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The Morris Ring *Circular*

Just the ticket!

Transport of delight for dancers of distinction

Rossendale residents have been riding with the Coconutters. as **Joe Healey**, who also took the photos, explains.

The Britannia Coconut Dancers of Bacup recently became even more a part of the Lancashire landscape when their area bus company repainted one of its vehicles in honour of the side. Phil Smith, Managing Director of Rosso Buses, and his team have a policy of championing local themes and the Coconutters were delighted to have been chosen for such an illustrious promotion. So, is this an end to clogging up the roads?

We've arrived! The Britannia Coconut Dancers of Bacup (below & right) admire the new livery.



“Not Rocket Science!”

Roy Dommett, who died in November, was Britain's Chief Missile Scientist during the Cold War, and later acted as adviser to H.M. Government. But within the Morris community he was feted for his profound knowledge of traditional dance, sharing his passion and insights through workshops, lectures, publications and, above all, his ebullient presence at Morris events near and far. **Steven Archer**, Treasurer of the Morris Ring, remembers a unique practitioner of the Morris whose painstaking research and joyous relish for the dance inspired numerous sides and countless individuals—himself included.

I first bumped into Roy in the mid sixties at Avon Tyrrell in the New Forest where, out in this remote place, there were wild weekends of dance and song. In the centre of all this revelry was the towering figure of Roy Leonard Dommett.



Roy Dommett with the author.

I had never before seen an adult behave quite like Roy. After all, he was a dozen years older than me which, as a teenager, made him an adult. There was an air of mischief, fun and not least rebellion in what he did which appealed to the emerging youth of that heady era. He turned the local pub into a cacophony of song and laughter, something I had never seen before.

That experience remains engrained in my memory as I suspect it does for the hundreds of other people who also experienced Roy's highly

infectious personality.

It was a few years later that I met him again. He was dressed as Andy Pandy and dancing on Sidmouth sea front. Tubby Reynolds had already befriended our little group of Sidmouth virgins and so it was that we were introduced to Morris Dancing workshops. The rest, as they say, is history. The magic influence of Roy and Tubby had captured another band of recruits and over 45 years later at least two of that group are still dancing Morris.

One year Roy asked me for a lift back from Sidmouth and volunteered to navigate so as to avoid the heavy traffic on the rather poor Dorset roads. Indeed we did avoid the Lyme Regis and Bere Regis black spots, driving along roads with grass growing up the middle. Roy was not one for following the crowd or doing the conventional thing.

Later in life I went to some of his Morris workshops, the last in October 2012. Undaunted by age and infirmity Roy exuded his infectious enthusiasm, not to mention his rebellious taste for

experimentation which culminated with us improvising a dance based on a film of the Wilson, Keppel and Bettysand dance.

For most of this time I was largely unaware that Roy and I had shared the status of being servants of Her Majesty. I was a humble Scientific Officer while Roy was one of the country's leading experts on rocketry, and this was something we talked about at our last meeting.

For Roy Dommett, however, it really was mostly Morris—and not Rocket Science.



Watch with Mother Roy in trademark attire.

Squire's Capers

Adam Garland, Squire of the Morris Ring, puts up with sunshine, showers and storms on his travels.

At the time of writing my last 'Capers', you may recall I had just been to Helmond for their 2015 Ring Meeting.

After that I visited Moulton for their annual festival. The day lived up to expectation with a wonderful atmosphere, good dancing, and the weather, as promised by Simon Care, was hot and sunny.

Two weekends later I went to Thaxted for their annual weekend of dance where our antipodean friends from Perth danced in as members of the Morris Ring. I met up with Perth again the following weekend at Hartley's day of dance and once

was an experimental 'do' based around a beer festival; it was a huge success in many ways. There were difficulties with the feast but it showed that, whilst for some aspects of the event traditional is best, there is no reason not to think in a broader spectrum when

and was well received by the guests. One comment I overheard was that it was the best Ring Meeting they had ever attended.

Yateley's day of dance was again in the style of a JMO event. I am so pleased that Ring Sides are embracing closer working with teams from our partner organisations. This closer working is obviously the way forward and when your Bagman and I went to the Federation 40th Anniversary celebration in Bath at the end of September we received a wonderfully warm reception; again I would



Geoff Jerram left, of Winchester Morris Men, helps **Adam Garland** sweep the chimneys of Thaxted.

Photo Steven Archer

again the sun shone on the Morris; a lovely day.

On the 13th June I was in Letchworth for their Day of Dance. The steady light rain throughout the day did nothing to spoil the event; a real JMO style get-together with a ceilidh in the evening.

Later that month I went north to join Oakworth for their Dales tour. Like Letchworth, this was more like a JMO event, and it was so nice to again see the fellowship we know in the Morris Ring extending to the other Organisations as well.

Hartley's Ring Meeting in July

arranging these things.

In August I visited Mersey and Saddleworth in quick succession. Having never been to Liverpool Mersey's one day Ring Meeting was great; nice reception from the crowds and I was able to see the Cavern Club. Saddleworth is Saddleworth – what more is there to be said? I would say 'Cart is something everyone involved with Morris should try to get to; a wonderful atmosphere, and this year my own Side, East Suffolk, were able to visit en masse.

Anker's Ring Meeting at the beginning of September marked the end of my first year as Squire

say a huge thanks to Mel Barber, Fee Lock and all who helped make us feel so welcome.

Cambridge and Anker both had their feasts in October, followed early in November by the Witchurch day of dance. Unfortunately this was the weekend of a major storm so there wasn't a lot of dancing due to the rain but the one spot which stands out is the amazing reception we received in the shopping centre; really attentive audience who joined in at the end and obviously enjoyed themselves.

At the time of writing the final

official event I attended was the memorial service for Roy Dommett; an incredible man whose legacy will last a very long time [see p2].

Roy was another of those people without whom the Morris World would be somewhat poorer. I have said before, and no doubt will say again, that the Morris world we perform in is not the dream child of only one man. Whilst it was for many years usual to toast Cecil Sharp at Morris Ring events, we have written records dating back to the mid-1300s and I have made a conscious effort to make 'The Immortal Memory' encompass all who had a hand (and foot!) in ensuring the survival of Morris Dancing.

The Morris world we see is the result of at least 650 years of evolution and development; new sides, new steps, new tunes, new instruments, the many different men and women who recorded, reported, danced, taught, explained and put their hearts and souls into this evolutionary process. Long may it continue.

2015 finished with a trip to the Original Welsh Border tour. An interesting day and good to see the dances performed in their 'home' territory. Having said that, I am sure the Morris world would not be worse off if the day lost the 'initiation ceremony' for new attendees!

Early this year I had a most enjoyable trip to the Hinkley Bullockers' 30th Anniversary Plough Day where once again Tony Ashley managed to keep the whole thing ticking along smoothly. This was followed by a journey across to Stafford's feast from which we battled home through the floods. A most enjoyable day all round, though.

Mid-January found me heading up the M1 to the Jigs Instructional for their feast. Geoff Jerram has again advised us that he would be more than willing to take the Jigs Instructional on the road. He can provide tutors and music but needs you to provide accommodation. This could also include teams from our friends in the Federation and Open Morris; perhaps a JMO Jig event?

After Burn's night and a decent Wassail in Suffolk, February saw me journey to Winchester for their feast. Another stormy night, but good dancing and great food. Following this was the ARM which I felt was a really constructive meeting. We were given a good idea of where the membership would like the Morris Ring to go with the annual meetings; both the issue of inclusivity and the financial running of events. You will all by now know that after the ARM the decision was made to bring back the Ring Meeting and, from here on in, to gain official Morris Ring support (financially and an official number) they will welcome all members of all

member clubs. This decision has been well received across the board, not only inside the Ring but within our partner organisations as well.

Following the ARM I had a weekend in Suffolk at the Oxblood Molly Day of Dance in Halesworth. This was mostly Federation and Open clubs and I was pleased to represent the Morris Ring. It was cold but sunny, with a good atmosphere and energy in the performances. Following this I went up to Devil's Dyke's Ale Feast and again had a superb evening of good dancing and good humour.

In mid-March I went to Sutton on Trent for the JMO AGM; again, a very constructive meeting. I am pleased to see the three organisations are working so closely together to promote Morris Dancing in all its forms, yet retaining the character of each organisation. This can only be a good thing for the Morris.

At the end of March I attended the funeral of Geoff Thompson, late of Packington and Handsworth Sword; a fine man and a good dancer whom I had known for many years through various events and the One Day Wonders Travelling Morris. Another sad loss to the Morris world.

In April I attended the JMO national day of dance in York hosted by Minster Strays. Those of you involved in organising these events know the huge amounts of work required and I think Minster Strays can be enormously pleased with their efforts. It was cold but sunny again, and there was a lot of good quality dancing. At the end of the day Fee Lock, Secretary for the Morris Federation, led us all in a huge Circassian Circle. This circumvented the need to find common dances for Cotswold, border, molly, and sword but still united everyone for a finale.

Mayday dawned bright and clear and, as always, I am so impressed with the number of clubs who brave the dawn to welcome in the



Squire of the Morris Ring **Adam Garland** with fellow **Lassington Oak Morris Men**.

Redcar Sword Dancers 1 Gravity 1

Brian Pierce declares that honour is satisfied at annual longsword competition—for now, at least.

Elation at our triumph in the Own Dance class at the 2014 Sword Dance Union Longsword Competition was tempered somewhat when a dropped blade cost us victory in the Traditional Dance category. Happily, in the same tournament, Redcar's Moira Clarke again won Best Musician.

Fast forward to last October, when the contest moved across the North Riding from Richmond-upon-Swale to Goathland. This time Redcar Sword Dancers rediscovered their winning ways with their performance of the Greatham Dance, along with the capture of the Trevor Stone Prize for the best score overall.

No one was more surprised than the team itself as our



Redcar Sword Dancers at full tilt.

number included a last minute substitute, George Unthank, who last danced with the side some 40 years earlier! George is pictured proudly holding the trophy, which has now been won four times by Redcar in the last nine years.



The trophy-laden victors.

GUM keep Standard high and hairy for television appearance

Travelling foodies The Hairy Bikers became Morris dancers for the day when they visited historic pub The Royal Standard of England in Forty Green near Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire.

Si King and Dave Myers were in the pub to record an episode for their BBC TV series *The Pubs that built Britain* and were joined by **Grand Union Morris** to demonstrate how



The well-groomed meet the hirsute Grand Union Morris filming with The Hairy Bikers.

the end of the Wars of the Roses might have been celebrated in taverns up and down the country. Guided by GUM's Fool and Bagman, Dudley Wells, the popular presenters made a commendable effort on screen at Adderbury *Shooting*.

The Royal Standard of England is England's oldest freehouse with a charter dating u back to Charles II's reign, and is a regular Grand Union Morris dances spot.

SCOTCHFEST!

Peter Halfpenney, Past Squire of the Morris Ring, recalls a memorable excursion across Hadrian's Wall.

In 2009, looking to combine a Morris dancing week away with the opportunity to involve family and friends of Harthill Morris, I came across a wonderful, almost fairy-tale castle at Brechin in the east of Scotland. Kinnaird Castle is the family seat of the Earl and Countess of Southesk and they

with roaring log fires and two baronial dining rooms make the venue ideal for our purposes.

Booking for such a large party becomes very cost-effective and even the most impoverished of our side found the adventure affordable. So it was that we

not dancing, time was yours to do with what you would.

The east coast of Scotland is littered with attractions and the Castle grounds comprise 3,500 acres of woodland, deer park, lakes and tracks where guests are free to roam at will, thus it was anticipated that there would be "ne'er a dull moment".

To say that the venture was a success is a massive understatement. So successful in fact that I have organised and run return visits in all but one of the last 5



No need to curtsy The Earl's guests assemble.

have graciously opened their doors to take in paying guests. Rooms are beautifully appointed, many boasting antique furniture, oil paintings and even a four-poster bed! Two suites of apartments are available accommodating 24 souls in total and the inclusion of two fully equipped kitchens, two large communal sitting rooms

first took up residence in Kinnaird Castle in November half-term week 2009 with 20 Harthill dancers and their wives plus four friends from Richmond on Swale. The plan was to dance out on three weekday evenings and to enjoy a full day's tour on the Saturday. All excursions would be by coach with meals provided at each venue. When

years. The cast list has changed over time as have the dancing venues but the flavour of the 'Scotchfest' has endured.

Scotchfest V crossed the border on Sunday 26th October 2014, participants all armed with contributions for the communal arrival night buffet. The beer barrels were set up and tapped and, as if by

magic, an array of single malt whiskies appeared on the sideboard. It's not called 'Scotchfest' for nothing!

After a free day Monday to explore the area we gathered in the Castle dining rooms for a splendid traditional Scottish home-cooked haggis dinner with neeps and tatties courtesy of Kay & Neil Dawson. Monday is our Ceilidh night in the Castle schoolroom. We were delighted to be joined for the evening by the Earl and Countess together with their personal houseguests - four lovely Italian friends. The Castle upholsterers, one of whom plays accordion, swelled the musicians contingent and Bob Carter (Great Yorkshire) took over as MC and caller for the evening. What a great icebreaker it was. We sang and danced our socks off!

We donned our Morris kit for the first time on Tuesday evening - a delightful meal in the Anchor Hotel in the picturesque harbour at Johnshaven preceded a dance display by sodium light outside and a warm sing

around in the bar followed.

2013 had seen us try a midweek day tour and we decided to repeat this in 2014. We boarded the coach at a most civilised start time of 9.45 am and headed out to our first dance spot at Glamis Castle. Former home of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother and birthplace of Princess Margaret, this is the domain of the Earl of Strathmore. It was a real privilege to perform at such a prestigious and spectacular venue! Ample time was allowed for exploring the grounds and we were invited to take a guided tour of the Castle free and gratis. Bless the wonderful staff at Glamis for their generous and enthusiastic welcome.

Lunch at the Strathmore Arms in Glamis village raised a few eyebrows - we have never before eaten steak pie completely devoid of pastry. The quality of the fare was such that it would have been churlish to enquire how it qualifies as pie with no pastry. Appetites sated we headed for Kirriemuir, famed less for songs about balls than as the birthplace of J M Barrie.



Beneath the bronze statue of Peter Pan and the crocodile weather vane on the church we danced two spots punctuated by a liquid injection at the Three-Bellies-Brae across the road.

After a couple of hours rest back at the Castle we were out again, purely socially this time, for a relaxing dinner at one of Scotland's most famous restaurants, the But 'n Ben at Auchmithie. Famed for the 'Arbroath Smokie' (lightly smoked haddock) and with an extensive menu to suit all tastes and pockets, we wine and dined in style.

There is a fish & chip emporium with a restaurant above overlooking the harbour at Gourdon, about 20 miles from Kinraddie Castle that is fast becoming renowned for one of the best fish & chip suppers in the country. This was our Thursday eating venue after which we performed a couple of songs and dances much to the delight of the owners, staff and fellow diners. We then repaired to the Harbour Bar next door for a superb session of singing, dancing and the odd pint or several accompanied inevitably by a wee dram.



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ScotchFest

A similar format on Friday evening saw us eating, dancing and singing at the Marykirk Hotel some four miles from Montrose. Food is lovely and dancing in the gloom outside well-supported despite the chill night air. It has to be said that singing in the bar against a wall of background noise is a challenge but the bag collected here (well into three figures) made our visit very worthwhile and helped greatly towards the cost of our coach.

Angus, our trusty coach driver, was on duty once more at nine o'clock on Saturday morning for the full day tour and added to the spectacle bedecked in full Scottish tartan. It is apparently

impossible to drive a coach wearing a sporran and there was no shortage of volunteers to act as 'Sporran Bearer' whilst in transit! Serendipity decreed that our tour coincided with the farmers' market in Montrose, our first dance spot. We then moved northward up the coast to Johnshaven for a quick couple of dances after which Gary, landlord at the Anchor Hotel, had coffees and pints waiting. Thus refreshed, Angus steered us to Inverbervie, famed as the birthplace of Hercules Linton who designed the Cutty Sark. After a dance and pint at the Salutation Hotel we walked to the small square where a full size replica of the Cutty Sark bowsprit and figurehead is situated.

Our final stop of the day was at Stonehaven. We danced on the harbour side before repaireing to the Marine hotel for a scrumptious fish pie lunch in the elegant first-floor dining room overlooking the marina. Scotchfest V was nearly over. One final dance session on the harbour wall then back on the coach to our fairy-tale castle.

Once again Kinnaird did us proud, providing a delicious evening meal of pasta followed by lemon meringue pie. Then a couple of logs thrown onto our sitting room fire created a cosy ambience for the farewell party, with our favourite tipples, songs aplenty and happy reflections on the many joys of the past week.

Whence and whither away?

Brian Tasker, Past Squire of the Morris Ring, considers the genesis of the Morris organisations, and wonders what the future might have in store.

Each of the Morris organisations came into being as a result of a specific need at a specific time.

The Cambridge Morris Men, touring as the Travelling Morrice, met with other morris men on their tours. A meeting was held in 1933 to discuss how these men might become associated with the Cambridge men. It was decided that the most practical solution was to invite the clubs to which these men belonged to become members of a new organisation to be called the Morris Ring. The idea was that these clubs could meet occasionally for weekends of dancing. The Morris Ring came

into being at Thaxted in 1934.

Women have danced the morris for centuries. For instance, when William Kemp danced from London to Norwich in 1600 he danced for an hour with a fourteen year old girl in Chelmsford and when the foundation stone of Blenheim Palace was laid in 1705 there were three Morris dances: one by young fellows, one by maidens and one by old beldames. From the earliest days of Cecil Sharp's collecting women have been involved in teaching and dancing the morris. However, it was not until the folk revival of the 1960s and 1970s that women's sides were formed which operated in

the same way as men's sides. The Morris Ring was not prepared to accept these sides into its organisation and the Women's Morris Federation came into being in 1975 to cater for their needs. In 1980 the Federation decided to accept mixed gender sides and from 1982 it accepted all sides irrespective of gender. In 1983 it dropped the word "Women's" from its name and became the Morris Federation.

The Open Morris began in 1979 as a loose organisation of East Anglian dancers, following efforts by one of the few mixed gender Morris sides in the country to find local friends and sympathisers. At that time there

was much rivalry between members of the Morris Ring on one side and the Women's Morris Federation on the other. Both organisations agreed that morris dancing shouldn't involve a mixing of the sexes and so the Open Morris came into being. There was clearly a need for co-operation between the three organisations and in 2001, following an informal meeting at which all three organisations were present, the idea of a Joint Morris Organisation (JMO) was mooted. The idea was to work together on matters of mutual interest and the value of this co-operation became evident at the time of the 2003 Licensing Bill. By working together, the organisations, including the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), managed to obtain an exemption for Morris dancing and any other similar forms of dance, such as maypole dancing, providing the music that accompanied the dance was live and unamplified. Following the passing of the Act the exemption was marked by a major display by all three organisations in Trafalgar Square in London. The annual



national JMO day of dance came about as a result of this event. The exemption has now been extended to include amplified, live music and recorded music when used to accompany Morris dancing or anything similar. A more recent development has been the introduction of regional JMO days of dance on a smaller scale for clubs in defined geographical areas. The JMO

also operates a combined public liability insurance policy. By bringing all three organisations into one policy the cost has been reduced for all. The JMO recently decided that it is not an organisation in its own right but a committee made up of representatives from all three organisations and which exists to help in the promotion and development of Morris dancing and to address issues of common interest.

There is a fourth organisation called the Sword Dance Union (SDU), which is not part of the JMO. Founded in 2005, the SDU aims to encourage, develop and maintain the traditional sword dances of England. The Sword Dance Union believes that only an organisation dedicated to the traditional sword dances of England can optimally promote and preserve these dances. The SDU complements the existing organisations dedicated to traditional English dances, and is therefore committed to working with other organisations supporting the same or similar aims. However, the SDU does not offer public liability insurance to its members so, in addition, all its members have to be members of one of the JMO organisations. The SDU is open to sides of any gender composition.

The English Folk Dance and Song Society is very supportive of Morris and sword dancing but has a wider remit and is outside of the scope of this article.

What does the future hold for the Morris organisations? Currently the membership of the three JMO organisations is approximately: Morris Ring: 174 clubs, Morris Federation 443 clubs and Open Morris 135 clubs. [See Jack Worth's article on the

Morris Census in Issue 71 of *The Morris Ring Circular*. Ed.]

The Morris Ring is slowly decreasing in size as its dancers get older and its member clubs either fold or accept female dancers and leave the Morris Ring. The Morris Federation and the Open Morris have a lower age profile and the number of their member clubs is steadily increasing, though their memberships are more volatile than that of the Morris Ring.

There is no doubt that all four organisations can continue in their present forms for the foreseeable future. However, the question which should be asked is whether or not this is the best way forward. An alternative is that the four organisations could combine in a single organisation. The new organisation could have special interest groups representing each of our distinct traditions, but none of these would be based on gender. Sides would remain completely free to determine their own gender policies within the law as defined in the Equality Act. Sides would still organise their own events and invite sides of their choice to dance with them. In addition there would be regional and national events organised on the same lines as the present JMO events. A further advantage of a combined organisation would be that the Morris could be represented by a single voice on most issues but specialists would be available to speak on individual traditions. The PR persons would be the first point of call for any media organisation requiring information. Also, the financial resources of the combined organisation could be used more effectively to promote all branches of the tradition.

ON BECOMING A MORRISTABORER

Fiddle? Squeezebox? No, it's whittle and dub for me, says Cambridge Morris Men's **Tony Pearson**.

There I was, firmly rooted in the early music world (apart from forays into 1920s popular music) the owner of a very expensive tabor pipe and no real opportunity to play it. Mind you, anything other than music for line-dancing is a bit of a lost cause, where I live. I cast around for another area where I might be able to put it to good use and of course, the Morris immediately sprang to mind.

I approached several local sides but they were already over-run by an invasive instrumental species, more of which later and then I found Cambridge Morris Men who were quite happy not only to take me on but also to help me to make the transition from Early Music to Morris.

Not coming to this from the normal direction, i.e. as a dancer, meant that I didn't know the dances or the tempos so I had to start right from scratch.

There is a school of thought that believes that it is impossible to become a Morris musician, without having been a dancer first. A rather sweeping statement? I don't happen to agree with it because it seems to me that if you are a sensitive musician who listens and watches what is going on there will be no problem. I have met many players of various instruments over the years that don't do this and, believe me, they're not suited to *any* musical activity.

Let's look at the instrumental tradition of the Morris.

Although back in time, the pipe & tabor was the original accompaniment, eventually players became less available and so violin & various squeeze-boxes were used instead.

During the Morris Revival, it's interesting to note how they approached the question of instrumentation and I'll digress for a moment to touch upon the Traditional Jazz revival because there are some interesting parallels here.

The first jazz record was made in 1917. (ODJB Barnyard Blues). The form developed very quickly and by the 1940s Bebop had arrived. This can sound alien to our ears now nearly 70 years down the road. In just over 20 years, the development of the music had left the original listeners behind. After WW2, when the dust had settled, the so-called Trad. Revival took place and I'm just old enough to remember it!

But what *was* revived?

In the early days, the front line of the bands could contain trumpet or cornet – trombone – clarinet – various saxes and even violin. The bass, if there was one, was blown and was either a tuba, a Sousaphone or a bass sax. The rhythmic chords could be provided by the piano, guitar or banjo. The drumming in those days was more in the form of sound effects. Mounted on a large bass drum would be Chinese tom-tom, splash cymbal, woodblock and/or Chinese temple blocks and perhaps a cow



Full strength
Tony Pearson
blows into town.

bell and that's it! Much use would be made of the snare drum which was played very much in the style of a marching band with great use of press-rolls etc. there was no hi-hat, they hadn't been invented yet and certainly no large diameter "crash and ride" cymbals.

In the revival came, they may have revived the music but certainly not the instrumentation. The front line was polarised into trumpet – clarinet – trombone and that was it. Until fairly recently there was a jazz club that would not allow a saxophone in the room, even in its case! The chords were always on the banjo, the bass was the string variety and they had to use whatever drummers they could find, with totally inappropriate kits, with hi-hats and cymbals straight out of the 1940's big bands. That's one reason why front lines started to be amplified, because the drums were just too loud.

If, by now, you're wondering how any of this is relevant, I'll tell you. When the Morris was revived, and I'm talking about the emergence of new sides that took

place between the wars, continuing to grow after the second and peaking in the 1970s, when all things 'folksy' were more in the mainstream than they are today. What did they revive?

The answer is that they may have revived the dances and the tunes that accompanied them but they certainly didn't revive the original instrumentation. Instead of going back to the time when the pipe and tabor was used exclusively, they picked a period when the Morris was struggling for musicians and sides had to take whatever they could get. I know William Kimber from the Headington Quarry Men played the concertina, this being the side that Cecil Sharp first witnessed but that was at the time when the pipe and tabor had virtually disappeared. It was originally the instrument of choice for a very good reason and that is because you can actually hear it sufficiently in the open air. The fiddle is an 'indoor' instrument and I've recently seen a Morris player with a battery amplifier strapped to his belt to make sound it loud enough! If you want a violin to stand out you have to play it in its upper reaches and Morris players never seem to do this. The concertina is also very quiet and of course there is another squeeze box, which I'll talk about shortly.

Although originally it was traditional to have only one instrument at a time to accompany the dances, whichever one was being used, this seems not to apply under revivalist circumstances when groups of certain instruments often play together. What are they?—I hear you ask.

Of course, I am referring to the melodeon, the Japanese Knotweed of the musical world. Players tend to cluster together in vast numbers and play almost in unison, each with their own version of the wrong chords. You'll be aware that the Ghurkas' weapon of choice is the kukuri, a



curved knife. It is said that when a soldier removes it from its scabbard, for any reason, custom dictates that it must draw blood before it goes back and I believe that the man will nick his own thumb if necessary to accomplish this. Something similar seems to apply to the melodeon, inasmuch as whenever it's out of its case, it must be played, continuously: on tour buses – in pubs – at Morris ales. At Thaxted, I witnessed Mike Chandler, one of the finest taborers you are ever likely to encounter, blessed with two of them, amplified, playing along with him. Sufficient to say, that the sound of the pipe was lost although the tabor made a valiant effort to be heard. I was standing near enough to commiserate with him afterwards.

At the one and only ale I've ever attended, there was an orchestra of them, with a few violins thrown in for good measure, that played the whole time. Sufficient to say that the pipe never came out of its bag. However, the beer and food were good so the evening wasn't a complete write-off.

All that aside, this is how I went about getting to grips with learning to use the authentic instrument and in the light of experience, would recommend anyone else to do something similar.

Ideally, start at the commencement of the practice season and ask the foreman, or whoever is doing the training, for a list of the dances to be covered that year and clarify which version/tradition they come from. You need to know this as the tunes themselves and the sequences often vary between traditions. It is also helpful to know which dances are being taught each week, so that you can practice and learn them in advance gradually as you can't memorise a whole set – possibly anything up to twenty-five, which is where I am so far, in one go.

Because some traditions continued to evolve after the introduction of the new instrumentation, you'll find that occasional tunes don't necessarily lie well under the fingers on the pipe and tabor, so you have to be prepared to adapt them. This means slight variations like avoiding huge leaps that are out of the range. Don't worry, the dancers probably won't notice and if they do, explain to them why.

Dancers tend to talk about different traditions all the time, whereas all you're interested in is the tune. You don't need to worry about where it comes from, whether it's long or short hankies or sticks – once you've learned it just play it!

To find the tunes to the dances being taught, in the first place, look on the Morris Ring website, and there you'll find the Lionel Bacon book otherwise known as "The Black Book". Find what you want and print them off; they're available in a PDF format.

I then set them with my music software package and then, with a click of the mouse, transpose them for the particular pipe I

play. Because this is in “D” the tunes will be in either “D” or “G” or possibly their relative minors. If you don’t have a music software package you’ll have to do all this by hand with manuscript paper and a pen.

This is the point at which you will have to do any ‘doctoring’ required to make them fit the instrument. You’ll find that the way you play them is also indicated – namely the sequence of “A” & “B” sections and sometimes even “C”s. Put these instructions at the beginning but more about that later.

I then print them off and put them in a book to take along to practices. I sit it on a music stand and away I go. Assuming you can read on the pipe you’ll be fine.

It’s at this time that you’ll discover whether or not your side performs the dance in the same way as the instructions you have, would lead you to believe they will. If they don’t, out with the pen and scribble on the page, how they do want it played. This way any mistakes or discrepancies are rectified.

When you get home amend the dots on your computer, print off the corrected version, add it to the book and throw away the incorrect one. This way you’ll build up a collection of tunes with the right instructions for your side. Once again, if you do it by hand it will take you that little bit longer but the principle’s the same.

When you’re happy that all is well, it is now up to you to commit these tunes to memory. There’s no easy way to do this except by lots and lots of practice every day. I find it helps if I can sing the tune, then I can usually play it, so even when you are not actually practicing, hum the tune in question to yourself until you really know it.

If you are unable to read music, you will still have to collect the tunes and go about learning them the way you usually do with a new one. Along with the dots you will



Tony with son Robin.

also find a midi of each tune that you can play along to, but it won’t necessarily be in the right key and it may be that the way it is played, in an ‘undoctored’ form does not fit on the pipe. You will have to do whatever you usually do to get over this.

I have a very bad memory and although I know all the tunes I often can’t remember the titles or how they start or how the “A”s & “B”s are supposed to be played. To overcome this I have made myself a crib sheet which I keep tucked in the Tabor ropes so that I can glance down and remind myself of all this.

This is a good time to touch upon another very important aspect of being a successful Morris Taborer – namely training whoever you are playing for, to be well organised themselves, so that you can give as good a service to them as possible. This may not be as obvious to them as it is to you. Most people are incredibly musically unaware and just don’t understand how it all works. I’m lucky that at Cambridge we have a very good foreman who is also a musician himself and it all works very well. If you’re not fortunate in this respect it will all be down to you to take control. Be well

organised for whoever is running the dancing-out sessions as well as for yourself. Carry a list of dances that the dancers know and you can play. In this instance I list them under traditions as this seems to be important to whoever is deciding what will come next.

If you don’t carry a list, you could find dances called that you don’t know and neither do some of the dancers, especially if they are new men and have yet to be taught them. This is not good at a public performance, where the side wants to look slick and well organised.

Morris taboring is very different from playing for other forms of dance. I’ve played in dance bands and jazz bands and I’ve spent a lot of time in the Early Music world, for example playing Renaissance dance music. I was used to setting a tempo and sticking to it – but there’s no strict tempo in the Morris. The theory is that you are supposed to beat on the tabor in time with the dancers’ feet. If they vary the speed, so do you. Therefore, within a dance this can differ from dancer to dancer, for example, in the “c” section of a corner dance which contains ‘slows’; a man of more mature years will be far more sedate than

a young turk, who, because he can jump higher, for example, will take longer to return to earth.

On the subject of tempos in general, there are a host of YouTube clips of Morris sides dancing and the first thing you will notice is that no two of them ever take the same dance at the same speed. Here's how you get round this: as you play the 'once to yourself' at the beginning, the man who is leading, in No. 1 position should indicate to you whether he finds the speed acceptable or whether he wants it faster or slower. In some cases you may have to play this introduction more than once and he should not start the dancing until he is happy with the speed. It's his responsibility, not yours. Even so, dancers will still whinge afterwards if they don't like the tempo, so just direct them to No. 1 – it's his fault, assuming that you maintained the tempo he set.

The bottom line is that, as I said before, you have to be sensitive to what's going on around you, just as in any kind of music and to be successful as a Morris taborer, this is no more or less important. As for instruments: I started off by playing a Generation metal pipe, the one with the plastic mouthpiece. Next came my Mark Binns wooden pipe, all the way from Australia as this was more appropriate for Early Music. Eventually, a split developed and it had to be returned to the maker for repair.

By that time I had learned about Jim Jones and his stainless steel pipes and I managed to buy one on Ebay. I discovered that it didn't play too well and it was suggested that, I contact the afore-mentioned Mike Chandler, who I had previously met at Thaxted. Mike used to make tabors to go with Jim's pipes. He has the largest single collection of Jones pipes and he offered to look at mine to find out what was wrong. I went to see him and he diagnosed that the windway was too wide. He put on a

modification and it made a world of difference. This still gets a build-up of stuff inside but it can be removed by dunking the end of the instrument in a bottle containing hydrogen peroxide; when the fizzing stops, rinse it under the tap and all is well again! A significant difference between this pipe and others is the little hook on the front under which goes the ring finger of the playing hand. This changed my whole technique as I discovered that I had to play using the next joint up like on the bagpipes. While I was with Mike he also suggested that I used a different method for half-holeing: instead of rolling the finger, you can just straighten it to get the same effect. You can even trill between C and C sharp. With regard to the tabor, I don't hang it from my wrist, elbow, or fingers as most do. It really irritates me having something dangling from me while I'm playing so I hang it on this sling, around my neck. I think it's more important to be comfortable. It was made by Marcus Music in Wales and has a synthetic batter-head. This is so that when I have to play in the rain, it still sounds like a drum and not a rice-puddingskin!

And so to the future:

As the years progress, I shall add to my repertoire of tunes each practice season and hope I become a better player. Let's face it, what you get out of any aspect of life is in direct proportion to how much you put in; therefore it must be that the effort I make to be good at this will be rewarded by the satisfaction I'll derive from knowing that I'm doing it to the best of my ability.

This is a revised version of a paper originally delivered to the Taborers' Society in 2014.

Please address all enquiries about the eradication of *Polygonum Cuspidatum* *Melodeum* to your local authority and knot to the editor. *Thank you.*

continued from p4

summer. I received messages from all over the country, from a whole range of events; lovely to think of you all welcoming back the sun in style.

On the 7th May I was in London with Westminster for their day of dance. I have always enjoyed this day as the hosts are always so welcoming, but more, it is our opportunity to show quality English dance to literally thousands of tourists from around the world. It is funny to think that there must be hundreds of photographs of us in photo albums and holiday snaps across the globe.

For the Spring Bank Holiday weekend my wife, Rhen, and I went up to the Yorkshire Dales to join Leeds Morris Men on the Dales Tour. This was one of the highlights of my tenure so far: a superbly run mini-JMO event in its 63rd year. The dancing was great, everyone was hugely welcoming, there was a jovial atmosphere and the landscape and dancing venues were sublime. Enormous thanks to everyone especially Moss Ambrose and Maggie, and Alistair Hutchinson for all their efforts.

Finally for now, on May Bank Holiday Monday we journeyed to Oxfordshire to see Headington Quarry and their guests, Eynsham, on their tour of the village, and a very pleasant tour it was too. We had tea in the White Hart before meeting them for a compact and bijou wander, taking in three pubs where both Headington and Eynsham put on a good show.

So, that's it for now; I hope your summer dancing is going well, and I look forward to meeting up with as many of you as possible over my last few months in post.

Galley Right,

Adam

“The food was awesome—the banquet was better than my mum's cooking!”

Thus declared 13 year old **Henry Avery** when asked for his considered opinion on his very first Morris Ring Jigs Instructional weekend in Sutton Bonington. (Sorry, Mum!) Henry and his **Leominster Morris Men** sparring partner **George Glynn-Jones** (12) were decidedly among the most youthful delegates ever to take part in the event, which took place in Sutton Bonington under the direction of (almost) equally youthful Past Squire of the Morris Ring, Geoff Jerram.

And if George's account (*see right*) fails to have you clamouring to attend the 2017 weekend (13th-15th January, since you ask), do let the rest of us know who does the cooking for you these days. Thanks!

P.S. The boys took their dads with them to the Jigs Instructional as a special treat—thanks to **Adam Glynn-Jones** and **Phil Avery** of Leominster Morris Men for all their help.

I really liked the jigs weekend because I learnt a lot of dances and went home and practised them. My favourite tradition was Bampton and I have been practising it at home with my dad and at Morris practices. There weren't half a lot of dances to learn but not all of them stuck in your brain. After a while I realised that if I only learned a few dances, then I could practise them at home and make those perfect and maybe



Henry Avery



George Glynn-Jones

one day perform them in public. I liked how there were three different classes because I didn't want to feel left behind when everybody else is miles ahead of me.

My favourite day was the Saturday as we had a great big feast with lots of other Morris Dancers. I drank about 4 cans of J20 and a sip of whisky. I didn't like the whisky.

Overall the whole weekend was really good and I'd definitely want to go next year.

The next **Morris Ring Jigs Instructional** will take place in Sutton Bonington over the weekend of 13th-15th January 2017. You don't have to be an experienced dancer to take part—the instructors will polish your technique and hone your skills to send you on your way a more accomplished and confident practitioner of the Morris (even if you don't intend to dance solo!). More details anon, but if you're too fired up to wait, and don't want George and Henry to hog the limelight, reserve your place *now* by contacting jigsinstructional@themorrisring.org.

U.K visits for Adelaide Morris Men and Perth Morris Men

Both of our Australian member sides, **Adelaide Morris Men** and **Perth Morris Men**, made the long haul last summer to perform in a variety of venues around the kingdom. Perth Morris Men were the first to arrive, in time to put in an appearance at the Thaxted Ring Meeting at the end of May, with Adelaide Morris Men landing later in the summer to attend the Mersey Ring Meeting in Liverpool in August. Both sides also joined other Morris groups up and down the land to enjoy home comforts and appreciative audiences.



Adelaide Morris Men by St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.



Adelaide Morris Men in Liverpool.



Perth Morris Men at Penshurst Place, Kent.

Perth Morris Men at the Thaxted Ring Meeting.



Photos Steven Archer

Unstrained quality!

Images from the **Liverpool Ring Meeting** hosted in August by **Mersey Morris Men**



Adlington Morris Men
under close scrutiny.



Thelwall Morris Men

Photos

left **Peter Holland**

above, below & opposite

Duncan Broomhead



Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris Men



Peter Mann
plays,
Kinnerton
Morris Men
dance.



Harthill Morris Men



A class act from **Richard Stapledon**, Foreman of the host side.

More guidance from John Edwards on Archiving Morris Memorabilia

Part 2 Paperwork, Digital and Artefacts

Having considered Logbooks and scrapbooks [see MRC71], what about the other important bits and pieces in



your archives?

3. Paperwork

Books are probably best left alone in a library, so club members can borrow them as required. Unless you have first editions etc. they are not likely to be very valuable and should not be taking up too much space. It is important that the content of any library is easily available to club members. Books that never see the light of day might just as well be thrown away or given to somebody who really wants them. E-Bay demonstrates this quite well and is not only a source for books, but a means of disposal which does not involve destruction.

Music is probably best photocopied on to A4 paper for ease of filing. It can then be scanned into a computer file and issued for reprinting by potential users, but beware of copyright issues.

Similar comments apply to

other bits of paper as the main problem of old items is the fact that they may be faded or damaged and in odd sizes. Most people have room for a file, but not a random heap of faded paper.

4. Digital Media

This is the latest form of memorabilia and, with the proliferation of digital cameras and clever phones; it probably generates more items than all the rest put together. It occupies little physical space and with a 3Tb hard disk now costing under £100 it is probably the cheapest to archive.

However, for it to make sense to a future historian or interested party, it demands more discipline than any of the others. 100,000 random images and videos on a disc are just too daunting for anyone to bother. Finding blank or blurred pictures, irrelevant shots, or unknown content, will all put people off and largely negate the reason for your doing the work.

This demands going through what you, (and any other contributors), have stored; classifying and dating it; as well as including locations and events. Some recent images may include GPS data but even that is time consuming to identify. Unfortunately, this is a "cruel to be kind" scenario. If

an item is in any way substandard or largely duplicates others it should be deleted.

These items are liable to come in thick and fast, which could mean a lot of time spent sorting it out. I have done a bit of this, but it will be quite some time before we have a DVD with our recent club history on it. Sadly, only illness or a spell in jail will provide me with enough free time to undertake all these exercises and I do not relish either very much. If you have anybody who is computer literate in either situation please take advantage of it, but that is hardly a solution.

Other items of digital, (and



Photo Ryan McGuire

some analogue), media require machines to play them before you can consider archiving them. Being a hoarder and a bit of a Luddite, I still have:

- A 16mm projector, though it would never stand up to any Health and Safety checks.
- A poor quality reel to reel recorder somewhere in the attic.
- A cassette player and a Minidisc player, both still in use for barn dances, as is the USB-output record player, which has been in service converting old LPs and singles to MP3.
- A decent SVHS Recorder, which will come in handy for the VHS Tapes marked helpfully "Morris", which I have recently been given.
- A Hi8 video camera and a DV tape digital camera are still in use.
- I also have Cannon "Ion camera" discs, but few people will have even heard of that early type of digital camera that used 2" discs, let alone used one.
- 3½" floppy discs that still play on my old computer and I am probably the last person on the planet still using the silver paper output from the printer that came with my Sinclair ZX81.

I do not provide this list with any pride, nor am I offering any service in the use of such kit. It is only to illustrate how necessary it is to deal with changes in technology if you wish to retain the more recent heritage of your Morris club. There are professional companies offering to convert

most media to current systems, but the costs are constantly rising.

Archiving such things as club websites is more difficult, but I have a couple of off line files of code for the Stafford web site, stored just in case. For



Photo Jenny Hughes

Facebook, Twitter, or other social media gems that are intrinsically ephemeral; archiving may simply not be possible. However, the occasional screen shot converted to a picture then added to a CD of club history could be of interest in years to come.

5. Artefacts

Stafford Morris Men have been around long enough to accumulate quite a lot of items that we want. We also have quite a lot residing in dark cupboards lots that we do not really want.

At best, we have tried to compile a list of who has what, but little more. Items like the original Squire's tankard, which became full [of what? *Ed.*] after 50 years; The Squire's Badge, (not intrinsically valuable, but important to the club), various

items of regalia, a candlestick made to mark our 40th anniversary, etc. have been photographed as important assets. However, the engraved toilet seat, the 'flasher' gnome, the ancient and deteriorating encapsulated sandwich, (passed between Stafford and Jockey for many years), and lots of others have not.

We hardly ever consider the matter of insurance of club property, but perhaps this archive could have merit in the event of loss from somebody's home.

So to summarise, there are no short cuts to recording, archiving and disseminating all this historic data for the benefit of current and future generations of dancers and scholars. Obviously, if Cecil Sharp had had the good sense to take a video camera, or a smart phone, with him on his travels instead of a notebook, we would be much better off. We should try to preserve evidence of what we currently have, even if it is boring and time consuming.

I hope this article will provide food for thought, if not actual assistance, for those club members lumbered with the unenviable task of archiving their bit of Morris history. In ten years' time this article will seem as up to date as instructions on how to sharpen your quill pen, but we have to work with what we have.

John Edwards (Knotty) is Archivist to Stafford Morris Men. For Part One of John's article, please see *Morris Ring Circular* Issue 71.

Grimsby Morris Men

Fifty years on (almost) and still 'boaring', as **Trevor Jones** explains.

Grimsby Morris will be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2017, having been formed by some like-minded individuals who were around the Grimsby folk scene in 1967. This, however, was not the first Morris side from the town where it seems Morris traditions go back even further. In the year 1750 the following report, dated 6th January, appeared in the *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury* regarding the earthquakes that shook the region on 28th December 1749. *"At Laceby in Lincolnshire and in several other parts of the county as well as of the counties of York and Nottingham the Earthquake was felt very sensibly. And at Laceby aforesaid there happen'd this remarkable story: On Innocents Day in the afternoon, several Morris Dancers came tither from Grimsby; and after they had danced and played their tricks, they went towards Alesby, a little town not far off; but, as they were going about five o'clock they felt two such terrible shocks of the Earth, that they had much ado to hold their feet, and thought the ground was ready to swallow them up. Whereupon thinking that God was angry with them for playing the fool, they returned immediately to Laceby in a great fright, and*

the next day home, not daring to pursue their intended Circuit and Dancing."

This is the only mention of a Grimsby Morris side from any archived material that side historian and archivist Ian Horsley can find, prior to the team being 're-established' in 1967.

The late Stan Compton was the instigator of the formation of a team of like-minded fools, which got together to perform what was meant to be a one-off Morris dance at a meeting of the Grimsby Folk Song Club, which met regularly, at the now defunct 'Lifeboat Hotel' on Kingsway, Cleethorpes. This was in December 1967; the rest, as they say is history, as almost five decades later the team is still going strong. Two of the members of that original bunch are still to be found among the current team.

These are Glen Osbourne and John Ide, who, both older, but not necessarily wiser, and both having had long sabbaticals, have decided to once again strap on the bells.

Currently, the side performs two distinctly different styles of dancing although for special occasions we have performed both Molly and Longsword. Throughout the summer months it is the very sedate Cotswold tradition, which is danced with both handkerchiefs and sticks, to tunes played on a pipe and tabor. For this the side wear white shirts with red ribbons at the sleeve, black knee britches with braces, bell pads sporting red, white and black ribbons, top hats also bedecked with red, white and black ribbons and white hose. The 'Grimsby Boar', reflecting Grimsby's great boar hunting tradition, is the symbol of the side and their 'hobby boar' Stanley (named in honour of Stan Compton) is often seen reeking havoc among both young and old, whilst the side is dancing.



Grimsby Morris Men

During the dark winter months the somewhat darker Morris of the Border tradition is danced, although we refer to it as *Boar-der*: 'Stan gets in everywhere'. The side, for this tradition, put on multi-coloured rag coats, (reminiscent of traditional Lincolnshire Plough Jags) odd coloured socks and have their faces brightly painted. The side also wear the bell pads, bedecked with red, black and white ribbons which are traditionally the colours of Grimsby.

The side also perform traditional Lincolnshire 'Plough Plays' over the Christmas period which they take on tour around the local hostleries whilst collecting for the charity of their choice. Traditionally 'Plough Plays' were performed by agricultural workers who used to call at big houses, dragging their plough with them, and performing these plays to supplement their winter income. It did have a darker side though: if the owner of the house was not forthcoming with payment, invariably the 'Plough Boys' would plough up their lawns, leaving deep

furrows. Grimsby Morris would like to point out that we do not practise this, as it would probably now be classed as criminal damage, but mainly because we don't have access to a plough!

Grimsby Morris is very mindful of local charities and during the past few years alone, the side has collected considerable sums of money for FLAG (Family Links around Grimsby), St. Andrews Hospice, Stroke Association and the Pink Rose Appeal at The Princess Diana Hospital, Grimsby. Our traditional Boxing Day tour around Grimsby and Cleethorpes at which we dance at various Public Houses, again collecting for charity and the celebration of the now traditional two 'Waes-hal's' in early January, have become regular dates in a number of people's diaries, with folk coming from afar a field as Chesterfield and Essex to help the side celebrate traditional English events.

During the summer months the side also carry out 'Water Pump Blessing' tours around local towns and villages, where we dance and collect

contributions towards the charity 'Water Aid' which aims to provide fresh drinking water for people in the third world.

During the fifty years that the team has been going, well over one hundred different individuals have danced the Morris with the team. Countless dance venues have been chalked up and thousands of pounds collected for different charities.

We are eager to hear especially from former members, dancers from other sides that we have danced out with over the years or even individuals that remember seeing the side at one of our numerous dance outs.

We are planning a Golden Year of celebration, including an exhibition at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life, so your memories, anecdotes, quotes, photos etc. would be a very welcome addition to our archive and may even find its way into the exhibition. If you have any, then please do not hesitate to get in touch via, or even just check out www.grimsbymorrismen.org.uk. We really look forward to hearing from you!

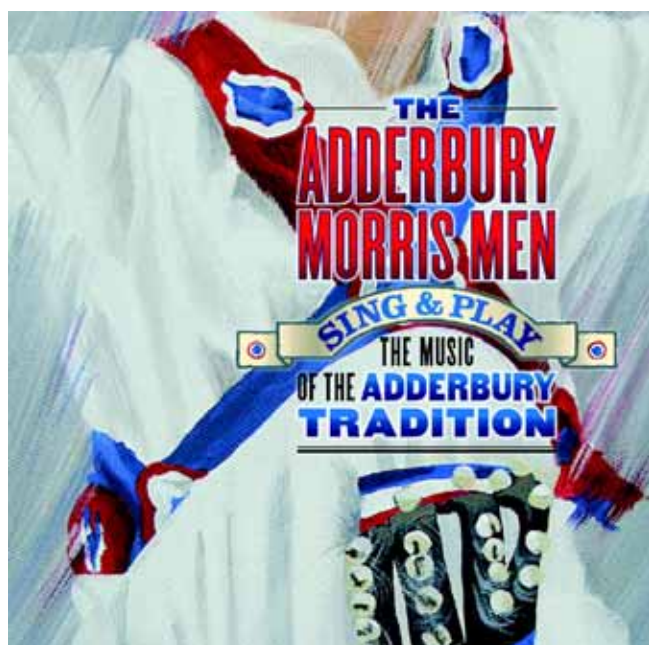
What goes where? *Read on...*

Confused about where to send your articles or news items?

- Advance notices and other time-sensitive items go to bagman@themorrisring.org for inclusion in the *Newsletter*.
- Scholarly articles (the history of the Morris, its practitioners and literature) go to mac.mccoig@btinternet.com for inclusion in the *Morris Dancer*.
- All reports (short or long) of past events, visits and anniversaries, and longer obituaries go to thecircular@themorrisring.org for inclusion in the *Morris Ring Circular*. Single/multiple images, poems, letters and other items are also warmly welcomed for consideration.

CD Reviews

Jon Melville has been listening to two collections of songs and tunes designed to delight.



The Adderbury Morris Men Sing & Play the Music of the Adderbury Tradition
(Talking Elephant TECD304 2015)

The Adderbury Morris tradition was collected by Janet Blunt and Cecil Sharp just after the Great War from the only surviving man from the team. Those dances were published by Sharp and later appear in Bacon's 'A Handbook of Morris Dances' from 1974.

The current Adderbury team was formed in 1975 and their 40th anniversary has led to Talking Elephant issuing this recording on CD, the original LP dating from 1982. Founder member Tim Radford also wrote the Morris Federation book 'Adderbury Tradition – Cotswold Morris Dancing,' first published in 1990.

The CD contains all of the dances in the Adderbury tradition at the time of recording. Devotees of the Black Book [Lionel Bacon's *A Handbook of Morris Dancing* 1974—available from The Morris Shop] will find more here than there, although it corresponds directly with the Federation publication above. The

bulk of the tunes are traditional and familiar, although there are three from the pen of Chris Leslie, including the lovely "Cobb's Horse." The Adderbury men are in great voice where the dances have sung introductions, a characteristic of the tradition, and then either the melodeon of Stephen Wass or the fiddle of Bryan Martin or Chris Leslie perform the tune at dancing speed for the correct pattern of A and B musics to perform the dance. The musicianship is exactly what would be required to dance to – steady of rhythm and pace, constant and without ornamentation, apart from the double-stopped fiddle technique also characteristic of the tradition.

So, as a listening experience, a little unexciting: The music is a single instrument played for dancing to, so the tracks lack light and shade, ornamentation and variety and are generally overlong. However, the music itself is spot-on for the dance performance, so any sides finding themselves without a musician could readily practice to this CD; it would be valuable support to anyone teaching these dances in a school, for example. It would also make an excellent play-along recording for musicians learning the craft of playing for dance. The Adderbury morris tradition was collected by Janet Blunt and Cecil Sharp just after the Great War from the only surviving man from the team. Those dances were published by Sharp and later appear in Bacon's 'A Handbook of Morris Dances' from 1974.

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“And the ladies go dancing...”
(Talking Elephant TECD305 2015)

The release of ‘Morris On’ in 1972 contributed significantly to a revival of interest in morris dancing nationally and many teams can trace their origins back to around that time. There have been many recordings of Morris music since then, most combining Morris-related songs with tunes performed both for listening and for dancing to (often, with the dancers audible). The latest of this genre celebrates the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Women’s Morris Federation (later the Morris Federation) in 1975.

‘Morris On’ featured a band of mainly folk-rock musicians with little Morris connection and a few Morris alumni. As with most recordings which have followed since, the majority of the varied performances on this two-CD collection are from musicians and singers steeped in the tradition.

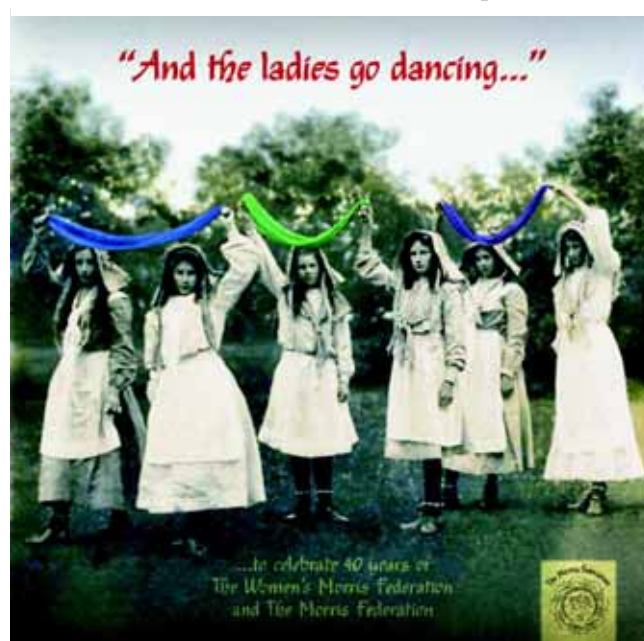
Some of the tracks are directly taken from Morris performance – the sound of sticks, bells and clogs in the background is a little unusual, but rapper-sword and Appalachian step-dancing is surreal. There is considerable variety here, and a great deal of excellent musicianship.

Among those credited as individuals, Richard Arrowsmith (Crucible and Pecsætan Morris), Will Pound (Haddo and Chinewrde Morris) and the incomparable John Kirkpatrick (who was of course integral to ‘Morris On’) all provide virtuoso melodeon performances and there is outstanding fiddling from Nicky Pound (Haddo and Chinewrde Morris), Sarah Matthews (Stone Monkey rapper) and Laurel Swift (Morris Offspring).

The songs are mainly about or from the Morris tradition, and many will become part of the Morris canon as a result of reaching a wider audience here. In addition, there is an excellent Richard Thompson song from the Wilson Family whose sole Morris connection is that it gave a name to a team, and the set closes with John Tams’ immortal ‘Rolling Home.’

High spots? I had not encountered Haddo (Will and Nicky Pound, melodeon and fiddle) before and their performances here led me to purchase their CD. And if you haven’t heard The Teacups *a cappella* ‘Rapper Set’ – yes, sung rapper music – you have missed a rare treat.

So if, like me, you have most of the various Morris-related compilation CDs from ‘Morris On’ then this is definitely one to add to the collection – the music, song and performances are top-notch and the CD is a good and varied listen. If you don’t have any other CDs like this, I cannot think of a better place to start.



Both CDs, and many more excellent Morris-related titles, are available now from www.themorrisshop.com.

New dances from Vectis

Created by Howard Atkins to tunes composed by the late Mike Howley, here are two new Morris dances from the Men of Wight Morris Men. The dances are for four men in the shape of a square. Thanks are due to Martin Davis, Men of Wight's Squire, and side musician Mike Butler for preparing the dances for publication.

FOUR CROSS

Howard Atkins 2007

A four man column dance - Field Town style

Music *The Men of Wight Dance* (Mike Howley 2005) played lyrically.

Sequence—OY;FU;DF;HG;DF;FD;DF;BB;DF;WhR

½A.(AB2)2.(AC2)2.A

CF - 'short' danced as normal (and relative to set's starting orientation). FU & FD outside ft lead with galleys, only a ½-turn at end of 2nd half ready for the DF. HG and BB L ft lead 1st half, R ft lead 2nd half, 2 & 4 making a ½-right turn to face East at end of HG & 1 & 3 a ½-right turn to face West at end of BB. Finish with the WhR, & 4 PC 'all in'.

DF - In column, sidestep & capers: first by head pair, then by second pair (who are in head position by then). The column faces a different direction for each DF: North (4-step), East (PC), South (beetles), West (UC).

Sidestep (bars 1-4) for L man is |ss(lt)|ss(lt)|ss(rt)|ftj|, opposite footing for R man of pair. Thus dancers move away from each other for bars 1 & 2 and towards each other for bar 3.

Capers (bars 5-8) 1st time: |4|4|G|ftj|, start with outside ft, cast out & down & galley ¾ (i.e. left man turn left with left ft lead & galley, right man turn right with right ft lead & galley) to finish facing up in other pair's position.

2nd time: same as 1st time but 4 PC instead of |4|4|

3rd time: same as 1st time but with 2 "beetles" instead of |4|4|

4th time: same as 1st time but with 2 UC instead of |4|4|

Second pair dance up into head position during bars 5-8, same steps as the head pair and with same ft to galley out (left man left ft lead & galley, right man right ft lead & galley) all the way round, finish ready for their sidestep. At the end of bar 5 aim for the head and second pairs to have briefly formed a line of four. (If the set becomes too big the second pair can move closer together during this movement so the first pair are not forced too far apart.)

Bars 9-16 as for bars 1-8 but according to new positions. When all are in original positions, finish facing in the correct direction for the CF (i.e. front for HG, BB & WR but facing down for FD).

Four men. DF in pairs to give a rest; 4 compass directions to be unusual but tie in with "9 Men's"; FD to keep the symmetry of CF & DF; symmetrical side-steps to give a strong visual impact.

X: 1

T: Fourcross

C: Mike Howley, 2004

N: A dance to this tune was devised by Howard Atkins as a 4-man dance with the same name for the Men of Wight Morris in 2006

M: 6/8

L: 1/8

Q: 3/8=70

A: Isle of Wight

P: A(AB2)2(AC2)2A

K: G

P: A

D|GBed2B|GFED2D|G2GGFG|c3B2A|GBed2B|GFED2D|GFGdcB|A2AG2|

P: B

A|B2BBAG|FGFE2D|GABdBd|efgf2d|gfd^cd|edcBAG|EFGABc|A2-AG2

P: C

A|B2BBAG|FGFE2D|GABdBd|efgf2d|(2gfe3|(2d^cd3|(2edc3|(2BAG3|

EFGABc|A2-AG2|

THE ELUSIVE SQUIRREL

Howard Atkins 2015 (v4)

A 4 man square set dance, 2 short sticks per man - Bampton style

Music: *The Elusive Squirrel* (Mike Howley 2004) (played fairly slowly to allow time for the hand movements!)

Style: Bicycle single-step (2-step), left foot lead |l l r|. Arms as for a hankie dances. Sticks crossed in front of sternum for OY. From sternum forward up and out on hop right of 2-step. Forrie caper (fc) is |l - r r| clash own sticks chin level. Side-steps are forward, lead hand up on first step of side step. Step sequences are: For CF (common figures) - |2-step|2-step|hb|fc|; For DF (distinctive figure) - |ss(lt)|ss(rt)|hb (forward!)|fc|.

Sequence:

OY;DI;DF;HG;DF;WG;DF;WR;DF;DO

 $\frac{1}{2}$ B.(AB2)4. $\frac{1}{2}$ A $\frac{1}{2}$ B (DO is 1st 4 bars of A, & last 4 of B)

OY (once to yourself) - Forrie caper

DI (dance in) - Start all 4 dancers at four corners of the dancing area facing in. Each pair dances forward, forming the (largish) set by the end of the A music.

CF - HG (half-gip), WG (whole-gip) and WR (rounds) danced as normal.

DO (dance out) - The reverse of DI. Dancers turn out, dance towards the corner they came from, finishing with a forrie caper facing out (do this with a spring forward for show).

DF: Clashing and half circle:-

1st bar: 1st diag (1-4) - Clash partner right, high, partner left, high (small step in for the clash then step back.) 2nd

bar: 2nd diag (2-3) - as 1st diag above

3rd bar: to partner (1-2,3-4) - as 1st diag above

4th bar: forrie caper (clash own). Use this to turn long way into...

5th-8th bars: ...circle clockwise half way (remember to keep the set large to allow for the step in/out for clash).

9th-16th bars: Repeat bars 1-8 from new positions to get back to place.

[Four men, consistent with *Four Cross* & different movements to a set of 6. Two sticks to be different and allows arm movements. DI & DO to be unusual (cf *Shepherds Hey*). DO to lengthen dance. Simple clashing gives time to turn, suits music, easy and not fussy. DF stepping is as Bampton heys]

X:1 T:The Elusive Squirrel

C:M. R. Howley

N:A dance to this tune was devised by Howard Atkins as a 4-man dance with the same name for the Men of Wight Morris in 2014

M:6/8

L:1/8

Q:3/8=80

P:O.(AB2)n.F

K:G

P:O

D|EFG FGA|GAB ABc|d2G cAF|A3 G2||P:AD|G2B Bcd|dBAG2D|E2G FEF|G3-G2D|G2B Bcd|dBAG2B
|A2d^cB^c|d3-d2||P:B=c/2d/2|e2ccBc|d3B3|GABBAG|A3d3|EFG FGA|GAB ABc|d2G cAF|A3 G2||

P:F

D|G2B Bcd|dBAG2D|E2G FEF|G3-G2D|EFG FGA|GAB ABc|d2G cAF|A3 G2||

THE MORRIS DANCER

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

Edited by Mac McCoig mac.mccoig@btinternet.com. Download from the Morris Ring website.

Obituaries

John Allen

Cambridge Morris Men
1928-2015



Photo Peter Copley

John Allen came up to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge in 1946 and soon joined the University Rambling Club, where he was given the number IV to distinguish him from past and present members. He later joined the Round (The Cambridge University Country Dance Club) and was persuaded to join the

Cambridge Morris Men where he retained his well-known "nickname".

John remained a very active member of the CMM, being appointed Squire in 1959 and again in 1963, before moving to St Andrews in 1968. He led tours of the Travelling Morrice to the Cotswolds in 1960 & 1964, each one finishing with a joint show in Chipping Campden with his favourite traditional side.

After moving to Scotland, he still often danced with the CMM and almost always joined the Travelling Morrice on the June tours.

Whilst he never claimed to be a really good dancer he studied the different traditions and held strong views on the active standard that should be aimed at and always encouraged men to dance with vigour. Longborough was his favourite tradition and he wrote a detailed paper on the dances and contacts with old dancers. (unpublished and not dated, but maybe 1965/6) He was at his best in the "folly", with his great white beard, which many a small child discovered was fixed on. In that role he kept one eye on the dancers and also fully reacted with the audience. His tradition of wading across the stream at Lower Slaughter to take the collecting tin to the audience was only one of his fine traditions.

John handled difficult situations with academic brilliance, whether they concerned the police and a drunken spectator in Ross-on-Wye or very verbose member of the IRA in Ireland. On tours his advice and help to younger men was invaluable and in addition his sense of fun and enjoyment of life led to many harmless pranks, particularly one to the annoyance of Russell Wortley concerning his tent, but all was soon forgotten due to John's good humour and tact.

After obtaining his degree and doctorate in physics at Cambridge, John's highly respected professional and academic life took him, while at the Services Electronic Research Laboratory at Baldock to the discovery and development of what he called a crystal lamp, now known as a LED, and to St Andrews University in 1968, initially as Research Fellow, lecturer, then as a Professor, where the respect to him shown by his students was reflected in their gift of a special cushion for his "Chair". He retired but continued working as Emeritus Professor of Physics, and in 2010 was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science. His scientific brilliance never marred his friendship with traditional dancers or their families, audiences and lesser academic men.

We in the CMM, the TM and the Morris generally have lost a very fine supporter and friend to all active Morris men.

John Jenner

Arthur Cartwright

Jockey Morris Men

Arthur Cartwright joined Jockey in 1954 and was in continuous membership until January 2016. He came to the club after learning the Morris while at Acocks Green School and while a member of the Woodcraft Folk under the direction of Gladys Watson. Arthur was a very loyal member of the club and made an enormous contribution particularly as foreman and treasurer. As foreman he was responsible for developing a number of the club's signature dances including *Jockey*, *Ducklington* and *Ringwood* based on the Fieldtown tradition and written to a tune composed by a former club president, Geoff Mendham. He was also responsible (with Roy Yarnell) for developing *Jenny Lind* as a Lichfield dance which has widely been adopted by other Morris sides. Arthur was treasurer of Jockey for more years than anyone can remember and had a rather unique way of keeping the accounts; suffice to say that at the end of the year everyone knew what they owed.

As foreman and a senior member of the team he was always ready to offer constructive criticism and guidance to younger members of the club. Arthur also made it very clear when he disagreed with anything, particularly changes in long established Morris traditions; he was always sure to spark a debate. Arthur remained an active

contributor to the side until his sudden death. He will be greatly missed by the side and practice nights will never be quite the same.

Gary Chilvers

Gordon Kidd

West Somerset Morris Men
1941-2016



Gordon was born in Northern Ireland and always embraced his Irish roots. He was brought up in Exmouth and later moved to West Somerset.

He went into the bakery trade at 15 years old. As he was still washing pans after a year and not icing cakes, Gordon joined the Merchant Navy. He travelled the world as a steward with P & O.

He met and married Mary in 1961 and they lived for the last forty-eight years in the same house in Bossington Lane, Porlock. Gordon worked as a milkman, furniture remover, passed his HGV test, at Clarks Factory, Cricketer Farms and the County Council where he drove and ran the mobile

library until he retired.

In 1969 he was chosen to be Jan Ridd at the Centenary of the publication of the book "Lorna Doone". He attended many functions in that role and at a fete in Porlock he saw the West Somerset Morris Men. He asked if he could join and from then on it was a way of life for over forty years.

The esteem in which Gordon was held in the Morris community was shown by the presence of members of other Morris sides from the area at his funeral celebration. Dancing took place at the Church and at the wake.

Gordon was a really committed Morris Man. When turning out for the Morris, he was always immaculately dressed with shiny black shoes, perfectly pressed white shirt and hankies. It put the rest of us to shame.

He was an excellent dancer and musician. He really came into his own in the pub where he played and sang, giving great pleasure to many.

He was a self-taught melodeon player and was in the "Brute Force" band in the 70s. Gordon composed several folk dance tunes although he could not write a note of music. So he played the music to Brian Heaton who wrote it down. Gordon was twice Squire of West Somerset Morris Men.

Sadly Gordon developed dementia and was in care for over two years before his death.

Farewell, Gordon. You gave a lot to us in your life – rest in peace.

Malcolm Appleton

Phillip Stafford

**Chester City Morris Men
1943-2015**



Phillip Stafford was born in Chester in 1943 into a military family (his father was Brigadier John Stafford) with close links to cattle and agriculture. It was perhaps inevitable that he should go into farming. Phillip went off to Harper Adams Agricultural College in Shropshire after which he started his working life at Rheal Farm, just outside Mold. He met his wife Eunice while out beagling in Mid Wales; soon after their marriage Phil joined her in business as agricultural feed merchants, and they became well known for their supply and service to the local farming community. Phil was instrumental in establishing Chester City Morris Men in the early seventies. His knowledge and enthusiasm made him a key member of the team and he served as Squire and Bagman.

He always danced in the number one position, and his seemingly effortless style was a performance touchstone for both audiences and fellow dancers alike.

In latter years Phil assumed the mantle of unofficial custodian of the side's collective memory; he could recall accurately where and when the team danced on any given occasion. As part of this role he checked every venue, dancing spots and quite a few hostelrys. Many a time he reunited hats and other items of kit with their owners.

But things didn't always go to plan! On one memorable day Chester City Morris Men were preparing to dance when it became apparent that the bass drum had been forgotten. Phil, however, was unflappable. A quick call was made to his better half, who responded without delay. When Eunice arrived it was a sight to behold as she hove into view with the large drum strapped to her back and astride, of all things, a moped!

During his time in the Morris Phil helped to revive a traditional Mumming play which was taken around the Chester pubs. Although he played many parts over the years he excelled as the Drunken Doctor and made the part his own.

While still carrying on with the feed business, Phil, Eunice and daughter Katherine moved out to Bell Farm at Tushingham in Cheshire, opposite the Blue Bell public house and soon became very much part of the local community. Phil arranged for Morris sides to dance outside

the Bell and in nearby Whitchurch. Phil was heavily involved in the local folk scene and was known far and wide for his fine singing and stories. Over the years he organised music sessions in a number of local pubs, and took pains to encourage new singers and all who wished to give voice, no matter how modestly. He was also one of the founders of the Chester Folk Festival, working tirelessly behind the scenes for over four decades.

Phil was a true gentleman. He will be hugely missed for the love, devotion and energy he channelled into all aspects of life.

John Finnan

Colin Reynolds

**Lincoln & Micklebarrow
Morris Men**



Colin was brought up in Essex and in the early 70's was one of the pupils of Chingford County High School who was taught Morris by Peter Boyce. These boys then went onto form the original Chingford Morris Men. Colin later danced also

with Mayflower Morris Men. After retiring in 2009, he moved to Lincolnshire. His interest in Morris dancing waned until he came across Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men dancing at the Chipping Campden Ring Meeting in 2012. He joined later that year and was an active member until his final illness in the summer of 2014.

One of Colin's other loves was rambling and he was the Group Footpath Officer for Lincoln Ramblers, ensuring that the local footpaths were kept open.

Marilyn, his wife, said he regretted not having found Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men sooner as he loved the Morris. Colin was an excellent dancer who also had a heart as big as he was! He will be sorely missed by all the people in his life.

Andrew Horn

John Thomas

Rose & Castle Morris Men 1946-2015

It is with the greatest regret that Rose and Castle Morris Men announce the death of their longest-serving active member, John Thomas, who passed away following a stroke in October at the far too early age of 69.

"JT", as he was widely known in Morris circles, was a founder member of Rose and Castle when it was set up in 1977, before which he danced with the now defunct Akeley Morris Men. From then until his first serious illness in late 2000, JT was a stalwart dancer with our Side, rarely

missing a dance out, a weekend away or a practice. He was also an accomplished melodeon player, who contributed a number of our favourite dance tunes.

Although Rose and Castle was his main focus, John was also active with a number of other local sides, notably Redbornstoke Morris and Old Mother Redcaps.

JT was an affable and jovial social companion, whose knowledge of Morris and folk music was at least matched by his expert appreciation of a decent pint of real ale and a good traditional pub. He was also an authority on steam railways and actively involved in their preservation.

His good humour and wealth of interesting conversation and anecdote won him many friends, including this writer, who was one of a number of such he recruited into Rose and Castle, over 20 years ago now.

In 2000-01 John was fortunate to survive very serious illness, which severely limited his mobility and meant his dancing days were, sadly, at an end. However, JT continued to be a hard-core member of Rose and Castle as a musician, turning out in all weathers to play for us and joining the Side on away gigs even when confined to a wheelchair. His wife Frances, whom he married in 1969, was the rock who supported him

through these often difficult latter years.

His passing prompted a flood of condolence and tribute from Morris and Folk circles, nationally as well as locally. John's funeral in Milton Keynes on November 9th was packed to the doors with friends and family, including representatives from at least a dozen Morris sides around the country. As JT would certainly have wished, the funeral was followed by a gathering at Rose and Castle's home hostelry, the Boat at Stoke Bruerne, at which many a pint of good English ale was sunk in his memory.



Farewell, JT. We will always remember, and miss, you. But, thanks to commitment like yours, the Morris goes on...

Steve Brady

Peter Wallis

**Lichfield Morris Men
1944-2015**



Lichfield Morris Men have suffered the sad loss of long-standing stalwart Peter Wallis after a long illness. Anyone who has attended a Lichfield Ale will know Peter as the joint owner, along with wife Christina, of the Rainbow Nursery which served as dormitory for overnight stays. Peter Wallis was born on 28 November 1944 in Braunton, Devon, but soon moved to Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset and school in Bridgewater.

He joined the RAF as a boy entrant at the age of 17, serving overseas in Borneo.

Peter went to Stirling University to study Biology as a mature student and then he went on to Murray House College in Edinburgh in 1975 to do post graduate teacher training. It was there that he saw a notice about Lothian Morris on a wall in a pub. After ringing the number, he had his first encounter with Neil Thomson who sent him home with a melodeon and instruction book. He was told that they had a booking at Edinburgh Folk Festival and that their regular musician couldn't make it, so Peter was to play for them. This

meant that Peter learnt to dance and play at the same time (very urgently) and so became enthused and thoroughly involved in morris dancing.

On moving to Staffordshire in 1979 to teach at Abbots Bromley School, Peter joined Glebe Morris an offshoot of Stafford Morris Men. Peter's brother, Mark was dancing with Glebe, as was Keith Chandler, later to become an acknowledged researcher and writer of the Morristradition.

Peter joined the newly re-formed Lichfield Morris Men in 1980. For the next 34 years he served several terms of office as Squire, Bagman and Foreman of the side. He was also the principal musician for much of that time, playing melodeon, both for Lichfield Morris and for Beggars Oak Clog Dancers, as well as a number of ceilidh bands.

Peter was with Lichfield Morris Men at all the Morris Ring Meetings which they attended over the years, including White Rose, Colchester, Winchester and Silkeborg.

Even a broken Achilles tendon could not stop Peter taking part in the Morris and many of us remember him on a tour of Dorset with his leg in plaster, playing his melodeon in a wheelchair. He was still in plaster at Dancing England, where Bill Tidy drew the cartoon reproduced here.

Peter collaborated with the late Roy Judge, social anthropologist and, at the time, President of the Folklore Society, on his research into the history of Lichfield Morris, and they set out to trace, interview and record any remaining members of Men of Mercia who danced in the 1950s and to whom the dances had been passed. As a result, they amassed a huge database of information on the subject. Roy gave a talk on the subject to The Folklore Society and Peter was left with

much material from which he planned to write a book. Sadly, Peter became ill and died before this could be achieved, but it is hoped that it will be published in Peter's memory.

As well as Lichfield Morris Men, Peter Wallis was an indispensable member of folk play side Armitage Mummers, interpreting the role of the Doctor in his own unique style. As well as the traditional New Year's Day performances in Armitage and Handsacre, which Peter organised, he was with the team at numerous festivals across the country. He is particularly remembered for his notorious trick at Alford Festival of pulling a set of real lungs out of his doctor's bag and tossing them in the direction of the audience. This always got a reaction, especially towards the end of the weekend, after three days with no fridge to keep them fresh! He would still laugh many years later at the time when a dog appeared from somewhere in the audience and ran off with the lungs!

He will be remembered by many within the Morris world and beyond for his good nature, sense of humour and raucous laugh. Peter's passing is a massive loss to his family, to the Morris world and to Lichfield Morris Men in particular.

Peter Cole & Duncan Rippon



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All styles of literary and graphic endeavour will be considered for publication. Letters and articles may be subject to shrinkage; photographs should be at least 2400 pixels in width and accompanied by full details of date, location, photographer and identities of featured sides and/or individuals. Items about *future* events should be sent in good time to bagman@themorrisring.org for inclusion in the *Newsletter*; scholarly articles which expand our knowledge about the Morris (e.g. its practitioners, its history and its literature) should hasten (via mac.mccoig@btinternet.com) to *The Morris Dancer*. Everything else (or if in doubt), send to *The Morris Ring Circular*.

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