

the MORRIS RING
FOUNDED 1934

THE Circular

*Edited for the Morris Ring by Eddie Dunmore
118 Edgecombe, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8AD*

Number 39



Wath Bording
by Merlins Cave, Chalfont



Most of my time, this Summer, has been taken up with the Ring Meetings & with Days of Dance & Feasts. It started off with a visit to the North Wood MM Day of Dance involving a walking tour of Croydon town centre. Some excellent dancing: the Scout accommodation was first class (down a narrow lane & surrounded by trees. . . yes, in Croydon!!); the intricacies of 'Therapia Lane' & its association with the local tram system are still in the memory.

The first Ring Meeting at Thaxted was my baptism as program coordinator. The weather was kind & it was an excellent weekend of dancing with twenty or so Sides in attendance. It was a pleasure to see two overseas Clubs present: Helmond MM & Vancouver MM. Coming down the hill from the Swan Hotel, leading the Squire's procession to the expectant crowd in the Square, is a 'bit special'. The Rev. Raymond Tayler, vicar of Thaxted, & a keen supporter of the Morris, provided some amusing anecdotes in his speech. Later, on the Sunday, he gave an energetic display in the massed 'Bobbing Around': with some coaching from his home side he could prove a useful recruit!

In mid-June I joined the Midlands & North Area on their Cotswold tour featuring specific traditions in their village of origin: this included dancing spots at Bledington, Fieldtown, Bampton, Longborough & Ilmington. Then followed a chance to be with my own Side, Shakespeare MM, dancing at Chipping Campden, & then off the West Somerset MM Day of Dance at Dunster, Minehead,

Porlock & Lynmouth. Their Squire, Gordon Kidd, certainly believes in value for money – we danced all day with barely a pause except for lunch and, even then, a quick practice to learn 'Sweet Jenny Jones' was squeezed in.

Right at the end of June came the Otley meeting hosted by Boars Head/Claro Sword MM. Again the weather was kind & the tours provided views of some wonderful countryside, with a special steam train ride from Bolton Abbey. The final Show was excellent & featured a massed 'Jenny Lind' (in the style of Lichfield) that was danced with great gusto. This is my favourite stick dance & I intend to include it at all the Ring Meetings in 2002, so please make sure you have got to grips with it.

Then there was a visit to Pebble Mill Studios, Birmingham, with Paul Bryan & son John (Ilmington MM) for a radio show to talk about local morris traditions (including the mice in Ilmington Church!).

The two Ring Meetings scheduled in July were special celebrations. Not only was each side one of the six founder members of the Morris Ring, but both were celebrating their 75th Anniversary. Greensleeves MM have long been associated with Chipperfield & the 'outdoor' theme made for a memorable weekend. There was some high quality dancing & I particularly remember the distinctive performance of Northumberland/Durham clog dance by Peter Brown of Monkseaton MM.

The venue for the East Surrey Meeting was the College at Ep-

som, where we enjoyed splendid food (how many profiteroles did you manage?), accommodation & facilities . . . plus a very early call as a start to the Sunday morning. I understand that BFB missed all the excitement & slept contentedly through the comings & goings.

I offer a sincere thank you to the Sides who organised & hosted the 2001 Ring Meetings so successfully. I am delighted that so many Clubs decided to attend at least one Meeting in the year. However, I do realise the expense involved is high. The current cost for full participation at a Meeting is now around £45-55 (without travel & ale costs). This appears to be the 'going rate' even when some of the work, such as catering, is carried out by host members. I would dearly like to find some way to reduce this & so make such Meetings more accessible to more Sides. Does anyone have any ideas?

For next year 2002 there are five Meetings planned. I would encourage all Sides from across the whole spectrum – Cotswold, Rapper, Sword, Mummer & Border – to consider going to one of these so that the colour & vibrancy associated with the various styles of the Morris can be made obvious. Due to personal commitments I have decided 'to dance out' at the Bristol Ring Meeting, July 26-28, 2002.

Presentation: I have to say that there is still some sloppy morris on show, both in terms of dancing performance & team appearance. Presentation is all important: typically, please make sure the Set always faces the audience when dancing. Introduce the Side/dance/style clearly &, if you are collecting for a charity or good cause, explain the background preferably with some visual display. As an example of what can be done, I joined the Gloucestershire MM weekend of dance (Boars Head MM, Benfieldside MM & West Somerset MM also present) & in one day dancing in Cheltenham between 10am & 4pm over £1000 was collected for the Sue Ryder Home Charity.

I would like to include some words of thanks: to John Tarling (Romford MM) & Tony Ashley (Anker MM) for the hard work they have put in as Area Representatives over recent years. John is moving from Harlow to Devon (pastures new), & is relinquishing his duties as the East Area Representative. Tony has decided to stand down as the North Midlands Representative, to take a back seat for a while & just enjoy the dancing. Thank you both for your personal support.

Morris Futures project: I have just received an interesting Paper concerning an initiative to promote the Morris, that will involve the Ring alongside EFDSS, the Morris Federation & the Open Morris. We all know that many sides suffer from a lack of membership, especially of younger people. In addition, the general public have a poor awareness & understanding of traditional dancing & folk culture in general.

The project, which forms a component of the EFDSS National Education Programme, has four main targets: to increase participation in morris dance on a national level; to encourage excellence in morris traditions; to raise public awareness of the morris traditions; to attract financial support from funding bodies & public institutions. It looks exciting & challenging in the sense that all the morris organisations are getting together & looking to the future with some positive ideas. The Ring representative for this initiative is Daniel Fox, immediate past Squire, who is also a member of the National Executive of EFDSS. Expect more details as the project progresses.

My diary is rapidly filling for the Autumn/Winter 'season' of feasts & ales. Thank you for the invitations already received, & I look forward to further travels & meeting as many Sides as possible in the months ahead. Continue to flourish, & enjoy your dancing.

Gerald

A Double Tour To The Old Eastern Block

Past Squire Tim Sercombe

This July I was fortunate enough to be invited on a Chameleonic Morris tour to Estonia. The dates for the tour fitted in with a Mendip Morris tour to the Czech Republic leaving Birmingham on the 12th of July. It did mean that I would be flying back into the UK on the 11th to catch a bus from Gatwick to Birmingham. It also implied a rather uncomfortable night in the departure lounge, while the others found accommodation in travel lodges, but the hardship was well worth it.

The Estonia trip started with a car journey up from Exeter, with an old Exeter morris friend and colleague, Colin Andrews. The other members of the tour converged on Gatwick airport, from the four corners of the globe, (well, most of them came by mini bus from Writtle, in Essex, as they mostly live in and around the Thaxted/East Suffolk area.). One of our number (Peter Contrastano) was flying in from Boston USA.. Dave

Brewster, of Thaxted, was once again the mastermind behind the organisation for the tour. He had been to Estonia the Christmas before, and had met the organisers of the Baltica 2001 Festival, and had secured an invitation for the team. This festival moves from one Baltic state to the next each year, and this year it was Estonia's turn to play host.

We converged on the travellers' bar at the airport, where tickets and information sheets were handed out, and the Squire for the tour was appointed. This onerous duty was inflicted on Mike Parker of East Suffolk (no stranger to such a task), whose gallant leadership did us well throughout the tour. We all went down to check in, where we left Dave to wait at the check in desk to see if Peter C. would appear. This left the rest of us to pass on through to the departure lounge, to be beguiled by the tax free shopping, and to stock up on what ever was necessary to get through a tour of the Eastern block. Dave appeared without Peter C: he had



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An alternative to dancing

left his ticket at the desk in the hope that he would get there on time. After the frenzied shopping by the men we caught the monorail to the departure gate, and there was Peter C. waiting for us (he never did divulge how he got there before us). With time to waste we thought we would entertain our fellow travellers as we waited to be called for our flight. It turned out that we were travelling with a Gospel choir from the USA, who were also making a tour of the Baltic States. They were fascinated as to who we were and what we did. We danced for them, and on the flight 30,000 feet above Europe, they returned the complement and sang for us. For me this was quite unnerving, being 30,000 feet nearer a concept that I do not believe in, and having hymns sung at me – scary or what?

At Tallinn, Estonia's capital, we were met by Anna, one of the organisers of the festival. She had us quickly on the bus and whisked off to our first night's accommodation at a hostel in the centre of town, not five minute's walk from the old walled city. After pairing off with a room mate and booking in, we made a late night forage into the city to see what we could find. At that god-awful time of night (midnight), after a while and with no action to be found, some of us returned to the hostel. Others, undeterred, continued looking for the Tallinn night life, with sufficient success to require an account the following morning.

Our first full day in the city was taken up with a bit of sight seeing, and taking in the sights and sounds of the old city square (this mainly consisted of watching the very attractive women, with legs right up to their armpits). Later in the day we got into kit and did some informal dancing for the hundreds of tourists that were milling around the old square. Many of these were English, in part on a cruise liner which had a 24 hour stop over in Tallinn. As you can imagine, they were most surprised to come across an English morris team so far from home.

Later that afternoon we were taken just outside of the city to a very big park, to partake in a huge beer festival. Waiting in the performing area we came across the Estonian group that

we had met the previous year in Ireland, so a reunion was in order (another excuse to have more beer). After we performed we were taken off to have an evening meal at one of the many sites around the park where food could be found. We sat eating our meal watching the bungee jumpers, and a crazy ride, involving a chair attached to two bungee ropes suspended from two big cranes. The victim was shot into the air at a rate of knots, spun a couple of times at apogee before gravity reclaimed him or her & then bounced until stability was achieved.

The next few days of the tour were to be spent on two islands just off of the mainland. We were up early, bags packed, and just after breakfast a minibus turned up and we were off. Des said, when we arrived at the ferry terminal, that it would be possible to walk to the island as the depth of the sea at this point was only 3 feet deep. This would have been difficult for Des, as he is only 2 feet 9 inches tall.

We were to give a number of performances on the islands, along with the Lithuanians and some local dance teams. Every village seems to have a dance group, and folk culture on these Islands is very strong and evident: unspoilt by the mainland and any Russian influences. We had two wonderful days of fun while we were on the islands of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa but the best bit came when we were being transported from Saaremaa to

Hiiumaa. We were taken in an open boat on what we thought was a 15 minute crossing which turned out to be ninety minutes. We passed the time singing songs and getting to know our Lithuanian travelling companions. At Hiiumaa the local town band came out to greet us: a trombone, a trumpet, one bass drum with cymbal and an electric keyboard. It was welcomed none the less. Yet more performances for the locals, on Hiiumaa, and then a well-earned rest back at the woodland lodge we were staying at. The following day some of the men went swimming in the Baltic Sea, I did not know what to expect, but I found the water quite warm: much too warm, I thought, for the Baltic.

The following day we returned to Tallinn, in readiness for the actual festival that was to start on the Monday. Our guide for this part of the stay was a young woman who quickly became known as "the Ice Maiden". She was very insistent that we be on time and punctual for all buses and appointments. We could not raise a laugh let alone a smile from this very grumpy girl, no matter how much we tried, but we were not about to give up on her. The highlight of the tour, as far as the organisers were concerned; was for all the teams to perform in the big theatre in the city. We were to perform on the second day, so while we waited around for our turn, we decided to go off into the city, to do some informal dancing and to get a beer or two. The Ice Maiden was not happy, but there was no point in us waiting around the theatre getting bored.

On the second day (Tuesday) we were all to take part in a procession from the Royal Palace, we all duly assembled at the given time to be welcomed by a civic dignitary, as we listened to the kind words of welcome we were aware that there was the sound of thunder in the air, and it was getting closer. With a flash of lightning & a clap of thunder, the heavens opened. I have never got so wet so fast in all my life, it was if someone had turned a water canon onto us,



Square Dancing, Chameleonic Style



All Aboard the Skylark?

but the procession went ahead as the rain and thunder persisted. By the time we had reached our destination church we did not care one way or the other what happened next. We stood around deciding what to do: the decision was to find a warm bar and try to dry off before we were due on stage that evening.

We found a bar that took pity on us and allowed us in to drip all over their furniture. With a couple of beers inside of us the world looked a better place, and

after one or two dances in the bar we were well on the way to drying out. We made our way back to the theatre, where we did some informal dancing for the incoming audience (who were most appreciative). While we waited during the interval, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Tallinn came and gave us a few words of encouragement, saying that if she had known that we were in the country she would have invited us to the Embassy for drinks.

After our performance, which went down a storm, we went back to the hotel to get out of our damp clothes, and take off for the farewell party, where we made our goodbyes to the Lithuanians as they boarded their bus. At the main gate we sang songs of farewell both in English and Lithuanian, waving goodbyes as the bus drove off into the darkness, but to our surprise the bus turned around and came back down the other carriageway and stopped. We thought they could not bear to leave us, but no – they had left one of their group behind, and discovered the absence in the nick of time.

The following morning saw us all packed up and ready to go. We had the morning to ourselves, so some of us went into the city for the last time to do some last minute shopping, and to have the final beer of the tour as we waited for our bus to take us to the airport. The Alloa Colliery Pipe Band bus arrived to take them to the airport as well, and as there was room on their bus we all travelled together (this would surely put the icing on the cake as far as the ice maiden was concerned). We danced in the airport, for the

pipe band, and two lads did a jig to the pipes: then onto the plane and home.

This completed a very successful trip of Estonia: we had good company, excellent accommodation, and plenty of good food. We met many new friends, and made contacts to attend further festivals around the world. All in all we achieved a good deal, and I look forward to the phone ringing to ask if I am available to take off to the next far-flung corner of the world with the Chameleonic Morris.

There is a footnote regarding the ice maiden: one of the team asked her why she had been so off hand with us, her reply some what shocked us. She had been told that the last morris team to have been invited to the Baltica festival had got so drunk on one occasion that they were unable to perform.

I urge all morris teams that travel abroad, that their first commitment is to their hosts, and to fore fill all that is asked of them by the organisers, and two, any bad behaviour not only reflects on that particular team, but it also tarnishes all morris teams, I am not saying don't have a drink while away, but do remember that we are all ambassadors for the morris when we travel away.

Part Two, The Trip to The Czech Republic

At Gatwick we said our goodbyes, and as my travelling companions made their way homeward; I went in search of my bus to Birmingham. I got to Birmingham International Airport at 11.30 p.m. and settled in for a long night. By 6 a.m. some of the Mendip men had started to arrive & it was good to see them. They all looked refreshed from a good nights sleep: I felt like I had spent the night under a hedge and I probably looked like I had. We checked in and it was not long before we were boarding our flight to Prague. I promptly fell asleep and when I

woke up we were airborne – I had slept through take off & now I was being presented with my breakfast (a welcome site, even if it was airline food).

On arrival at Prague, we promptly organised three minicabs to take us to the main railway station. As we neared the city there were traffic hold ups. Our driver swung off to the right, down a dirt track, emerging at one of the many bridges that crosses the river, & in no time at all we were at the station. We had an hour or so to wait for our train to Ostrava, the

republic's third biggest city, out on the Polish border. We had made this trip on two occasions before, and knew the ropes by now. I took advantage on the journey to catch up on more sleep, but the rest of the men made their way to what was euphemistically called the restaurant car for peivo (beer) & a light lunch. By the time I had woken up, & made my way to the restaurant car, all that was left to eat was chicken. This was the first of many meals containing chicken, but it was adequate &, washed down with a couple of

bottles of real Czech Budweiser beer, the total bill came to £1.50.

On our arrival in Ostrava, we were taken to the tram stop and boarded the tram to the Czech House. This is the old party head quarters, now transformed into a cultural centre for the folk arts. There, a welcoming committee greeted us with beer and wine to mark our return to the city & we greeted old friends, that we had not seen for over a year. There was much to talk about, and pictures of Group Odra's time in Somerset the previous year to exchange.



Katerina & Jitrenka

We were then paired off with our respective hosts for the week. Brian Doran, and I were to be staying with my hosts from my previous visit. We would be staying with the prettiest sisters in Ostrava, Jitrenka, and Katerina: all the other men would have quite willingly swapped with Brian and myself, but no chance.

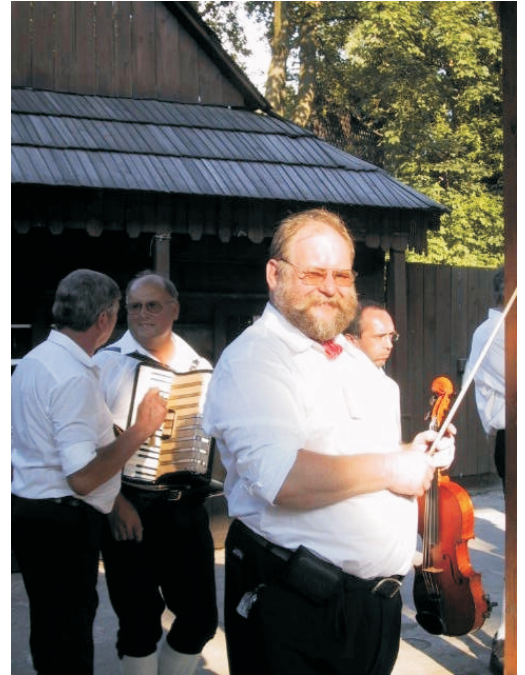
This trip was to be a three-country tour, we were not only dancing in the Czech Republic, but we were to visit Poland & Slovakia (where we were to have a day in the mountains). Most days we were dancing but we did have one day off to see the sights of Ostrava – the closed down steel mill & coal mines. The last time we were here, in 1999, the pollution was unbelievable: eyes quickly be-

gan to sting and water & throats became very sore. This time was a different matter, the air was clean & there was none of that overpowering sulphur smell.

We were not booked into any festivals as such, but we had a full dancing programme, which the group Odra had organised. On most of our appearances, we appeared alongside our hosts in a joint performance.

The one festival that we were booked into was not a dancing festival at all. We were asked to perform at a music & song festival in the village of Doneloma, not to dance but to sing. This was a new one on us, & required some thought. We started with a song: went into a medley of tunes played by Theo, from Letchworth: then back to

“Lamorna” song by Robin from Dartington. Steve then sang the Nutting Girl, followed by Andy Hebden dancing the jig right after the song had finished. Tom finished the set with Wild Mountain Thyme. The crowd loved it – so much so that we were called back for two encores. We got off quick, all with the same thought, that we had got away with it, but it was good fun to do, and our hosts were more than happy with our performance.



Clive DuMont at the Music Festival

tantly, I for one did not want to return home, but there was talk of a joint venture next year, to a



Ostrava from the Town Hall tower

Our tour was quickly coming to a close, & on our last day we had an audience with the Mayor of Ostrava, after we had been up the Town Hall tower to see the view. That night we had a farewell party at the Czech House, sad farewells were said, and partings made, all be it reluc-

festival in France, let's hope we came make that happen.

At the station the following morning most of the team Odra turned out to see us off. With a tear in the eye we boarded the train, and made straight for the restaurant car, to settle in for the long journey back to Prague, and our flight home.



Group Odra

John Messias, Fool East Kent Morris Men.

Died peacefully August 16th. 2001



John has been Fooling for the East Kent Morris Men for 43 years. He had only recently joined the side when he was invited to Fool and he had a hard act to follow for he was taking the place of Johnny Burke who

was leaving us to live in Staffordshire. It didn't take long for us to realise that we had another great character in our midst for John rapidly developed his own unique style of fooling. His bowler hat, coat tails, red trousers

and red nose soon became a familiar sight and a trade mark of the side.

It was his line of patter and the way that he could charm a crowd that were his greatest strengths and he made it seem so easy. There was never any problem of continuity in a display when John was around and until the last few years would contribute to the dancing with his version of the Fool's Jig. This was always accompanied by his verbal patter and we never knew how long it would last. However there was telepathic communication with Peter Taylor, our musician, as they always seemed to keep pace with each other and to finish at the same time. The crowd would then be encouraged to try it at home as "There is nothing in it—like my front room".

It was always a delight to arrive at a stand with John. His eyes would light up and he'd say "I'll have that", and you would wonder if he had seen a bike or a hat. It wouldn't take long to find out. As the first dance was ending he would

wobble into view having charmed some teenager into lending him his two wheeled pride and joy and announce the next dance while just avoiding falling off. Hats were his real weakness though. If we had a big crowd he would swap his bowler with one from the crowd and then swap that with another and so on throughout the performance so that towards the end there would be ten or more hats on the wrong heads scattered throughout the audience. As Bonny Green Garters was announced there would be an apparent mad panic as he raced around getting hats back onto the right heads. How he remembered where they all belonged I shall never know.

Behind all the fun was also a kind and considerate man always, in quiet moments, asking about the welfare of the family and offering encouragement and the optimistic view of life. It was difficult to remember that he had his own health problems with Diabetes and consequent circulatory problems as he always remained so full of life and the perfect fool. I asked him not so long ago how he managed and he replied that he had learned to pace himself. It says a lot for John that few of us had realised that that was what he was doing.

In the Morris world it is not only the East Kent Morris Men who will miss John's exuberant presence as all who came into contact with him will have recollections of a very funny and engaging character. Our sympathies go out to his wife "Tee" and his sons.

Peter Brun, Squire EKMM.

Among The Cotswold Hills There Hangs A Mystery



The Author

On Saturday 16th June 2001 22 stalwarts from Boar's Head, Harthill and Ripley met at Ambergate Sports and Social Club for an 8.30am start, a time that some think doesn't exist on Saturday! Dave and Lil have moved from the Red Lion, Fritchley. The day and forecast was awful, but spirits were roused by Lil's bacon baps, coffee was available but much more important an excellent pint of Pedigree.

The BFB had arrived early and had a kip in his car, I went to try and wake him without immediate result so I left him alone, "thinking to myself the poor **** needs his sleep. He missed the bacon sandwiches, a fact that he never let us forget all day, neither did we. Eventually the coach departed about quarter of an hour late.

A minor detour off the M1 at Kegworth to pick up, Dolphin and Mickleberrow who were not at the pub that they had described to me. The lost were found at another pub and off we went on to the A 42 to pick up Packington at the A444 interchange. It was really nice of the Council to put up barriers to protect our parked coach. On the way to the Cotswolds the liquid sunshine continued unabated. Round about Moreton in the Marsh the clouds began to break and the rain stopped. Stowe Market Place outside the Queen's Head was found Gerald, John and Mike from Coventry. The party was complete. Much more important was that Ian the driver arranged that our arrival coincided with that of a party of Japanese.

Good dancing was had by all and then back onto the bus to the King's Head at Bledington, where we arrived before time so straight into the pub for the Hook Norton or whatever. Dolphin set off the show at five minutes to twelve, early (a morris tour early!) Ripley did Highland Mary, Bampton, and when asked why it was not a Bledington dance, "we don't do Bledington!" came back the stern reply. Important to note is that Archie the young landlord was most welcoming and supportive. A small crowd of distant onlookers assembled. Back on to the coach at 12.30pm before the threatening rain.

Through the lanes to Leafield, that's Field Town for short, the Fox is the only place to dance in this surprisingly open village. Comments about the surface outside are best left unsaid be-



Ripley in unfamiliar surroundings at Stow

cause they would contain lots of non-standard English words. The weather was kind again to a totally field town repertoire.

On to Bampton in the Bush, but on the way there was a revolt led by the BFB who remembered that he had not had any bacon 'sarnies'. Arriving in Bampton about a quarter of an hour late and the weather looking threatening I decided that it would be politic to take an early lunch. This was much to the chagrin of Francis Shergold who had turned out to see us. The problem was his pass was running out. A good session in the bar by the assembled company, so good that a generous benefactor who "had not heard singing like that

for a long time" deposited a large sum behind the bar to buy everyone a drink. An adequate repast was taken by all and then it was down to the serious stuff the dancing, watched over by Francis. Later in the show one of the young Bampton dancers danced the Nutting Girl double jig to the applause and encouragement of the multitude.

Leaving Trevor our morris man host behind we set off for Longborough. Connie Emms had by arrangement opened early for us. We found the flattest patch of ground, the sun came out as did the people from the cottages around. We danced as much Longborough as the company could manage, massed



Dolphin dancing Bledington at Bledington



The Cameraman dancing Ladies' Pleasure (Bledington) at Bledington

Swaggering Boney and a single set for London Pride. What a pity that we couldn't do as we

Ambergate about two hours later.

The weather against all odds turned out to be kind to us, the luck of the morris! Good pubs and good sites with good hospitality; but most importantly was we were dancing the dances in the villages from whence they came. In the special atmosphere of each village the dances felt right and at home. What a privilege it was. It is a quickening thought to remember that if it was not for the work of Cecil Sharp then in many villages there would be few if any dances to be done.

Among the men that came there was a resounding vote in favour



Longborough dancing Longborough at Longborough

had done in the other villages to have danced mainly their dances. A matter that should be put right in the future.

Ilmington and the Red Lion was the next stop for tea and a meeting with the Ilmington Men. What a wonderful sight to see Ilmington danced in Ilmington by Ilmington. A programme of Ilmington dances in their village. The dancing was brought to a conclusion by Ilmington dancing the linked hankerchief dance Maid of the Mill. Yours truly was paid the complement of being invited to dance with them. Dolphin went off to dance for a wedding party at the village hall and the rest of us had a buffet. We said our farewells and set off on the return journey at quarter to eight and getting back to

of going back next year. Looking at the possibility of other routes it seems that there are two other basic roots. Next years tour will start at Bucknell, go on to Wheatley and then to Headington for lunch. After lunch it will be Banbury, Adderbury, possibly Hinton in the Hedges, and Brackley for tea. The date will have to be in September in 2002 whatever is the date of the last Saturday, I think it's the 29th.

Few of the 40 men had danced in any of the villages of the tradition before. Fantasy and sentimentality are not very fashionable emotions in a macho world. The first thing is that the setting feels just right and has left its mark on the tradition. Field Town is expansive just like its acres of village



Ilmington dancing Ilmington at Ilmington

green, Longborough is elevated just like the village itself. Bampton gives the feeling of agelessness. It is a heartening thought to recall that when dancing in Bampton that it has been done by and for many generations.

Men should consult the Cotswold tour part of my web site for developments and pictures of this year, including the possibility of an edited video. The tour made a small profit and that will go into the bank to breed on for next year.

David Thompson
Midlands & North Area Rep.



Francis

The 285th MEETING of the MORRIS RING

THAXTED - 1st - 3rd June 2001



Peterborough earning their lunch at The Globe

The meeting - the 285th Meeting of the Morris Ring, was hosted by Thaxted. Some 20 Sides - nearly 200 men - attended or

were represented at the Meeting. The Sides present were: - Aldbury, Anstey, Cambridge, Chalice, Claro, Dartington, Dolphin,



Deep & meaningful discussions in progress

Exeter, Helmond, Letchworth, Lord Conyers, Offley, Peterborough, Rutland, Silurian, Standon, Vancouver [Canada], Westminster and Whitchurch.

After Friday evening registration at the Star Inn, the evening was spent in local hosteleries. Accommodation was mainly at the Thaxted Primary School, as the Bolford Street Hall was not used this year. There was camping available in the field adjacent to the school and also accommoda-

first show finished virtually on time at about 7.10pm - the road closure finishing at 7.00pm. The majority of the Men made their way to the School, the new venue for the Feast, although a number, as usual, had made their own arrangements.

The Guests at the Feast were: John Hunter, the son of the Morris Ring's first Squire, Alec Hunter, and the new Vicar of Thaxted, the Revd. Father Raymond Taylor, who said Grace. Also on the top table were Past



Silurian at The Globe

tion in the Church Hall and at the Sports Centre. Supper was provided at the Rose and Crown. Some remained there for singing well into the night.

Saturday dawned clear but cool, with showers affecting some of the earlier spots in the morning. However, it cleared later. The five Tours visited the traditional range of villages in the area. There was also a "Squire's Tour", which visited each of the tours.

The Tours returned to Thaxted for tea and afterwards the Men made their way to each end of the High Street to form up for the start of the Processions. These set out at 6pm. and the

Bagman, Keith Francis; the Area Representative, John Tarling; the Squire of Vancouver, Graham Baldwin and The Ring Officers.

The Feast menu was Tomato and Vegetable Soup; Casserole of Chicken and various Vegetables; Apple Pie; Cheese and Biscuits, and Coffee. Speeches followed the meal, but there was time for only a few songs before the start of the evening show. The weather was still cool, but fine, and remained fine for the second evening show.

After the second show, the crowd parted, as Jake Walker's solo fiddle stuck up its haunting tune. Daniel Fox, The Immedi-

ate Past Squire of the Ring, led Thaxted in the Abbot's Bromley Horn Dance to provide the normal climax to the day, silencing the crowd. The eerie silence of the crowd remained through the entire performance, as they listened to the flawless fiddle playing, watched the dancers and took in the atmosphere. As always, unforgettable.

Afterwards the crowd dispersed and the Men gravitated to The Star and the Rose and Crown for a few more dances and to sample the ale. There was also that well known favourite "Black Sheep Bitter" [3.8%] from the Black Sheep Brewery served direct from the barrel at the wine bar;

this was rather less crowded, and cheaper, than many of the pubs! Singing - particularly in the "Rose and Crown" continued until about Midnight.

On the Sunday, after breakfast, the Men assembled in the Town Street at 9.30am, under blue and sunny skies, but with a cool wind, ready for the procession to make its dignified way to Church for the 10.00am Sung Mass with Sermon.

There was the usual considerable Thaxted involvement in the service. The celebrant was the new Vicar of Thaxted, the Revd. Father Raymond Taylor SSC. Vancouver presented the Offertory Dance; they danced



Vancouver dancing in Thaxted Church

with Bonny Green for the remaining Morris Men.

this unstinting service to the Ring, as they said two years ago, "Year after Year after Year".

**John Frearson
Bagman,
The Morris Ring**

For most Sides running a Ring Meeting every ten or twenty years is quite enough, but this was Thaxted's 68th Ring Meeting. The entire weekend went smoothly. A pat on the back for each and every member of Thaxted, whom we thank for



Letchworth dancing "Mrs Casey", Ascott



Magaret Gardens, Sunday afternoon: Thaxted Boys

one of their Border dances in the Pershore Tradition.

Then followed dancing in the Churchyard, by the Bull Ring from about 11.30 until lunch-time.

Lunch was served at the Hall. Afterwards, there was Morris and Country Dancing for all in the Margaret Gardens. Both the Thaxted Men's and Boys' Sides performed and there were a good number of country-dances. In particular it was good to see the energy and enthusiasm of the Thaxted Boys, dancing it must be said some advanced dances for such a young team. The afternoon finished



Thaxted men dancing "Banks of the Dee", Fieldtown, on Sunday afternoon

BOAR'S HEAD & CLARO SWORD RING MEETING

OTLEY: 29th June – 1st July 2001



Refreshment break at the Narrow Boat, Skipton

The 286th Meeting of the Morris Ring was hosted jointly, by Boar's Head and Claro Sword. Attending Sides were: Anker, Benfieldside, Faithful

Gloucestershire, Hartley, Jockey, Manchester, Shakespeare, St. Albans and Uttoxeter.

Registration took place from 6.00pm in Otley Civic Centre, where beer was provided and a

meal [an excellent hot chilli] was available. The evening was spent in various hostelrys. Accommodation was centred at the Civic Centre, but some Sides were billeted in the nearby Labour Club.

The various public houses were frequented until late, with most men gravitating to the Manor House Hotel, at the end of the evening. Singing continued there until midnight - and beer was still available at that time. Returning to the Civic Centre, the bar had been closed at midnight to encourage an early night, as there was to be an early start in the morning. Whilst this was not universally popular, many secretly were relieved to get their heads down, and felt better in the morning for the extra sleep!

Saturday dawned clear but cool, with some showers threatening to affect some of the earlier spots

in the morning. It cleared later, however, and no tours were rained upon. The three tours visited the local towns and a range of villages in the area. The "Squire's Tour" spent some time with each of the three tours. The tours visited Aire-dale; Wharfedale; and the Harrogate and Masham area, returning to Otley at the end of the day, for a drink and to freshen up for the Feast.

The top Table and Guests at the Feast were: The Officers of the Morris Ring; Past Squires, Mike Chandler and Daniel Fox and Past Bagman, Tony Parsons. Councillor Phil Coyne, Mayor of Otley, was the principle guest.

In his introduction, when lighting the candles, the Squire said a few words, but noted that those betting on "the Squire's stakes" would be hard done by as he was not making a speech.



Anker dancing for lunch at the Blue Bell, Kettlewell



Claro at Skipton Town Hall

He “introduced” the silver, as the donor Sides were present. The Candlesticks were presented by Hartley; the Staff Rests by Manchester; and the Musician’s Badge by Benfieldside at the Claro Ring Meeting in 1987. The first recipient of the badge, Ian Porter, of Claro was present, and it was he who said Grace.

The menu was Vegetable Soup; Roast Beef with Yorkshire Pudding, Roast Potatoes and Seasonal Vegetables; Apple Pie or Pineapple Tumble and Cream; and Coffee. The beers available included: Barmpot Bitter [3.8%] from the Goose Eye Brewery; Rooster’s Special [3.9%] from Rooster’s Brewing Co and Dow Cave [4.1%] from Turkey Inn. Later in the evening these were supplemented by Thwaites Bitter from the Manor House Hotel.

The Speeches followed: Past Squire Mike Chandler proposed the Loyal Toast. Cllr. Phil Coyne [by way of a song] then gave a welcome to Otley. The Bagman, John Frearson, proposed the Immortal Memory. The Toast to the Guests was proposed by Andy Lynch, Squire of Boar’s Head [by way of a song] and then by Marcel Boughton, Squire of Claro, [by way of a poem]. Bob Pierce of Gloucestershire replied.

There was time for only a limited amount of entertainment. Adrian Wedgewood [Uttoxeter] told two “Jokes”; Mike Chandler and Graham Lyndon-Jones [St Albans] played a duo for pipe and tabor; and Hartley sang “Beside the Seaside”. The Feast finished at about 10.00pm to allow the Men to move to their appointed “sponsor” pubs to dance prior to migrating “where they might”. Among pubs frequented was the Bowling Green, home of Briscoe’s Brewery, which had brewed a special commemorative beer for the occasion - with the Ring Meeting logo as the pump clip.

On Sunday – breakfast having been taken in the Civic Centre – the Men made their way to All Saints Parish Church, Kirkgate, for the 9.30am Morning Family Service. There was the usual input from the Morris in the service. Bernard Hylands in a few

words of introduction to the attendees, thanked the Parish for allowing the Ring “to gatecrash”. The sermon was preached by Ian Porter of Claro. A side from each of Boar’s Head and Claro danced the Offertory Dance; they danced “*Black Joke*” from Ilmington.

Following the service, the Men formed up for a Procession from the Parish Church to Walkergate. Whilst waiting, Manchester were able to perform Abram, in commemoration and recognition that elsewhere, in Abram, there were concurrently the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the last time that the Abram dance had been performed prior to the revival. The Procession then moved off to Walkergate where there was to be a massed display in the Charles Street Car Park.

The Ring Bagman was persuaded to give a radio interview for the John Boyd Show on BBC Radio Leeds, which was done from a “studio” on the back-stairs of the Manor House Hotel. Meanwhile, Past Bagman Tony Parsons, assisted a fellow member of Shakespeare (the Squire) with the running of the show. Following the show’s end at about 12.45pm, some men revisited the Manor House Hotel, which had become the favoured “watering hole” for the weekend. A buffet lunch was



Boars Head’s “Old Woman Tossed Up”, Bucknell

served from about 1.00pm at the Civic Hall.

The entire weekend went smoothly from the participants’ viewpoint. A pat on the back for each and every member of both host Sides with sincere thanks.

**John Frearson
Bagman,
The Morris Ring**



Manchester celebrating the Centenary of the last Abram performance

GREENSLEEVES RING MEETING:

CHIPPERFIELD: 13 – 15th July 2001



Chester City at Hemel Hempstead in the rain!

The Meeting - the 287th Meeting of the Morris Ring - was hosted by Greensleeves. It was based at Chipperfield Village Hall in Hertfordshire. The Meeting was an enhanced version of Greensleeves' annual Chipperfield Weekend and celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the formation of Greensleeves in 1926.

Eight Sides - some 120 men - attended the Meeting from all ends of the country. The guest

Sides present were: **Chester City; Coventry; Dolphin; East Surrey** [also celebrating their 75th Anniversary]; **Moulton; Wath-on-Deane; Westminster and Winchester**. Also present: Past Squires **Geoff Jerram** [Winchester]; **Bert Cleaver** and **Ivor Allsop** [Greensleeves]; **Barry Care** [Moulton] and **Daniel Fox** [Thaxted].

The Reception and bar opened at 6.00pm, and food was available in the Village Hall from 7.30pm. Having indulged in a

supper of Thai pork and stir-fried vegetables with rice, the Friday evening proceedings transferred to the villageG.

reensleeves opened the events on the common opposite "**The Two Brewers**". They danced "**The Rose**" around an oak tree that had planted in memory of Past Greensleeves' and Ring Squire, **Leslie Nichols**, who, some 40 years ago, lived in Chipperfield, hence it became the venue for the Greensleeves' weekends there. Greensleeves then danced a show on the road outside "**The Two Brewers**", and, in due course the Men made their ways to the **Royal Oak** or the **Windmill** to sing and play until closing time.

On Saturday, after a substantial breakfast at the Hall, the Sides were loaded into vintage busses at about 9.30am. Three tours [**Cameron, Heaven and Neil** - named for the first three Squires of Greensleeves] travelled to nearby towns for their first spots, before visiting various villages.

Notable dances and features noted during the Squire's tour included:

- On the Neil Tour: **Chester City** processing at a goodly pace through Hemel Hempstead. The presence of three generations of the Trewinnard family: son [Robin] and father [Martin] from Coventry; and grandfather [Geoff] from Greensleeves. Winchester valiantly continuing to dance "Jockey to the Fair" in Hemel Hempstead Market in a torrential downpour - "*once started we do not stop*" - and they did not even call a shorter version [quite legitimate in the Brackley tradition!!!].
- On the Cameron Tour: At the Squirrel in Penn Street: The jigs from Moulton Boys various. The Squire's "Valentine" with the Ring Squire and Bagman, Past Squire

Daniel Fox, two candidates for Squire, Bob Pierce and Bob Cross, and Mark Fenton of Greensleeves, dancing to Past Squire, Bert Cleaver. The dance "Loveless" from Westminster, a fine dance in Longborough style composed in memory of past Squire, Kenneth Loveless. A return to this Tour was made later at the Bekonscot Model Village.

- On the Heaven Tour: At the lunch spot at Merlin's Cave at Chalfont St Giles: Wath in Border Mode. Dolphin's generosity in inviting the bagman to dance [and learn their version of British Grenadiers!!]. The lunch on this tour was pasties and chips - and a Burton Bitter from the cellar headed the beer selection!

The Tours returned to Chipperfield Village Hall to refresh, take tea, and regroup. Before the evening Tours, Chester City invited all to the camping ground to spend time as their guests in their "Casino" club. Cocktails were served, and gambling chips in the form of "dolly mixture" were provided to gamble on the tables and at various card games. An attractive "Molly/hostess" circulated. Fun for all, but the hosts won most of the games by means fair or foul.

Thereafter, the early evening tours had a staggered start to make use of a single bus. The sides had been shuffled so that new acquaintances could be forged. The bus then collected in the Men and transported them to Chipperfield Hall once more, where glasses were charged for the Feast. This took place at 8.00pm - with the tables set with white cloths and candles lighting the tables. There were souvenir place mats, with items from the historic Greensleeves logs, and a commemorative pint glass for each man.

The menu was Tabbouleh; Beef with Port, Guinness and Wal-



Sunday Show: Coventry dancing Sleights

nuts; [or a Nut Roast without the alcoholic additions]; these being accompanied by New Potatoes, Vichy Carrots and Peas à la Francaise; Apples baked in Raspberry Beer; Cheese and Biscuits; and Coffee and Mints.

The Speeches and Toasts followed: Past Squire, Daniel Fox, proposed the Loyal Toast. The Ring Squire, Gerald Willey, proposed The Immortal Memory. In his speech, he noted that the Treasurer was uninjured but frustrated after his accident and he wished Greensleeves a "happy birthday" - which was then duly sung by those present! He had danced more than at any other Ring Meeting. He noted how the Morris changed with time as old customs receded and dances evolved. What Sharp did was to save the Morris, and where would we be without the work of Lionel Bacon and his Black Book and of Roy Judge; each Side had their own significant Men, but Sharp was the great architect.

At this stage the Greensleeves Loving Cup was started on its rounds. It incorporated drops of all previous cups. The Squire of Greensleeves, Tim Edwards, then welcomed the guests, the Ring Officials and the various Past Squires. He welcomed individuals, Bob Pierce, of Gloucestershire, and Bryan Jackson, Squire of Monkseaton, who had attended the first "Chipperfield". He thanked Chester City for their jolly japes. He noted that Coventry had three generations of Trewinnards present [Coventry attended regularly - every 25 years!!!]. Dolphin were regulars and had helped out with a new venue when the Jigs weekend had to move from Chipperfield. It had been good to see the young lads with Moulton and he thanked Wath for dancing Border, out of season, to provide varietyBo.

b Davies of East Surrey, replied for the guests. What did Greensleeves call to mind he asked - the Men present duly hummed the appropriate tune!! He thanked the hosts, the Meeting Bagman, the tour leaders and squires, and the catering

team. The guests raised their glasses.

The weather on Sunday was sunny, dry and warm for the finale of the weekend proceedings. Breakfast was taken in the Village Hall from 8.00am. At 10.15am, the Men made their way to the school drive to form up a procession, which danced the short distance to the car park adjacent to the Church, for an open-air service at 10.30am.

During the service, the Squires' Staffs were presented at the altar as is customary. The Morris Band accompanied all the hymns. The Squire of the Ring read the initial prayer and the lesson. The Bishop of Bedford, the Right Rev. John Richardson [an honorary member of Greensleeves] took the service, and preached the sermon. He remembered Leslie Nichols, with his "squeezebox", playing in the Windmill, and thanked everyone "for making an old Bishop very happy". The hosts, Greensleeves, performed the customary offertory dance - they showed a "Double Rose" in the Fieldtown tradition.



Westminster: a model team at Bekonscot

After the service, the first Mass show took place for about an hour in the same car park. After a brief respite, the Men formed up to process to the Windmill for a final [slightly less formal] show of similar length. After the show, lunch was provided in the pub garden. This comprised rolls, new potatoes, cold meats and cheeses and salad. There was also a chance [for non-drivers] to indulge in a few more pints, before departingTh.

e entire weekend went very smoothly, but they have done it before!!! A pat on the back however for the very hard work from each and every member of Greensleeves, whose attention to detail ensured that all the arrangements went without a hitch.

John Frearson - Bagman - The Morris Ring
15 July 2001



Twin Sisters (aka Upton Stick) by Greensleeves

EAST SURREY RING MEETING

Epsom, 17th - 19th August 2001



*Church Square, Dorking
Stafford dancing "Lads a Bunchum"*

The Meeting - the 288th Meeting of the Morris Ring - was based in the impressive Victorian buildings of Epsom College in Epsom, Surrey. It celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the formation of East Surrey Morris Men in 1926. Guest Sides were: Chanctonbury Ring; Colchester; Mendip; Silkeborg [from Denmark]; Stafford; Taunton Deane; Thames Valley; Thaxted; Trigg and Yateley. Also present were: Past Squires Geoff Jerram [Winchester]; Tim Sercombe [with Mendip];

Mike Chandler and Daniel Fox [with Thaxted]; and representatives from Bedford.

The Reception and bar opened at 6.00pm on Friday evening, and food [throughout under the direction of the School catering department] was available soon after. The supper was a choice of Chicken; Herb Chicken and Vegetarian "Chicken", all with a choice of chips - or chips. The Beer was from Young's Brewery and there was a choice of Bitter [3.5%] or Special [4.5%]; these were drunk by the local

cognoscenti as "Mixed" - a half-and-half blend. Singing, some dancing, drinking and talk carried on until a late hour - and then the men drifted to their beds - yes BEDS - this Ring Meeting provided beds, with pillows and duvets, in the boarding house study bedrooms!!

The weather on the Saturday started fine but was to change later in the day. After a substantial breakfast, the Sides embussed. Four tours travelled

All the Tours met up in Reigate's Priory Park for a Massed Show at 4.15pm. About half way through the one-hour programme the weather deteriorated, and there was heavy rain for the final four items. The Sides carried on without a murmur of protest - and the audience also stuck it out. The show finished in pouring rain.

The tours then re-joined the buses for a final pub stop. Dancing was generally not possible, but one Tour, at least,



*Church Square, Dorking
Mendip dance "The Valentine"*

to the local towns of Epsom, Reigate, Leatherhead and Dorking, for their first spots, before visiting various villages.

The Squire's party visited all four Tours. At Leigh, the Squire organised a Side comprising himself; the Bagman; Past Squire Geoff Jerram; Area Representative Mike Austin; and the East Surrey Squire (Derek Stewart) and Foreman (Dave Shires). These latter took the first corners for Valentine - and danced this in the East Surrey manner, which ensured the other had to think. In the East Surrey version, the corners start, not with customary side steps, but by crossing to face partners - a pleasant variation.

managed to dance a few dances inside their allocated pub (The Blue Anchor at Tadworth). They then returned to Epsom College, to dry out ready for the Feast, which took place at 8.00pm. in the College Dining Room.

The Squire introduced the Top Table comprising: - Immediate Past Squire Daniel Fox; Past Squires Mike Chandler, Tim Sercombe and Geoff Jerram; Area Representative Mike Austin; Derek Stewart, Bob Davies and Alan Vaughan [the Squire, Bagman and Meeting Bagman from East Surrey]; and the current Ring Officers. Alf Bloxome, Squire of East Surrey, 1955 - 1956, said Grace.



*More deep & meaningful discussions,
this time in Dorking*



Stafford performing a rapper dance at Shere

The menu was Wild Mushroom and Chicken Pate; Roast Beef with Chasseur accompanied by Vegetables; Profiteroles with Chocolate Sauce; Cheese and Biscuits; and Coffee and Mints. The Menu suggested that these latter had been provided by Tony Harber of East Surrey. It should perhaps be put on record that he had sponsored the cost of the Feast to a considerably greater extent, in thanks to his Side, and all his friends in the Morris, for giving him so many years of pleasure. Those attending owe him their thanks - and wish him many more years of the same.

The Speeches and Toasts followed: The Ring Squire, Gerald

Wiley proposed the Loyal Toast, to "The Queens" - to include also the Queen of Denmark. Past Squire, Daniel Fox proposed The Immortal Memory. In his speech, he recalled Alec Hunter first drinking that toast to Cecil Sharp before the meal. He also suggested remembering those others associated with the Morris Ring, who had also collected dances, and made the Morris, as it was today, possible.

The Squire of East Surrey, Derek Stewart, then welcomed the guests, the Ring Officials and the various Past Squires. Thaxted were a fellow founder Ring Side, as were Greensleeves, who were repre-

sented at the Feast and were also celebrating their 75th Anniversary. Thames Valley had attended all four East Surrey Ring Meetings, as had Bedford, who were represented by the Ring Bagman, and by two Men. Geoff Jerram, Past Squire and Winchester, replied for the guests in his own inimitable style.

The speeches ended, music and song was called forth from each of the Sides. Silkeborg presented the Squire of East Surrey with a bottle of liqueur spirits and an educational magazine and video featuring various Danish "activity". They then sang a Danish version of "My Old Man's a Dustman" - the chorus was joined - in English!!

ensure the School was safe - and the Police had taken statements concerning the state of the alarms - those evacuated from their beds in the main building had to sleep in the Hall, there being no working fire alarms in the residential block.

The weather on Sunday was appalling. Torrential rain at first light, which did not cheer those, whose sleep had been disrupted. The Procession was cancelled, and some clubs from greater distances departed early. Breakfast was taken in the Hall at an earlier hour, as many were already awake - or had not slept. Undeterred by weather, just before 10.00am, the Men made their way to St. Peter's church,



Chanctonbury Ring dancing "William & Nancy" at Pyrford Lock

Of particular note, the contribution from Taunton Deane, a "Morris Rap" "we are doing this rap because we don't sing" - it featured choruses of Postman's Knock; Lads a Bunchum; and Bonny Green Garters. It brought the house down. Finally, a song from Geoff Jerram, a fitting climax, and appropriately placed, as no-one wished to have to follow his outstanding talent.

The carousing and music continued in the Hall, until individuals drifted off to their beds. It was most unfortunate that the fire alarms were set-off during the night, and then damaged in a well intentioned effort to prevent their sounding. By the time the Fire Brigade had attended to

Walton-on-the-Hill, and parked as adjacent as possible, before dashing through torrential rain to morning service.

During the service, the Squires' Staffs were presented at the altar as customary. The Squire of the Ring read the initial lesson; the Meeting Bagman, Alan Vaughan read the second lesson. The hosts, East Surrey, performed "Banks of the Dee" from the Fieldtown tradition.

The weather having moderated, it was possible for the remaining Sides to dance outside the Church. This informal show commenced at about 11.15pm and ran until, with the rain increasing once more, the Bagman decided that enough was



*Bockett's Farm:
"Beaux of London City" by Mendip*



*Bockett's Farm:
Chanctonbury dance Trunkles*

enough and quit whilst those remaining were winning. The Sides were then split between the nearest two pubs - the Chequers and the Fox and Hounds - for refreshment and in some cases, a few more dances.

Lunch was provided in the Riddell Hall in Walton-on-the-Hill. A cold buffet selection had been produced, principally, by the East Surrey Squire's family.

The weekend went smoothly, except for the incident with the fire alarm, and the unfortunate weather either side of Saturday evening. Well done, however for the very hard work from each and every member of East Surrey and particularly for their Meeting Bagman, Alan Vaughan. We thank them all for providing a splendid weekend - despite rain and alarums!!!

John Frearson
*Bagman,
The Morris Ring*



*Another Bucknell dance, "Maid of the Mill"
from Thaxted*

A Hitchhiker's Guide to the East Surrey Meeting

Eddie Dunmore

My old friend Bob Davies, East Surrey's Bagman, was kind enough to send me a copy of the meeting schedule with the suggestion that I might like to turn up at one or more of the stops. As North Wood weren't doing anything that weekend, I rang him to see if I could hitch a lift with his tour.

On Saturday morning, herself left me at Epsom College while she went off for a healthy 12-mile walk. The College is an

after. Our first stop was St Martin's Square in Dorking, where the audience consisted of at least five people who hadn't been on the coach. It was at Dorking that Squire Gerald turned up with his entourage.

From Dorking the coach made its way to Abinger Hatch, arriving just on opening time. It was an odd sensation, riding in a coach which brushing the foliage on both sides of the road simultaneously Luckily the only



*Priory Park, Reigate:
a Bucknell dance from Trigg*

attractive mature building, founded under the patronage of German Albert specifically to educate the sons of doctors. It is now coeducational for Years 9 to 13. Inside I met a number of old friends, so the time waiting for coach-boarding passed quickly.

Because the first stop was "dry", East Surrey had thoughtfully provided a can of beer for every man on board the coach. The teams on "Tour D" were Chanctonbury Ring, Mendip & Stafford, Ravensbourne having cried off due to lack of numbers. Travelling under Mendip colours was Past Squire Tim Sercombe: as he is a member of North Wood, I felt duty bound to ensure that he was looked

oncoming vehicle we met was at a passing place, but it was still nip & tuck! At Abinger Hatch, Stafford performed a dance with wooden sabres & Mendip danced "Captain Crocker", Bampton style. From Abinger Hatch, we travelled, thankfully on standard-width roads, to Shere.

The picturesque quality of Shere was, of course, enhanced by Chanctonbury's "Beaux of London City" & Mendip's "William & Nancy". Stafford then did a careful Winlaton rapper before Bob chivvied us all back to the coach, "because we're running late", only for us to hang about waiting for it to turn up. Then it was on to the



*Priory Park:
Yateley dancing "Old Tom of Oxford"*

lunch stop at Pyrford Lock, where, this time, it was Chanctonbury who danced "William & Nancy". Being a tourist trap, the drinks were slightly overpriced & the cost of a large red wine made Tim wince (it was his round). Mendip entertained us, & the punters, with "Balance the Straw" & Stafford offered "Jenny Lind".

Before we could relax properly, it was back on the coach & off to Bockett's Farm. The audience here was made up a motley collection of domesticated animals, llamas & all, & families with children. The only dances I have recorded for here are "Beaux", Badby by Mendip & "Trunkles", Bledington, from Chanctonbury (sorry, Stafford). The penultimate (for me) coach journey was to Priory Park, Reigate.

The day had got steadily darker after a relatively fine start. By the time we all got to Priory Park, the sky was a definite gun-metal grey. The deterioration accelerated, & East Surrey must have wished that the host side could have danced first, because their performance of "Glorishears" was danced in a worsening shower. As we all hurried (in fitter cases, a near sprint) back to the coaches, the shower grew up into a down-pour. I had to negotiate quickly with the occupants of coach C, because I had arranged with

herself that we would meet at the Blue Anchor & have a meal there. Fortunately, they took pity on a bedraggled hitchhiker & we were shortly drying out, drinks in hand. The Danes did a dance & then burst into song, while I bumped into the ex-landlord (complete with his Egyptian wife) of The Old Fox & Hounds in West Croydon (North Wood's second venue on Boxing Day last).



*Priory Park:
the hosts, East Surrey, dancing "Glorishear"*

I must record my thanks to Bob & the East Surrey team for a very pleasant day out. It was nice catching up with Tim & putting the world to rights. The tour led by Bob enjoyed a very relaxed day out in some of the most attractive parts of the Surrey stockbroker belt, & I am assured that the beer was drinkable & appreciated. The morning was fine enough for the dancing to be enjoyed & the

afternoon rain held off until East Surrey's dance at Priory Park, making them the perfect hosts. I heard about the contretemps with the fire alarms, which seemed to be occasioned by an unfamiliarity with British wiring standards, particularly in respect of alarm systems. I'm sure we are going to hear stories of "the night that we had to sleep on the tables in the dining hall" for some time.

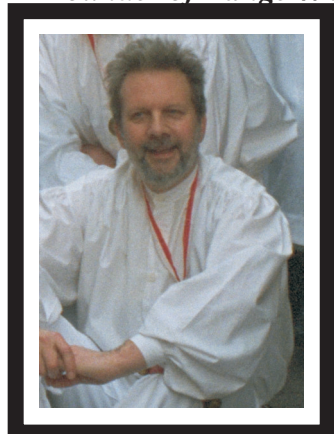


Silkeborg in full voice at The Blue Anchor, Tadworth

Renaat Van Craenenbroeck

January 3rd 1937 – July 6th, 2001

Founder of Lange Wapper, creator of the Antwerp Sword Dance & choreographer of Folk dances.



Renaat was a regular visitor to England - he and his team Lange Wapper made the first of many visits 30 years ago. We met when they attended a Longsword event I organised in 1981. Throughout the 1980's and 90's we travelled to see many Continental sword dances and he made numerous visits to England (and to the Shetland Isles) to see teams.

In 1958 Renaat founded "Lange Wapper" and by 1970 he had gathered dancers and choreographed a sword dance. He had none of the hang-ups we find in England regarding newly composed dances - he was justifiably proud of his creation, and of the customs which grew around it. His Antwerp sword dance was the first of a "family" of dances - he helped to create sword dances for "In De Kring" from Dunkirk and another from "Quevaucamps" in the south of Belgium.

Some UK dancers will know Renaat because of his involvement with the Sword Spectaculars but they may not realise that the idea of an international meeting of sword dance teams was Renaat's - he suggested an event to commemorate six hundred years since the first written record in 1389 of sword dancing.

He carried out research throughout the Continent (he was described by Steve Corrsin

as "... the leading Belgian authority and the single most important figure in linking continental sword teams"). He had widespread contacts with teams and researchers throughout the Continent, greatly aided by his skill at languages. Renaat produced a publication "t'zweertdanserke" - a team newsletter and a vehicle for Renaat's many discoveries. He also contributed to "Rattle Up My Boys".

He was a respected (and very busy) tutor in demand throughout Belgium and France by groups who wished to improve their dance skills. His tutorial video tapes covering Flemish Waltzes, Mazurkas, Schottisches and Polkas are excellent.

Renaat had an international reputation. He presented a much admired paper at the 2000 Symposium on Korcula is-

land and had returned to the area with his group to participate in the fifth Festival of Sword Dances. At the Symposium he made contact with a Spanish researcher who spoke of sword dances from Andalusia. That was enough for him - he set about making plans for the two of us to visit the area as soon as practical. Renaat and I visited the Lastovo Carnival earlier this year and his return visit to the area (with Lange Wapper) was partly to follow up contacts, partly to participate in a Croatian festival but also to encourage the Lastovo group to attend Lange Wapper's Half Lent event next March.

On Friday night the teams at the festival travelled to the town of Vela Luka to the west of the island of Kprcula and, during a dance performance, Renaat suddenly collapsed. He was leading his group in a carni-

val dance when he fell to the ground. Some of the audience thought this was part of a "death and resurrection." scene, especially when a doctor was called for. They expected Renaat to jump up and be "reborn". But in spite of valiant efforts it was not possible to revive him - I am told by John Forrest (who was at the conference) that Renaat died suddenly and without pain.

Before their departure from Croatia Lange Wapper held a memorial performance for Renaat with representatives from each of Korcula's six Kumpanija and Moreska groups. A Mass was held for Renaat in his home town of Libin on Tuesday July 17th 2001. His coffin was carried to a crowded church by Lange Wapper sword dancers. The next morning a committal service was held followed by a gathering at the pub the sword dancers use as a base at Half Lent. Normally the Antwerp sword dance is performed only once a year but as a gesture to the memory of their leader they held a special performance of the dance outside Antwerp Cathedral. Renaat's family and friends in Lange Wapper will be aware of the immense felling of loss that I share with them. There are many aspects of his life which will live with me - his commitment, his natural authority, his dance skills, his amazing command of languages, his extensive knowledge - but most of all I will miss his friendship.

*Trevor Stone
Driffield,
September 2001*



A Day Out with Ravensbourne (& guests)

Eddie Dunmore

When young Steve asked me if I would like to go out on Saturday (9th June) to watch Ravensbourne dance, my first reaction was to refuse. On being told that the occasion was a rescheduled Tonbridge in company with Rivington Clog, I reconsidered. Ian Hamilton's daughter Christine, an old friend, dances with them, so it was a chance to catch up on news since our last meeting at Ian's funeral.

We got to the Riverwalk in

From Tonbridge we went to Groombridge for dancing at The Junction & The Crown, where lunch was taken. The final pitch of the day was at Hever Castle, where Wayne Taylor, Past Squire & Foreman of Ravensbourne, gave a quality performance of a Fieldtown jig – The Nutting Girl, if my memory serves me true.

It was this that gave me pause, because the day was principally noteworthy for the difference between the two sides in standard of presentation & dancing. I would not like to suggest that



Rivington at the Riverwalk, Tonbridge

Tonbridge in good time, unlike the coach carrying the majority of the dancers. When they eventually arrived, almost an hour late, we were told about breakdowns & emergency replacements. Still it had given me a chance to do some updating with Kevin, a long-time member of Ravensbourne, who turned up independently.

Tonbridge was still broadly the same as I remembered from my early days with Ravensbourne, when this particular tour was normally synchronised with the Tunbridge Wells Carnival. Traffic was heavier, of course, & parking was much more difficult & vastly more expensive.

Ravensbourne were bad, but they were ordinary. The Rivington team were demonstrably crisper & better turned out, & to any uninformed spectator, easily the better side on the day. They coped impressively with being short-handed, having only six dancers out: it needed an informed eye to detect the modifications they had made to their eight-handed dances.

At the risk of being controversial, I would hazard the thought that female sides tend to feel that they have more to prove, & as a result, tend to produce a more committed display. We can use our mantra of morris being a male tradition, but to the general public this is only



Ravensbourne at The Crown, Groombridge

meaningful if it is immediately obvious. As I said, I wouldn't want to give the impression that Ravensbourne were especially egregious – a lot of North Wood's performances look

tired. Another difference was the kit: it was obviously cared for, & not covered in a kaleidoscope of badges of varying relevance.



THE DOUGLAS KENNEDY MEMORIAL FUND

Going abroad in 2002?

The Douglas Kennedy Memorial Fund was established by the English Folk Dance and Song Society in 1994 to celebrate the life of Douglas Kennedy, Director of the Society from 1924 to 1961 and Squire of the Ring, 1938 - 1947.

The fund could make a modest but helpful grant to your side's travelling expenses if you're planning to present the Morris at an international festival overseas next year.

Preference will be given to a team with young members - teens and early 20s. Applications must be with the Trustees by the end of January 2002.

For further information, write to

Bob Parker,
Clerk to the Trustees,
40 Nightingale Road
Hampton
Middlesex TW12 3HZ,
or email
RonSmdly@aol.com

The Ridgewell Files

<i>Dated</i>	<i>Publication</i>	<i>Issue Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Content</i>
31.v.2001	<i>Sun</i>	1.v.2001	The Littlejohn Column	R i c h a r d Littlejohn	Morris dancers as riot control
11.vi.2001	<i>Knutsford Guardian</i>	9.v.2001	Knutsford Royal May Day Festival	Anon. (photo no. 1/3/19)	Manchester Morris in procession
15.vi.2001	<i>Hitchin Comet</i>	10.v.2001	Sticking with Tradition	Anon.	Photo & description of Letchworth Morris dancing at Ickwell Green on May Day Bank Holiday
22.vi.2001	<i>Hastings & St Leonards Observer</i>	11.v.2001	Folklore's still all right, Jack!	Anon. (photo no H19765)	Mad Jacks Morris at Hastings
28.vi.2001	<i>The Times</i>	29.v.2001	Tiny Haystacks refuses to submit on count of 238	M a t t h e w Parris	Michael Fabricant collecting for Lichfield Bower Processional (with photo showing the author in hot pursuit). Also included is a (unpublished) letter to The Times by Gordon.
10.vii.2001	<i>Sussex County Times</i>	18.v.2001	Town centre street feat	Niamh Arnett (photos by Mick Burren)	Article with photos of Broadwood, Magog Garland, Sompting & Boalserter Skotsploech from Holland
13.vii.2001	<i>Herts & Essex Observer</i>	7.vi.2001	Gathering of the clans!	Anon.	Thaxted: photo shows "Bonny Green"? in front of the Guildhall
17.vii.2001	<i>Impartial Reporter & Farmers' Journal</i>	10.xii.1998			Correction to the information contained in Circular 38's Ridgewell Files
20.vii.2001	<i>Cotswold Journal</i>	7.vi.2001	Wonderful Wake	Mathew Martin	Photo of Chipping Campden Fool (Norman Morrey) at Scuttlebrook Wake
24.vii.2001	<i>The Abingdon Herald</i>	28.vi.2001	Song & dance as oldest tradition celebrated	Anon. (photos by Antony Moore)	Ock Street Election with photos of Britannia Coco-nut Dancers & Mayoral procession
26.vii.2001	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	30.vi.2001	Skylarks, cricket and Dame Vera	Sally Varlow (photos by Elizabeth Carter)	Article on the village of Ditchling, including a photo of the feet of Ditchling Morris & one of a member of Sompting
30.vii.2001	<i>Daily Express</i>	2.vii.2001	Be anything but an Englishman? Hey nonny no!	A n t h o n y Mitchell	Report on a Gaymercommissioned survey including photo of a Letchworth man titled "ECCENTRIC: Morris man in action"
1.viii.2001	<i>Daily Express</i>	3.vii.2001	You don't have to be eccentric to be British but it helps	Paul Callan	Mention of morris, & photo-montage including Letchworth, Patrick Moore, Lord Bath
3.viii.2001	<i>The Independent</i>	9, 13 & 17.vii.2001	Morris dancing belittled Morris menace Country dancing	Liz Pearce Alex Palmer Jim Walker	Correspondence originally taking issue with "quirky" as a description of morris

The Ridgewell Files

<i>Dated</i>	<i>Publication</i>	<i>Issue Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Content</i>
6.viii.2001	<i>Bridlington Free Press</i>	22.ii.2001	Dance cash donated	Anon.	Flamborough Longsword's donation to pre-school group
9.viii.2001	<i>Wharfe Valley Times</i>	5.vii.2001	Morris men who are masters of the ring	Anon.	Report on Boar's Head & Claro Ring Meeting, with photo of Barry Slaymaker & Tony Wilson of Claro
15.viii.2001	<i>Daily Mail</i>	11.vii.2001	Wurzels hit the high spot	Anon.	Answer to "Can you still buy those spotted red handkerchiefs which used to be the trademark of farm workers?"

Correspondence



Dear Eddie,

In thanking you for publishing my photograph of Leonard Bardwell in Circular 38, I would draw attention to an editorial mishap that occurred in my accompanying letter. The photograph was not taken as stated on the Saturday morning of the 1955 London Ring Meeting, but on the Sunday morning following a church service in St Paul's Cathedral.

A further photograph I took on that occasion, in Northampton square, was of Greensleeves Morris Men performing a sword dance. In this picture Gordon

Neil, the then Squire of Greensleeves, can be seen displaying the nut, while Leslie Nichols, Past Squire of the Morris Ring (1964 – 66), can be observed in third position to Gordon's left in the circle.

Greensleeves were one of the host clubs for that 21st birthday meeting of the Ring & I salute them on the 75th anniversary of their foundation. A comprehensive history of the first 50 years of this club was published in *The Morris Dancer*, (Volume One) No 6, March 1980, pp 7 – 17.

*Wassail,
Gordon Ridgewell.*

John Nourse

This year marked the 50th anniversary of the postwar revival of Oxford University Morris Men, which had been one of the founder-members of the Morris Ring in 1934. In 1951 the Squire was David Welti (later Squire of the Ring), and the Bagman John Nourse.

John's influence on the subsequent history of the side was profound, as it was under his leadership, and with himself as musician, that the first tour of the Ancient Men (the OUMM in travelling mode) took place. Since then no year has passed without at least one tour - sometimes two or three - being arranged, either at home or abroad. Over the years, the Ancient Men have taken the moms to many parts of the world, including Mexico, the USA, Japan and beyond the former Iron Curtain. In later years John took a less active part in the dancing,

but as an accomplished musical became a leading light in the annual Lacock and Chippenham Folk Festival.

Music was at the centre of John's life. A year ago, when he was told that he had only months, perhaps even weeks, to live, he decided to celebrate his 70th birthday by mounting a public performance of Haydn's Creation by the Corsham Choral Society. So it was that on June 9th 2001, from a wheelchair, he conducted the final section of that great work, before formally handing over the Society to his successor. It was also incidentally the 50th anniversary, almost to the day, of the morris side he had helped to re-found. Just seven weeks later, he died peacefully at home, an ambition achieved.

John Hawkins



Stafford MM's Domesday 2000 photo (the first of the eight so far to hand)



This portrait of Renaat was taken in Antwerp after his 30th Half-Lent appearance

Editorial

This will be very short in this edition, due to pressure on the available space. It is being written in the immediate aftermath of the destruction in New York & Washington, which be be old news by the time you read it. Already the morris dance discussion list has carried news of two members of Marlboro MM that are known to have been killed. Words for the tragedy seem inadequate.

The next issue of *The Morris Dancer* has virtually no copy so far to hand. If this position doesn't change by my copy date of mid-November, the content will be largely recycled from previous editions.

If you are sending contributions by post, please ensure that they are addressed to the address on the masthead (which has been there since Autumn last year!).

Morris on!

Eddie Dunmore
September 2001

Information & photos have been added to the Lange Wapper website:

www.langewapper.be.tf
or www.sworddance.be.tf, & to an additional site created since his death: www.renaat.be.tf

Renaat was a regular contributor to the pages of Trevor Stone's *Rattle Up My Boys*:

"*Sword Dance in Antwerp*" (details of the Lange Wapper team) – Issue 2, Series 3, Summer 1991

Information about the Oni Kenbai (a Japanese sword dance team) – Issue 2, Series 4, Summer 1993

"*An Intriguing document – an ancient French manuscript*" – Issue 5, Series 5, Winter 1995/6
"*Sword dancing in 1389*" (details of a visit to Brugge's archives – Issue 3, Series 6, Spring 1997

"*Rules for a successful sword dance team*" – Issue 2, Series 10, Summer 2001.