

September 2005

No 50

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The Squire

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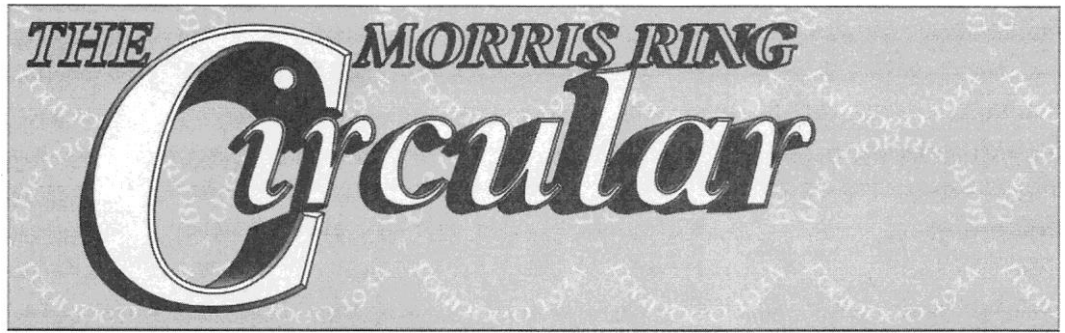
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## St George's Day in Chester

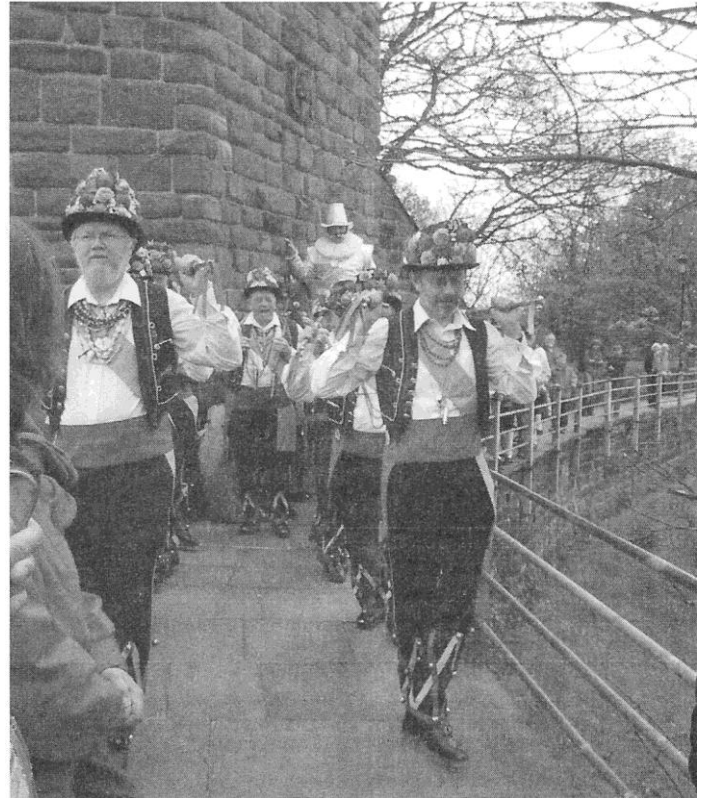
By Roy Fenton

What do you do when St. George's Day falls on a Saturday? If you are Chester City Morris Men, you organise some go-karting and a boat race. Oh, yes, and some dancing to fill the weekend in between.

Chester has to be one of the most Morris-friendly cities, with generous pedestrianised areas and a wealth of atmospheric spots to dance. It has some good pubs, too, and the almost-complete walls provide a way to get to them quickly on foot. Chester City Morris Men not only know how to use their town to best advantage, they also understand how to ensure visiting Morris sides have a thoroughly good time.

The go-karting was an entrée, organised on the Friday afternoon. It was not a case of old age and treachery overcoming youthful talent, as the drivers doing best were invariably the younger ones. Two exceptions were Chester City's Tom and Ken who were well up the field, possibly because the sight of them approaching in a rear view mirror — even without their clogs on — would turn the boldest accelerator foot to jelly.

Friday evening was spent in the Commercial Hotel, a gem of a pub right in the city centre, with supper comprising the first of the weekend's regional delicacies, scouse (though 'delicacy' and scouse' are words not often associated). Here we



*Chester City Morris Men dance on the city walls at King Charles' Tower.*

Photo Teresa Box

were delighted to be joined by a well-loved figure closely associated with the Morris Ring. Yes, Helen Cross arrived, and she brought Bob with her too. Whether one awoke refreshed after a night in Stanley Palace, the weekend's base, depended on one's abilities to a) sleep within close proximity to 50 snoring Morris men and b) resist the high rollers of Monkseaton and their entreaties to play dominoes for money; some men reporting to have lost as much as 30p in just one night.

Saturday's breakfast was taken in a local café. Another fine example of regional cuisine, the meal was specially

devised for those with cholesterol deficit syndrome. There was a choice: death-by-breakfast or, for the hungry, mega-death-by-breakfast. Refusal to accept any component was regarded as a mortal insult to local hospitality, and other portions were compulsorily doubled.

The first dancing stop was outside the Town Hall where Chester City began as they meant to go on, noisily and showily as befits a North West side. Clubs then broke away for their individual tours, several of which began in Eastgate Street in view of the Victorian clock.....(continued page 3)

# The Squire

Dear Friends

So far 2005 has been a year of highs and tragic lows. We need not list those team members and friends who have passed away during the last few months, but I must pay tribute to their families and friends. Without doubt I have sometimes been overwhelmed

the dignified tribute paid by King John's Morris when they danced in memory of Bob Waller at the Saturday evening show.

Durham Rams Ring Meeting — dancing in the most beautiful surroundings especially the Sunday show in the Market Place. Low points — introducing Thelwall as

year - superbly organised. A memorable point after the Feast when we sang (at Trigg's instigation) 'Irene, Goodnight Irene' substituting 'Eileen' for 'Irene' to the Deputy Mayor of St Albans as we escorted her out — her name being Eileen, and she was very touched and enjoyed the whole affair.

As regards other events the St

be far too many to list here but I thank everyone for the kindness and hospitality shown to me wherever I have been as Squire.

## Roy Yarnell: Oak Tree Planting

It is my intention as the summer wanes to revisit the ambition of Roy Yarnell to encourage clubs to plant oak trees each year up to and including the 75th Anniversary of the Morris Ring in 2009. Adrian Wedgwood (Uttoxeter MM) and I have been discussing possible inclusion of a Morris Ring "presence" at the National Arboretum at Alrewas in the Midlands. Roy and I coincidentally had also talked about this prior to his tragic illness. I would welcome any views on this and also it would be so good if clubs — if they have already planted some trees — to start a register of trees and the reasons for planting. More news to follow.



*The New Team, aka Health Aura & Beauty. Deliberate posing under the Salon sign!*

Photo John Frearson,

by the bravery and dignity of the family members and friends of those no longer with us. My fellow officers and I must salute the never failing good humour of our colleagues in the morris world, even at the most difficult of times.

It has been the greatest pleasure to attend Days of Dance and Ring Meetings and I will just list some high points:-

Helmond Ring Meeting — Victory singing us out after the last show on the Saturday. The sound just hung on the air and was magical. I didn't realise The Netherlands had so many castles!

At Thaxted Ring Meeting

Thelwell, will they ever forgive me. Secondly, spending hours at Newcastle Airport when security wouldn't let me fly back with the Staff of Office (a dangerous weapon!!)

Long Man Ring Meeting — a wonderful part of the country. Areal high spot of the weekend being the massed show at the Bandstand in Eastbourne. Such a friendly and relaxed weekend, but such a shame that the weather changed on Sunday precluding us from dancing after Church. But everybody returned home with a smile on their face.

St Alban's Ring Meeting. The final meeting of the

George's weekend at Chester was wonderful. Chester City Morris Men are not only a credit to the Morris Ring but to the City of Chester and I would like to thank them for awarding me the 'Broken Clog Iron' (for what I know not). The Peasmarsh weekend at the end of May — although this weekend has run for many years I felt proud to be asked to lead a procession out of Bodium Castle, something that had not been done before, but I think a new tradition has started.

I have been to so many events since my article in the last Circular that there would



Bob Cross  
The Squire

# Chester & St George

continued from front page

that has become Chester's trade-mark postcard.

This street is lined with the double-deck medieval shops known as The Rows, which historians believe were built to prevent the Welsh ram-raiding the local Tesco. The Rows provide balconies for masses of spectators and make this a very special place to dance. The shows here put clubs on their mettle as each successive side was pushed to 'follow that'.

Of the other stops, two on the walls merit particular mention. From King Charles' Tower the soon-to-be headless monarch watched his army's defeat at the battle of Rowton Moor. Here the dancing spot was, it has to be said, a trifle narrow. This and the 200-foot drop to the canal beyond a low parapet made it a challenging place to perform. Chester City MM were best able to cope with the restricted space, perhaps surprisingly, as the term a 'trifle narrow' could never be applied to several of them, especially their foreman. The Water Tower, however, was a different story. Here, the walls descend in tiers, and dancing on the lowest tier gave the wonderful sight of row upon row of spectators above the dancers' heads, as if in a series of balconies.

The afternoon finished at the Albion, another of Chester City Morris Men's favourite pubs: is this why it warns patrons 'we are not family friendly'? Here was the day's last performance of a St. George mumming play by the Jones's Ale Soul Cakers, aka the Chester men's sons and sons-in-law. During this play, a recumbent Bold Slasher is revived by the Doctor pouring into his mouth an entire bottle of Sainsbury's Fizzy French Lager, a cruel and unusual punishment that ought to be reported to the European

Court of Human Rights (the use of French lager, that is).

A buffet supper was followed by the evening's entertainment, what could be described as a 'smoking concert', and for which each side attending was asked to nominate two performers. Not for the first time, the sheer amount of talent in and around the Morris

danced a massed 'Banks of the Dee'. Although Westminster, Chester and Monkseaton were at full strength, Thaxted and Greensleeves were now depleted slightly, and both depended on the assistance of Bob Cross. So, Squires of the Ring do have some use.

The plan for the waterborne event was for teams of four

minster's ladies impressed the judges by waving articles of intimate female apparel.

The medieval town planners had ensured that no dancing spot in Chester is more than 200 yards from a good pub, and we returned to the Albion for lunch and prize-giving. Delivered with Chester MM's typical panache, and an ap-



*Greensleeves close in on the victim for Brighton Camp, chosen by the Squire of the Ring*

Photo Dave Legg

impressed. Who would want to stay home and watch 'Celebrity Arm Wrestling' when you could enjoy such singing and playing, see superb clog dancing, juggling and even Westminster's ladies putting on a puppet show?

With several sides having been present only for the Saturday - White Hart, Addlington, Kinnerton and Manley — the Sunday morning's performance was a more relaxed affair. However, The Groves, besides Chester's River, is a dancing spot to fight a turf war over, especially on an idyllic spring morning with a relaxed and good-natured crowd of spectators. Inevitably, we

to take a boat and proceed upstream to the suspension bridge, from which Chester men would tip a number of tennis balls. The winner would be the boat that retrieved the most balls with the least number of drownings. However, health and safety considerations — presumably the danger of being sued by injured fish — meant the local boatmen refused to hire craft for this purpose. Ever resourceful, Chester turned the event into a straight boat race, with marks awarded (totally arbitrarily) for style and elegance. As this is a family journal, modesty forbids a description of just how West-

parent ease that suggests they practised hard, the nominations for prizes were announced and serenaded, and awards made - almost all of them completely spurious (well, Greensleeves didn't win any).

Chester City's weekend with its dancing and hospitality left all participants well satisfied. To quote the Squire of the Ring 'Chester are not only wonderful ambassadors for the Morris Ring, they are also wonderful ambassadors for the City of Chester'.

Roy Fenton is a member of Greensleeves Morris Men

# Woodside tour Germany on bicycles made for SIX!

by Dave Lang

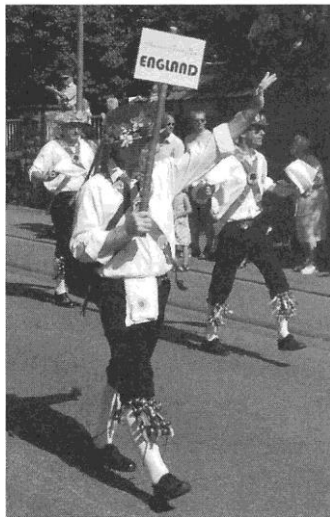
The attached photos show this invention, complete with tray for beers, is absolutely essential to the modern touring Cotswold sides (except perhaps those dancing Litchfield) - and we did get a lot of moans from the footsore musicians!

Woodside MM were invited to spent along week-end at the Bergstrasse Winzerfest (Winemaker's Festival) and the 25th Anniversary of a local twinning arrangements at Bensheim in Germany, about 40km south of Frankfurt.

So it was early on a Friday morning last September that 21 of us, including dancers, musicians and a number of partners assembled at Heathrow for the short flight to Frankfurt. All went completely smoothly, albeit one musician's ticket was not delivered by the automated machines and 2 others managed by an error to be given both automated and manual tickets — so much for airline security procedures. Our time in Bensheim was to prove an excellent balance of good dancing spots and great chances to relax, meet the locals, view the passing world and sample the local food, wine and beers (not necessary in that order).

On the first evening we entertained the members of the twinning association with 3 dance spots and one band/song spot, interspersed with a local brass band, the local Ancient Dance Society musicians and a local pop singer. Saturday morning saw us dancing in the market area for the shoppers, followed by traditional schnitzel, wurst etc fare from the market and German beers for relaxation. Later we were guests at the Official Wine Festival (with several speeches) and

sampled a range of German wines that don't ever seem to reach these shores, especially the reds. This was followed by a walking procession to the official opening ceremony (and more speeches). At that point we found a dancing space downtown around the many wine stalls and our intention of 4 dances grew to something around a three-quarters of an hour spot. And Sunday was the PROCESSION! Did I mention it was about 34 degrees C and we processed



**Ben's Parade**

Photo: Woodside Partner

through the town for around 2 hours along with 96 other floats! We knew from an earlier trip that this was going to be tough (well we're not getting any younger!) so developed a procession based on single step Jockie which we thought we could use for longer periods. And our reward was 3rd place out of the 97 "floats" - yes we know we don't understand that bit either. In the procession we were cunningly placed between a VW Beetle decorated with cucumbers and carrying the 2 Cucumber Queens (female) from the next town and the horse and cart carrying the local cider makers plus full barrels — we were somewhat torn! Still it



**Woodside at a typical bike rally!**

Photo: Woodside Partner

was better than being directly behind Snow White and the seven dwarfs on horseback although unfortunately we were not far behind them and had to introduce extra jumps at strategic points - particularly enjoyed by the crowd when anyone managed a direct "hit". Obviously, this was followed with refreshments and recuperation at a local "bierhaus" and restaurants on a beautiful warm evening.

Monday was the "Earlybird" Street Party at 10.30 am in one of the older residential areas where the twinning arrangement was born — more dancing, eating and drinking and then the coach back to the airport. Nothing remarkable to report here - oh except the security staff didn't seem to be able to cope with Lank's melodeon. They x-rayed it and then said — what does it do .... then prove it. That brightened up Departures. They then vacuumed it and checked it and several other boxes with a spectrometer for any suspicious dust particles. And the most asked question/comment during the trip was "Morris Dancing ... not from England ... must be from Scotland or Ireland?" We asked ourselves what

was it that made people believe or expect that such a obviously traditional ritual form of dance could not have originated in the English tradition. Was it that we don't "sell" our traditions (or just that the Scots and Irish do it better!) or that most of the population doesn't itself know the traditional music, song or dance of England. Well we hope we dispelled a few myths during the recent trip to Bensheim, and a number of Ring booklets were given away to those with a particular interest or curiosity, and we helped the winemakers create space for the soon to be harvested 2004 vintage.

And our most lasting memory of the long week-end - which is what twinning is all about — is the friendliness and interest of the locals!

*(Apologies to Woodside for not including this in last issue, but Obituaries rather overtook the space. Ed.)*



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## Cam Valley Headline Glastonbury

by Simon Gordon-Walker

Cam Valley morris entertained the crowds of this year's Glastonbury Festival in the

end's entertainment in the Avalon field — a concert venue for the likes of the Oyster Band, Hayseed Dixies, Eliza Carthy, Sharon Shannon, the

boots to the welcoming and appreciative crowds. We are all getting on a bit (age-wise) so the soft ground (sinking ground) and wellies were hard work. However, a plentiful supply of local cider and a great set by the Levellers raised our spirits and flagging legs.

On Sunday the sun beamed on the festival, the ground dried out and the naked bodies appeared. One lady dressed only in a simple boa around

the neck, enjoyed her dance as The Rose, helping us to gain our largest crowd of the day and no doubt the largest number of photographs — 6 Cam Valley men with their gorgeously naked Rose!

Our special thanks to the organisers of the Avalon field, to staff of the Avalon camp-site and bar, and to the Action Aid volunteers who gave us our "Make Poverty History" wavers which we used to support their worthy cause.



*Cam Valley testing the Wellies!*

Photo: Cam Valley

mud, sweat and beer. A thoroughly enjoyable weekend was had by all the Cam valley dancers and musicians, and the festival crowds who watched and joined us; all will remember the weekend for the friendly spirit and mixture of sunshine and glorious mud. Cam Valley had been invited to dance as part of the week-

Proclaimers and many more excellent bands. We were fortunate to be camping in the performers' area with our own berber-style bar and restaurant, so were able to escape the worst of the flooding, but not the mud! Our dancing began on the Saturday, in the mud, where dancers had to resort to dancing in wellies or hiking



*Cam Valley gently handling Rose, except for the embarrassed(?) man on the right!*

Photo: Cam Valley

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## "Click and Save?" On Morris Record-Keeping..

by Joe Oldaker

At the 2005 ARM, Barry Care as Keeper of the Photographic Archive stated quite plausibly that "conventional photography is on the way out". He was holding two CDs which stored a team's entire photographic records.

Farewell to bulky and fragile albums with the associated wear and tear. At this point I recalled the County Archivist for Northamptonshire at Bedford's Archive Conference several years back, who told the story of an entire State Census in the USA, stored safely under a mountain, on

paper tape, and inaccessible because no one had kept a reader when that technology became obsolete. So where do we stand on record-keeping for posterity?

First, it must be a basic assumption that an Archive is worth having - our everyday doings in the Morris world are

tomorrow's Morris history, and our records are sources for future researchers. With this in mind, how durable are those records?

Most teams keep files of papers, photographs, letters etc., which vary greatly in how well they survive .....

(continued page 6)

(newsprint, for example, deteriorates quickly), so is the answer to convert it to digital form and store it on some medium such as CD, DVD, mini Hard Disk and so forth? Up to a point, this works, provided that whoever is in charge of the archive is prepared to: a) convert it to digital formats, and b) outflank the obsolete technology trap by regular updating, or keeping hardware and software able to access the older storage. There are signs that CD and DVD are already heading for obsolescence, going the way of floppy disks, and one day back-compatibility will cease to be important as new media emerge. Which is more use, an unreadable disk, or a faded page or photograph which is just about decipherable? One does not envy those involved in the film archive projects, where film is transferred to video (markedly more durable, easily duplicated and not as liable

to damage as ageing film stock); but video recorders and players are being phased out already in favour of DVD. So do they re-record to DVD, until that becomes obsolete, and so on? Is it possible to keep up?

During his tenure as Ring Bagman, John Frearson dragged most Bagmen (albeit kicking and screaming) into the electronic age - the virtues of e-mail are obvious. It is possible to send messages with immediate effect, respond at once to news and events, mail multi-page documents to hundreds of recipients in one go without the postage costs and so forth. But what happens when we do a bit of "housekeeping" and clear stuff from the overfull in-box? Suddenly all that information, records of invitations, details of Tours and Feasts, interesting bits of gossip vanish into the blue. We all remember where we went and what we did and how good it was, but that's not much use 50 or 100 years

down the line if there is no record of it.

It is possible to imagine a team losing all its records, the Bagman's house burns down, they get left in the back of a taxi, accidentally shipped off to the tip, whatever. That team and its activities will continue to stay on record in the "archives" of other teams who danced with them, invited them to their dos, made return visits, exchanged information, even if the original team disappears from the scene. But not if all the communications were electronic and have been "tidied away" to the recycle bin. In the same way as the 'phone effectively made what would once have appeared in letters or postcards invisible to future researchers, so electronic mail is removing from the record information for which letters were still used.

So I suggest we all need to think before we hit the delete key - even if it is only "important" communications,

big events (ours or other teams'), unique information of some kind, we should ask if there ought to be a more permanent record of it. At least save it to a "records" file which will hopefully keep it for future reference (hardware and software willing!). It's worth also having paper versions of "Business" documents, Minutes of AGM, Accounts, Yearly Programme and similar at the very least. It's surprising what can be reconstructed from accounts for example! If these papers survive they should be decipherable for some considerable time, even if they are not archival quality materials.

I am of course writing this on a computer, and it will be e-mailed as an attachment to the Editor with covering message, but I shall print out a paper copy for my Morris records.

*(Happy to receive any copy in any electronic format. ed..)*

## A move for the Future

*by David Thompson*

At the Westminster Day of Dance two years ago I was approached by two separate members of the public who enquired whether the dancing was a competition and they were rather surprised to find that there was no competitive element to what we were doing. The infant Irish Free State took great pains to preserve and rediscover its musical traditions of song and dance. In some cases they had to be reinvented. The vehicle for the strengthening of this newly won nationalistic pride was the competition. There could have been no Riverdance without the underlying competitive culture.

Much has been said and written in past months about the future of the morris. There

must be a large number of men who feel powerless but would want to do something to preserve the morris for the future. There must be a body of common ground that people could subscribe to and would propose the following mission statement:-

**A MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE SECOND MILLENNIUM**

Morris is an English male tradition

The tradition needs to be presented in a truly professional manner

The dancing should be to a good standard as reflected by the tradition

All possible attempts should be made to gain positive publicity

It is proposed as a positive move for the future that individual men or sides sign up to

the Mission Statement. Those that are prepared to sign up to the Mission Statement wear this badge



The latin in the above translates as 'traditions die if the good do nothing'.

Those individuals/sides that can support the above can receive the badge for a small fee.

Varying degrees of commitment give access to more precious background colours.

Individual — wear a

bronze badge

Sides — wear a silver badge

Excellence — gold, gained by success in competitive ales by demonstrating commitment to all aspects of the Mission Statement.

Thus the badge will be something to be prized.

Sides will want to gain gold.

Gold can only be gained through competition which will lead to an increase in desirability.

Any individual who falls short of the statement forfeits the right to wear the badge.

At the very least good men will be doing something.

*(This is published unedited. Ed.).*

# The Ridgewell Files

Publication	Issue Date	Title of Article	Author	Synopsis
Bury Times	22 March 2005	Ancient antics, pagan...	David Thomson	Pace Eggers
Rossendale Free Press	1 April 2005	Nutters'...Banned	Catherine Smyth	Eggers halted by police
Rossendale Free Press	1 April 2005	Nutters' Easter treat...	Dominic Collis	Report of event
Rossendale Free Press	8 April 2005	Carry on dancing	Readers' vote	493 yes/7 no
Rossendale Free Press	15 April 2005	Interference overload	K Slaughter and S Mawdsley	Letters re above
Daily Star	18 April 2005	Plan your day-long bash for England	James Moore	5pm Try morris dancing
Bolton Evening News	26th April 2005	Dancing in the streets	-	Horwich St George's Day celebrations
Herts Observer	28th April 2005	St George's day Report	-	Cambridge MM in Saf-fron Walden
Hertfordshire Mercury	29 April 2005	Party time for patriots	Jon Ryan & Raymond Brown	Standon in Bircherleyon, St George's Day
Daily Mail	3 May 2005	Take your partners....	Roy Hattersley	Icknield Way/May Morning
Chester Mail	18 May 2005	Dancers are great by George	-	Report on st George's Day in Chester
The Abingdon Herald	23 June 2005	Mock Mayor Vote...	Gordon Rogers	Two recounts for Mayor of Ock Street
The Times	7 July 2005	Wide ranging botanist...	unattributed	Obituary Bob Ross
Herts & Essex Observer	7 July 2005	Morris Man...dies	unattributed	Obituary John Hunter



*Ms Charlie Corcoran in a little Gucci number!*

Photo: Anon

## Election Win Celebration: Charlie dresses up to the Nines

*by Our Fashion Correspondents*

A number of photos have been secretly passed to the editor regarding the private life of the newly elected Ring Bagman, Charlie Corcoran. Normally we would regard what a man gets up to in his private life is his own business. And quite rightly too. We certainly would not use these pages to print truthful but scurrilous stories about any Ring Squire, especially Bob Cross who has done more than hold Charlie's hand these early days of his investiture (*what? ed..*)

No, what really concerns all Morris Men is should we have been told before the election? Charlie's son is a little more forthcoming on the matter and we quote: 'A Brazilian wax

would surely have been more effective than scissors'. Quite so. We assume he is referring to the cut of the dress rather than any potential cosmetic treatment. Which brings us neatly to the photo on page two where all three elected officers are seen outside one of those 'salons', a euphemism for goodness knows what! We do wonder how the Treasurer lost the 'expenses' for this little jaunt! No doubt under Archives, a mish-mash of all-sorts if you ask me!

We think it's time to draw a distinct veil over proceedings, which is no doubt what Charlie should do until he's perfected a more effective plucking.

T & S

# Picture Gallery

## Greensleeves' Chipperfield 2005



*Procession to the Windmill, Sunday 10th July*

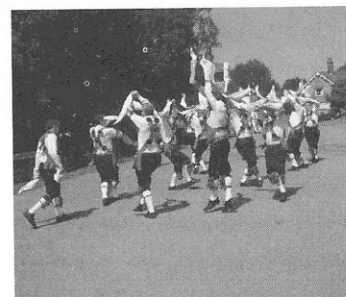
All Photos Harry Stevenson



*Barnsley Longsword above and below performing after the Sunday service*



*Hosts, Greensleeves with two sets, below*



*Wath, below and left, at the Sunday display*



*Greensleeves finishing with a flourish*





# Picture Gallery

## Long Man Ring Meeting



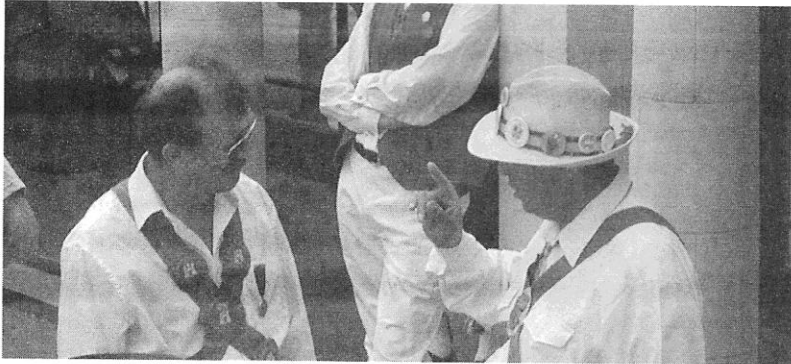
*Wessex at Massed display*



*Bedford at the Eastborne display, above and a massed dance left*

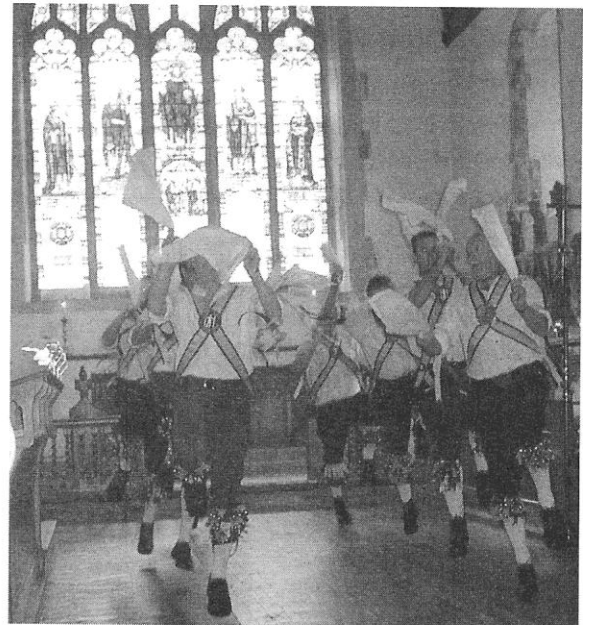


*Westminster rising to the occasion, but who are the musicians, top left?*



*'Now you mark my words.....' What is Steve telling Geoff?*

Ail Photos Harry Stevenson



*The Hosts, above, in Church*



*The Hosts, Long Man*



*Taunton Deane, right, with their solo spot*



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# The Morris Ring Circular

September 2005

Issue No 50

## Letters To The Editor

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### St Albans' History

#### From John Price

Dear Harry,

The back page of Issue 49 of The Circular contains the comment "Someone asked why St Albans weren't one of the original six that formed the Ring". I think that question originally stemmed from me, as I researched all known facts about our 75 years as a club - and some of the unknown ones as well- for our Anniversary booklet.

This has always puzzled me, since we'd been in existence for four years when the Ring was conceived, and our founder (Kenworthy Schofield) was well respected and well connected - and indeed was second Squire of the Ring. So why weren't we in on the "concept" meeting rather than joining at the Inaugural one? I thought the answer was unknown: but Reggie Welbank (known to many, I'm sure) told me that Walter Abson had given a view a few years ago. He thought that Kenworthy was less attracted by the notion than the Cambridge/ Thaxted/ Letchworth individuals who mooted the idea. Also that he was less in touch with them after moving from Cambridge to the St Albans area in 1928. Simple, eh?

So that's our official line now, and recorded for posterity in our booklet - along with the reason why we wear brown shoes and how we served a feast made entirely from pasta at our 1976 Day of Dance. Not to mention our

passing relationship with Isla St Clair.

John Jenner may wish to offer a comment on Kenworthy's likely feelings from a Cambridge MM perspective, though I doubt he has a view on our brown shoes or our pasta. I don't know what he knows about Isla St Clair.

Wassail

John Price

St Albans Morris Men

[john.e.price@ntlworld.com](mailto:john.e.price@ntlworld.com)

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### Rushcart Appeal

#### From Richard Hankinson

Dear Harry,

In 1975, Saddleworth Morris Men built their first Rushcart and incorporated it into a weekend of dance inviting Adlington Morris Men and Gorton Morris Men (sadly now defunct). From those small beginnings the weekend has grown into one of the largest weekends of its type and we are fortunate that we have been able to keep the cost of attending the event to an absolute minimum.

Over the years we have carried out running repairs which have enabled us to keep the cart on the road. However, it became apparent during the 2004 event that 30 years of Saddleworth Rushcart have taken their toll and the cart was in serious need of repair. The cart was completely stripped to reveal the extent

of the damage and the verdict was worse than we imagined. It was terminal with only the axle beam being salvaged. A retired joiner and cabinet maker offered his services but the bill for the timber alone came to a staggering £985.00 + vat. We don't yet know the labour charge.

The wheels also needed work and, as Quickfit don't do 50 inch cartwheels, the services of a wheelwright were sought. The rims and spokes of both wheels have suffered from a fungal infestation and are beyond saving. New wheels are being built around the old hubs at a cost of £720.00 + vat each.

And now the sales pitch! The bill facing us amounts to a little over £2800.00 plus the labour charge. I am writing this letter by way of an appeal for donations towards rebuilding the cart and so keep the Rushcart alive for another 30 years at least. If you have been to the event, try not to remember getting wet in a Pennine downpour but reflect on the fun we have had over the years and hope to have in the years to come.

Any donations will be very gratefully received.

Yours Sincerely,

Richard Hankinson  
Saddleworth Morris Men

31, Moorgate Drive,  
Carrbrook, Stalybridge,  
Cheshire SKIS 3LX

### Thaxted Ring Meeting Programme 2005

#### From Gordon Ridgewell

Dear Harry

In the programme for the 2005 Thaxted Ring Meeting, it is stated that "The Morris Ring was inaugurated by six founder clubs in Thaxted in 1934". Wrong! It was in fact inaugurated at Cecil Sharp House at the Inaugural Meeting of the Ring held on 20 October 1934.

What took place in Thaxted in 1934 was that the Morris Ring was constituted. When the current Squire of Thaxted Morris Men next visits Thaxted I suggest he seeks out 32 Newbiggin Street and the commemorative wall plaque on its front wall, as illustrated in my photograph on page 4 of Circular No 24, September 1994, which records the event that took place in Mr King's house on 2 June 1934.

Wassail

Gordon Ridgewell

53 The Wick  
Hertford  
Hertfordshire  
SG14 3HP

(can Thaxted write direct if they feel inclined. ed)



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## Competition

In an athletics event of field or track it is obvious when there is a winner-either first past the post or who throws or jumps longest or highest. Rarely, a dead heat may occur

In this years FA Cup Final Arsenal won the Cup on penalties; if it had been decided on 'merit' then Manchester United would have won it by a huge margin. In most games there is a winner and often a draw. Usually the best team wins, but as in all sport this is not always the case.

There has often been controversy in subjective sports and deciding the winners; Ice Dancing, Diving and Gymnastics come to mind. Maybe within those disciplines there are experts who genuinely mark according to a strict code. But 'marking' Morris Dancing? Is our correspondent having a laugh? Surely we all know which sides are dancing well? As dancers in a set or team, they know when they've achieved a 'togetherness' - an empathy with the dance.



*King John's at their Day of Dance 2005*

Photo Harry Stevenson

It's a personal thing but appreciated by other dancers; the public may not understand it but they know when Morris is good.

The emotion created by ex-

ceptional sporting endeavour is to be savoured for what it is - sport - a contest; witness the last two Ashes Tests. No medals needed; the winners in both matches were Cricket and

sport in general. Both sides playing at their best.

Morris sides, clubs or teams are more than happy for their peers' recognition. That is worth more than any badge.

## Morris Ring Publications: 2006 onwards

Following the appointment by the Squire of two new Editors, for the Ring Circular and the Morris Dancer, and the election of new Ring Bagman, it was deemed appropriate to have a meeting to discuss the various Ring publications, their distribution and subscription collection.

### Content

No change except continued liaison between Bagman and circular editor to avoid too much repetition. Some will be

inevitable, but will try to minimise.

### Distribution

The first circular of the year to be available for distribution at the ARM, which is normally early March. This will also be the distribution date for the Morris Dancer. For those not attending, they will reach you by hand delivery or post soon after. Final Copy dates for Circular: 31st January for March distribution; 30th June for July/August distribution; and

30th October for November/December distribution. There is more flexibility for second two issues; however for the first issue copy date is fixed. For the Morris Dancer copy date is 30th November. These are likely to require more time for editor to peruse, revise and corroborate so the extra period is not unreasonable.

### Subscriptions

All publication subscriptions

are now payable to The Morris Ring and should be sent to the Treasurer, Steve Adamson. Steve and Charlie, the new bagman, will between them produce the definitive address list. All enquiries on content to the editors, all other enquiries to Charlie please. All individual subscriptions are due 1st January. Subscription forms will be sent out with the next Newsletter and Circular.

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# Obituaries

## Bob Ross

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Bob Ross on Tuesday 24th May 2005 at his home in Evesbatch, Worcestershire. He was 92. Bob (not Robert as his son is called - the names Robert and Bob alternate in generations) was second Bagman of the Morris Ring (1946-1950), taking over from his great friend and colleague, Walter Abson.

Bob's funeral was held on Thursday 2nd June at St Mary's Church, Bishop's Frome, Herefordshire, where Bob had been a server for many years. The Church was packed with family, friends and many Morris Men. There were many members present from his own sides (Cambridge and London Pride) and representatives from Chalice (Ring Squire, Bob Cross), Chipping Campden, Jockey (Past Treasurer, Richard Sinclair), Leominster, Letchworth, Silurian (Past Bagman, Keith Francis). Barbara Sunderland was also among the mourners.

## Bob Waller

It is with great sadness that King John's Morris Men report the very sudden and unexpected death of their colleague and close friend, Bob Waller, aged 53, on Saturday, June 4th, 2005 in Saffron Walden, Essex.

The team was taking part in the annual Morris Ring meeting hosted by Thaxted Morris Men. They had just completed a display dance for the general public when Bob suffered a massive heart attack. Doctor, paramedic and ambulance staff strove to revive him without success. He is not thought to have suffered for very long. Originally from Nottingham, he moved to Lockerley, near Romsey in 1985 after some time in Devon where he met

During the service the Revd John. Hawkins, who first met Bob at the Morris Meeting in Oxford in November 1949 (to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the historic meeting in 1899 between Cecil Sharp and William Kimber) spoke about Bob's eventful life. At St Paul's School Hammersmith Bob took up rowing, rugby and boxing. Just before going up to Cambridge (a scholarship at St John's College) he went to a meeting of London Pride Dance Club where John Oliver suggested he make contact with the Cambridge Morris Men and the Round Country Dance Club. Such chance meetings can change lives. Not only did Bob join the morris fraternity (in which he was later to reach high office as Bagman) but he also met Peggy, his future wife, at the Round. At Cambridge Bob boxed for the University: he obtained first classes in both parts of the Natural Science tripos, specialising in Botany in Part 2. After 6 months as the botanist on the Universities Expedition to Nigeria, he took up a post at the Natural History

his wife Jane. He worked for IBM in Hursley where he held the post of Product Planner for the Java Technology Centre.



Bob joined King John's Morris Men in 1987 after replying to an advert in the local paper and quickly became a committed, regular member of the team, becoming known as a dependable and amiable companion. Over the next 18 years he danced in Belgium,

Museum to work on diatoms. Peggy and Bob married on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1939, and during the war Bob worked with the Ministry of Aircraft Production and later with Bomber Command, analysing the results of air raids. After the war Bob returned to his diatom post where he became both Deputy Keeper of Botany and in 1966 Keeper of Botany until his retirement in 1977. John recounted numerous anecdotes about Bob: he was always open to new ideas as well as a man of strong views who would argue forcefully, and meticulous in all things. The Rev Jane Davies, who officiated at the funeral, spoke about Bob's service to his local Church. Appropriately we sang 'Lord of the Dance', and Stephanie Abson played 'Arioso' by Handel on the violin (a touching link between the first two Bagmen of the Morris Ring).

Bob's coffin was led out of the Church by the Ring Squire and representatives of Cambridge and London Pride Morris Men to the accompaniment of Princess Royal, Longborough

France, Germany, Iraq and Jersey as well as at home. He was Squire of the team from 1996 to 1998 and latterly ran the team's website (<http://www.kingjohnsmorris.org/>). He was a regular member of the King John's Morris Mummerys plays, spending the evenings in the run-up to Christmas entertaining the general public in the ale houses around Southampton and aiding in the collection of hundreds of pounds for various local charities.

He was a kind and jovial man whose insightful wit would appear at just the right moment to the delight of all. He was a respected figure in the team and was known and liked the length of the country. The team's current Squire,

played by Michael Blandford. Bob was buried in the Churchyard at Evesbatch.

We gathered for refreshments at the Village Hall, and there was dancing of several of Bob's favourite dances, particularly by his friends from Cambridge and London Pride. Robert Ross, (Bob's son) danced the jig Princess Royal, Longborough (Bob's favourite jig). Bob had danced the Bledington jig, Lumps of Plum Pudding, at his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party.

Within a few months we have lost two great stalwarts of the Morris Ring who were our links with the foundation and early years of our organisation as first and second Bagmen. As a subsequent Bagman it was a great privilege to have known them both - their wisdom, their memories and their significant contribution to our heritage. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Peggy, his son, Robert, and daughters, Anne, Helen and Isobel, and his many grandchildren.

Keith Francis

John Miller says of Bob *"He was a big man, what you might call a gentle giant. He was, however, very articulate and intelligent. I personally, will always have an image in my mind of Bob playing a very mean Turkish Knight in our Christmas Mummerys play! We will all miss him. Our thoughts go out to his wife Jane, who will always be part of the KJMM 'Family'".* John summarises the feelings of every member of King John's Morris Men. Henceforth, there will forever be a void in our lives where Bob Waller dwelt. Our lives are the poorer for his passing.

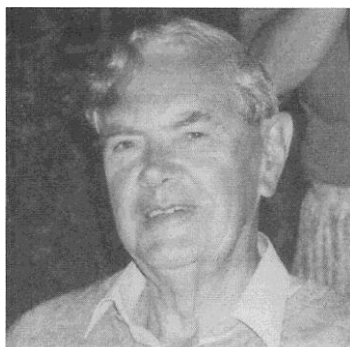
Wassail,

Martin Kennard On Behalf of Jane Waller and King John's Morris Men



# Obituaries

## Dr Leonard C. Luckwell 1914-2005



his wisdom and skill in those transitional years.

In 1956 he started teaching Morris at Clevedon Country Dance Club. At the same time, a similar club was started at Weston by Peter Boyce who asked Len to supply some of his Morris expertise. They soon amalgamated, with Len as it's first Squire, and evolved into the Mendip Morris Men which is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. Len remained involved with the club throughout and was Club President at the time of his death.

He was a man who contributed and encouraged the Mendip Morris Men for 49 years and is owed a big debt of gratitude. He will be greatly missed.

We send our condolences to his wife Beryl and to his family.

Alf Denham, Mendip MM  
.I am indebted to Geoff Rye for some of the above information. (An unedited version of this obituary is intended for EFDSS publications. ed..)

It is with sadness that we report the death of Len Luckwell on 27th June 2005 at the age of 91. Len was a very distinguished biologist and after demob from the RAF he went to Long Ashton Research Station to take up the position as Head of Pomology. In 1952 he became the Assistant Director of Long Ashton Research Station, a post that he held until his retirement in 1978.

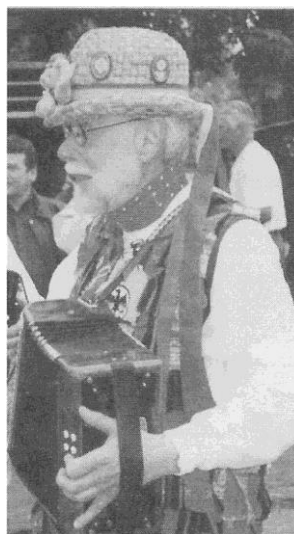
Len was appointed as the Chairman of the N.E.C of the EFDSS in 1963 and served until 1968. He was presented with the Society Gold Badge in 1973 and the citation praises



*King John's dancing in Romsey Abbey grounds after Bob Waller's funeral service*

Photo: Harry Stevenson

## Ted Ovenden



of indigestion then, like a light switching off, he died. He wouldn't even have known what was happening".

Ted joined Standon Morris Men around 1980, initially as a dancer, but subsequently taught himself melodeon and gave up dancing some years ago.

Only last Thursday he was out with us and in fine spirits sampling the ales at The Woodman, Wildhill.

Ted was never a good traveller but could be relied upon to be at every practice, every Thursday night out and all local bookings.

We shall miss him

Derek Wisbey  
Standon Morris Men

You will be saddened to learn that Ted Ovenden, our Musician died suddenly on Sunday morning, 22nd May 2005. Ted, I believe was in his early seventies. I received the following message from his daughter Sally.

"I am sorry to say my dad died this morning, Sunday 22 May. He woke up, told my mum he had a touch



*Standon Morris Men on St George's Day 2005: one of Ted Ovenden's last performances: Weeping Willow*

Photo: Gordon Ridgewell

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# Monkseaton Morrismen and Folk Dance Club

*by Bryan Jackson*

Back in the autumn of 1955, Alan and Joyce Brown, with Harry Etherington, wrote a letter to various local dancers around Tyneside inviting them to help set up a new team to be called Monkseaton Morrismen. A copy of that letter still resides in our scrapbook for 1955 — 56, and it explains that the



*Monkseaton at Saturday display*

Photo Harry Stevenson

team was to be a display side, taking traditional dances back to the people, and in particular the rapper sword dance and the Northumbrian country dances, the rants. The invitation also warned that members would have to be prepared for a lot of hard work, for the standard of dance presentation was to be as professional as possible! That warning still rings in our ears to this day, and members over the ensuing 50 years will testify to the amount of blood and sweat shed in achieving the standards Alan looked for. However, I don't think there have been too many tears shed, for we have had too much fun and enjoyment from our efforts

as we have literally "danced around the world!"

While a student after the war at King's College, Newcastle, Alan and several others came under the influence of Bill Cassie, and they helped research the rapper dances of Tyneside, talking to the remaining dancers in the pit villages, and ensuring that

they were not lost to future dancers. Alan,

the consummate showman, realised that the dance from North Walbottle, which actually involved the Tommy and Betty in the dance, was one of the best dances to show to the public, and that dance has been the main item in displays ever since, along with the

Winlaton version, which is well suited to dances in pub bars!

However, Alan's sights were set far beyond just showing the rapper and the rants to local audiences, and he set about choreographing a two hour theatre show displaying facets of traditional dance and music from around the country. Over the next few years he and Joyce worked on the choreography until by 1970 he had achieved a slick polished performance, and we took that show on a three week, 3000 mile tour of the mid-west of the USA that summer. Since then we have been filmed for Norwegian



*Monkseaton at their Weekend of Dance 2004*

Photo Harry Stevenson

television during a tour of that country, for Yugoslav television in Sarajevo, and toured all over the continent. A German film producer came over some years ago to make a film about the Green Man, and Alan persuaded Headington Quarry and Green Man to join us for a weekend of filming around Bamburgh Castle. I don't think any of us involved have forgotten that event, as the producer had Headington and Green Man hopping about among the rock pools, Monkseaton rapping on the battlements (with me fiddling astride a cannon!) and Alistair Anderson cavorting among the trees and bushes as the Green Man! We even took the show to Hong Kong and Bangkok, when a very young Kathryn Tickell joined Monkseaton as piper, fiddler in the band, and even dancer in one of the sequences!

This autumn sees the 50th Anniversary of the team, and the two main events we are organising are a dinner and dance on the 10<sup>th</sup> September

2005, when members past and present and guests from some of the teams we have performed with over the years will gather in the Guest Hall of Alnwick Castle for "a bit of a do!" Then on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, we are organising a barn dance for friends from local teams and the various people who have supported Monkseaton over the years, to be held in Cullercoats. We are also joining the French team La Sabotée Sancerroise in Sancerre for their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary festival in August, for their leader Andre Dubois was a close friend of Alan's from the very earliest days of both teams. If there are any past members of Monkseaton who have not received an invitation to the dinner dance in September, and are reading this, please do get in touch with us. The only reason for the omission will be that we don't have your present address! (a little late for the September event, sorry. ed..) Bryan Jackson is Squire of Monkseaton and joined in 1957

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*Creating a giant longsword lock after the Feast at Monkseaton's 2004 weekend*

Photo Harry Stevenson



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## From Symphony To Soap (Halle To Hollyoaks)

by Mike Bailey

Leyland Morris Men had a very unusual start to their dancing year. Last year we were invited to dance at a wedding reception to entertain the guests during the photo session.

The bride and groom and a number of the guests were members of the Halle orchestra.

Such was the impression we made that we were subsequently asked if we would like to join the orchestra at one of their concerts - a family concert held on a Sunday afternoon. We were very keen to be involved and as a result entertained the concert goers by dancing on the concourse outside the prestigious venue of the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester.



**Leyland MM on the set of Hollyoaks**

Photo: Leyland MM

From these dizzy heights in March our next event was as 'professional Morris Men' for the cast of Hollyoaks which was filmed in Liverpool.

We had been contacted through a casting agency who needed a team available during the week

and as it happened at short notice - we were due to attend on Wednesday but were told the day before that the filming was off and could we go Thursday instead. One of the advantages of older retired dancers is their weekday availability which in

this case enabled us to fulfil the booking.

In a long day's shoot lasting from 8 am until 6 pm we did some NW dancing both to music and in silent mode (the request to silence the bells was refused) and then took part by mingling with the crowds as extras.

Was it worth it - well that will depend on the TV coverage we get but it has certainly boosted team funds.

It was featured during a May Day theme but you didn't need to blink for too long!

Garden fetes and the odd pub will seem a little low key now.

Mike Bailey is Secretary of Leyland Morris Men

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## Thoughts on why I became a Morris Dancer

by Key Lowe

It was in 1984 that I took my family to Chippenham for the day - I think it was the August bank holiday weekend. We parked the car and went for a walk around the town. We were pleasantly surprised to find there was some kind of folk festival going on unbeknown to us, so the visit was made that much more interesting.

As you can appreciate, it was a while ago but my memories that day were of a stage with some young female Irish dancers, lots of stalls selling all kinds of strange clothes, and a group of Morris men standing outside a pub, tankards in hand and looking like they were having a good time. Later on we watched them dance and I can remember thinking that I could just see myself doing that.

Fast forward 19 years. The kids have grown up and left home. My wife and I have relocated to the coast. We've got time on our hands and need a social life. A chance meeting at a 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party got me talking to someone who used to dance and still took an active interest in the local side, Bourne River. 'Why don't you come along and give it a try?' he suggested. Ok, I'll do that' I replied. My wife was a bit cynical at that point. She was also in the position of having to work with the wife of my newfound Morris-dancing friend. 'By all means do it,' she told me, 'but don't say you'll do it and lose interest.'

We went to watch Bourne River on a couple of summer outings before I committed myself and attended the AGM. And what has happened since then? Well, after a hard winter

of training and a hard, hot summer of dancing out at various pubs and folk festivals, I was awarded my 'fishes', the crest worn on the back of the baldrics by members of the side considered proficient enough.

Neither my wife nor I realised what level of commitment membership of a side entails. Last summer it seemed like every weekend I was either working or dancing. Our social life has really taken off, meeting with wives and partners who come out to support the side. And life within the side? I have found Bourne River members to be welcoming, supportive, friendly and, above all, patient; all of which contribute to making the process of converting a 51-year-old complete novice, into something resembling a dancer. I am also now a member of the

Stourvale Mummers with two plays under my belt. I could also say that my parts are getting bigger all the time! What I like most of all is the knowledge that I am contributing to keeping alive an ancient tradition that may be mocked or spoken of in derisory terms, but without which this country of ours would be a much poorer, less colourful and less melodious place. Morris dancing should be every man's dream, the opportunity to get fit and go to the pub.

Key Lowe is a member of the Bourne River Morris Men

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*(Any reader with their own thoughts on why/how they became a Morris Dancer/Musician? ed)*

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## West Somerset 1965-2005

by Our Regular Correspondent  
*In-the-Marsh, Dudley Binding*

The West Somerset Morris Men (WSMM) were formed in April 1965 at the time that Halsway Manor near Crowcombe in Somerset became a Folk Centre. We first performed in public the following Boxing Day outside what was then the Railway Hotel, Washford. In 1969 WSMM were admitted to the Morris Ring. We still practice at Halsway Manor most Thursday evenings throughout the winter months.

The West Somerset Morris Men have a 40th Anniversary to celebrate. This consists of two events.

### **1). An April Anniversary Dinner and Dance The**



Anniversary Dinner and Dance (a dress-up do) was held at Raleighs Cross with some 95 present, including two founder members (one still waving his bladder about to all and sundry - guess who?) plus many past and present club members, guests and Bob Cross (who we also count as a WSMM) Squire of the Ring. Representatives of Gloucestershire MM, Exeter MM, Mendip MM, Chalice MM and Wyvern Jubilee MM were in attendance. After a much enjoyed Formal Dinner there was dancing to the music of Jigs for Gigs and the Caller was Jules Rutter, son of the late Bill Rutter. It has been a very interesting 40 years for The West Somerset

Morris Men. The Club has not travelled around the UK or abroad as frequently as some other Ring sides, but there has been the odd overseas trip. There have been exchanges with Les Compagnons Du Folk Lore, where we are anxious to maintain the French Connection.

2). **The West Somerset Morris Men's 40th Anniversary** took the form of a Saturday Day of Dance extending into the Sunday (July 2nd/3rd 2005) - West Somerset Morris Men were joined for the Day of Dance by near neighbours Chalice MM, Taunton Deane MM and Wyvern Jubilee MM. Bob Cross was present for the weekend - particularly appropriate as he no doubt belongs to all the teams which

took part.

The weather was kind to us and the tour (much to the surprise of all concerned) was able to keep to time, even allowing for time engaged in obtaining urgent and important alcoholic supplies.



Dancing first in the medieval village of Dunster where I did not partake of any amber fluids so I was not qualified to report on beer consumed. Sony John



Frearson. The Coach took us next to Porlock to dance on Pollards Garage Forecourt, opposite The Castle Hotel. Excellent Exmoor Ale brewed by Exmoor Brewery. Next venue: Porlock Weir, Ship Inn - Barn Owl locally brewed by the Cotleigh Brewery. We danced and were fed on a variety of Sandwiches plus Chips. An informal music session continued in the sunshine, before moving on to Minehead Sea Front for more dancing. No 'Kiss-Me-Quick' hats, but there was a contingent of dancers who duly attended the Beach Hotel to check up on the excellent Fuller's London Pride. John Frearson should be pleased with our research: we did not want any of our readers to feel that they are missing out on the details of the Ales being consumed now that John has retired as Bagman!

The next venue was a respite from alcohol and dancing - an excellent Somerset Cream Tea at Home Farm Blue Anchor: If visiting Home Farm please ask for Alison and say Dudley sent you. The Tour continued on to Watchet and The Star Inn with four Real Ales where the Otter Ale is highly recommended. The Star opened early especially for the Morris Men. In the evening the traditional Feast was enjoyed at a secret

location. In Old Cleeve. (Surely some mistake? Secret eh? ed.) An excellent meal was enjoyed by those present washed down with "Exmoor Silver Stallion"

Some speeches from "Yours truly", plus Malcolm Appleton (WSMM Bagman), Joe Raucki (WSMM Squire) and (Yes you've guessed it): Bob Cross.

Those that slept in the hall overnight benefited from a certain amount of late night hospitality.

Sunday morning, a random selection of WSMM and Chalice Men (plus of course Bob Cross) danced on the Esplanade at Watchet and then outside The White Horse Inn, Stogumber. Lunch was taken at the White Horse Inn where the Morris Men were fed well, and sampled some Tinnars Ale, St Austell Brewery. After Lunch on to Halsway Manor to dance at their Open Day. Tea was taken to bring, what in effect turned out to be a weekend rather than a day of dance, to a successful conclusion.

The tour was organised by Malcolm Appleton and his efforts are appreciated as are his photographs of Taunton Deane, above left at Porlock Weir; West Somerset Musicians at Porlock and a massed show at Porlock. £244.19 was raised for Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance benefited from the Saturday Tour Collections.



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# Mersey Morris: Squire Attacks Apes in Gibraltar

by Dan Corcoran

This year Mersey Morris Men, a group of hip young dancers, averaging fifty years of dancing a piece, decided that following the success of the trip to Utrecht Morris in Holland in 2004, a further trip abroad was necessary. So, tired of dancing on the same lump of wet rock in the Wirral peninsula on May Day Morning, they upped sticks, girded their hankies, and boarded a plane for sunny Gibraltar. Unlike Utrecht, where we flew in full Morris Garb, this time we were in mufti, the more to surprise the unsuspecting locals when we started our merry capers.

Upon leaving the airport, we surveyed the scene. To our right: a dirty great big gate, beyond which lay foreign parts, namely Spain. To our left: a dirty great big rock. It wasn't England, but it would do. We set off in search of our Hostel (Emile Youth Hostel, great beds, but bring your own toilet paper and don't expect a fry-up for breakfast) and, more importantly (for most), liquid nourishment. What would we find in this far off land? Exquisite continental lagers, beautiful Belgium beers, perhaps a nice little alehouse with a barrel or two of some little-known Gibraltar Brew? Bloody Tennents and Cream flow Boddingtons, with a pint of Carling to wash it down. Yay. Casting off the pangs of disappointment, we resigned ourselves to a weekend of bad beer, with the comforting thought of the crate of Cains Raisin Beer back in the hostel for Solace.

Alas, it was not to be. The first morning we set about doing our little bit for the Empire. There is a small naval force attached to Gibraltar, entrusted with the task of defending our pristine shores from the



*Mersey Morris Men on the Rocks*

Photo Mersey MM

tide of drug smugglers and illegal immigrants who try to cross the straights. The Cains was to be a gift from our local brewery to the sailors there, and in thanks we got an exhilarating ride around the bay in their RIBS (rigid-hulled inflatable boats, or something). We also had plaques to present to the mayor of Gibraltar from the mayors of Wirral and Liverpool. Unfortunately he was currently on holiday, it being a bank holiday and all, so we instead presented them to his assistant. After a brief bout of waving to the masses in the square from the official balcony, during which I tried to instigate revolution to throw off the shackles of

our tyrannical squire (he was having none of it) we retired into Gibraltar to do a spot more impromptu dancing.

We did the usual sight-seeing around the rock, marvelling at the flying apes and relentless German tourists. Our guide actually told us that in all his years of doing the tour only one of the Macaques had been injured by a car. Predictably, not five minutes after he told us this, a young ape was run over by a boy-racer, which while sad, was deeply ironic. We also went across the border into Spainland, at about two-thirty in the afternoon... mad dogs and Morrismen and all that. Needless to say, our Morris and Rapper



*Mersey Morris Men in the Square*

display was greeted with rapt bemusement by the handful of hardy tourists and drunks not enjoying their siestas.

We were informed of the presence of a place called the Liverpool Bar, not too far from the border, and we thought it would be churlish not to grace it with our presence. We had actually noticed the place on the way to our dancing spot, if not its name, and thought better of patronising it due to the excessive numbers of Juventus supporters outside. It turned out that they were actually Newcastle supporters, and the Liverpool Bar was in fact run by a pair of Geordies. I don't know why either. Still, they were very welcoming and the sheer heat meant that the Wife-Beater, while being the only drink available (mutter, grumble), was exceptionally gorgeous.

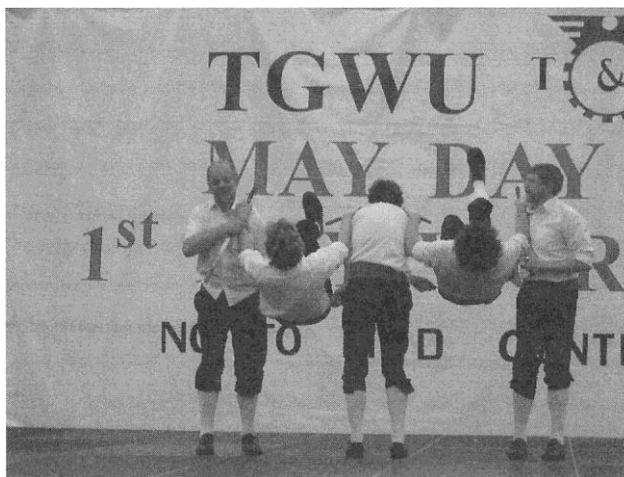
And so to May Day Morning, supposedly the purpose of our visit. Most of the team decided that they would book a taxi to take them up the rock, complaining that various weak hips, bladders and hangovers would probably hinder any attempt on the rock by foot. Two brave and hardy souls, however, David Eames and I, decided that since we were young and virile we would climb up the rock, in kit, to meet them at the top. Oh well, we said, you only live once! It doesn't look very high, but it is. We realised when we were almost at the top that we hadn't actually ascertained where exactly we were dancing once we got there. We looked around for the highest spot, and waited. And then some more.

Just as time was fast running out we thought we could hear a distant jingle of Morris bells, and listened, hoping they would get closer. Upon further inspection, however, we realised that they had

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## Mersey Morris In Gib continued

found a slightly smaller and lower spot, though it did have better views. Muttering, we descended to join them in time for the second dance. Our total audience consisted of around five people, and twenty-odd bemused, but increasingly brave, apes. Annoyed at being awoken so rudely and early, the Morrismen turned on the Squire and... Sorry, the apes started creeping closer and we had to keep a firm hand on hats, cameras, sticks and hankies. In the end our Squire resorted to grabbing a stick and rushing around like an irate, well, Morrisman, charging the apes and daring them to 'come-and-have-a-go-if-you-think-you're-hard-enough.' Slight ad-libbing on my part there, but that was the general gist. We followed that with more



*Mersey Morris Men on Stage*

Photo Mersey MM

dancing throughout the day, on and off, and an official spot for a trade union that was holding a rally in the square. We were promised 'thousands' of spectators, but the real figure was somewhere nearer the couple of hundred mark.

Still, it was a prime spot and we enjoyed ourselves. Our oldest member, Jim Jones, was also able to point out from the square the locations of the brothels that he knew of from his posting there in the war, which, I think, is an aspect

of history that is not covered enough in our state schools' curriculum.

So, all in all, it was a darn good weekend. We danced on top of the rock of Gibraltar as the sun came up, which is a truly great experience. Who knows where we will be next year. Ayers rock was mentioned, as was the Matterhorn, but my money's on a damp rock in the Wirral, as we sink back into obscurity once more. Look out for the future travels of the truly international Mersey Morrismen soon, and you may even marvel with wonder at our very own Fanclub Site ([www.freewebs.com/merseymorrisfansite](http://www.freewebs.com/merseymorrisfansite)), enough to make any other team green with envy.

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## Jigs Instruction Weekend

by Geoff Jerram

The Cotswold Morris Jig, a dance typically for one or two, is a valuable but frequently overlooked part of a dancer's repertory. It provides an opportunity for an individual performer to show his skills, whether by way of a change of emphasis, or expansion of style, without the constraints imposed by a team of dancers, but it should not be taken as an authority to 're-write' a tradition. As well as frequently being used in a ceremonial role to distinguish the solo dancer, the Jig is a valuable device for the Squire of a club to present a varied and more interesting programme.

The Jigs Instructional endeavours to inspire the confidence and ability to dance Jigs by giving a good basic grounding followed by detailed instruction. The rate of progress will be largely defined by the experience of those present but it is

intended to cover all the Jigs from several of the major Cotswold traditions. It is the only instructional run by The Morris Ring every year and has a virtually unbroken

only one providing a thorough grounding in the steps and movements of the major traditions. However, while dancers of differing levels of ability are welcomed, it

demands of the weekend.

The next is scheduled for the weekend of 20-22<sup>nd</sup> January 2006 and will be hosted by the Dolphin MM at Sutton Bonnington. The Bagman of The Morris Ring, Charlie Corcoran, will be sending out the usual notice in due course but make a note now of the date. We normally aim to cater for some 30 or so dancers (neither the teachers nor the facilities will cope with more than that) and if past popularity is anything to go it'd be wise to get applications as early as possible after the notice has been published. In the meantime please direct any enquiries to the writer at



*Ian Small & Michael Burke dance a double jig at Long Man Ring Meeting; Geoff Jerram playing*

Photo Harry Stevenson

history of some 25 years under the leadership of Past Squire, Bert Cleaver, who announced his retirement from this event earlier this year. It is also the

is unlikely that a beginner would benefit much from the instructional owing to the amount of detail covered and the technical and physical

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# The 3rd Wensleydale Sword & Dance Festival

by Brian Tasker

Over the weekend of 20/22 May the annual Wensleydale sword dance festival was held in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. The base for



*Sallyport*

Photo Peter Mernagh

the weekend was the Green Dragon Inn in the village of Hardraw, near Hawes. The teams participating this year were the Brompton Scorpers (longsword), Goathland Plough Stots (longsword), Pengwyn (rapper), Sallyport (rapper), Southport (longsword) and Stevenage (rapper). It was great to see longsword so strongly represented.

On the Saturday there were two coach tours visiting and dancing in many of the beautiful villages in the Dale. Sallyport were on tour with the Brompton Scorpers and the Goathland Plough Stots. The Goathland team included four teenagers. Keith Thompson explained that he devotes one evening a week to teaching the young lads in the village. He puts a lot of effort into training them and holds out the carrot of subsidised foreign travel with the team. The formula certainly seems to work. Goathland's musicians for the weekend included Eliza

Carthy who has played for them regularly since she was fourteen.

Sallyport danced their regular repertoire of Newbiggin and Winlaton supplemented at one stop with a performance of Swallwell with a spectacular new ending rather similar to a Sherborne split caper. Included in the team was a young French undergraduate who has been studying at the University of Northumbria. During his year in England he became so enthusiastic about rapper that he also joined Addison and the Newcastle Kingsmen. The Brompton Scorpers are a longsword team who perform their own dance. The team consists of three Sallyport men who live locally, ably assisted by some locals who have been drafted in and have discovered how much fun can be found in sword dancing.

Southport are dancing as well as ever, despite their advancing years! During the Sunday lunchtime show at the Crown in Hawes they performed the

Papa Stour sword dance. This was of particular interest to me as I dance the same dance with North British. In fact two of the Southport men also dance Papa Stour with North British. This causes them a novel problem as Southport dance it on left foot and North British

with strong connections to Sallyport. In particular, the wife and daughter of the captain of swords dances with the team. Pengwyn are a team to watch out for. They dance crisply and precisely and their stepping is second to none.

Stevenage put up a strong side



*Goatland Plough Stots, with Eliza Carthy*

Photo Peter Mernagh

on the right. It is difficult enough to keep on the correct foot dancing to a slip jig without this added problem! Pengwyn are a ladies team

and made up for their inability to raise a team for this year's Dancing England Rapper Tournament in Preston. Most spectacular (and unusual) is the dance where they start out with five men, go down to four as a result of a little confusion with the swords, three men change position and then they pick up the fifth man again to finish the dance. A speciality to watch out for!

By accident or design, the weekend coincided with a beer festival at the Green Dragon. Fortunately this happy event did not prevent many of the dancers walking up the valley to see the Hardraw Force waterfall. The final blessing was the weather. Showery, yes. Sometimes torrential rain, but the sun shone when we were outside dancing and it rained when we were inside drinking. What more can you ask for?



*Stevenage*

Brian Tasker is a member of  
Photo Stevenage MM Sallyport

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## THE DOUGLAS KENNEDY MEMORIAL FUND

Is your club going to an International Festival next year to present English folk dance, music or song? Or are you going yourself to study folk dance, music or song overseas?

If so, you can apply for a grant towards your travelling expenses to the DOUGLAS KENNEDY MEMORIAL FUND. The fund was established in memory of Douglas Kennedy, Director of the EFDSS from 1924 to 1961, and Squire of the Morris Ring from 1938 to 1947, after his death at the age of 94.

As Douglas would have wished the Trustees will give priority to young applicants or teams of predominantly young people.

If you or your club would like to be considered you should write now to the Clerk to the Trustees: Robert Parker, 40 Nightingale Rd., Hampton, Middlesex, TW12 3HZ. All completed applications will need to be returned to the Clerk to the Trustees not later than the 31 February 2006. The successful applicants will be notified as soon as possible.

RONALD SMEDLEY  
*Chairman of the Trustees*

*TRUSTEES*  
ELIZABETH KENNEDY RONALD SMEDLEY CHAIRMAN EFDSS  
*CLERK TO THE TRUSTEES*  
ROBERT PARKER

*REGISTERED CHARITY 1001303*

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*And this is it and that's about it!*

Not too much tittle-tattle. I hope all of you have had a great summer. I been to King John's great day of dance, Chippenham Folk Festival, Greensleeves for a Sunday, an evening with Trigg (more on that in next issue), our own (Winchester) day of dance and of course, Long Man Ring Meeting. Which brings me neatly to the next issue of the Circular. I would like it to feature articles and photos from this years Ring Meetings. The articles can come from any attendee, not just the host clubs, but I can only publish what is sent or what I write. So please

a big response and soon. *Copy date for the next issue is 20th November 2005.*



I mentioned Trigg earlier, and more on that amazing evening in the next issue, but Roger

Hancock (left) has been their bagman since 1970 (is that correct Roger?). Can anyone top that!

Another article for the next issue is the revival of the Whadon Witsun Song from Nigel Strudwick of Devils Dyke Morris Men. Real community involvement here.

So, please get your pens out, or tap your keyboards and record an event soon.

Wassail. H