

the MORRIS RING
FOUNDED 1934

THE Circular

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Number 32



The Moment of Truth

Autumn 1998

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The Squire

I write this having just "recovered" from the "ordeal" of dancing in as the new Squire. As it turned out the "ordeal" was anything but, thanks to the fellowship of the morris and so there was little to "recover" from, apart from the excellent week-end that Exeter MM had organised.

First of all, I want to thank Tim for his two years as Squire. He had an inauspicious preparation as Squire-elect in 1996 with the accident at the Thaxted Ring meeting. However he overcame that and spent his two years in office travelling around

the country and the world representing the Morris Ring. He has set a very high standard and a work-rate that will be difficult to equal. I look forward to working with him over the next two years in his capacity as Chairman of the Advisory Council and wish him well in his pursuit of higher education.

I also want to thank Exeter MM for organising a most enjoyable week-end, giving Tim the opportunity to dance out at home, and me to dance in, in a setting that I think is second only to Thaxted - but then I am biased. It was for me a moving

experience to dance in the Cathedral Close in front of so many friends and well-wishers. My thanks to all those who came and to those who sent messages of support.

I am beginning to realise that invitations to Ales, Feasts, Days of Dance and other events are bound to clash. I will, in my first year, work on the basis of first come, first served. In the second year, I will give priority to those sides whom I missed out in the first year, assuming of course I am given a second chance. I look forward to receiving your invitations. If your Ales, Feasts, Week-Ends or Days of Dance are "fixed" points in the calendar, let me know so I can book them in for the next year if I cannot make it this year.

Two events will require careful thought and attention during the next two years. First, and I think the more important, is the centenary on Boxing Day 1999 of Cecil Sharp's first meeting with Headington Quarry

Morris Men. Secondly is the Millennium. Both will be discussed at the ARM on March 6 1999 hosted by Bedford MM. I urge all sides to consider what they will be doing for these two events and to give careful thought to what they think The Ring should be doing.

Holidays are about to or have started and we are approaching the end of the summer dancing season. I hope it has been a good one for you and that the winter/practice season is enjoyable. Please tell us of any successes you have in recruiting new members.

I look forward to seeing many of you during the next two years.

Continue to flourish.



The Retired Squire

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers - to misquote Shakespeare's Henry V. I feel that line from Shakespeare applies so much to the Morris Ring, for we are a band of brothers, joined and coming together in the pursuit of one objective, to dance the Morris. Henry also goes on to say before the battle of Agincourt "And he that sheds his blood with me this day shall be my brother". I don't expect anyone here tonight to shed his blood on my behalf: maybe take a drink or two together, that's a different matter.

This past two years have been the time of my life: I have travelled 40,464 1/2 miles on behalf of the Morris Ring and I have enjoyed every mile. Whenever I have gone away I have first represented the Morris Ring, then the City of my birth, Exeter: but the proudest thing of all that I represent is my team, Exeter Morris Men, and I would like to take this opportunity to

thank all the men of Exeter for the support that they have given me in my term of office. I could not have

done the job of Squire without that support.

I can't think of anything I have done in the past two years to be ashamed of, or of anything I might of done to have let Exeter down in any way. I don't think I have caused any international incidents either, unless you call falling in a ditch in the Czech Republic (after being led astray, I hasten to add) an International incident.

As you all know the organisation of a Ring Meeting is not just down to one or two men in the side, it is down to the commitment of all the men in the club, and this Ring Meeting is no exception: the entire club has been involved at some stage. Of course if every one was involved in decision-making then the meeting would have got no further than what beer we were going to order, so it came down to a small handful of men to start the whole thing off and I think these four men are worth a

mention: The Squire, Andrew Scoff; The Bagman for the Club and Treasurer for The Ring Meeting, Bob Higgs; our local man in Honiton and Secretary and Minute Taker, Russ Palmer; and the man that has done all the correspondence and come up with some great ideas, the Bagman for the Meeting, Steve Carrick

As I have said before, I have had a truly wonderful time as The Squire, and I owe the biggest thank you to you, the membership, for putting your trust in me and appointing me as Squire two years ago at the Durham ARM. I will always be grateful to you all for that trust you put in me. I would like to say thank you to all the sides that have invited me to their ales, feasts and days of dance, with a special thank you to the clubs who invited me to travel abroad with them, to such places as New York, the Czech Republic and, my last visit abroad, to the French Alps

There are one or two other people I would like to say a big thank you to. First to John Frearson, I have only been working with John since I appointed him back in March this year: his output of work in that time has surpassed all expectations. Well done, John, and

thank you for all you have done in the short time you have been bagman and I trust your rate of work will continue during Daniel's term of office.

Now for the one person that has made doing the job of the Squire great fun. I of course refer to our larger-than-life Treasurer, Steve Adamson BFB. It was worth doing the job just to make the acquaintance of Steve. I shall miss those early morning heavy-breathing phone calls and the ready wit and repartee. Thank you, Steve, for some very memorable moments and for your support in the past two years, plus all the work you do for the Morris Ring and its membership.

It now comes to me to welcome my successor into office, Daniel Fox. I can only hope in your two years of office you have as much fun, laughter and enjoyment, as I have had. You are now entering the ranks of a very exclusive company of men, of which I am very privileged and proud to be member and I know you are too. I know this position only comes to a very few but I know that every man in this room tonight is worthy of the title of Squire of the Morris Ring.

Festival International de folklore de Romans - 9, 10, 11, 12 juillet 98

Visit by Jockey Morris and the Ring Squire.

by John Maher, Ring Overseas Bagman



Romans sur Isère in Drôme has helped to organise a folklore festival since 1978: this was the 21st anniversary festival and they particularly wanted a Morris Side, since in all of the 20 years they never had a visit from the "English Morris"! The visit by Jockey Morris remedied this in July by joining with Bolivian, Spanish, Israeli, Kenyan, Polish, Russian and Slovakian dancers, as well as two French dance groups - the locals - 'Empi', and 'Keltiad' from Quimper. Jockey Morris was accompanied by the Ring Squire, Tim Sercombe, past Squire Roy Yarnell, and by Jockey's dancing step ladder. Bristol Morris's Horse was also there creating mayhem (as usual).

The setting for this festival will surely draw Jockey back again. It is a considerable distance to travel, 600 miles from Calais or Cherbourg: however, on the French motorways it is a fast and easy journey provided you avoid Paris, and don't run out of diesel! (Two of Jockey travelled by SNCF, very easy from Birmingham). The twin towns of Romans and Bourg-de-Péage straddle the river Isère (Romans is on the north bank of the river). Years ago Romans and Bourg were separated by a toll bridge - hence the name of the other half of the town - the bridge was destroyed in WWII and a modern bridge, without the toll, now joins the two towns. For wine lovers this is one of the best wine regions in France - Crozes

Hermitage 1995 is well worth buying at present! Romans is renowned for two particular delicacies - ravioles - little packets with meat or cheese and herb fillings made from thin noodle pastry, and pognes - a sweet orange brioche bread.

Whilst this is a town festival, with the full (financial!) support of the town of Romans, it is

volve: ritual and seasonal dances - particularly connected with grape gathering and harvest time and fertility - human and agricultural; exorcism - on the 24th June a black cat was burned alive and its ashes scattered to repel evil spirits, and there were dances to drive out rat plagues; wedding, burlesque and festival dances with many rigaudon dances; and many

extend to every country in Europe, to Africa, to America and to the Middle East. Empi et Riaume is predominantly a dance group, but one which puts great value in its regional traditions and folklore, it also enjoys celebrating these interests with l'étranger who possesses similar passions. Empi et Riaume and Jockey Morris were well matched.



organised by the regional folklore society, Empi et Riaume. 'Empi', like the Morris Ring, was founded in 1934, and is one of the oldest folklore groups in France, its founders, Marie-Madeleine Bouvier and the poet Charles Forot, were also involved in the foundation of the French National Commission of Scientific Folklore Research. 'Empi' has amassed a large collection of local folklore material and of traditional dances and songs, it performs these, and specialises in reconstructing the costumes and clothes of the past. In particular the group have a Sacred Sword Dance danced only by men wearing half-length breeches made of coarse linen, brown sleeveless cloaks, red headbands and bare legs and feet. Other dances in-

other bourree couple dances. The music is from accordions, clarinets, violins, vielle, pipe and tabor. Anyone who visited Billingham Festival this year will have met this enthusiastic group.

In the 1970s Empi made several visits to the Middlesborough festival, and in 1988 danced at the Eisteddfod. Empi's other travels, apart from to all the large French festivals,

Jockey arrived in Romans late on Friday evening, after a long, hot and tiring journey from Birmingham. The temperature and humidity were still high even at 10pm. Anne-Marie Ciolfi (the president of 'Empi') had asked if they could perform immediately, since the Kenyan group on the programme were delayed. Jockey changed into kit, and were soon up on stage dancing for half an hour. All of the performances during the





weekend were on a stage erected in the large courtyard and gardens of the Romans Musée de la Chaussure (Romans other speciality is high quality shoe manufacture). Saturday morning saw Jockey on a more traditional pursuit - a tour of the two towns' bars, with plenty of dancing between these. Come Saturday afternoon and we were off on a marathon défilé all around the town. This was a 4 km procession of all the festival groups, with dancing at a series of places on the route. Curiously the bars did not get very many visits! Jockey made up for this in the evening by taking over a local café-bar, and dancing and singing the night away. Sunday morning saw more dancing for Jockey around the town, followed by the traditional *Échange des cadeaux avec le Maire*: a stage show in the afternoon, again in the heat, followed. Another highlight was Horse on the Israeli coach, surrounded by admiring nymphs, he deserved that after suffering for two hours in the défilé.



Sunday 12th July was the evening that France won the Football World Cup: the whole country was out on the streets celebrating into the small hours of Monday. Some of us watched the game in a sports hall where the TV was poorly projected onto a wall in a large room. It kept breaking down or fading at crucial moments, adding to the hubbub and heat. The room was packed with over 200 very animated, noisy and vociferous French men and women, many dressed or bodily decorated in the national colours of blue, white and red. One young woman, sporting the French Stripe, let off a deafening gas siren at frequent intervals. Some of the Bolivians started supporting Brazil, but quietened down rapidly when they saw the strength of the French support! When France scored the first goal (they deserved 5 to my mind), the room went ape! After the game, and already well oiled with drinks, we all trooped downstairs to the main sports hall for the Festival Bal, this went on into the night until everyone went home with their hosts and collapsed exhausted into bed.

By far the best aspect of Romans was the welcome and kindness we received from our hosts: Jockey were all accommodated with members of Empi or their friends. The hospitality was embarrassing in its generosity, and I'm certain that we would all want to thank our French friends for giving us such a welcome. Lets hope that we can somehow return the kindness in England at some time. It would be appropriate to try to arrange an Anglo-French 'Ring Meeting', in Bristol we have found that most French Dance teams enjoy a Morris

Tour, and the 'Feast' could be something else!

On Monday we all departed for the second part of our visit to France, a July 14th town celebration in Annecy. Annecy is several hours drive to the north east of Romans, up into the mountains via Chambéry on the way to Geneva, and is definitely part of 'up market' France, en



route also is Aix Les Bains and other expensive watering holes. The scenery is spectacular, beautiful lakes and mountains, and it becomes noticeably greener and cooler. The snow was missing at this time of year, though we were welcomed by a

heavy rainstorm. For this visit our hosts were the town, so that all the folk dancers were accommodated in local schools in classrooms used for dormitories. Now this was more like it! Another Ring Meeting venue, even down to the single wash basin per floor and few shaver plugs. However most Ring Meetings don't aspire to having 'arab' loos - two foot rests and a

hole in the floor, nor do they provide spring beds!

The hospitality shown by the town was excellent, and we were well fed and looked after. In the evening we had a performance at the local shopping arcade - nothing like the British arcades though - the only problem was that we were on after the Greek team, and they rather exceeded the performance time allotted to them. After the show Jockey discovered another café-bar, and once we had satisfied the landlord as to how we should pay for drinks, settled down to another evening of revelry. This landlord presented us with jugs of beer, he got the Morris message.

July 14th is always a great day to be in France, especially if



you are involved in the festivities as we were. The morning was spent in exploring the locality, and Jockey piled into their minibus, and drove down the

lakeside and struggled up onto the Col le Combe, a renowned take-off point for hang-gliders. We dissuaded Tim from trying to take off with a café umbrella,

but Pete Grassby decided to try the real thing, and was given a tandem ride on a hang glider down the mountain to the lakeside. The late afternoon saw us all in Morris kit, and ready for another défilé, luckily this was much shorter than the one in Romans: we paraded through the old mediaeval part of Annecy, ending up at the lakeside. This time Horse managed to find several beer troughs around the route. After supper we danced at the lakeside in the dusk, just before one of the finest firework displays to be seen in France. Annecy attracts many thousands of people each year, just to see this display, it was a magnificent end to an amazing visit. Next morning Jockey Morris set off for Calais, this time avoiding Paris, (and did not run out of diesel) so caught an early ferry!

I want to thank Jockey for making Geraldine, myself (and Horse!) very welcome. Geraldine helped us with the language, particularly with the mayoral presentations. I also want to thank Richard Sinclair for organising the tour – he found the constant feature of

an event like this, namely that it is very difficult to get men to commit themselves to a visit outside of the 'holidays'. Annie Ciolfi has been asking me for several years to produce a Morris team for her festival at Romans, thanks again to her and to Empi et Riaume for making our visit possible. In return I am busy putting together a Web site for Empi et Riaume, watch for more pictures!

In March 1999 I will be travelling over for the AGM of l'Union Nationale des Groupes de Traditions Populaires, this year it is conveniently close in Quimper, hosted by Keltiad and the redoubtable Annie le Duc. Can any Morris Side who would like a visit to France in 1999 contact me and I will try to help.

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A Proudness of Fools. Photo: Pete Thomas

On the 21st June 1958 East Kent Morris Men went on tour with a very important new member. John Messias appeared for the first time as East Kent Morris' Fool. 40 years later East Kent Morris celebrated John's forty years of fooling with a Foolish Tour.



All my own work??. Photo: Pete Thomas

In 1958 Johnny Burke our original Fool had just moved from Kent to Stafford and a new fool was needed! Barnett Field



The Presentation. Photo: Pete Thomas

A Foolish Tour

*Pete Thomas
East Kent MM*

and some of the other original members came across a young cockney who was living in Dymchurch and decided that he would make a good Fool. John wasn't so sure. During the winter of 1957/8 John practised with the side and actually danced with the side before deciding they may have been right. 40 years later we can only agree with Barnett's judgement.

The original tour started at Tenterden at about 3pm and toured around the edge of Romney Marsh before finishing

at a holiday camp at St Mary's Bay. We have pictures in our scrapbook of crowds 3 and 4 deep watching the dancing.

While vast hordes of Morris Men were struggling out of their beds at Chipping Campden we were again heading for Tenterden at the ungodly hour of 9.30am. We were accompanied by Woodchurch Morris and members of other local sides. John was in his usual outrageous form, marking all the local ladies in his own distinc-



John B (KJMM) & John Messias. Photo: Pete Thomas

tive fashion and kidnapping babies in prams.

There were several connections with the past including the presence of John Burke from King John who is the son of Johnny Burke our original Fool and seven past squires of East Kent Morris, 3 of whom were founder members of the side from 1953.

Lunch was taken at The Black Lion at Appledore which again had been one of the original spots (except it was called the Red Lion in those days). Presented with a copy of the original poster and press cuttings it was the first time that anyone had ever seen John lost for words - it didn't last!

The tour progressed with further spots in New Romney with the appearance of the six legged Hooden Horse (with the total age of the legs being half that of the next youngest dancer), Hythe where 5 former squires danced in one set and Folkestone where we were joined by Barnett and Olive Field who could claim responsi-



Woodchurch Morris. Photo: Pete Thomas

bility for starting John's lifelong career of foolishness.

With his bowler hat, red bow tie and red nose, John is a familiar site at events such as Thaxted where he shows all the

attributes of a true fool. He interacts with the dancers and the audience, he gives the dancers a breather and he is a past master at parting the audience from their money. Scandalising the women and loved by the kids,

our honorary Brownie has still not retired so we are looking forward to the 50th Anniversary tour. (With this length of notice can we avoid the weekend of the largest ever Ring Meeting?).

a century of song

Malcolm Taylor of Vaughan Williams Memorial Library was kind enough to send me a review copy of "a century of songs". For the benefit of non-members of the EFDSS, I should point out that one of its two precursors, the Folk Song Society, was founded in 1898, with its first meeting on 16th May and incorporation on 2nd February 1899. This CD celebrates the Centennial and includes transcriptions of recordings made by Cecil Sharp, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Fred Hamer and others. Their dates range from the early years of this century up to April of this year.

For me it was a particular pleasure to hear the Copper family on the first track: around 1975-6 I was in Brighton setting-up an exhibition and took the opportunity to go over to Rottingdean to find Bob in attendance at the folksong club. He was kind enough to spend some time in conversation with me and my memory is of a warm-hearted, genuine character (but then, so many of the older, country-bred personalities seemed to have a natural dignity and warmth in my experience). The track is their version of "Claudy Banks" and features Bob and his family in 1986.

Because of the time-span of the source material, some of the tracks are primarily of antiquarian interest, although they do serve to remind us of our good fortune in having access to modern technology (this publication does that for me when I think back to having to hectograph worksheets or prepare stencils for duplication in the past). Particularly impressive is "Hark, Hark, What News" from the carollers at The Black Bull, recorded last December: I do miss the *a capella* singing of the folksong clubs of the 60s & 70s!

Although I regret the absence of some of my particular favourites (Joseph Taylor of Saxby-All-Saints, recorded by Percy Grainger in 1908, springs to mind, among others), the overall selection is impressive enough to have been selected as CD of the week in The Observer of 26th June 1998. It is difficult to improve on Neil Spencer's fi-

Record Review

nal sentence "Not for the faint-hearted, but a fascinating historical document". I can only add that, if you're a sentimental old folkie like me, some of the tracks will bring the moisture of nostalgia to your eyes. Derek Schofield and Malcolm Taylor are to be congratulated on their production of a must-have disc, which comes complete with a booklet of notes and a foreword by Martin Carthy.

To buy this compilation, and I strongly recommend that you do, send your £13.99 (which includes p&p) to "A Century of Song CD", EFDSS, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, London NW1 7AY.

ED

BAMPTON, Spring Bank Holiday Monday 1998 - A personal view

Keith Chandler

It was very subtle, and few would have been aware of anything particularly significant occurring, but this year's Spring Bank Holiday Monday at Bampton was truly an historic occasion. It was, in fact, one of the most landmark occasions relating to the long-time performance of morris dancing in the town ever. I'll explain why, but you need first of all to be aware that there are three separate dance teams in Bampton, each with its own unique pedigree.

Arnold Woodley, the chief transmitter of the choreographic features of the dances since the final years of the 1940s, and perhaps the finest southern English fiddle stylist of his generation, died in 1995. The following year the leadership of the side devolved onto Lawrence Adams, a dancer since his early teens but now a man still in his thirties.



Around the same time Francis Shergold, like Arnold also involved as dancer since the mid-late 1930s, decided it was time to step down as leader. The

mantle passed to Tony Daniels, a dancer since he was a young boy, but again, like Lawrence, a man in his thirties.

Most significantly, this year Alec Wixey, leader of the final Bampton dance set, suffered a hip injury which will prevent him from dancing for a couple of years, if not for good. He too decided that it was time to step down, and so passed on the leadership to Mathew Green, like Lawrence and Tony a dancer since his early teens, but once again a man only in his thirties.

So, the transition is complete. The future of the morris dance tradition in Bampton rests now in the hands of three young men, as they carry it into the next millennium. And what of that future? From personal observation I perceive both the Daniels and Green sides to be in healthy condition. The Adams side have been rather shambolic and lackadaisical for some years, in fact since even before Arnold Woodley passed on. Each year I wonder if they will turn out, and so far they have. I suspect the chief reason to be the involvement of several revivalist outsiders who live well away from Bampton itself, in fact outside of the county altogether. All three teams have accommodated folkies in recent years, but those in the other two

sets live in the town and are well integrated into other of its social activities.

Inevitably, members of the older generation are gradually dropping out. Terry Rouse this year announced his retirement as fool from the Daniels set. Bill Daniels danced in the morning only, and it will be instructive to see how much longer he will continue. Colin Knight told me he wants to complete his fifty years of dancing, which will be in 1999. After that I suspect he too will retire.

Of less specific historic importance (these things have a way of fluctuating in and out of favour) visitor attendance figures have been well down over the past few years. Fortunately, none of the participants need to be paid for dancing any longer, and so the collection box doesn't need to jingle quite so loudly. It's not inconceivable that, eventually, the whole thing will shake down again to a single active side. I have my own theories but really, when and if that happens and who will remain active, is anyone's guess.

On a different tack, who will inherit the mantle of maintaining historical records of the ongoing situation? There was a fifteen year period when I recorded the activities of





Thanks for the opportunity of commenting in advance on Keith's personal view.

Keith's article does reflect the state of affairs in Bampton at present. It is typical of Keith to be accurate and absolutely objective in his reporting. It is also good to see that Arnold Woodley's fiddle playing has been acknowledged. It is a genuine shame that he was never properly recorded.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Keith for his efforts and his genuine interest in Bampton over the years. I know from personal experience the trouble he takes

and the level of detail of his notes. The fact that he extremely unwilling to publish much of his later information for fear of causing unnecessary controversy in the village speaks volumes of his concern for the tradition and its survival. I think it is a great pity that he has decided to call it a day and I hope that his successor will be as diligent, patient and thorough (and occasionally friendly!) as Keith.

On the subject of the number of visitors, there has unfortunately been a reduction in visitors in recent year. However, this does not necessarily spoil the atmosphere and some think

Bampton, Abingdon, Chipping Campden and Headington Quarry in the most minute detail. If, for example, I didn't know the name of this or that dancer I would ask. Will the next generation of researchers in twenty years' time find themselves in the same situation that I did in 1978, when before any serious collecting of historical information could begin I had to spend quite some time getting locals at all four locations named above (as well as Brackley, Eynsham and elsewhere) to identify the names of participants in the old photographs I had copies of. Only then was it possible to discover who was still living and where they or their relatives might be found.

The appearance of this piece in print will at least permanently document the transforming situation in Bampton. But, like Roy Dommett, I have been standing further and further back over the past few years. It still needs ongoing documentation, though, and I see no one stepping into the breach. Any takers?

from Mathew Green

it would be pity to turn Bampton into yet another folk festival. Anyway, on behalf of all the team, I'd like to say thanks to all the regulars who support not only the "Green" team, but

the others as well. We all look forward to seeing them all again in 1999, especially of course, with or without notebook, Mr Keith Chandler.

from Lawrence Adams

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on Keith's article.

I suppose the best thing I can do is to give a summary of my own attachment to Arnold's team. When I first danced out at Whitsun 1974, Mathew was already a member of Arnold's boys' team, so we obviously danced together. Later, Mathew joined the Wixey team and eventually became their Squire.

After our American visit I got married and lapsed membership for a while. In 1987, Sonny needed some help and I

fooled for the side: this was normally done by my brother Andrew but he was unavailable at the time. The following year the team made me Bagman, which is what I remained until I became Squire and the job of Bagman went to my nephew Darren Lloyd.

I know I have much work to do to get the team like I want: Arnold once told me that it can take a generation to change the main fabric of a morris team. Now that I am Squire and have had the chance to reflect on the things Arnold said, they make sense.



The three dancers we have from outside Bampton were all asked to join by Arnold and they have been good members. However, they only see them-

selves as honorary members. I was pleased to see Arnold get some accolades for his large contribution to the music and dance of Bampton.

May I conclude by wishing Keith a happy retirement and hope that any successor is as colourful.

Editor's Note

A copy of this letter from Keith was sent to the leader of each of the Bampton teams for their comments. Mathew Green's reply came via e-mail from Jeff Dando. Tony Daniels rang me to say that he had no particular problem with Keith expressing his opinion.

My own opinion, for what it's worth, is that Keith is marginally hyper-critical in his comments about the "Woodley" side. I think it is important to bear in mind that the last

six years of Arnold's life were clouded by his awareness of the cancer that eventually killed both Wyn and himself. It is possible to surmise that his hold on leadership was a talisman for his hold on life.

Lawrence, having served as Arnold's Bagman, was initially reluctant about assuming leadership of the team. However, now that he has, he will obviously put his own stamp on its organisation and character. Perhaps it is possible to see signs of

evolution in the presence of the two boys in this year's team (see my photos). However, Lawrence is only too aware of the dangers inherent in trying to do too much too soon and I am sure that his approach will be to encourage evolution rather than revolution.

I feel that I should declare a special interest. Over the past 20-odd years, this is the side with whom I have had most contact: Arnold and Win became personal friends to Margaret

& myself. In recent years we have felt honoured to be invited to join the team at their Bank Holiday lunch. In addition, Lawrence and I have had a couple of lengthy 'phone conversations concerning Keith's letter.

Finally, Keith's mention of outsiders in the team needs contextualising: the events are surely significant and worthy of inclusion in any history that might be written. ED

Summary of the Moulton/Bampton friendship

The connection between Moulton MM and TBMD began in 1975 at Stoneleigh Showground, Warwickshire. Bampton had forgotten their cake and borrowed Moulton's to carry round when it was their turn to dance. Arnold Woodley, Bill Fowler and Son Townsend attended the Moulton Morris Gaudy in January 1976, and in May of that year Bampton Morris danced at Moulton Festival. The teams continued attending each other's functions regularly, and at the 1980 Moulton Festival Brian Judkins (landlord of The Artichoke) invited TBMD to attend the Tercentenary of the opening of the pub in June.

For the 1981 Moulton Festival, they were one dancer short and needed Sonny in the set (he was past regular dancing by then). Paul Care, fooling for Moulton that weekend, was wearing an all-white fool's kit and Arnold asked him to dance with Bampton for the weekend. Paul made such a good job of fitting in that he was invited to dance at Bampton for Whitsun (the following weekend). He was fitted up with their kit and danced with the side all day: Paul continued to dance at Bampton at Whitsun for several years, being taken by his father, often accompanied by brother Simon with his melodeon. TBMD, including Arnold, had a ceilidh band called "The Bushmen" and the after-practice sessions in The George were quite exceptional during that period (1980 -

1985). "The Bushmen Band" played in Moulton in January 1984 at the Moulton Morris Mens' Annual Extravaganza Barn Dance, and to return the favour Moulton's Musicians played for Bampton's Christmas Party.

In 1982 Barry Care was elected Squire of The Morris Ring, and was made an honorary member of Bampton Morris. Arnold did not let him sit and watch and Barry ended up dancing with the side on the Sunday night practices. He, in turn, was fitted up with kit and danced out at Whitsun in May 1983: with father and son dancing it was natural for the team to invite Simon to play for the Morris, as well as the pub sessions. Paul and Simon's connections have loosened but

Barry has maintained his and now appears as Bampton's Morris Clown. A full Bampton Morris side went to Northampton and danced at Simon Care's wedding in 1987, and during the years two Bampton dancers who moved to live in the Northampton area danced with Moulton Morris during the time they lived there.

Those who knew Arnold and Win well will be aware that they rarely went out of Bampton to social functions, but in 1989 were guests of honour at Moulton Morris Ladies Gaudy and received a hand-decorated plate to mark the years of shared fun with the Moulton men and their ladies. Before he died, Arnold passed two fiddles over to Barry Care for safe keeping. One was the first real violin Arnold

ever owned, and was the one he learned to play on. The other one was the historic "Jinky Wells" fiddle which had its neck snapped off by 'Nipper' Dixey in 1925, and led to the break-up into two teams. The fiddle used by Arnold for most of his playing with the Morris was originally owned by Sam Bennett, from Ilmington. (Arnold's sister Gertie now owns this instrument.) It was Sam Bennett who provided the music for the old dancers after the split in 1926: using help from far flung friends "out of county" seems to have happened before.



RING MEETING - THAXTED 1998

John Frearson



Thaxted MM at The Lion, Great Samford. Photo: John Frearson

The Thaxted Meeting had glorious weather, fortunately not quite so hot as Richmondshire. There had been some concern that the vast numbers at the Chipping Campden Meeting might result in an empty High Street for the Massed Show at Thaxted. In the event nearly 200 men attended, there were four well-filled tours and the Show filled the High Street.

Friday night was spent in hosteleries various; first for supper and later for informal dancing by some of the Sides — and some serious ale tasting!! Saturday dawned fine and four tours set off, only one less than usual. Your correspondent travelled of the fifth tour, the so-called “Squire’s Tour”, and had snapshot sample of the events on each of the four tours.

First, The Red Lion at Great Samford, to watch East Suffolk, Thaxted, Wyre Forest and Yateley. Photographic evidence produced later shows that East Suffolk danced Longsword on at least one occasion, led by Past Squire Mike Garland. Other Past Squires noted as present during weekend: a slim-line Bert Cleaver (with a flask of

memorable Sloe Gin), Mike Chandler in Thaxted kit and Ivor Allsop recording unique Archive footage of the Bagman’s back — sorry Ivor!!!. Second stop: The King’s Head at Hadstock to see Dolphin; Harwich; Oakworth and Standon plus some blended Cambridge and London Pride. The Squire joined Dolphin for some energetic split-capers! The advantage of a Squire’s Tour is some leisurely time to discuss affairs of state — and put the Morris to right and savour the local ales. We recall the Friary Meux Bitter, written up as “Friary Moo — Udderly Beautiful”.

Stop number three: The Dog and Duck at Stansted — yes, there is a village as well as a London Airport!! Here we caught up with Coventry; Mayflower; Silurian Whitchurch; Moulton and a selection from Rumford and Whitchurch. Moulton were be-clogged in North-west mode and under the tender care (excuse pun) of Past Squire Barry Care. We stayed with this tour for lunch, taken at The Coach and Horses at Newport. Here Coventry showed some Longsword, and two younger members of Moulton (now

transmuted into a Cotswold



*Past Squire Ivor Allsop filming on Saturday evening.
Photograph by Gordon Ridgewell*

side) danced a Bampton double jig. Lunch was of generous proportions — some delay ensued when, having exited to buy a beer, the Bagman was refused admission to lunch by the Thaxted bouncers as he had neither pass-out nor luncheon ticket (no one thought to give the Squire’s Tour lunch tickets). Fortunately, the Squire Elect was on hand to recognise and vouch for him.

The final Sides were found at our fifth stop: (The Stag at Little Easton) Belchamp, King John’s and Westminster. Belchamp dancing Border style and accompanied by melodeon and brass duo - trombone and an enormous “euphonium” (or some such) — a splendid sound.

We had time to follow this Tour to their (and our) final call at The Greyhound at Monk Street. This stop can cause problems for the uninitiated



*Present & Past Management at The Dog & Duck, Stansted.
Photo: John Frearson*

Morris searcher. It had not been called the Greyhound for some ten or more years – and caused much confusion to the writer on a previous visit!! We arrived to join various Morris followers from Bedford and East Surrey, suitable disguised as tourists, with a drink before the Sides arrived. Little dancing was seen as the Squire called a planning meeting for the mass shows - the Squire merely called it – and

then vanished to top up his tankard – the hot weather causing unaccountable evaporation problems!!!

A quick tea was taken on our return to Thaxted, and the Men then gathered for the Processions. The Squire accompanied by the Treasurer led the Procession from the Bull Ring; the Squire Elect and the Bagman just made it to the far end of the



*The Belchamp Band at The Stag, Little Easton.
Photo: John Frearson*

High Street for the other procession and the 6.00 p.m. start.

After this first show, we retired for the Feast. An advantage of the reduced numbers was that all those who



East Suffolk dancing Longsword. Photo: A.Bull



Simon Ritchie of Thaxted MM processing for Abbots Bromley Horn Dance. Photo: Gordon Ridgewell

wished could be accommodated. The toasts and speeches included a reading from Past Squire Mike Chandler to introduce the toast "The Immortal Memory"; fine words from Past Squire Mike Garland on change in the Morris; and a reply from David Thompson for Thaxted to say that in Thaxted "nothing would change". The evening show followed at 9.30 p.m. The Squire had made an excellent choice for the last show dance before the Horn Dance: Westminster danced their Longborough style "Loveless", composed in memory of Past Squire Father Kenneth Loveless, to an arrangement for fiddle and accordion of his favourite song, Sharp's "Seeds of Love". This was a triumph and was to be repeated as the show dance in Thaxted Church on Sunday. On Saturday evening, Helmond closed the show, dancing to a solo fiddle, and setting the mood for the Horn Dance that was to follow.

The greatest problem of the weekend: the Police Constable who kept telling his control that there were only two more races (obviously drafted in from Newmarket!) and then felt he would need to call on reinforcements to clear the way through the crowd for the entry of the Thaxted Horn Dancers!! We reassured him and as usual, the crowd parted as the solo fiddle stuck up its haunting tune. The Horn Dance provided its usual climax – raising the hair on the back of the neck and silencing the crowd. A masterpiece of fiddle playing and overall, as usual, an unforgettable experience.

The crowd dispersed and the men gravitated to The Star for a few more dances and to sample some excellent ale direct from the barrel. Later a night-cap for the Squire, Bagman and John Jenner of Cambridge at The Bull – and the arrival of a Bride and Groom, who had to pose with those assembled – many kisses also had to be bestowed to ensure good luck (the Groom seemed a little weary at all this) but the Bride was enjoying herself.

On the Sunday: the Procession to Church formed up and we made our dignified way to Church. The Bishop of Chelmsford resplendent in Pur-



The Orchestra at Stansted. Photo: John Frearson

ple brought up the rear. A Fool was later to complement him on his kit and ask with which Side he danced!

Other news: too plentiful to recall: but Jack Thompson, of Letchworth, asked that greetings be sent to all those at Thaxted. He has now had his leg fitted, and has done some walking – otherwise he reports that he is well.

After much chat, a drink or two and assisting with a

photo-call for Silurian it was time for a well deserved lunch. Then all too soon it was over. I thoroughly enjoyed attending my first Ring Meeting as Ring Bagman – and Thaxted was a splendid learning experience, with everything well in control. I have discovered that one needs the ability to be in three places at once and to have eyes in the back of one's head. A clipboard to match one's kit is an essential!! However, with our ever efficient hosts, the Thaxted Morris Men, any potential

problems melted away. Thank you again Thaxted, for this unstinting service to the Ring year on year. For most Sides running a Ring Meeting every ten or twenty years is quite enough – Thaxted must make for stamina, not just Squires.



Westminster dancing "Loveless" in Thaxted Church. Photo: Gordon Ridgewell

The Ridgewell Files

Where Gordon finds the time, I don't know – Steve Corrsin has the theory that he is the front-man or alias for a vast international information-gathering network – but he has managed to send me 20 mailings since May 20th. That's an average of one every four and a half days: the compelling evidence against Steve's theory is that each of these comes complete with hand-written commentary.

Communique 1: (20.v.98) **"Dirty dancing"** (*The Guardian*,

28.vi.97); an account of Tony Blair's visit to the USA, ending with a suggestion that Bill Clinton could have been dragged into a morris set.

Communique 4: (11.vi.98) **"Morris men blacked out"** (*Daily Mail*, 11.vii.97); about Granada's banning of the Britannia Coconut Dancers from appearing blacked up.

Communique 5: (15.vi.98) **Diary item** (*The Guardian*, 9.x.97); concerning Norman Tebbit's appearance on "Today" and a passing reference to mor-



Communique 9



Communique 3

11.ii.98); a bowls club adopts the haka for pre-match 'psyching'.

Communique 2: (29.v.98) **"There's something sinister about morris dancing"** (*The Independent*, 25.v.98); Duff Hart-Davis on Gloucestershire MM's Whitsun plans.

Communique 3: (5.vi.98) **"Leaders meet movers and shakers"** (*Daily Express*,

ris.

Communique 6: (20.vi.98) **"End of the line for morris men"** (*Sunday Mirror*, 5.iv.98); concerning the loss of potential recruits for Lichfield MM to the current craze for line-dancing.

Communique 7: (20.vi.98) **"England, our England"** (*The Guardian*, 20.vi.98); about the search for a national symbol af-

ter the riots at the soccer World Cup in France.

Communique 8: (21.vi.98) **"Sensible banking in a mad, mad world"** (*Daily Mail*, 15.iv.98); an advert for Alliance & Leicester featuring the previously-mentioned Britannia Coconut Dancers (blacked-up).

Communique 9: (25.vi.98) colour photograph (*The Times*, 22.vi.98); showing Minnesota Traditional MM at Chipping Campden.

Communique 10: "He y nonny... go call the cops" (*The Sport*, 5.v.98); concerning a brawl that disrupted the Rochester Sweeps' Festival and police use of CS gas.

Communique 11: (1.vii.98) **"Morris minor"** (*The Observer*, 17.v.98); a letter from Past Squire Barry Care concerning a quote from Eliza Carthy in the Review section of 10.v.98.

Communique 12: Gordon noticed my absence from Thaxted and kindly supplied a set of 12 photographs [for which, many thanks]

Communique 13: (14.vii.98) **"I hope England lose in the world cup..."** (*The Guardian*, 5.vi.98 & 8.vi.98); an article by Decca Aitkenhead concerning the nature of national identity provoked a number of letters in reply, one taking up a passing reference to the morris.

Communique 14: (15.vii.98) **"Bladder control"** (*Evening Standard*, 11.vi.98); Londoner's diary quoting Bob Davies of East Surrey MM bemoaning the difficulties of obtaining pigs' bladders.

Communique 15: (21.vi.98) **"Exacting position"** (*The Times*, 14.ix.94); a letter from the late Dan Rothenberg, used to point out my misspelling of his name [apologies – ED].

Communique 16: **"Is that Morris from Surrey dancing?"** (*The Guardian*, 22.vi.8); letters advocating compulsory morris dancing for convicted soccer hooligans and national costumes for the soccer teams.

Communique 17: (5.viii.98) **"A colourful distraction for the**



Communique 19

many" (*Watford Observer*, 10.vii.98); previewing the Chipperfield Carnival and Greensleeves MM's annual Chipperfield weekend.

Communique 18: (8.viii.98) "Diving Bell" (*The Sun*, 16.vii.98) concerning underwater morris at Tewkesbury. The same item also appeared in *The Times Diary* of 18.vii.98.

Communique 19: (10.viii.98) "Four Christenings and a funeral" (*Daily Telegraph*, 25.vii.98); concerning possible Register Office naming ceremonies and prenuptial counselling. Gordon thinks that the dance shown is "Haste to the Naming".

Communique 20: (15.viii.98) Photograph (*The Times*, 27.vii.98); taken at the Exeter Ring Meeting. [As a participant at that Meeting, I find it ironic that this featured a Sunday-only visitor from Dartington – ED].



Communique 20: Photograph by Tim Cuff of Apex Photo Agency

Parish News (from Croydon)

There is no point in editing a national publication if one cannot occasionally include items of purely local interest. This is one such which had North Wood Morris featuring on the inside pages of our local free papers: hardly front-page news but certainly a concern to us for a few days.

Our Fool & mouthpiece, Paul Beaumont, is a teacher at a local Primary School. One of his extra-curricular interests is coaching a morris side he has formed among its pupils.

The high point of the school year was to be a performance by the side at the end of term concert and everything appeared to be going well: the music had been sorted and rehearsals were coming along nicely. Paul was psyched up to accompany his team on his melodeon, having been coached by North Wood's musician Brian.

A week before the event, Paul was taken into Mayday Hospital having suffered a heart attack. It was described as non life-threatening: however, it was still a matter of concern to

us all, given that Paul isn't 40 yet.

While we ensured that we were all kept aware of Paul's progress, the show was the next priority. Brian Collins (late of

Rutland) stepped into the breach and all went off well. A photograph duly appeared in the freesheet (credited, I might add, to our Squire, Jon Wimhurst).

At the time of going to press, Paul is recuperating satisfactorily and anticipates returning to the chalk-face in the near future.

Eddie Dunmore



Northwood Morris man Brian Collins with Selsdon Primary pupils.

Picture by J Wimhurst

Ring Meeting – Exeter 1998



Offley at Cullompton

Having agreed that we would hire a minibus to take us all, plus luggage, to Exeter, organising the hire was left until a week before the date. On the busiest weekend of the year, there were none left! This gave us the problem of sorting

out the logistics of who would go in which car. The journey was uneventful (if slowish) until we decided to stop for lunch in a pub to be greeted by the landlord and informed that “there’s no food, if that’s what you want”. The all-day breakfast in

the nearest Little Chef had to do, although some of us were unhappy about not being given the promised Lego gift.

Honiton was eventually reached and, after a diversion to raid “holes in the wall” we



Westminster at Tucker’s Arms, Dalwood



Tim²

found the base for the weekend. The accommodation was sorted out, myself to join the “Odds & Sods” and the others to their designated room. We reassembled at the bar and I found that, although beer-drinkers were more than adequately catered for, wine-drinkers were obvi-



The Unicorn

ously an unknown species: a 20-minute safari in the Honiton jungle located an off-licence and a bottle of passable South African Cabernet Sauvignon.

Returning to the dining-hall, the North Wood Male Voice Choir had found the piano and Brian (late of Rutland) was coaching us in a medley of musical entertainments. This



Bedford at Colyton Square



Pete Contrastano & friend with Kennet, Branscombe

was brought to a halt when we decided that the time had come for a formal meal: as Chinese could not be located, we settled for Indian.

Back at base, the informal dancing had started. The zenith

was an eight-man Dearest Dickie (don't try this at home, children), which needed intense concentration to remember which corner one was on and where we were in the music.

On Saturday morning, I joined the Squires' Tour and it was heartening to see that the guest-list included the Morris Ring's most consistent fan, Carole Curtis. The first stop found us at Culmpton watching Tour E, which included Icknield Way, Offley & Thaxted. The latter danced something that looked suspiciously like Abingdon: on enquiry, I learnt that they had been dancing it for a long time (if you're a revival side that was formed in 1911, this is true). Leaving Culmpton, we drove all the way back to Honiton and out the other side to see Tour A at the Tucker's Arms, Dalwood. This time the entertainment in-

cluded Westminster, Mendip and Ripley. Tim was presented with an almost life-size facsimile of himself by Ripley (see the plate labelled "Tim?"). Within 20 minutes we were being hustled on our way to Colyton to catch up with Bedford (clogging), Plymouth and Martlets.

Lunch was taken at Branscombe, at the Fountain Head after watching North Wood, and was enormous: a huge plate piled with hot food! After lunch Pete Contrastano of Black Joker was hired to find a willing subject for Kennet to dance Glorishear to – she paid the usual forfeit. Then it was back into the minibus and on to Lyme Regis, which turned out to be totally devoid of morris men apart from ourselves. After the tenth query for details of the time of our performance we retreated to a handy café for a quiet cup of tea. Runners were sent out at regular intervals for news on the arrival of the advertised dancers. When they arrived, Jockey danced North Skelton, Bob Cross of Chalice danced to Past Squire Geoff Jerram's playing and East Surrey danced Trunkles. Soon after 5 pm we were on our way back to Honiton to ready ourselves for the Feast.

Tim's valedictory speech at the Feast is reproduced, almost in its entirety, on page 2. The Badge of Office was transferred to its new custodian and a presentation was made to Tim. There was the usual quota of songs (one not entirely appro-



Jockey Longsword at Lyme Regis

priate in my opinion) and a bravura performance on the flageolet by the Treasurer.

Sunday morning was reasonably relaxed and the pessimistic assessment of parking opportunities was not fulfilled. The wait between arriving and the pro-



Bob Cross with Past Squire Geoff Ferram, Lyme Regis



The Head of the Procession, Exeter



The Transfer of Power

cession actually starting always seems to be an age: but soon enough it was under way. Galloping ahead to attempt a head-on shot, I almost literally bumped into Pruw & Lionel Harper, who had come up from Totnes for the occasion. Once those who would had filed into the Cathedral, we found a café that was under serious pressure because of the volume of business and eventually managed to get served. It was while we were sat there that we became aware of the Treasurer furtively checking the contents of a skip (the evidence is on the back page – suitable captions will attract the usual reward).

The show followed its usual course, the climax being the jigs of the outgoing and incoming Squires Jigs. Daniel's was preceded by a fine performance by Thaxted and the weekend's public business finished with the tidy performance that one would expect from our hosts before we all trooped off for lunch.

The clerk of the weather must have a soft spot for Exeter, because it was fine all weekend with just a few spots of rain towards the end of the Sunday show.

Attending the meeting meant that I missed hearing Ladysmith Black Mambazo at the Royal Festival Hall, something which doesn't happen too often. I had a thoroughly enjoyable time and found the sacrifice well worth making. Exeter are to be congratulated on immaculate organisation and their caterers should be commended for the high standard of fare over the weekend. Thank you, Exeter, for inviting me and making me welcome, and a very special Thank You to our Immediate Past Squire, whose transparent enjoyment of the event contributed enormously to everyone else's.

ED

Ring Meeting – Chipping Campden 1998

A selection of photos from John Frearson



Ilmington dancing at Moreton-in-Marsh



Manchester dancing at Stratford



Past, Present & Future with Horse



Boars Head dancing rapper at The Halfway House



Chipping Campden dancing in the Massed Show at Chipping Campden



Minnesota Traditional MM dancing "Rag Time"



Editorial

The top photograph shows Gloucester MM dancing "How do you do, Sir?" at Fort Nelson, Portsmouth. I am grateful to Hilary Warburton Blanford for offering it to me for the Caption Competition. The lower photograph also cries out for a suitable caption and was taken by me at Exeter. Printable entries to me, please, by the end of the year: any that tickle the editorial sense of humour will receive appropriate reward.

Recently there has been a fair amount of discussion about a "morris bibliography". Jocelyn Reynolds volunteered a book-list (unfortunately formatted as a Word document, which occasioned a branch discussion) and our Overseas Bagman and Ring Homepage Maintenance Engineer, John Maher, has taken the idea one stage further. He has taken her list to form the seed of a list at "<http://www.argonet.co.uk/users/johnmaher/Ring/Biblio.htm>".

He says "I have added some books of my own, and am also going to pass the list to Tom Randall for his comments, Tom is a local antiquarian folklore book specialist. . . ."

He is also suggesting that individual ideas would be welcome: "A list such as this needs to be more than just a list of titles, I suggest that it should include also an indication of where a book can be obtained (often a library) or bought (and price), whether it is in print, and also what makes it interesting for a Morris dancer. Some books are of greater interest to general folklore than for their Morris content. (To read the MDDL sometimes I have the impression that Morris dancing includes anything that a Morris dancer is interested in!)"

So there you go: let John or me know about books that you have found useful/essential as part of your morris experience. Which do you regard as an essential "vade mecum"? Check out the current list at the address given above (there must be at least one man in your side who has an Internet account, surely?) and remember John's criteria. We look forward to, and will value, sharing your wisdom.

Now that this edition is completed, my next deadline is for Volume Three Number six of The Morris Dancer. I already have some material contributed by Roy Dommett and I am hopeful of an article by Steve Corrsin. In addition, a chance meeting resulted in the chance to acquire a scan & print of a photograph taken in Godstone some years ago and the results of my enquiries will be presented in the same publication. More is needed: please make sure that any letters, articles or queries are with me by December 1st (the bane of every editor's life is the promised material that arrives a week too late and exactly one day after the final proofs have been given to the printer.

Eddie Dunmore

August 1998

