Letchworth Morris Men dancing at The Crown, Northill, during the Ickwell Festival on May Bank Holiday Monday.
I t has been a busy time. In March a couple of meet-
ings; firstly to chair the
annual joint meeting be-
tween the Morris Ring,
Morris Federation and Open
Morris and then, to
Lichfield, for the Archive
Morris and then, to
Morris Federation and Open
between the Morris Ring,
annual joint meeting be-

The meeting itself was well at-
tended, although there were no-
iceably many absences: per-
haps the distance and the
foot-and-mouth scare were pro-
hibitive factors. Several issues
were thoroughly discussed . . .
the minutes of the meeting will
be circulated shortly.
Revision of Areas
Of the three proposals put for-
ward, the one that subsumed the
Greater London Area was ad-
opted. Allowing for some mi-
nor amendments, this means we
have settled this particular is-
ue, which has now been run-
ning for some time.

Development of
Associate Membership
This created much lively dis-
cussion after I had proposed one
level of membership with a
common subscription fee. The
outcome was a decision in fa-
vour of the retention of Associ-
ate Membership status with its
lower annual subscription with the
proviso that current Associ-
ate Member sides should be
warmly encouraged to seek full
membership of the Ring.

Promotion of the mor-
ris
It was good to welcome repre-
sentatives from the EFDSS,
Morris Federation and Open
Morris and hear about the very
positive approaches being made
as joint ventures for the promo-
tion of the morris tradition.

Instructionals.
As co-ordinator of the Ring In-
structional programme, the fol-
lowing sessions for 2002 are
planned:

January 18 – 20,
Jigs Instructional at Sutton
Bonnington: Bert Cleaver with
Dolphin MM will lead this.

September,
Longborough and Adderbury
traditions. This will be led by
Jack Rowell with Stafford MM
& Uttoxeter MM

November,
Bucknell and Badby traditions.
This will be led by John Burke
& King John’s Morris Men.

This brings some of the less fa-
miliar (as danced) traditions to
the fore with some new faces as
instructors. Also I would like to
encourage each Area to consider
including a one-day Instruc-
tional as part of the calendar of
events within their region.

For the Easter weekend I went
to seek the Britannia Coco-Nut
Dancers are of Bacup dance
from boundary to boundary of
the town in their own inimita-
ble style. I was made very wel-
come by Tom Healey and
colleagues and, apart from the
dreadful weather, enjoyed the
day. Then to Harthill MM for
their twenty fifth anniversary
Feast. It was one of those week-
ends, which remain in the mem-
ory: a wide cross section of
cubs, some excellent dancing
and first-class hospitality.

Enter in May Day: I was danc-
ing with my own side, Shake-
speare, to greet the dawn in
Stratford-upon-Avon — one
time, at least, when you could
see how beautiful the town re-
ally is — followed by a radio in-
terview and a traditional
breakfast with ale. In the eve-
nings we went to the village of
Offenham to watch the local
folk enjoy their May Pole danc-
ing and, together with Chipping
Camen and Bedworth Morris
Men to show them some
Cotsuld dances. Most recently
I attended the Westminster Day
of Dance, my first experience.
An extremely warm day was
spent walking the streets of
London with breaks in between
to dance and keep the fluid lev-
els topped up. Some thirteen
sides were present, with six Past
Squires of the Ring in attendance;
clearly a popular day out.

The response to my Domesday
2000 entreaty for each side to
provide a colour photograph,
together with a list of members
and their activities within the
side, has been rather slow! How-
ever, there is a trickle of replies
for the records. All Bagmen . . .
more action please.

The dancing season is begin-
in earnest, with the first
Ring Meeting looming up at
Thaxted. I am looking forward
to seeing as many sides as possi-
ble at Ring Meetings and
Days/Weekends of Dance over
the months ahead.

Continue to flourish.

Gerald
Correspondence

Dear Eddie,

Seeing the picture of Len Bardwell (not Bardell) dancing Old Mother Oxford in 1960 in The Morris Ring Circular for Spring 2001 reminded me of his time with Oxford. In fact, when the picture was taken in 1960 Len had been a member of Oxford (City) Morris Men for many years, but he is not in Oxford kit so I presume he is in the kit of his first club, East Surrey, as hosts of the meeting.

From 1953 to 1957 Len was the Oxford Morris Man, keeping the side alive by dancing Old Mother Oxford (as in the photo – it was his favourite jig) each May Morning. Oxford Morris Men had entered a period of decline with members dancing for the revived Oxford University Morris Men and Headington Quarry Morris Dancers after the war, until by 1953 there was only Len left. A new set of dancers joined Len and revived the side (as Oxford City Morris Men) in 1957.

There were many anecdotes about Len. My favourite is the occasion when, as Squire of the team, he was asked to judge the dog show at a village fete where Oxford City Morris Men were performing. No-one demurred at his choice of ‘The Dog Who Looks Most Like Its Owner’ but he had to beat a hasty retreat when half an hour later he awarded the same dog the prize as ‘The Dog With The Most Mongrel Ancestry’!

With best wishes
Mike Heaney

Dear Eddie,

In pointing out that it was Leonard Bardwell – not Bardell – who was dancing a jig to the playing of Bert Cleaver’s pipe & tabor (Circular 37), allow me to record that Leonard was bagman & musician for East Surrey Morris Men from 1934 – 1939. He was also a member of Greensleeves Morris Men. After the war became musician for the Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers, in whose kit he was dancing Old Mother Oxford at the Reigate Ring Meeting.

My accompanying photograph, taken on the Saturday morning of the Morris Ring’s 21st birthday meeting, held in London on the weekend of 8 – 10 July 1955, depicts Leonard playing his concertina in Northampton Square.

Perhaps some of your older readers may wish to recount memories they have of this grand old man of the morris?

Wassail,
Gordon Ridgewell

Hi, Eddie.

Thanks for replying. This is the reason I wanted to contact you, in your capacity as editor of The Morris Dancer. The attached are guaranteed clean, they are of my own authorship.

These are three of a series of photographs of East Surrey & Ravensbourne which recently came into my possession. They were taken at the Hare & Hounds, Godstone and The Whyte Harte at Bletchingley on the occasion of ES’s May Tour of 1950 (as confirmed by E.S. bagman - he is the character in white Royal Navy t-shirt, shorts & socks in the background of the rapper dance).

I am sending them to you since I understand that one or both of the locations will be visited during their forthcoming Ring Meeting, and I wondered if you might want to use them in a “then and now” feature, in view of the passage of half a century between them.

Incidentally, if you can help me to identify any of the participants, I should appreciate it.

Malc.
(Malcolm Ward, of Ravensbourne)
Dear Eddie,

My friend, Gary Stringfellow of Sowerby Bridge, received a collection of music a couple of years ago & amongst this was a book entitled "Country & Morris Dances". This was compiled by Alfred Moffat & published by Ascherberg, Hopwood & Crew Ltd., 16 Mortimer Street, London W1, & was No 65 in their "Music-Lovers' Library". I told Roy Judge of this publication & he checked it out, giving the information that it was first published by George Newnes in 1913, & that the New Grove gave Moffat as a Scottish music editor & collector, 1866 - 1950, active as a collector & arranger of traditional music of the British Isles, & that he collaborated with Kidson in "Dances of Olden Time" (1912). Roy said I don't get the impression that he did more than collect from printed sources.

"Country & Morris Dances" is a collection of good Eighteenth Century tunes arranged for the piano. The arrangements are very pleasant & consist of 39 pieces: quite a few of them are very pleasant & consist of 39 pieces: quite a few of them are quite useful for the Morris Dancer.

Robert Dover's Cotswold Olimpick Games

I may be of interest to your readers to add to the information about the Cotswold Olimpick Games which date from 1612, were continued until 1852, and which are now held annually on Dover's Hill above Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire. In the early 19th Century, Morris dancing was a prominent feature of the Games.

The information comes from 'A Real Lover of Old English Pastimes' who wrote about them in The Mirror for 10th June 1826. The Morris Dancers were 'Spruce lads sprigged up in their Sunday clothes, with ribbons round their hats and arms, and bells on their legs, and they were attended by a jester called Tom Fool, who carried a long stick with a bladder tied to it, with which he buffeted about, to make room for the dancers.' One of the men was chosen 'to carry a large plum cake, a long sword run through the middle of it, the cake resting on the hilt. On the point of the sword is a large bunch of ribbons with streamers, and a large knife is stuck in the cake, and when the young man sees a favourite lass he gives her a slice.'

It is said that teams of Morris men from such Gloucestershire places as Guiting Power, and Sherborne competed against each other as to which team would have the right to stay on Dover's Hill for the Games. The Games begin at 7.30 p.m. You are all most welcome.

Dr F.D.A. Burns, Hon. Secretary

Dear Sirs,

We are highly obliged in introducing ourselves as specialist in the manufacture of Hand Embroidered Gold & Silver Bullion Wire Badges, Emblems, Crests, Lace, Regalia, & all kinds of Leather Goods, etc:

Nice Embroidery Works
Ahmed Pura, Sialkot, Pakistan
Tel: 0092-432-592193, 580995
Fax: 0092-432-267919, 268835
E-mail:nicegood@brain.net.pk

Sub: Supply of Embroidery Badges, Insignias, Emblems, Crests, Laces, Regalia, & all kinds of Leather Goods, etc:

Dear Sirs,

We are highly obliged in introducing ourselves as specialist in the manufacture of Hand Embroidered Gold & Silver Bullion Wire Badges, Emblems, Insignias, Crests, Hat Cap Cords, Sword Knots, Tassele Fringes, Laces, Flage, Banners, Cap Visors, Regalias, Chinstripes, LANeyards & Appallate for Military, Navy, Air Force, Police, Club & Churches Apparel, Gowms, Sashes, & all kinds of Leather items.-

Our prices are consistent with cost of production & we always offer our products at lowest prices in the world market, OR you may quote your prices on the order sheets for our acceptance & compliance, or you like & wish. Your Business Link With us will certainly prove most beneficial for both our Houses.

In view of the above, we would like to appreciate from you the best comments, at least with trial order of samples enabling us to submit you the counter samples for your kind testing & approval.

To save time & hardship it would much better if you would send us your own choice samples with all important instruction, design sheets, Colours & size round or square shape, with padded or without padding or original samples to enable us make similar ones & send the same to you for your kind approval. After doing the needful your samples will always returned to you.

Quick & prompt delivery is guaranteed. Order of minimum quantity are also accepted happily.

Hoping to receive the favourable communication per return of mail, dear sirs,

Yours faithfully for Nice Embroidery Works

S.M. SALIM.

Robert Dover's Cotswold Olimpick Games

I may be of interest to your readers to add to the information about the Cotswold Olimpick Games which date from 1612, were continued until 1852, and which are now held annually on Dover's Hill above Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire. In the early 19th Century, Morris dancing was a prominent feature of the Games.

The information comes from 'A Real Lover of Old English Pastimes' who wrote about them in The Mirror for 10th June 1826. The Morris Dancers were 'Spruce lads sprigged up in their Sunday clothes, with ribbons round their hats and arms, and bells on their legs, and they were attended by a jester called Tom Fool, who carried a long stick with a bladder tied to it, with which he buffeted about, to make room for the dancers.' One of the men was chosen 'to carry a large plum cake, a long sword run through the middle of it, the cake resting on the hilt. On the point of the sword is a large bunch of ribbons with streamers, and a large knife is stuck in the cake, and when the young man sees a favourite lass he gives her a slice.'

It is said that teams of Morris men from such Gloucestershire places as Guiting Power and Sherborne competed against each other as to which team would have the right to stay on Dover's Hill for the Games. I am pleased to report that the present Games, revived in 1963, do not have such rivalry, Campden Morrismen always dance for us on Dover's Hill and hopefully one or more guest teams will also be dancing on Friday evening, 1st June, 2001 when, foot and mouth restrictions willing, we celebrate Robert Dover's Cotswold Olimpick Games again. The Games begin at 7.30 p.m. You are all most welcome.

Dr F.D.A. Burns, Hon. Secretary

Dear Eddie,

My friend, Gary Stringfellow of Sowerby Bridge, received a collection of music a couple of years ago & amongst this was a book entitled 'Country & Morris Dances'. This was compiled by Alfred Moffat & published by Ascherberg, Hopwood & Crew Ltd., 16 Mortimer Street, London W1, & was No 65 in their 'Music-Lovers' Library'. I told Roy Judge of this publication & he checked it out, giving the information that it was first published by George Newnes in 1913, & that the New Grove gave Moffat as a Scottish music editor & collector, 1866 - 1950, active as a collector & arranger of traditional music of the British Isles, & that he collaborated with Kidson in 'Dances of Olden Time' (1912). Roy said I don't get the impression that he did more than collect from printed sources.

'Country & Morris Dances' is a collection of good Eighteenth Century tunes arranged for the piano. The arrangements are very pleasant & consist of 39 pieces: quite a few of them are well-known, such as The Keel Row, Boys & Girls Come Out To Play, & Roger de Coverley.

The tunes listed as morris dances are; The Glory of the West, The Glory of the North, The Scotch Morris, The French Morris, The Bishop's Morris, Green Stocking or Ropely Village (morris dance), The Red Shore (morris dance), Morris Dance & A Hundred Pipers (a favourite tune for morris dancers).

The provenance of The Scotch Morris is a country-dance from Young's The Dancing Master, Vol. III, with this title: while The French Morris is a pas de
deux by Isaac, a well-known Jewish dancing master who lived in France for a while & when he returned to England, liked to be called Isaac d’Orleans. This dance has more elevations than is usual to give the morris impression & is perhaps useful on that account. It is most likely that the other tunes have a similar origin as these two as exotic titles, while A Hundred Pipers could suggest that Moffat was familiar with NW morris where it was often used.

There are footnotes to Green Stockings or Ropely Village, & The Red Shore, saying 'from a Ms collection of about 1750'. Ropely is in Hampshire, & Green Stockings - I read from a folklorist source - were worn by unmarried sisters at a wedding to further their own marriage prospects. It is possible, & perhaps probable, that the Ms was merely copied from one of the country-dance manuals, but it is interesting that there are so many references to morris while little is known of the dance itself during this period.

**Julian Pilling.**

PS: music still available if anyone interested (arrangements still copyright) - contributions to cost accepted!

PPS: The "Morris England" type cove is an awkward size for reduction & I had to do it in two parts, the original being in glorious colour, for what it is worth.

PPPS: Sorry - I have no intention of www-ing: in my 79th year I can't work up any enthusiasm!

---

**Dear Eddie,**

The sight of the Farnborough Morris Men on the front cover of The Morris Dancer Volume Three Number 8 has prompted me to make a further visit to my loft to retrieve the photographs I took of this side in 1961. The occasion was Farnborough’s Weekend of Dance at Odiham, Hampshire, on the weekend of 30th June – 2nd July, when I was an invited guest & acted as Cakebearer.

Since these pictures are now some 40 years old, you may wish to publish them in The Circular as Photographs of record, as they capture something of the flavour of the Farnborough Morris. These photographs depict:

a) A handkerchief dance outside the butcher’s in the High Street, with Reg Hall as musician

b) A walking tour of Odiham with a camp-follower in hot pursuit

---

The illustrations on pages 3 – 6 come from:

- page 3 top – Gordon Ridgewell
- page 3 bottom – Malcolm Ward
- page 4 top – Malcolm Ward
- this page, top – Julian Pilling
- bottom – Gordon Ridgewell
- page 6, bottom – Gordon Ridgewell.
Mazes & the Morris?

Morris Dancing is ancient and rooted in the celebrations of the pagn (Roman for country people). At one stage the pagans did not worship anything but they did celebrate anything they perceived as being of vital importance to the mystery of life.

studies of symbolism in respect of landscape have revealed fascinating things some connected with Mazes and interest to the Morris Dancer. Many aspects of history facts get blurred and changed. Maze for example is not the original name of a letter which looks similar to a Z but was pronounced Y. It was the 27th letter of the alphabet. By inserting the Y the maze comes into line with MAYE and the original word from the Sanskrit meaning “little points”. The vital little points of green growth that signal May and the start of the New Year’s growth.

The unicursal trench of the “turf” maze was a simple aera-tion and drainage channel in the centre of which stood a tall rig or rick pole. All around this the straw and twigs were stacked as a source of food for the cattle during winter. The crops were grown in fields and harvested into stooks. Stooks were left for nine dews in the ground. The grain was taken away to safe storage whilst the greater bulk of straw was stacked nearby.

Most of the community was involved in this process so we have one of the early communal gathering places. The growth of the great city-states rode on the back of successful agriculture so these operations took place for thousands of years. One of these was near Lake Moiris in Egypt and records tell us there was a great labyrinth there, another symbol of a pagan world. I believe the Morris word evolved from there. The stamping work led to dances based upon them and I believe many of the rig dances, there are thousands and Morris Dancing, derived directly from it. The maze and rig is a universal tool, still in use today though on a somewhat smaller scale. (Since the 17-century we have been able to store protein in the form of roots so in the 1730’s all the mazes “went under the plow”.) The haystack was finished and ropes attached to stop the hay blowing away. These rig bands were vital to the survival of the community so it is not surprising that they entered the symbolism of the dance. The Morris Dance is one of good cheer and optimism so we have to wait until the spring to see the source of the ribbons the man wears. If in the spring they had not got to “the last straw” before the new green started growing, they would celebrate for this was the time when they knew they had seven months of relatively trouble free life ahead. The last straw would be cleared and the rig bands would hang loose. The rig or rick pole towered above, sometimes more than a hundred feet tall. The rig is the male and the male dancers would join it, their bodies echoing the upright male. From their upright trunk hung the ribbons, loose and free. The women would be adorned and together with their feet on the maze, the female tellus mater and their hands all gripping the ribbon links with the male pillar they wove a dance of unity, Man with Woman and all with Nature. The later patriarchal religions concealed much of the feminine aspect but the Maze itself is a powerful female symbol. Mazepal (Maypole) Dancing was considered by the church to be the worship of a pagan idyll. I do not believe this to be so; it was simple celebration of life.

Idols were involved but one wonders whether the original idol was the token received by those adding to the haystack so that they could get their appropriate share for their cattle during the winter. The German for a maze is Dolhaus and the Dutch Doolhoof. (House where you get your dole). The corn dolly would be one sort of Idol manufacture. The I of course is the I of the male pillar and a name of this first communal Bank.

Graham Burgess
Ninesprings House,
Whitchurch,
Hampshire RG287RA
0125689 2837
email: graham@gyrdn.demon.co.uk

If you want to know the full story there is a paper priced £6.00 (£1.00 goes to the Society). Make cheques payable to A.G. Burgess. I would be interested to hear of any other connections between dance and the maze.
North Wood’s Day of Dance

Rutland Morris Men took a side and two musicians to Northwood’s weekend from 18th to 20th May. The journey being long we had to stop twice, for essential supplies of beer and chips, with more beer on our arrival. Accommodation was in a scout centre with luxurious bunk beds and hot showers (not in the same room).

Saturday saw a tour of sunny Croydon via a very impressive clean, efficient and smart tram system. We found first class stops for lunch and a very pleasant mid afternoon stop where the Rutland human pyramid was repeated and reached three levels. That might not sound much, but you try it!! We did a lot of dancing too, with full sides from Northwood, Rutland and Greensleeves, half a side from Green Oak and all three Ring Officers. By the time the feast was served (by the scouts) there was no energy left for more dancing.

Northwood were really good hosts. Weekends away need several ingredients - good company, reasonably comfortable accommodation (preferably with showers), good food and drink, and thoughtful attention to detail such as Sunday papers, tea in bed etc. Northwood had it all - many thanks, chaps.

On Sunday Rutland Morris Men ventured into the Big City. This was a most exciting time, as there are lots of traffic lights (Rutland only has one set in the whole county), and the yellow lines were red. We still don’t know why. We danced in Covent Garden and then went to the London Eye for which our illustrious bagman had thoughtfully bought tickets weeks before. Upon entering the capsule for our “flight” (it is operated by British Airways), we asked the rest of the occupants if they minded us dancing. They were very polite, and with glazed expressions they enthusiastically said they would be delighted (at least, I think they did). So, six dancers performed The Nutting Girl, Fieldtown at the very top. The capsules are oval, and we did it at one end, which with hindsight may not have been ideal, but we lived to tell the tale.

The last part of the weekend also deserves mention, which was an emergency visit to a Weatherspoons pub in the very centre of London where two meals cost £6, beer was all well under £2 and it was clean and quiet. Well worth a return trip, and no, I don’t have any advertising role.

Jonathan Unna
May Morning at Dartmouth

**Dartmouth, May 1st 2001**

We assembled at 0520 hours under the cover of darkness & after disabling the sentry, we slipped past the guardroom & into the grounds of the College. We made our way to the highest part of the grounds to await the sunrise. As the sun crept over the Devon hills to the east, the music struck up & we were off. We did several dances as the sun rose behind the clouds, then we dashed off down to the parade ground right in front of the main door. There we took a group photo, did one or two more dances, & made our escape.

The MoD & College staff could only have got to know about it when they saw it on the local news that night. In fact, after the dancing in front of the College, we were invited into the main dining hall to take breakfast on the Quarter Deck, along with the local BBC camera crew. We sat down to a sumptuous breakfast, just what was needed after being out in a biting wind, but (Alas!) there was no Nelson's blood to cheer our cold hands & feet.

Dartmouth Naval College is steeped in history, & along both walls of the dining hall are the portraits of some of our more famous sea captains & admirals: Nelson, Frobisher, Drake, Hardy, & Duckworth! Yes that is right, Admiral Duckworth, & No, I have never heard of him either.

For some of us, it was a welcome return to the College. We had in our ranks two ex-naval officers that went to the college many years ago, & for one of the chaps, Graham, after serving 13 years in Her Majesty's Navy, it was an opportunity to see how the other half lived while he was slumming it below decks.

Our thanks must go to Peter Court-Hampton & John Culf, for putting it together, & of course the MoD & the Britannia Naval College, for giving its permission.

Hope to see you soon,

**Tim Sercombe**

The offer of a rather special venue for this years dancing in of the ‘Summer could hardly be refused: we were treated almost like royalty at the Britannia Royal Naval College from the time we arrived at 5:20am to ‘sign on’ and check in, until we left after a hearty breakfast!

The arena of the Helipad at the top of the hill provided a cold and windy start to our performance, later to be transferred to the Parade Ground in front of the College itself, closer to sea level, where some shelter was afforded, and where the BBC IV South West were able to put together a very commendable interpretation of ‘our welcoming in of the Mayo’!

**Pictures courtesy of Tim & Terry**

This second report has been stolen from the Dartington website (www.dartingtonmorrismen.org.uk) ED

---

The Morris Dancer, Volume Three Number Nine, is due for publication in mid-December. Early submission of any article you consider suitable will be gratefully received by the Editor.

Email him at editor@themorrisdancer.org.uk
A Review of ‘Traditional Graffiti’

- a CD from the Wheeze & Suck Band.

For those expecting the Sydney based Wheeze & Suck Band’s music to be a fusion of English and Australian folk - a kind of Pratty Flowyrs with didgeridoo or billabongs in Shropshire - their CD ‘Traditional Graffiti’ will be a disappointment. Organisers of UK folk festivals might note that if it’s good enough ‘down under’ traditional English music should get more coverage on home soil.

The Wheeze & Suck Band get good air time on Sydney radio stations and on their local concert scene as well as at their National Folk Festival held annually in Canberra. This is not at all surprising to us familiar with their first recording on ‘The Loading Bay Tapes’. Some material, admittedly, is repeated on ‘Traditional Graffiti’ and one or two tracks lose a little freshness second time around, but others are significantly enhanced with a different arrangement or treatment this time.

Many tracks draw on the band’s roots in the Sydney Morris Men and on their shared heritage of regional customs and traditions, with morris tunes, was-sailing and mummers play being enhanced by hammered dulcimer, autoharp, mandolin and Rhonda Mawer’s superb vocals. Her sigice is supreme throughout and is featured on tracks ‘The female drummer’ and the Cyril Tawney ballad ‘Grey Funnel Line’; her harmonies in ‘Raise your banner high’ and ‘Here we come a-wassailing’ are outstanding.

We are introduced to the versatility of the band in the first set of tunes where ‘Roll up’ of Wakes fame introduces the Winsen Processional led by the fiddle of ‘Lol’ Osborn which is followed by the Furry Dance where Ian Macintosh on melodeon, Peter Kerrawn on concertina and Trevor Sutton’s vocals take over. As on all tracks strong percussion is provided by John ‘Bongo’ Milce.

Trevor also sings the lead in the Sydney Morris Men’s favourite ‘My young man’ where the musical riff’s are driven by percussion and melodeon. A pro solidarity slant is given to the two tracks ‘Raise your banner high’ and the whistle gives the impression of a union march in ‘Part of the union’. By now in answer to: ‘Are you out or in, brother?’ I’m well and truly in!

Patriotism is rife in the three tracks ‘Over the hills’, ‘British Grenadiers’, where the two pipes and voices lead into the full band playing, and to ‘The heights of Alma’ an oft forgotten traditional song celebrating the first victory of the Crimean campaign with a splendidly triumphalistic chorus.

‘My log cabin home in the sky’ provides light relief from the English tradition with the fade of howling wolves giving way on the next track to ‘Lol’ singing ‘Jim the carter’s lad’ coupled with ‘Down the road’ with whistled commands to the horse giving added authenticity. Interesting sound effects throughout are used again to lead into ‘Here’s a tender coming’ which provides a suitably strong final and fifteenth track.

Good on ya, Wheezers. You’ve earned your little bit of corn! Thanks for reminding us of our rich roots. There are, indeed, no billabongs in Shropshire, but Rolf Harris did ‘headline’ at Sidmouth this year! Thankfully, as yet, there is no . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . line dancing.

Monty

(Paul Montgomery, Yateley Morris men)

Step Change:

a collection of papers by leading English & American researchers on traditional dance, published by Francis Boutle, will be launched at Hastings Jack in the Green Festival on the 6th May.

The papers in Step Change are aimed at interested dancers rather than specialist academicians & are intended to give a snapshot of the changes that have taken place in research on traditional dance. The book as a whole includes a wealth of new material to interest anyone who wants to find out more about the dances they enjoy doing. Individual contributions reflect the concerns of a generation of researchers who have been prepared to challenge conventional thinking, & - more importantly - put in the work to support their changed priorities & innovations. Stephen Corrsin & Keith Chandler’s papers replace the vague generalities of traditions rooted in pagan fertility rituals with detailed historical documentation (Keith Chandler’s paper has already been nominated for a local history award). Elaine Bradtke & Caroline Radcliffe’s works extend the boundaries of scholarship into forms of dance previously dismissed as ‘popular’ or ‘degenerate’ – revealing the interaction of tradition & innovation that characterises all living traditions. Theresa Buckland & Keith Chandler answer the question “Who were the Folk” with information on real lives & attitudes among people who were & are, just like ourselves, & whilst the research presented by Allison Thompson & Georgina Boyes deals directly with the development of the Folk Dance Revival, the papers by Stephen Corrsin, Elaine Bradtke & Theresa Buckland all reflect the way the existence of a Folk Dance Revival has affected the ideas about traditional dances.

Steve Corrsin & Georgina Boyes’ papers are also likely to be controversial. They highlight the influence of Nazi scholarship & ideology on English dance & dancers & suggest that some aspects of the Folk Dance Revival are far less innocent than they seem.

The papers are listed below - we hope the new ideas & approaches illustrated in Step Change are as stimulating as the traditional dances they describe & as interesting as the people who have - and continue - to dance them.

Stephen D Corrsin, “English Sword Dancing & the European Context”
Theresa Buckland, “In a Word We Are Unique: Ownership & control in an English dance custom.”
Elaine Bradtke, “Molly Dancing: A Study of Discontinuity & Change”
Caroline Radcliffe, “The Ladies’ Clog Dancing Contest of 1898”
Allison Thompson, “Meeting the Prophet: Cecil Sharp & the English Folk Revival as seen by Elsie J. Oxenham”
Georgina Boyes, “The lady that is with you”: Maud Karpeles & the English Folk Revival”

A preliminary review of the publication can be found on page 12. It is obtainable from the publisher, Francis Boutle, 23 Arlington Way, London EC1R 1UY (phone: 020 7278 4497), for £10. ED
Dear Eddie,

I bring you news of Barbara Sunderland, widow of Past Squire Morris Sunderland, A photograph of Barbara was featured in ‘The Ridgewell Files’ in Circular 28, Autumn 1996, p.11.

(Hitchin Comet, 1.iii.2001, p.25: “Ex-head’s CND battle”)

Dear Eddie,

A perusal of The Ridgewell Files: 200101, published in The Circular reveals that my communication of 26.i.2001 has failed to make it... where do all those millions of letters that get lost in the postal system every year end up?

But fear not ... I have obtained an additional copy of the press cutting that was the subject of my missive.

Here it is.

(The Sunday Telegraph, 15.x.2000, p.14: Amanda Hall interviewing Allan Leighton)

Dear Eddie,

I was most interested to read, in Duncan Broomhead’s article entitled ‘Year 2000 Memories’, published in Circular 37 (Spring 2001), that the Aldlington Mummers performed the Alderley Mummers Play... in Enniskillen.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the mumming tradition was flourishing in Ireland... when I read a feature article...

The article... gives a good impression of the mumming tradition in the emerald isle.

(Hertfordshire Mercury, 4.v.2001, p.13: “Morris men move to mayor’s May day music”)

Dear Eddie,

Having experienced the Farnborough Morris at first hand, I concur with the sentiments expressed by Stephen Earwicker in Circular 37...

Dear Eddie,

The first ever visit abroad by the Flamborough Sword Dancers took place in 2000 when they took part in the Half-Lent Sword Dance festival in Antwerp. I enclose three press cuttings... unearthed in the British Library Newspaper Library...

King John's Day of Dance, April 20 – 22, 2001

A photo-report from John Frearson

The Dartington website has their report on this event: “Another splendid weekend, with our Saturday tour taking us from the Bargate in Southampton, to Ocean Village, then by Blue Funnel to Warsash (Rising Sun), Hamble. Lunch at The Elm Tree, Swanwick, on to The Brushmakers’ Arms, Upham, & tea at the Royal Victoria country Park, Netley (the site of the famous Military Hospital). Finally, back to the Bold Forrester at Sarisbury.

A specially arranged tour of the Bursledon Brickworks on Sunday morning, & a good lunch at The Swan, Mansbridge, completed a memorable weekend!”

John's photographs show, from the top:

1 Three Generations of Care: Barry & his grandson dancing a double jig to Simon's playing at The Brushmakers’ Arms
2 Moulton dancing by the old lightship at Ocean Village
3 Plymouth at The Bold Forrester
4 Dartington at The Rising Sun, Warsash
 Editorial

You will gather from the review alongside that I was extremely impressed by “Step Change”. I strongly recommend that you buy yourself a copy. Having recently started on the process of ancestor research, I have a heightened awareness of how easy it is to edit the past to make it conform to the way we would like it to be. Incidentally, no culture was more prone to this than the ancient Egyptians, who always maintained that what they were doing was sanctioned by tradition, even if the evidence was non-existent. If you want to know how it was, rather than how it ought to have been, this collection of essays is a good place to start.

On page 7 you will have seen the report on our (literal) Day of Dance in Croydon, to which we welcomed all three Ring Officers, Greensleeves Morris Men & representatives from Green Oak Morris Men, as well as Rutland Morris Men. The weather was kind to us from the start, which was just as well because our base from Friday night was the Frylands Wood Scout Camp site in the more rural end of Croydon. As a special treat, we laid on a stiff climb up a vertiginous footpath (no cloven-hoofed animals in sight!) to the tram terminus in New Addington.

The tram driver was obviously slightly taken aback by the appearance of 30-odd colourfully-dressed characters boarding his tram. Before setting off into metropolitan Croydon, he tanned the message that his tram was not licensed for singing & dancing! The other effect worthy of note was our effect on the majority of the other passengers who studiously avoided seeing us: one or two bold souls did actually talk to us & one even pressed money into our hands despite the lack of a performance! We walked through to Queen’s Gardens for our shake-out (where Greensleeves joined us, having travelled direct from Wimbledon on the tram) & then trekked 150m to The Spread Eagle, where we had to ring the bell & bang on the door to get them to open.

Then we got to our main dancing site in the pedestrianised North End & after some technical discussions with already-resident buskers, we were able to get down to our main business of dancing. Gerald & JF teamed up with Green Oak plus volunteers, so that we had four teams keeping the crowds entertained. For lunch we walked along what was the High Street to the West Croydon tram-stop to travel the two stops to The Porter & Sorter, our lunch stop.

After lunch, Rutland insisted on dancing The Rose in what was left of the pub ‘garden’, hoisting North Wood’s mascot (go to the our web page for a portrait) in the final figure. Then it was back on the tram for a single stop & North End again. When we judged that the Saturday afternoon shoppers were beginning to lose interest, we led our guests to The Royal Standard, a small traditional ‘local’ under the shadow of the flyover. This visit allowed time for quiet drinking & recuperation, although our Squire’s significant other was persuaded (somehow) to join the Rutland human pyramid (see the photo on page 7). Eventually, we made our way to the Fairfield Halls to work the matinee crowd on their exit before joining the tram for our final trip back to New Addington & the steep path (this time, thankfully, downhill). Back at base, we ate an enjoyable evening meal prepared by the Croham Venture Scout unit, washed down for those who would, with Chiddingstone-brewed Larkins.

Circular 39 is scheduled for publication in mid-September. Can I ask you all to let me have your items for inclusion by 20th August, please. For preference, copy should be good quality typescript (single spacing is fine): not being a copy-typist, manuscripts will be edited to prevent editorial RSS. Any pictures can be accepted as print, slides or negatives, & will be returned after scanning.

Enjoy your collective summer, Eddie Dunmore.