squire a-waiting
 4 Thirsty work 5 Scousers with sticks 6 Ely Cathedral 7 The Flying Treasurer 8 Devil's Dyke Morris Men

Photos Steve King





1–3 Moulton Village Festival *Photos Steven Archer*

4 Sport Relief at the Olympic Park *see page 15*

5 Morris Ring A.R.M. *Photo Joe Oldaker*

6–9 Forest of Dean Morris Men's Family Weekend
Photos Tom Mockford (except 9: Morris Moll)

All the Bells and Whistles



Shaun Lambley, Keeper of the Morris Shop, has been hard at work over the past months, taking his wares to morris and other folk events up and down the country. Morris *aficionados* have been eager to browse and, gratifyingly, purchase books, DVDs, CDs, clothing, bells and numerous other goodies from the shop's extensive range of specialist items.

Shaun is also exploiting social media to excellent effect, promoting both new and established products via Facebook with increasing success ([/themorrisshop](http://themorrisshop)). I found Shaun in brisk entrepreneurial mode when I joined other shop customers

at Bromyard Folk Festival (pictured). He reckons to have attended somewhere in the region of thirty events of one sort or another so far this year, with more lined up.

"It's been a hectic few months," said Shaun, "but great fun, and the more I do the better I get to know what lines people are interested in, which will help us develop the shop even more."

Shaun is always happy to receive invitations to set up shop at festivals, days of dance and other similar events: shaun@themorrisshop.com, though it's first come, first served, so get your request in soon.

With Christmas looming,

Shaun is gearing up for a busy time satisfying orders arriving via the shop website (www.themorrisshop.com), where full colour photos will lead you that perfect gift. But please don't shove—I was here first.

Dan Frooty



Obituaries

Charles (Chas) Whitlock

1929–2014

St Albans Morris Men

Whitchurch Morris Men

Chas Whitlock, who passed away peacefully on 10th June 2014, aged 85, started dancing the Morris whilst at Oxford University. He had been educated at King Henry VIIIth Grammar School Coventry and then studied for an NSC in Physics at Oxford. After graduating and National Service in the REME he joined Armstrong Whitworth as a telemetry engineer. Chas was made redundant and for two years taught in the Science Department at Lawrence Sherref School in Rugby. He then returned to telemetry with the Scientific Research Organisation. Initially employed in London he commuted from Coventry until buying a flat in Harpenden. Soon thereafter his department was relocated to Swindon where he took up weekday digs, returning to Harpenden each weekend.

Chas's early dancing life after graduating was, for a number of years, with Coventry Morris Men where he was Bagman for many years and for one year, Squire. He joined St Albans Morris Men in 1970 and was still nominally a member at the time of his death. Whilst working away from St Albans

he danced with Icknield Way MM and after taking early retirement in 1989 also danced with Whitchurch MM. Morris played a central role in Chas's life. A regular performer with St Albans he attended ring meetings, days and weekends of dance whilst also being a choir member at St Mary's Luton and latterly at St John's Harpenden.

Nic Nicolson

An obituary for Chas Whitlock also appeared in Morris Ring

Gordon Myland

1936–2014

St Albans Morris Men

Many in the folk world were shocked to hear of Gordon's passing in early March 2014. Gordon's involvement in folk began in 1961 when he joined St Albans Morris Men. He quickly became a significant member of the club acting as bagman and Squiring the club

on three occasions. During his membership of SAMM he founded St Albans Folk Packet, a club that performed Cotswold Morris, long sword, rapper and folk dance displays. Folk Packet hosted a number of International Festivals in St Albans. The visitors being hosted by friends to keep costs to a minimum. In the mid 60's he founded St Albans Mummerys, who still perform each Boxing Day in the town centre.

His love of the town is reflected in that each club is identified as coming from St Albans and was further shown by Gordon becoming a District Councillor in the earlier 1990's. He served as Mayor for the municipal year 2004/5. Gradually his civic duties took over from folk dancing and he is probably best known over the past few years for his work associated with the Keech Hospital Care charity.

Nic Nicolson



Another Will Kemp?

Brahn boots? I ask yer! Not with red breeches, surely...

What have we here? A sneak preview of the Squire's new outfit? An early depiction of antics at Sutton Bonington? Our esteemed Treasurer dancing *Balance the Books* (Addington), one of his favourite jigs?

**Find out in the next issue of
The Morris Dancer**

*the digital journal that expands our
understanding of the Morris in all its forms*

**Available to download
in November only from
www.themorrisring.org**

Letters

From Daniel Fox

Dear Editor,

I was pleased to see the article [Morris Ring Circular 69] by Mike Stevens, Eastern Area Rep., about the Young Dancers Workshops.

Thaxted MM currently have three young (ie under 21) members and, as part of their development as Morris dancers, the club encouraged them to take part in the Young Dancers Workshop organised by Mike Stevens, Eastern Area Rep. I am aware that there are differing opinions on the benefits or otherwise of creating groups defined by age rather than community.

Two of Thaxted's young dancers have been to two of the workshops organised by Mike Stevens and it is clear that their confidence as dancers has grown. This is, I think, as a result of spending time with other dancers of their age group. It does not diminish the importance to them of being, first and foremost, members of Thaxted Morris Men.

If, as I think they do, the Young Dancers Workshops add to the dancing of our younger members and does not diminish the importance of the community of individual Morris sides, then the Morris Ring should encourage other Area Reps to follow Mike's example and organise similar workshops in their areas.

Daniel

Daniel Fox is a Past Squire of the Morris Ring and a member of Thaxted Morris Men

Advertisement



A great gift idea

Not (yet) in the Morris Shop are these handsome cufflinks proudly displaying your side's badge (or anything else, come to that). Handcrafted by skilled artisans on the wooded slopes of the southern counties, these cufflinks are competitively priced and can be yours in time for Christmas. For full details, contact Neil Stevens (Kennet Morris Men) via omally@omally.co.uk.

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Please submit items for Issue 71 by 5th November to the Editor:
thecircular@themorrisring.org

Letters and articles may be subject to shrinkage; photographs should be at least 300 dpi and accompanied by full details of date, location, photographer and identities of featured sides and/or individuals. Thanks.

Wozzle!

Tony Foard

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