



July 2006  
No 52  
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## Ravensthorpe Dance Found & New Percy Grainger 'Shepherds Hey' Tune

### The Squires

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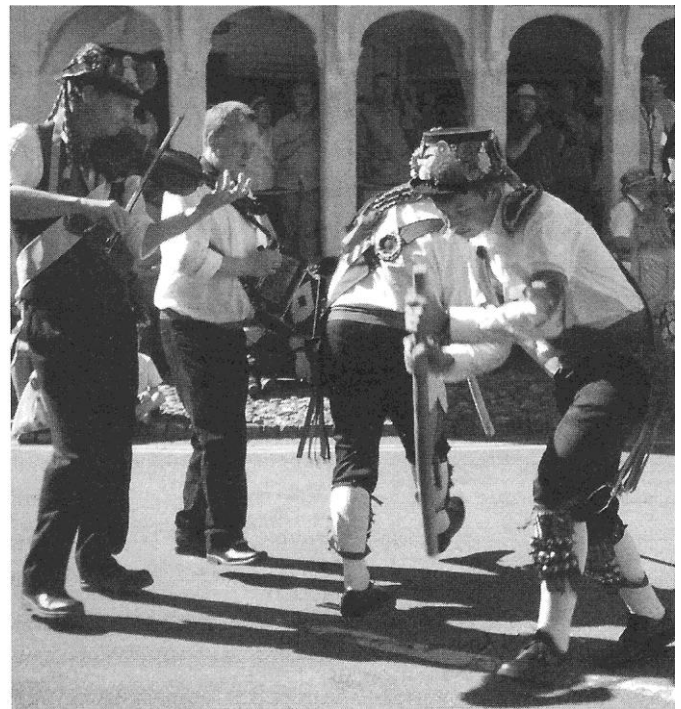
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by Barry Care

How a "lost" dance found me!

In the early 1900's a team of Morris men was formed at the village of Lampport in Northamptonshire. It seems it only lasted a couple of years under that name and as the dancers all came from several neighbouring villages they called their team the Nen Valley Morris. They were led by the Vicar of Lampport: the Revd. Walter Watkins-Pitchford, a local folklorist and collector of folk songs, dances and customs, who acted as their bagman. If the name seems familiar I should add that his youngest son was Denys Watkins-Pitchford (known as B-B), the famous author of the children's books "Little Grey Men", and he is also known to all fishermen for his famous book on Carp Fishing. The Nen Valley dancers were mostly local agricultural labourers and artisans, and many had to walk or bicycle several miles to attend practices. When the Morris Ring Archives were set up by Ivor Allsop and myself in the late 1970's, Ivor came across several letters and other information about this team and sent me copies of the items knowing I would be interested in the history of Morris in my area.

The Nen Valley Morris Men were an adventurous bunch and travelled quite extensively on tours to demonstrate their Morris dances. There is a detailed account of one



**Moulton Morris Men dancing Shepherd's Hey, from Ravensthorpe, at Thaxted Ring Meeting 2006**

of their tours which was published in the EFDS News Journal of 1930. We read that on that tour they started off at five o'clock on a Saturday morning and the dancers and their families travelled by motor bus travelling at a steady 40mph to reach Sheringham on the north Norfolk coast, where the first show was held. They continued on back inland to dance at Holt, then to Blakeney Quay, and finally to Cley-next-the-Sea for their overnight stay. Next day after walks on the local mudflats they breakfasted on dumplings and cider before more Morris dancing shows. They travelled home on the Sunday giving more shows at Kings Lynn and then Stamford, finally arriving home in Northamptonshire at 1 am in the morning. It surely

has to be conceded that the trip and that programme would be extraordinary even in these days of fast transport, but even more so for that time.

We also have more information about their activities from a programme published in 1928 in which the list of dances from which their show would be selected were listed as follows: Trunkles; Country Gardens; Shepherds Hey; Rodney; Rigs O'Marlow; Flowers of Edinburgh; Laudnum Bunches; Lads A Bunchun; The Buffoon; Old Black Joe; Glorishears; Cuckoos Nest; Blue Eyed Stranger; London Pride; Constant Billy; How D'Ye Do?; Baccy Pipes (solo); Molly Oxford (solo); I'll Go and Enlist (solo); and the Sword (cont. on page three)

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## The Squires: The Immediate Past & Incoming

By the time you read this part of the Circular, I as Squire will have danced out at the Mendip Ring Meeting. I can look back on two enjoyable years of events, Feasts, days and weekends of dance, Ring Meetings and various meetings of one sort or the other. Can I thank everyone who has invited me to an event, made me welcome in their homes and please be sure that your kindness has at times been quite humbling.

The main item in all this that will not be missed (or forgotten) will be the travelling. I really do think that the modifications carried out on the M5 have been especially done to hold me back! No matter how early I left from Weston, by the time the roadworks were behind me, I was behind the clock!

The most important point of this piece is to acknowledge publicly the support of my family during my two years who have been unswervingly cheerful and helpful in all I've done. Whether it be



**Bob Cross, at Hemel Hempstead market. Greensleeves Ring Meeting, 2006**

taking messages, doing the laundry or just making sure the car is constantly ready & filled up for the journey. I have been, and, am so thankful for their (especially Helen's) loyalty to The Morris Ring.

I would like to also mention the fact that both Steve, as Treasurer, and Charlie, as

Bagman, have been the most staunch allies and on your behalf I thank them most gratefully for their hard work, and I must acknowledge the advice and help given to me by members of the Advisory Council and Area Reps right the way through my term of office.

One disappointing aspect is the on-going situation of clubs paying their subs quite late (some in fact very late) in the day - please as you read this bear in mind that the insurance aspect of the monies is very important to you and your club. So please, I ask you to help the Treasurer and yourselves by paying next year's subs as early as possible.

I must also salute the kindness and obvious skills of David Hart, Chipping Campden, who has saved the day by repairing the Squire's Badge at times almost at the drop of a hat. It has been such a relief to know that someone of his calibre is willing to be of such great help.

You will no doubt have heard of Ben Dauncey's brave attempt to dance from Tunbridge Wells to Worcester. You will read fuller accounts in the Circular but I must make mention of his dedication and bravery and the hard work by all the Ravensbourne Morris Men and the support crew of The Next Foot Up. His endeavours will help the lives of so many people connected with the Make a Wish Foundation and also the MS Society. If you have not made a donation please contact Ravensbourne as soon as possible if not yesterday. All donations of whatever size will be most gratefully received.

Finally, I welcome on your behalf Paul Reece of the Thaxted Morris Men. I wish him every success for his two years in office and I know that you will all make him as welcome as you have me.

Wassail

Bob

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By the time you read this the 20 weeks since being elected at Weston will have elapsed and I will have returned there to dance in as Squire of the Morris Ring. This preparatory period has seen me out and about attending gatherings at Bampton, and Abingdon, practices at Banchory, Aberdeenshire and Ilmington, Westminster day of dance, Chester, Moulton and Hartley weekends of dance, the Thaxted and Chipperfield Ring meetings, the annual meeting of the Joint Morris Organisations at Canterbury and Nibs Matthews funeral, preparing, getting a feel of the pulse of our organisation and the clubs within it and most importantly listening to your aspirations and

concerns. Now the real job of work can officially begin.

My first pleasurable task is to congratulate Bob Cross on a job well done during this difficult and transitional phase in the Ring's history. His captaincy has been firm and resolute as changes and necessary reforms have needed to be addressed in order to make us ship shape and fit for the future. That role now falls to me, and at least my next two successors, as I estimate that this process will take 5 to 6 years to complete. This is just the period when many of our illustrious band of still active older and most experienced dancers, who have given such service to the tradition, will be contemplating hanging up their bells and the

viability of many sides may become critical unless their places are filled by new blood.



**Paul Reece at Abbots Bromley, Utttoxeter Ring Meeting, 2004**

I do however detect a sea-change. As I go around the country I am heartened by the signs of growth in many sides and by the addition of younger members. Saddleworth, East

Suffolk, Moulton, Bristol and Chipping Campden have been notable, Standon now have five active young dancers, Hartley three and Redcar two. If this trend could be replicated across the country we could reach 2012 in a very healthy state and our future secured. Already for 2012 Chipping Campden, Ilmington and Shakespeare are planning a combined Ring Meeting to coincide with the 400th anniversary of the Cotswold Olympics, Hartley for their 60th anniversary Ring Meeting and Thaxted for their 101". Two more and we will have enough Ring meetings to equal the rings on the Olympic flag. Camden, Stratford and the recent French revival Olympics in London beware, especially

as 2012 is the Ring's turn to organise the joint Morris organisations biennial event.

It seems to me that there is no better way to celebrate such historical milestones than for clubs to set themselves the goal of training up a young side to take the tradition forward to the next generation. 2012 is the year everyone will be focussing on for national cultural icons and traditions. We need to have young vital exponents of our tradition in place, keen, able and willing to perform on the Olympic world stage. No better or bigger opportunity for us to promote ourselves in the media spotlight is likely to present itself in the foreseeable future. I want to start now by supporting the setting up of regional young

sides to go into schools, colleges, communities and festivals to demonstrate what we do and train up youngsters in our art. Already, Steve Lowe of Jockey, to name but one teacher with an interest in the Morris, is successfully doing this with his own students, taking them into other schools, including the Birmingham Royal Ballet School (*see report page 8, ed.*) demonstrating and organising exchanges.

Each area rep needs to coordinate with those teachers and young dancers a programme of demonstrations, instruction and development. Such young dancers should be the focus at all Morris gatherings from now on, our watchword has to be the future, not the past. The vision

of Sharp at the start of the last century is as valid today at the start of this, namely the return to the people of that vital spark of their culture and tradition that they have lost. Sadly most are not aware that they have lost it. The media may make a joke of it, but what we do is more important than they ever imagined and often than we ever imagined. That is why we must show ourselves in our best ever light, in our best ever kit doing our best ever dancing. It is survival of the fittest. Second rate, remaining in neutral, looking back is the option of extinction. We have a job of work to do, securing our future is the only way to go. It is in our hands, our feet, but above all it must be in our hearts, to move forward as one. As the future is now we

have to start now, investing, putting our time and money in the future of the Morris. Memorials and sacred groves are part of the emotions of older age and the backward glance, real instinctive memory and folk memory are triggered by the flame of a living tradition. When all men dance we have heaven on earth and a future, when no men dance we have nothing, only perhaps static memorials and a feeling in our souls of tremendous loss and emptiness. Is this not why we dance? If the spirit is alive we have to dance. Life, dance and the future is the only forward path open to us. Let us take it together.

Paul Reece,  
Thaxted July 2006

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## .... the Ravensthorpe Dance (continued from page 1)

Dance. We also know that they were instructed in Headington dances by William Kimber and were visited by Douglas Kennedy who thought George Higgins, their jig dancer, one of the finest dancers he had seen. They also had contact with traditional dancers locally including Ephraim Cox from whom much of the Badby tradition was collected, and an old dancer from the Ravensthorpe side. The Reverend Watkins-Pitchford exchanged considerable correspondence with Cecil Sharp in the early 1920's, and among the topics was included an exchange over whether or not the Nen Valley men were better dancers because they practised to a fiddler, rather than the usual piano accompaniment of the time. The Reverend Watkins-Pitchford taught himself to play fiddle when over sixty!

In 1934 the formation of the Morris Ring was taking place and the Nen Valley Morris were one of the teams



***Moulton Morris Men dancing Shepherd's Hey, from Ravensthorpe, at Thaxted Ring Meeting 2006***

contacted about the plans Cambridge Morris were drawing up. Revd. Watkins-Pitchford wrote to Walter Abson on July 27th 1934 and explained the side had been going strong for 27 years (plus the two years as Lamport Morris)! If that statement was correct that must indicate their start up time as 1905 or so, and certainly made them the senior

'revival' side in existence at that time. He goes on to say that recruitment is a problem with illness and other men moving on, but that they had an average side that year, on the youngish side, mostly around twenty. Then he says ..... "we still keep the tradition we got from an old member of the Ravensthorpe side thirty years ago, and our work and finish

would not gain high marks. But it is the genuine country stuff (I gave Grainger one of the variants of Shepherds Hey we use). Kennedy said our solo man was one of the best he had seen. Kimber has been down to coach us, and I generally hunt out any tradition I can hear of, though since Ephrem Cox died it is rare to find anyone who remembers Morris hereabouts. It has quite died out at Badby..." Without that letter we would know nothing about a side having existed at the nearby village of Ravensthorpe (for those interested in its location, the village lies about twelve miles north-east of Badby).

Nen Valley Morris were not included among the first member clubs of The Morris Ring although Joseph Needham and Len Bardwell had suggested they be contacted and a letter was written to Walter Abson by Needham suggesting they be approached. It is somewhat confusing that they were not included at the outset,

particularly in view of their long history and praise for their dancing, but perhaps they were just too rural and a long way out from London. They continued to dance into the late 1930's but it is clear that the enthusiasm of the 1920's had passed, and whatever chance there had been of continuing the team faded away completely at the outbreak of war in 1939. The team would all have been of conscription age at that time and even if some were retained in agriculture, many would have gone off to war. They certainly never revived afterwards and the Reverend Watkins-Pitchford and his sons had gone from Lamport by then. There is a story that the schoolmaster from Pitsford was a keen member, but I believe he was killed during the war.

Moulton Morris Men came into contact with one of the Nen Valley dancers, Mr. Walter Harris in 1984. As a result of some bellringing at Pitsford church to celebrate his Golden Wedding, we were asked to dance at the family party to celebrate this event which was held on 5th February 1984 at Pytchley Lodge Farm a few miles from Moulton. We did about twenty minutes of dancing at which point we persuaded Mr. Harris to join in with the dance "Bean Setting" from Headington Quarry, which he performed very well for his age. We all had a few drinks and Mr. Harris chatted away at great length to us about his dancing days. I suggested he should jot down some of these reminiscences, as so little was remembered about the Nen Valley Morris Men. Some days later a lovely card arrived from one of his daughters thanking us for attending and inside was a few notes from Walter Harris. It wasn't much, three quarters of a foolscap page, hand-written: a piece about Bean Setting (the dance he had done with us) and about Mr. Kimber having provided several dances; a

few notes about 'Shephards Hay' [Walter's spelling-ed.] including the 'evolutions' as he phrased it - described as

a thought provoking time for all the family and my own grown-up children chided me about my own shortcomings



*Moulton Morris Men at Thaxted Ring Meeting  
2006*

one from the old Ravensthorpe side; the name "Beaux of London City or Shoot It" - another of the Ravensthorpe ones with a short phrase of description; and just the names of Old Trunkhose - the old Oxfordshire version and the Old Sword Dance from the miners of the north. To my shame now, I just glanced at it and tossed the note into my filing cabinet in the large box of miscellaneous Morris items, and went on to take great trouble to paste the glossy 'Thank You' card into the club scrapbook...but my excuse has to be ...I was the busy Squire of The Ring at the time up to my neck in preparations for the Morris Ring's Golden Jubilee Celebrations in a few months time.

That might have been the end of the story, but for the recurrence of my sister-in-law's cancer after remission of some fourteen years, which happened some two years ago. She had spent her life as local librarian and had a great love of books. Her illness was born bravely but she told me she was agitated that her books were not sorted out as she would have wished to do and now she needed time she wasn't going to have. It was

in the "sorting things out" department, pointing at the brimming filing cabinet full of Morris, vintage motorbike, and bellringing bits and pieces, all lacking any real order or organisation. I decided they were quite right and set to weeding out the rubbish and tidying the rest.

I actually enjoyed the memories a lot of the items brought back and then in one session what should I come across but the notes about the Nen Valley Morris team Ivor had sent me years before, including the letter from Walter Watkins-Pitchford to Walter Abson. I thought about his reference to the old Ravensthorpe side, then realised I had read something about that on Walter Harris's notes, and also the fact a tune called Shepherds Hey had been sent to Percy Grainger by Watkins-Pitchford. It dawned on me I had previously been lacking in proper attention to detail, insight and reasoning. I spent an anxious hour or so rummaging among the box of miscellaneous scraps of paper for the one with the notes Walter Harris had sent me. It was there, thank goodness, but not dated or with any explanation of origin and would have meant little to

anyone else giving it a glance. At least a dip into the Moulton Morris scrapbooks turned up that carefully pasted 'Thank-You' card and the date and details of our visit in 1984! I then contacted Chris Metherell the Ring Archivist to ensure I had everything that did exist about Nen Valley Morris, and also Malcolm Taylor at the Vaughan Williams Library to find out about the connection between Watkins-Pitchford and Sharp. Both men were very kind and helpful.

So a little thinking and I realised then there once was a Morris dance called Shepherds Hey from Ravensthorpe in Northamptonshire that had been danced by the Nen Valley Morris for many years, and one of their dancers had provided a few notes about the dance, and also the tune might possibly still exist if the letter from Watkins-Pitchford to Grainger had survived in Percy Grainger's archival papers. If I could find that tune we could reconstruct the dance. I wasn't confident such a letter would have been kept, however, and was also very unsure of how to begin such a search so like lots of folk do, I went onto the internet and typed in "Percy Grainger". I quickly came across the website of the Percy Grainger Society and contacted them to explain my quest. The Society sent me a copy of the four versions of Shepherds Hey he published in 1913, and although they did not include the one I was seeking, it was an important clue that later aided the search. The Grainger Society also told me that Percy Grainger's papers are kept at The Grainger Museum which is part of The University on Melbourne in Australia, and following an email approach setting out the reasons for my search I discovered that the curator is a lovely lady called Astrid who was very willing to support my efforts. It was with her help the letter from Watkins-Pitchford was tracked down.

Initially we had problems with no clear idea of what date the letter was sent and poor Astrid and her staff spent two weeks of fruitless searching through the Grainger Archives and might easily have given up at that point. The four versions of Shepherd Hey that Grainger published in 1913, however, provided a clue that helped. I thought about why Watkins-Pitchford would want to send the tune to Grainger, and made the assumption that he might well have obtained a copy of Grainger's versions of Shepherds Hey and it was this musical publication that made him send his variant to Grainger shortly after they were published. I emailed Astrid with my theory and this enabled the search in Australia to be narrowed down and to become centred on the years immediately following the 1913 date. It was only two days later when

the jubilant email from Astrid confirmed the letter existed, and I think she was as excited as me that they had found it! Sent by Watkins-Pitchford to Grainger on April 7th 1914, it contained three tunes, and .... yes, the Ravensthorpe variant of the Shepherds Hey tune was there! Arrangements followed for a copy to be provided via the post and a week or so later a copy of Watkins-Pitchford letter was in my hand!

It was most rewarding to find that it is a particularly lovely version too, unlike any of the other variants of this tune. So we had the tune, we had Walter Harris's notes and therefore the Ravensthorpe tradition was not completely lost and the Shepherds Hey dance lives again with its own tune. It is a stick dance with a half hey chorus and has a simple but lively style (jaunty' to use Walter Harris's word). It was danced out as our show dance

at the main massed display at the Thaxted Ring Meeting this year by Moulton Morris. It has a distinct character of its own, and was well received by those watching us at Thaxted. The majority of Northamptonshire's many Morris traditions went uncollected and therefore it has been particularly satisfying to put together a "lost" dance from a previously unknown tradition, although as the title says, in many ways the dance found me. We now need to look at the "Shoot-It" dance ascribed to Ravensthorpe to see if resurrection of that one is possible, and I would love to know if Watkins-Pitchford left any other archival material behind! Moulton Morris are happy to share the details and notation with any side interested in dancing the Shepherds Hey from Ravensthorpe.

To conclude I would like to thank all those who encouraged me in this quest and I think I

have managed to include most people's names in the writing of this piece; but I must add all the kind Morris dancers who have listened with patience to me telling this story at its various stages and providing encouragement to continue. Also thanks to Mollie my wife, and my children who bullied me into the action that started it all off, and to Moulton Morris Men who have to put up with me and my eccentricities. I recently emailed Astrid in Melbourne to say the dance was being done once again, thanking her and her staff for all their support, and received a lovely reply from her saying how delighted she had been to help and wishing well to all the Morris dancers over here!

Barry Care MBE,  
Past Squire, and Past  
Treasurer of The Morris  
Ring All Photos © Barry  
Care, Moulton Morris Men  
June 2006

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## Dutch Morris Ring 1947

The article following was based on an interview with Richard Callender and published in a Dutch magazine in 1947. It came to light when the archivist of the Dutch Folk Dance Society (NVS) was looking

for suitable articles to reprint in the run-up to the Society's 60th anniversary in 2006. It was reprinted (in Dutch again) in the society's current magazine (called Dansnieuws) on a page facing an announce-

ment and itinerary for the Helmond Morris Ring meeting last May.

As far as I know it has never been published in English. Thought you might be interested.

Wassail,

Antony Heywood  
Helmond Morris Men

### DUTCH MORRIS RING

"No women..." declared Mr Callender, "they can never be members. We'll meet once a year and spend the morning practising and in the afternoon we'll put on costume and process to a spot where we can show our Morris dances to the public. That is the Morris tradition."

"So only Morris teams can join?"

"Usually it's teams of six dancers with a couple of extras. One is the leader, the Squire and the other important person is the Bagman."

"Ahhh" I said rubbing finger and thumb together.

An understanding laugh...

"Exactly, the treasurer, but the finances are kept within the group. And as soon as possible the members of this Dutch Morris Ring should attend a major Morris Feast in England. We would love to see our Dutch friends dancing with our own traditional dancers. Difficult at present but it will come."

"Individual dancers in smaller places would be excluded?"

"No, they could become individual members. If they come to a Ring Meeting they would be at the disposal of that year's Squire who would make up teams for the day. Our Squire this year is Douglas Kennedy. Last year it was me..."

"But..."

"That's irrelevant. Even we have also got dancers who only know two dances."

"Two...?"

A hearty laugh as if to say 'Oh you Dutch!' then "Yes two, but they promise to keep practising them. That's the spirit."

"So not one of those fly-by-nights."

"NO. But establish the Ring. I'll come over to your first Ring day and I'll bring a real Squire's costume and a hobby horse..."

And why shouldn't we have a Ring Day next Easter?

Morris men who would like to see a Dutch Morris Ring should send their names and addresses to Mr Storm, 's Gravensandeweg 59, Wassenaar. Further details will be sent as soon as they are received from England.

Translated by Antony Heywood from an article in De Meiboom (newsletter of the Dutch Folk Dance Society, now NVS) dated the beginning of 1947



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## NIBS MATTHEWS

### A Tribute

Family and friends from the Folk and Morris world gathered at Kensal Green Crematorium on Friday 24th March to mark the passing of Nibs Matthews on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2006, aged 85. Sidney Alfred 'Nibs' Matthews MBE TD was born in Hackney on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1920. All through his life he was known by his nickname of Nibs. He grew up in Bishop's Stortford and at school he sang in the Church Choir in a strong treble good enough to perform solos. On Tuesday evenings after choir practice the organist went next door to play for Miss Beryl Frere's folk dance class. The choirboys would amuse themselves by throwing stones at the church hall door, and one night Nibs, aged 12, was dragged into the hall, and his whole life was to change. Miss Frere was the first great influence in his life, for she taught him the Morris dance, and at age 14 he was chosen to perform the bacca pipes jig at the EFDSS's annual festival at the Royal Albert Hall. Thus he was to meet the second great influence in his life - Douglas Kennedy, Cecil Sharp's successor as Director of the Society. Nibs attended the society's vacation schools and danced with the prestigious headquarters



Photo courtesy EFDSS

morris team that had been first established by Cecil Sharp before the First World War. After leaving school Nibs joined the International Tea Company Stores as an apprentice. He joined the TA and at the outbreak of war he joined up first as Sergeant Matthews and then gaining a commission. After the war Douglas Kennedy invited Nibs to join the expanding staff of the Society. He was first sent to Cornwall to train and teach, where he met Jean, and when he moved to Cheltenham in 1950 to be responsible for West Midlands, they married. Nibs became nationally famous as a caller for the BBC's radio and later television programmes from Bristol. He helped establish the Sidmouth Festival, which celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2004. In 1960 he was elected Squire of the

Morris Ring, and in 1975 he became the Director of the EFDSS. Nibs retired in 1985 and despite slowing down in his later years he would be seen at Bampton and Headington on Whit Monday to see the Morris Dancing. As family and friends assembled for the Committal and Thanksgiving Service John Graham, Dick Hobbs and Denis Smith played traditional music. Bert Cleaver, Past Squire, played the Morris Call. Hymns were 'Let all the world in every corner sing' and 'Through all the changing scenes of life'. Ian Forsyth read a passage from William Soroyan, Bob Cross, Squire of Morris Ring, sang 'The Seeds of Love', and Ron Smedley gave a tribute. Bert Cleaver closed the service with Morris Off. Nibs' coffin was draped in the Union Jack with his MBE placed

on a cushion. Afterwards we retired to the WIV on Harrow Road to reminisce about Nibs' life in the Folk and Morris world. At the Morris Ring ARM at the Feast Barry Care proposed a special toast to Nibs who had died 2 days before. Barry remarked that when the Morris Ring Photographic Archive was being sent up, Nibs had given the Ring free range of the work in the Vaughan Williams Library, and that if it had not been for Nibs, the Ring wouldn't have the Archive now. Barry also recollected the occasion when many men gathered to celebrate Douglas Kennedy's 90th birthday at his home and Nibs had danced a very graceful jig, immaculately performed. He said that Nibs was a lovely man, and though rather a private person, he was always encouraging and we should be very grateful for his services to the Folk and Morris world. As Ron Smedley said in his tribute at the thanksgiving service: 'It is the end of an era, rather the end of 2 eras as far as the Folk World is concerned - post 1<sup>st</sup> World War and then post 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. In our changing world, is there someone to take Nibs' place. We hope there is.'

<sup>^</sup>A celebration of the Life of Nibs Matthews' - a programme of dance music and song - will be held at Cecil Sharp House on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> September.

# The Ridgewell Files

<b>I</b>				
<b>Publication</b>	<b>Issue Date</b>	<b>Title of Article</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Synopsis</b>
The Times	24 Oct 2005	The Game	Danny Kelly	England team in morns kit
Saffron Walden Reporter	29 Sept 2005	Fayre fun is enjoyed by all	Jon Taylor	Standon at 'Michalmas' Fayre
Evergreen	Winter 2005/6	Morris Dancing	Editor of Evergreen	Poor attempt to define Morris; Kennet pictured
Bridlington Free Press	29 Dec 2005	Dancers keep tradition alive	-	Flamborough sword & boxing day; photo
The Star (Sheffield)	20 Dec 2005	Sword Dancers have a stab at ...	-	Handsworth & Boxing day; grand photo in Woodhouse (The Rose)
The Guardian	24 Dec 2005	How To .. Morris Dance	Guy Browning	Morris and Ale connection
Saffron Walden Reporter	12 Jan 2006	Celebrations plough on	-	Balsham Plough Monday Cambridge MM
The Times	18 March 2006	Nibs Matthews	-	Obituary
The Guardian	17 April 2006	Nibs Matthews	Derek Schofield	Obituary
Weston & Worle News	12 Jan 2006	Morris Men at Olympics? No says Bob	Karen Richards	Bob Cross, 50, commenting on Boxing day
Sheffield Telegraph	15 Jan 2006	Tradition's Cutting Edge	David Bocking	Grenoside dance to Cubans
Whitby Gazette	20 Jan 2006	European tour puts Plough Stots on TV	Richard Harris	Recently discovered archive film of Plough Stots, Czech Republic
Lancashire Evening Telegraph	24 March 2006	Where tradition is cherished	-	Around Rossendale, Bacup featured
Lancashire Evening Telegraph	24 March 2006	Little place with lots to offer	-	Around Settle, Leyland Morris Men featured
Rossendale Free Press	21 April 2006	Nutters enjoy cracking day	Alan Knight	Bacup annual Easter Saturday dance
Bolton Evening News	24 April 2006	For England and St George	Jane Lavender	Horwich Morris Men day with Saddleworth
The Observer	30 April 2006	Mayday! Mayday!	Tristram Hunt	Comparison with TUC May Day and original message of May Day
Times, Guardian, Telegraph & Independent on Sunday	28 April 2006 30 April 2006	Various	-	Department for Culture Media and Sport unveils 21 new icons of England
Cornish Guardian	6 July 2006	FranklyFraser	Stuart Fraser	Urging readers to support Trigg Morris Men and listen to 'Brown Sugar'

I am extremely grateful to Gordon Ridgewell for providing the newspaper cuttings, however space prevents me from including all, so the above is a selected example. It maybe that the list reverts to the Bagman's newsletter in future. (The Cornish Guardian article was sent in by Roger Hancock; obviously the writer agrees with me - see last issue page 12)

## The Crestwood Morris Team visit to Birmingham Royal Ballet.



by Steve Lowe

On Friday 16th June the Crestwood Morris Team visited the Birmingham Royal Ballet company at their studios behind The Hippodrome in Birmingham. They were accompanied by two year-six pupils who we had previously worked with from a neighbouring primary school. We arrived shortly before 10:30am to watch a class for the male dancers. It was fascinating to see how they were taught and just how disciplined they were, not only physically but mentally. Their listening skills were finely honed as the instructions given by their instructor were complex and only given once.

After a break for lunch we watched all the

performers being directed through a rehearsal. This was a real treat as the general public would not normally be allowed in to see work that goes on behind the scenes at such a prestigious dance company.

We then had about half an hour in which to practise our dances in the studio prior to a performance that we gave at 2:00pm. It was magnificent to have such a wonderful dance studio in which to practise. At two, the ballet dancers and instructors all came in to watch our short display. What an audience. We were introduced to David Bintley, CBE, the company's director. He was pleased that we could illustrate a traditional English dance form as many of their

dancers had never seen Morris dancing because a significant number of them came from countries as far away as Estonia. Italy, Brazil, Australia and Canada amongst others. We performed "Constant Billy" Adderbury. "Banks of the Lee" in the style of Badby and "Shepherd's Hay" Headington.

After our small display we were rewarded with rapturous applause. I felt very proud of the pupils involved. David was interested in a Jockey scrap book that I had taken along which contained photographs of Morris dancing from the 1950s. One of their teachers commented about how important it was that these dances were being taught to teenagers and he said it is a shame that so little emphasis is placed

on dance in the current school curriculum.

We were accompanied by musicians Derick Phillips and Graham Spencer from The Jockey Morris Men of Birmingham.

All the pupils who took part were excellent ambassadors for both schools. We had a wonderful time and Mr. Bintley's personal assistant said that we should stay in touch. We certainly will.

So, where do we go from here...

Mr. Steve Lowe is Foreman of the Crestwood Morris Team and a member of Jockey Morris Men

This article first appeared in the Crestwood School Newsletter



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# Plymouth Morris Men May Morning 2006:

## Stars of TV & Radio

by Petr Watson

Plymouth Morris Men celebrated the 1st of May as usual by dancing at 5:15am on the Hoe at Plymouth. The weather was inclement but shelter was provided by a fair ground trailer conveniently

News the following evening, 2nd May. The footage of May morning was supplemented by video taken the previous Wednesday at the practice venue, City Bus Social Club. Our man Ray Newnham had been filmed earlier in the day at his office, and was shown on



**All photos depict Plymouth Morris Men dancing their version of Skirmish, performed with a Navy Pattern Cutlass**

parked up close to Drake's statue. The dancing was successful and the sun shone brightly on the rest of the day. We were joined on the Hoe by a loyal band of supporters together with a film crew headed up by Claire Manning of ITV West Country News. This resulted in a screening on the ITV West Country

TV transforming - rather in the manner of Wonderwoman - into Super Morrisman. Apparently this transformation can be



Their contribution of music, discussion and dance was broadcast live about 7.30 in the morning. The side then travelled to Millbrook/Cawsand/Kingsand to attend the Black Prince Flower Boat Festival. A local event featuring a decorated model boat(The Black Prince) being carried through the villages (courtesy of HMS Raleigh Cadets) and culminating in a

The processions were lead by a motley collection of Town Criers, followed by children of the parishes, who danced Maypole and country dances. Sides attending included Plymouth, Wreckers, Black Bess and Newton Bushel. This event was also reported by the Western Morning News. May Day proved to be a very long, fruitful and enjoyable day which will be



launch into the waters of Plymouth Sound ( courtesy of the RNLI). The festival died out about 50 years go despite it being a well-established May celebration, on a par with Obby Oss in Padstow, North Cornwall, and Flora Day in Helston, West Cornwall, the revival s now in its 20th year.

repeated next year although without the Transformation.... Visit the Plymouth Morris mens web site [www.plymouthmorris.uk](http://www.plymouthmorris.uk) for more information

Peter Watson is Bagman, Plymouth Morris Men  
All photos do Plymouth MM

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# Thoughts on why I became a Morris Dancer

by Don Byfleet

Like most people I was born \ at an early age in Chatham, Kent, but moved into Dorset in 1947, a move that I have never regretted. I immediately joined the Weymouth and District Rover Scout crew where an ex-member of Oxford University Morris men shortly joined us. He drummed up a fellow ex-member who gave us a lecture on the noble and traditional practice of morris dancing. The first O.U.M.M. then volunteered all the younger and dafer members of the rover crew to form a side. We actually learned three dances before our leader and mentor departed for foreign climes whereupon his reluctant pupils breathed a sigh of relief and swore never to sully their feet with morris dancing again! In retrospect I realise now that our lack of enthusiasm was almost entirely due to the fact that our teacher was not only a poor dancer himself but also completely lacking in a sense of humour, a quality which, together with endless patience and boundless optimism, is essential to any good foreman. Time passed. In fact about \ 12 years, by which time by devious strokes of chance I had become embroiled in the folk dance world and it was at a folk dance New Year ball that I had my revelation in comparison with which St. Paul's was a non-starter. At a prescribed interval in the dancing, the hall at the end of the hall burst

open and in flooded the White Horse monis men led by John Burgess. They danced, they capered, they leap-frogged, they laughed, they shouted, they gave a tremendous display that left me open mouthed. This was real morris. "This" I said to myself, "I must have a basinful of". I mentioned this performance to John Burgess many years later and congratulated him on its liveliness and vitality. "Ah yes" he said, "I remember it well. We got the time wrong and turned up an hour too soon so I had spent it in the Kings arms next door!" Such is the secret of success! At that time there was no morris side within 40 miles of Weymouth so I had to further my ambitions by attending morris sessions at folk dance weekends and watching and joining with any touring side that came within reasonable distance of my home. At one stage the brother of the instigator of the Weymouth Rover crew side, also an ex O.U.M.M., appeared and initiated a side in Weymouth by gathering up a selection of exiled morris men dotted around Dorset and luring gullible friends to join the happy band. I was a scoutmaster at the time so we were able to meet in the troop's hut free of charge and even managed an outing or two but the members were too far flung and come the summer the lure of sailing and the beach were too much for the younger

members so the South Dorset Morris Men faded and expired. However in 1964 I provided myself with a reliable set of wheels and was able to join the Wessex Morris Men at their weekly practices nearly 30 miles away in Yeovil, so keen was my enthusiasm to learn if not to master the art. The foreman and later, squire, was Ralph Harrison, ex Jockey man to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude for instilling in me not only good dancing technique but also the whole ethos of the morris. Unfortunately Ralph was obliged to move away on promotion as was his deputy and so more or less by default and still green around the gills, I was elevated to, or should I say lumbered with, the illustrious position of squire. Aware of my ignorance, I attended every morris workshop or meeting or lecture I could manage to get to. These included the unforgettable, informative and hilarious series of weekends at Halsway Manor presided over, in his inimitable style, by Roy Dommatt As a result of this one-upmanship, at the end of my term as Squire in 1970, I was confirmed as Foreman of the side, a job I had effectively been doing since the departure of the previous squire and with which I am still stuck. It is the secret of an active old age — you've got to stay one ahead of the crowd! Around 1980/81 it was suggested that I might take on the role of fool, as I was always

a one for chatting up the crowd and at that time the side was quite well off for dancers. I took on the extra job with enthusiasm as I have always had strong views on the role of the fool in the side. I never interfere with dances as I feel they should stand on their own merits. If a dance doesn't entertain, change it. Rather I just feel that a fool should be a public relations and continuity man, keeping the show on the road and the crowd diverted between acts. It means that he must be on the go all the time, chatting up the punters before the show (late starting seems to be endemic in morris men. If advertised for 7:30 the side should be stood up neatly at that time not just assembling in the pub!), always looking for opportunity to raise a laugh and last off at "Bonny Green". It's all go — not a position of honour for any respected and semi-retired elder brethren. Having said this I must admit that my enthusiasm for the job has waned a little of later years in favour of my first love of dancing and also the opportunity to relax and make notes for rectifications and improvements in the coming practice season. The puff is a bit (correction — 'lot') shorter now and the ground a bit nearer but if you want to keep going you've got to make the effort to get off it. A shuffling morris man doesn't do our reputation any good. I look forward to the next 10 years. Amen

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## The Presentation to Don

by Glen

(our reporter at the scene)

Despite Don Byfleet managing, some two months earlier, successfully to ban the Wessex Morris men from doing 'anything' about his impending 80th birthday, he

was left, in his own words 'speechless and overwhelmed' by a presentation to him of an album of greetings' two weeks after his actual birthday! At the prestigious annual Sherborne Country Fair, held in the grounds of Sherborne Castle. (Wessex Morris Men always

feel honoured to be invited to dance at this event; it raises many thousands of pounds each year for local children's charities and thousands of people attend from all over Dorset and beyond.). So, on Whit Sunday, in front of this famous castle,



built by Sir Walter Raleigh, Wessex were joined by the Adderbury Morris Men who had been invited to join us as part of their weekend tour of West Dorset. The Squire of Wessex, Pete Metcalf, called the combined sides together and in front of the massed public and after a few appropriate words, the youngest Wessex Morris man, Dave Randall, stepped forward to present the album to the oldest man — Don! Don really was taken by surprise, he protested very mildly but a quick glance inside the album left him utterly amazed. He then danced a solo jig to the astonished and admiring men and the public. An 80 year old just showed them all up! Renditions of 'Happy Birthday', 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow' and an Adderbury tribute of 'Happy the Man' concluded the presentation and the dancing display went ahead as planned. An hour later, in the beer tent, Don's wife Heather was presented with a large and beautiful bouquet of flowers from Wessex — a heartfelt thank-you to a lady who has supported (and put up with) Don over all his morris years. At the closing of the fair, Don and Heather were spotted walking off to their car — arm in arm — he with his album and she with her flowers. Both with broad smiles! The album took the form of a photo album with 100 slip-in slots, each slot containing a greeting from Don's morris friends, admirers and Wessex men past and present. The Squire of the Morris Ring, Bob Cross, sent a very moving and poignant address. Adderbury, Mendip, Bathampton, Taunton Deene, Frome Valley, White Horse, Stockport, Exeter, Headington Quarry, Bourne River, Hartley, West Somerset, Saddleworth and Cambridge all sent postcards to be slotted into the album. At the last minute, Helier Men got their card to the UK;



***Don Byfleet with fellow Wessex Men admiring his album of postcards***

Photo: Paul Chesterman

fog in the channel threatened the post for several days. Fairport Convention and Morris Offspring were included in the greetings, as were cards from such people as Ivor Hyde who looks after melodeons, etc., and Liz, the haberdasher in Sherborne who supplies the ribbons for Wessex' kit; even the garage

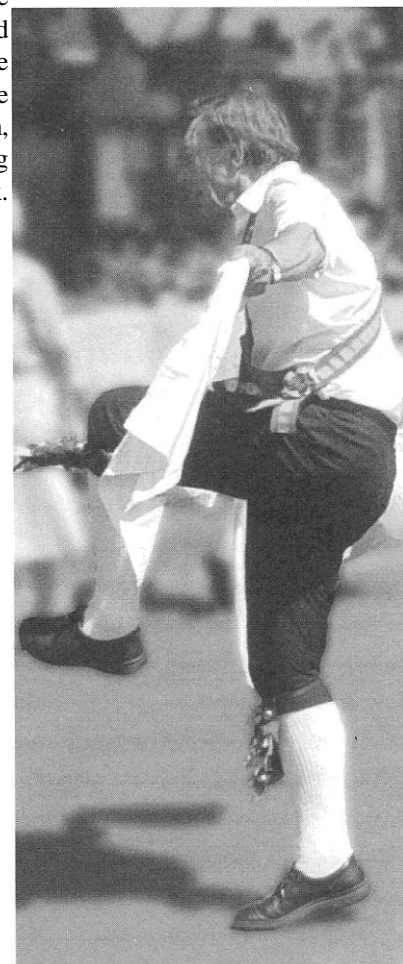
who looked after Don's car for many years sent cards! 83 cards in all, 'retired' Wessex men who thought they were long forgotten were traced and tracked down and some wonderful memories were recalled when they, and Don, were but young lads dancing with the then fledgling Wessex. The Yetties remembered

***Don enjoy the day at Sherborne Country Fair, below and left, on previous page***

Photo: Paul Chesterman



fondly those days — Pete Shuttler could only play the accordion with one hand then, so Mac stood by and pushed the base buttons for him! Through all the messages and greetings, one continued theme emerged;- one and all were unanimous in their admiration of a man who had, and still is, "Mr Wessex" — Don, reaching 80 years, is still renowned country-wide for all his dancing years and all he gives to the morris.



***Don dancing his celebratory jig***

Photo: Paul Chesterman



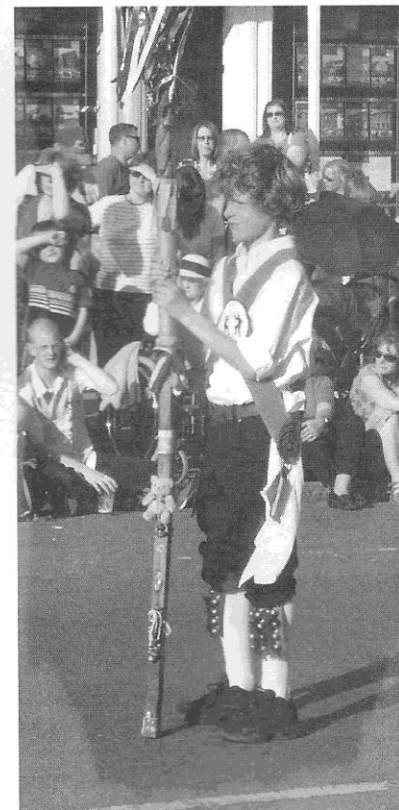
# Picture Gallery

## Thaxted Ring Meeting 2006



*Massed show around the May Pole; 3 'Pole Dancers', right & far right*

Photo Andy Padmore



*Top: Men of Wight*



*Redcar performing Greatham*

Photo Andy Padmore



*Below, A pride of Players*

Photos: Andy Padmore



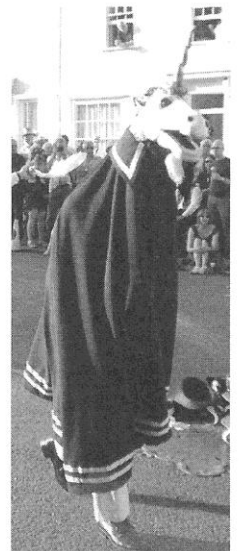
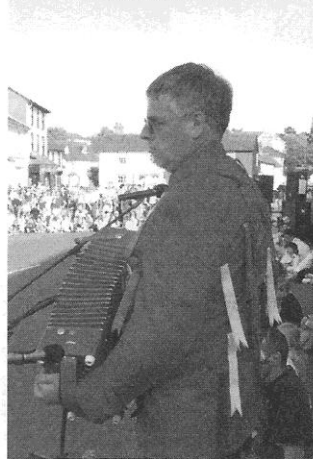
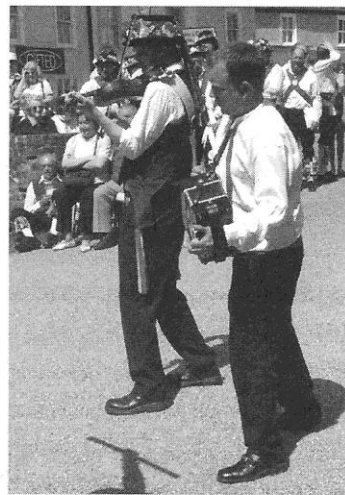
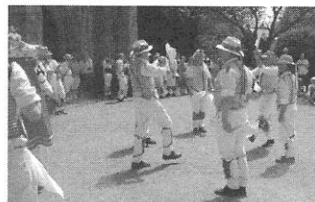
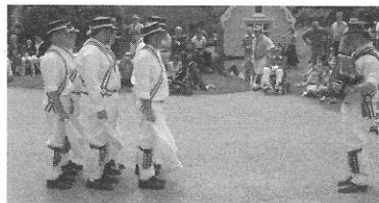
*Adelaide Morris Men above and left*

Photos Geoff Jerram



# Picture Gallery

## Thaxted Ring Meeting 2006



*Left, Geoff Jerram who took these photographs:*

*From top left clockwise:  
Moulton Morris Men,  
Thaxted musicians  
including Mike Chandler,  
Moulton musicians*

*above and top right:  
Redcar musician*

*above right:  
Ken Wilson of Chalice*

*right :  
Westminster's Unicorn*

*below Geoff  
Adelaide, Thaxted & Bob  
Cross practising his new  
role of cricket umpire*

*far left clockwise:  
Winchester, Redcar,  
Westminster and finally  
Adelaide Morris Men*



# The Morris Ring Circular

July 2006  
Issue No 52

## Letters To The Editor



**From Terry Heaslip**

[terry@heaslip.me.uk](mailto:terry@heaslip.me.uk)

12/03/06

Greetings Harry,

For the past 30 years Hartley MM have awaked the summer sun by dancing at dawn (5.30am) in the Coldrum Stone circle at Trottiscliffe, Kent, courtesy of the National Trust. In spite of the early hour and remoteness of the location, we regularly attract an audience of around 150, which I had always thought to be a reasonably healthy response to our activities.

However, reading the latest copy of National Geographic (March 2006) I was interested to find on pages 74/75 a photograph with the caption — 'Red-painted performers do their fiery best to celebrate the ancient Celtic festival of Beltane, attended by thousands in Edinburgh, Scotland. The dawn to come, May 1,

signals the start of summer.'

Studying the photograph in great detail reveals more than one reason why Morris Men struggle to match a similar interest from the general populace.

The photo can be found at <http://www7.nationalgeographic.com/coming/0603/feature3> but salient features can be better appreciated spread over two pages in the magazine.

Having seen the photo described on the back page of the latest Morris Ring Circular, you can be assured that it is far less revealing than the above example, which received an international audience. Surely, one only has to describe the photographic image as ritual !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Best wishes  
Terry Heaslip

**From David Jackson**

9Edward Street, King's  
Lynn, Norfolk PE30 5QS 5th  
April, 2006

Dear Harry.

[n this day and age I wouldn't dream of trying to prove the continuity of The Morris earlier than the Medieval period. Nevertheless, the cartouche From the 8th Century BOOK OF KELLS does look like an illustration of the final figure of OLD MAN'S Morris.

Kind regards,  
David

*(The cartouche David refers 'o is that of Three intertwined nen from the Book of Kells, the original of which is at Trinity College Dublin. As I am unsure of copyright I have not published the picture. I am sure the internet search engines will assist the more au-*

*dacious of you to find it. If you do please let me have the link for a subsequent issue, -ed.)*

**From: David Thompson**

tradcap iz [ntlworld.com](http://ntlworld.com)

Sent: 14 May 2006 15:39

To: Charlie Corcoran Cc:  
Harry Stevenson

The Ring needs to have brought to its attention that the dancing at the Bull Ring, Thaxted on Easter Monday 2006 was the 85th consecutive time that there has been dancing on a bank holiday in Thaxted

Thommo

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

It is a little disappointing that my discussion with a northern rapper and a Yorkshire longswordsmen brought no serious scandal to report. However, to have deprived Monkseaton of some small change at dominoes was something of a coup, greatly increasing my limp on Sunday at Chipperfield.

I thoroughly enjoyed Tarka's adventures in China: what a great trip for the lucky invites. Similarly, Greensleeves trip to Canada was another of those special trips.

Don Byfleet's Eightieth celebration was a truly happy one and his early memories were a joy,

especially as in his notes he abhors the limelight. As do all Morris Men. Thank you Don for your contribution, and not just for the articles.

Crestwood deserve a mention for their efforts and thanks for sending in the report. We look forward to your continuing development and welcome periodic updates.

Plymouth finally hit the big time with their report, and pleasing it is to see my first and only other club flourishing.

Finally a gem of a story from Barry Care. All contributors of photos, articles and letters are gratefully received. If they are not included in this issue, do not despair; there are

subsequent issues it may appear in, if I can find it...

A little plug here for an old, erm sorry, long-standing friend, Geoff Jerram. He has just issued a CD, ably produced by Paul Marsh of Forest Tracks. With 19 of Geoff's regularly sung songs at Feasts & Ales around the country I can commend it to you. The Morris shop is selling it but contact Geoff Jerram for further details (tel 07887684474)

### COPY DEADLINE ISSUE

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Your next issue will arrive during December 2006 so please can I have articles, photos and news by 30th October.

Articles for next issue include reports and photos of the final two Ring Meetings of the year, Greensleeves at Chipperfield and Mendip, where Bob Cross danced out and Paul Reece danced in. I say will, as I expect articles to be submitted. I attended Greensleeves and had a great weekend with 'The Others Morris Men'; ably led by Stephen Parker, and more on that in the Morris Circular no 53.

Finally, we are allowing Adverts to appear in future issues of the Morris Circular: charges are a modest £50 full page, £30 half page, £17 for quarter page and £9 for one-eighth page. All copy responsibility of advertiser and the Morris Ring does not necessarily endorse the product or event and takes no responsibility.



# The Morris Ring Circular Editorial

Editor: Harry Stevenson 59 Oliver's Battery Road North  
Winchester Hampshire S022 4JB  
01962 855911 harry\_wmm@trunkle s . free serve . co.uk

## Squires Old & New

It is pleasing to welcome our new Squire, Paul Reece of Thaxted. For any person to offer their time, considerable, as he will discover, deserves our support: more so as he was elected by the member clubs. Equally pleasing is to thank the outgoing Squire Bob Cross. Not so much pleasing that he is going. although perhaps his family may think so, but because of the time and effort, often not seen. that all our elected officers do put into their role. Bob no less so than his predecessors. We wish Bob well as the new Chairman of the Advisory Council and 'Cheers' to the outgoing Chairman. Cliff Marchant.

## New Dance. Old Dance

I am happy and pleased to publish Barry Care's article on the discover of a new dance from the village of

Ravensthorpe in Northamptonshire. Not unlike the feature in the last issue, from Whaddon, each report exhibits a story of triumph

in fruition something that was apparently lost, but through diligence, determination and persistence, we read moving



Bob Cross & Paul Reece, Thaxted 2006

Photo c/w Thaxted MM

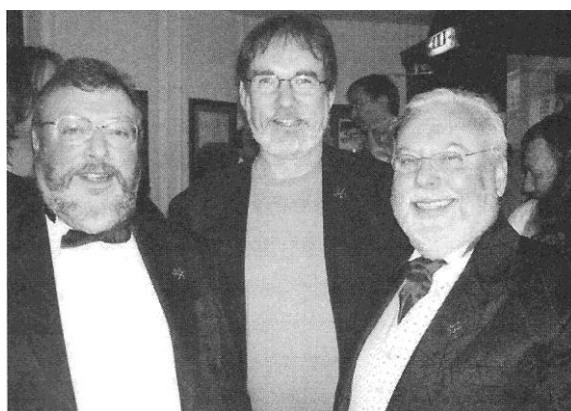
stories that are both current and relevant to their respective regions. As such, their presence in the Circular gives timely reports of fruition, as well as moving stories on the respective writer's journeys.

## The Young, The Future

Paul Reece's first missive to members has a fine objective. Incorporating both the young and the future, with the date of the London 2012 Games of the XXX Olympiad as its focused opportunity. Paul already lists a number of clubs who are having success with new and younger dancers. Please, write about your successes and encourage your new and young dancers to write about them. It will encourage readers to emulate your achievements and further encourage the youngsters to continue the dance.

## Presentation of EFDSS Gold Badges

On the Sunday morning of the Dancing England Rapper Tournament (held in York over the weekend of 17/19 March), Phil Heaton and Aubrey O'Brien were presented with EFDSS gold badges by Paul Davenport.



Phil Heaton, Paul Davenport and Aubrey O'Brien

Photo C/o Brian Tasker

Paul read out the citations which highlighted the contributions both men have made to the development of rapper sword dancing over very many years. Phil and Aubrey are perhaps best known today for their

Tommy and Betty act which they perform with Stone Monkey, Snark, Sallyport and anyone else who will have them, but in former days when they were at the peak of their dancing powers they

danced with all the great and the good of the rapper world.

Phil was the man who organised the incredible Dancing England folk shows held in Derby in the late

1980's and early 1990's. Anyone who saw those shows cannot have failed to be impressed by the variety and colour of our folk traditions. The Dancing England Rapper Tournament was a separate part of Dancing England and has continued ever since, growing in strength every year and encouraging the formation of many new rapper teams.

The gold badges are a welcome recognition of the importance of rapper in traditional dance.

Brian Tasker

# GREENSLEEVES - MAPLE LEAVES

by Roy Fenton

Greensleeves Morris Men's connection with Canada dates back to the early 1980s. Then, Robin Harrison - in terms of music and dancing easily the most talented dentist the side has ever had - set off with his Canadian-born wife Marlene to cross the Atlantic in a small boat. Failing to find the North West Passage, they fetched up in Newfoundland and decided to bring English Dentistry to this backward province. Two years of English Dentistry was enough for Newfoundland, or possibly vice versa, so they loaded their drill and chair into their covered wagon and headed westward to Ontario. Here they bought a homestead, relatively modest by Canadian standards, that would house their family, have room for a workshop and beer cellar in the basement, had sufficient rooms to sleep two whole Morris sides, and would accommodate a collection of squeeze boxes of which the Smithsonian is in awe. Robin also joined Toronto Morris Men.



**Toronto Morris Men giving it some welly at Mill Race.**

Photo: Teresa Box



**Greensleeves Vandalising the Mill Race Folk Festival, Cambridge, Ontario.**

Photo: Jean Cooling

Fast forward to 2004. After years of persuasion (none of it in his dentist's chair) Robin got Toronto Morris Men to visit to England. Greensleeves figured in their plans; they danced at our Chipperfield weekend, whilst Bert Cleaver then conducted them on a tour of the North Country. Returning south, the Toronto men danced with Greensleeves in Wimbledon and with Datchet Border Morris in Windsor before flying home. Although Greensleeves were surprised that so few of the Toronto side were either mounties or lumberjacks, we got on well with them, probably because of similar attitudes to the drink-dance balance. A return fixture was planned, with the Mill Race Folk Festival at Cambridge, Ontario being an appropriate event, as it fell within school holidays.

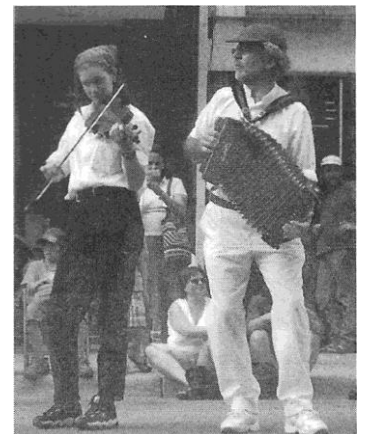
Mill Race turned out to be rather different from UK folk festivals. Firstly, there were hardly any folkies, largely because it was organised by the city as a tourist attraction. In fact, many of the audience were there by chance, and few had any idea about Morris. Secondly, performing sides

got paid. Well, paid modestly. As well as with Toronto Morris Men, we danced with Handsome Molly, a mixed side from Princeton, New Jersey who were inspired by Seven Champions and like them use an unaccompanied vocalist; and Orange Peel, a mixed border side (well, no-one's perfect). Greensleeves' performance was well received: we've never previously been applauded for the single-overs in North Skelton: perhaps the audience did not believe we were going to make it over our own swords.

One of the attractions of the Mill Race for the Toronto men was that Cambridge had one of Ontario's few proper pubs. the Golden Kiwi. They evinced some surprise that a Canadian pub serving English beer was run by a New Zealander. However, Greensleeves saw nothing odd in being served Fuller's London Pride by an antipodean: in south west London it is unusual for a pub *not* to be staffed by kiwis.

A day's R&R saw us sitting around Robin's garden, which not only accommodated a swimming pool but also an international volleyball court.

On Monday, a Canadian bank holiday, Greensleeves spent a morning doing touristy things at Niagara. We were not surprised to learn that the falls are retreating inland by several centimetres each year: who wouldn't want to get away from their extremely tacky surroundings? In the afternoon we met up again with Toronto to dance at Niagara-on-the-Lake. During the first show we added an interesting new figure to North Skelton: completely dropping a sword, stepping over it and picking it up again. Luckily we didn't perform the sword again, as we would have had to repeat the new figure to prove it was part of the dance. Two stops were enough on this tour, as in August Ontario has two sorts of weather: the very-hot-and-humid and the extremely-hot-and-humid. Toronto Morris Men have a worthy tradition: immediately they stop dancing their bag is taken to premises selling liquor (apparently a North American term roughly translated as 'drink'). Greensleeves saw no reason to alter this quaint colonial practice. Phase two of the tour saw Greensleeves amongst even more maple leaves in the



**Robin Harrison plus unnamed fiddle player**

Photo: Liz Jeffries

country to the north of Toronto. Bert Cleaver has relatives near the town of Orillia on Lake Couchiching (not too difficult to spell if you know when to stop). Jason and Linda did not just arrange some dancing spots for us, they actually built us one. Our first, mid-morning, spot by the lake was pleasant but unproductive bag-wise, as those who had come to swim with the beavers or walk their huskies had neglected to bring with them anything resembling dollar bills. So that lunchtime we had to buy our own beer. In the afternoon we put on a display for a children's summer music camp. They were an audience to move to Canada for: either their interest



***Linda enjoys being a victim. Note the dancing surface held together with duct tape.***



***Greensleeves concentrating (unsuccessfully) on not dropping a sword during North Skelton at Niagara-on-the Lake***

Photo: Liz Jeffries

in music kept them riveted for 30 minutes. or Canadian kids have better attention spans than ours. The day ended with a hog roast. to which Bert's relatives had invited all their Scottish dancing friends. Slightly overdone but tasty was our verdict on the unfortunate hog who, as a vegetarian, was named Gerald in honour of our bagman (another plant eater, and the first to expect to be eaten if ever Greensleeves' plane crashes into the Amazonian jungle).

Gerald certainly gave the audience an appetite for English Morris. And our hosts,

unable to find a suitable flat surface for our dancing, had constructed one from plywood sheets held together with duct tape. During our dancing 'Vandals of Hammerwich', Greensleeves' were somewhat surprised by Jason's retriever walking up to the set: like most Canadians, he doesn't like people fighting each other.

A stop next day at the museum devoted to humorist Stephen Leacock confirmed that Canadian audiences were polite, well-mannered and interested in what we were doing. Indeed, the whole trip convinced us that the country's

Photo: Dulcie Edwards

reputation for friendliness and hospitality is well deserved. And unlike the majority of the inhabitants of North America, they have a proper sense of their own place in the world. During several memorable song and music sessions shared between the sides, one of the Toronto men's most popular song was the alternative Canadian national anthem. Its sentiment was that 'our economy is rotten, our army's a joke, but Canada is really big - in fact the world's second biggest country. And if Russia keeps getting smaller, we'll become the biggest (as

long as we keep Quebec).'

But here is a mystery. Walking through Canada's towns and driving along its highways, one is hard pressed to distinguish its tawdry commercialism from that of the USA. When everyone in Canada is justifiably suspicious of their neighbour to the south, why are they all so keen to emulate it when they have so much of their own that is individual and attractive?

Greensleeves had a delightful time amongst the maple leaves. Apart from one of our cars being narrowly missed by an Air France plane missing the runway at Toronto airport, an emergency landing at Montreal on the way home, and a regrettable incident with leg and a Quebecois kerb, it passed without untoward incident. There were no audible rows, little blood or beer was spilt, and no divorces reported so far. Greensleeves would like to thank all Toronto Morris Men and their families, with especial thanks to Robin, Marlene, Richard and Rachel Harrison, and indeed to Canadians in general. Thank you for having us.

Roy Fenton is a member of Greensleeves Morris Men



***An attentive young audience learns how to make a sword lock***

Photo: Dave Legg

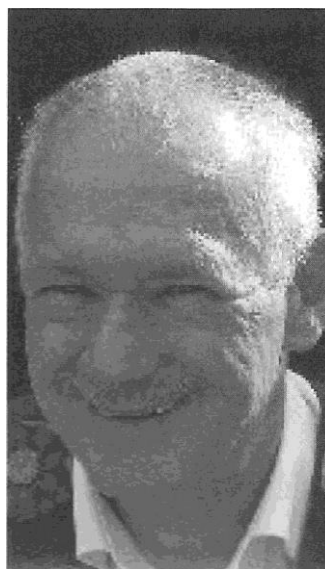
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# Jigs Instruction Weekend

by Pete Philp

**20-22 January 2006**

According to last year's report, the first thing that happens at a Jig Instructional is the appointment of the reporter - well nothing has changed. Before I had got halfway through supper on the Friday night Geoff Jerram was suggesting that, as this was my first instructional, I would be the ideal candidate. By Sunday lunch I hoped that he may have forgotten, but his final words to me were "I don't want a list of names and dances; I was here so I know who did what, just write about what you thought of the weekend". So this report is not for you Geoff, nor is for all the others who were there, the majority of whom had been to many previous Jig Instructionals. No, this report is aimed at those who have never been and need a little more information and encouragement to perhaps try it for themselves. The event is normally held on a weekend in January in the Village Hall at Sutton Bonnington, and hosted by Dolphin Morris Men. It is run very much on the lines of a Ring Meeting, starting at 6:00 p.m. on Friday and ending after lunch on Sunday. The accommodation is of the indoor camping variety, and if, like me, you have only experienced this during the summer months I would advise you that it is similar, but very much colder. All meals are included in the cost, and the only additional expense is for beer, either in the hall or at the King's Head which is 100 yards up the road. The Feast on the Saturday night, in kit to lend a sense of occasion, is exactly as you would expect at a Morris Ring event with a few formalities and a lot of drinking and singing. The festivities continued afterwards in the King's Head where the new licensing laws have been embraced with enthusiasm. Over the years I have attended many work related training courses, and I assumed that this weekend would follow a similar format. No doubt many of you have had similar experiences - "Give a five minute talk introducing yourself to the other delegates and explain what you hope to learn from the weekend" and of course the dreaded "demonstration" on the final day. I am delighted to be able to tell you that such teaching methods are not used at Ring instructionals. The atmosphere was very friendly and relaxed. The jigs were explained, demonstrated, and broken down to their component parts. We were then encouraged to learn all the elements and gradually build them into the complete jig. There is no pressure of any kind, you can watch, listen or video the whole thing. This year there were eight workshops, each lasting between one and one and a half hours, spread over the three days. Six of the workshops dealt with specific traditions, one on presentation of the Morris, and a final reprise/review. The traditions covered this year were Headington, Oddington/Ascot, Fieldtown, Bledington, Sherborne and Bampton. Apparently previous years have covered as many as nine and the traditions change from year to year. For me the selection was fine, two traditions that I danced regularly, two that I have danced, but not for many years and two that I have never danced before. As this was my first instructional I elected to try and absorb as much as possible and sample all six workshops - not a good idea! Predictably, the two traditions I had never tried were most



**Pete Philp**

Photo: Bob Mann  
difficult. In fact by the time I got to the second (Sherborne) I had realised the error of my ways and just listened and watched. Surprisingly, the two traditions that I found easiest were the two that I knew, but did not dance on a regular basis. In the traditions that I dance every week I had great difficulty in coping with the differences between mine and the teacher's style. There was no suggestion that what we were doing was wrong, but the combination of a change of pace, and subtle changes to hand and feet movements meant that I spent far too much time thinking about what I was doing, and we all know what happens then! However, the notes provided at the end of the session were excellent and no doubt after a few weeks practise at home, the whole thing will come together in time for the next dance season. The final two sessions on Sunday morning were very good. The first on Presentation was a new venture and provided a lot of thought provoking ideas. There were also a lot of demonstrations and I don't think I was alone in feeling that more could have been achieved by a discussion, with all members able to add their

own thoughts on the subject. Nevertheless the session was a worthwhile exercise. The final reprise/review provided a good opportunity to talk about the weekend and suggest ways that it might be improved in future years. To be honest there was, in my opinion, very little room for improvement. The teachers, musicians and demonstrators were all excellent. The quality and quantity of the food throughout the weekend was superb and the feast was the finest I have experienced for many a year. The accommodation was basic, but perfectly adequate and the timetable was adhered to with almost military precision. I think that it would be helpful if a list of the traditions to be covered was included with the initial invitation to attend. Also, starting the weekend with a brief chat about the format and expectation of the workshops would be reassuring for newcomers. But, back to the original question - what did I think about the weekend? I found it very enjoyable although quite mentally and physically taxing. At times I felt very confident, at others times I felt like a complete beginner, not a bad thing for a foreman to experience. I met a lot of old friends and made a few new ones. I learnt a lot about some traditions that I had not previously explored and even more about my own dancing. I picked up some very useful ideas about teaching the dance and presentation. All in all, a very good experience. But did I learn to dance a jig? Well no, but then I was never meant to, not on my first instructional!

Pete Philp is Squire of Trigg Morris Men

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# Tarka's Great China Adventure

by Keith Lascelles

Baz Bix, who had worked and travelled in China had long suggested a morris tour to China. The decision to go ahead came when Phil Heming incredibly generously offered to pay the air fares. Then the real hard work began; over a year of planning and preparation, including a reconnaissance trip by Baz to China as part of the "Far Flung Folk" project. The underlying philosophy was not to do stage shows, but to meet the people by dancing in schools, parks and with local dance groups.

Last September, the dream of the trip of a lifetime became a reality as seventeen members of Tarka Morris Men from Bideford checked in at Heathrow Airport, bound for Beijing. This included the aforesaid Phil Heming, who had managed to lose his passport, complete with visa only a week before. The first opportunity to dance came at Heathrow where the security staff were puzzled by all the bells in our bags, and the musical instruments. A dance convinced them that we really were a dance team.

Our first taste of China came at a restaurant close to the railway station in Beijing, where a superb meal for twenty cost the equivalent of £32 in total. Not quite London prices. To thank the bemused staff, we danced outside the restaurant.

The lack of a flight at the right time meant travelling to Guilin by train, a mere 1200 miles and 26 hours. The staff at the railway station were unimpressed by an impromptu dance, and escorted us off the concourse. We had a man with a gun who stayed with us in the sleeping



*Dancing at Guilin*

coach or restaurant car, we think to ensure we did not suffer the unwanted attention of opportunist thieves. The restaurant car was more geared to people who drank beer as an accompaniment to their food, rather than people who ate food as an accompaniment to their beer, and so the supply ran out. No problem — we just jumped off at every station and bought a crate of beer.

Then on to Yangshuo, our destination for most of the stay. Yangshuo is a popular tourist destination, as it is on the Li river, in karst country. That means it is surrounded by huge limestone pinnacles. The first evening, after 51 hours travelling, set the tone for the week; another splendid meal, dancing in the main thoroughfare Xi Jie or West Street, and an outdoor music and song session. Having nine musicians in the party meant that we could create a passable sound. All lubricated with pijiū, the one word that everyone had practised assiduously and used extensively. The next six days passed in a pleasant blur of dancing, eating, drinking and sightseeing. Locally, we danced again in the town,

in the local park, and in two schools, including involving the pupils in folk dancing.

The visit of a group of traditional dancers from England caused a minor problem for the people of Yangshuo, as they had no equivalent dance group to join with us. So for the previous six months, older dancers had been training a group of youngsters, sorting out musicians and costumes for Chinese traditional dancing. We gave two shows with these dancers, musicians and a Chinese opera group. The first was at a civic reception, the second was a concert on

the Saturday night on a stage set up in the town square, with an audience of the best part of a thousand people and national television coverage. The biggest problem was that the temporary stage was designed for slender Chinese girls gliding gently and gracefully, not for a pounding by morris dancers with a combined weight approaching 100 stone, and the plywood stage threatened to disintegrate. Despite this, the event was deemed such a huge success that the townspeople are going to organise a concert every Saturday during the summer months. The fact that our visit catalysed local people to rediscover their own culture has to be one of the big pluses of the trip.

We met up with more local dancers in the nearby town of Fuli. There was a timeless feeling as our boats beached on the river bank next to basking water buffalo. We were met at the town gate by the dancers, musicians and their dragons, who led us in procession to the huge sun-baked market square, where we shared a long display.

Two points were most obvious here. Firstly, the advantage of having so many dancers during





## ....Tarka in China (continued)

the long spot here; six men could dance whilst another six had a breather and drank copious amounts of water. And there was usually someone out of action, assessing the beneficial effects of Imodium. Secondly, Chinese dances tell a story, for example a morality tale about a farmer, his wife and two dragons. So we were frequently asked what a particular dance meant. So what does "The old woman tossed up a blanket" mean? Try explaining that it is the whole style of dancing that has a meaning, rather than individual dances.

More leisurely activities included a bicycle trip, bamboo rafting, climbing Moon mountain, going down a cave,



*Dancing in West Street Yangshuo*

and applauded their music, and were even more surprised when we offered to play some music. Inevitably, after a bit of retuning, this developed into a jam session for everybody.

Back to Beijing again, this time flying. Here we had the most memorable meal; a Mongolian

international incident by trying to dance in Tiananmen Square, we contented ourselves with dancing in the nearby Jingshan Park. Dancing on The Great Wall was a must, although we know not a first. As well as dancing on a rebuilt part, we headed for an unreconstructed section. There we scrambled to the top of an old fort where there was just room for us to dance. No audience, just us, the mountains, and The Great Wall snaking off over both horizons. A private celebration; our last dancing in China and a vindication of what we had set out to do.

General impressions? Some of the party had visited China previously, for others China

was a new experience. But we all remember the warmth of the reception and interest from the local population; the interesting food and drink; the posing for photographs, where James Boyle (young and eligible), John Blackburn and Alan Whitbread (old and bearded) were in greatest demand. And The Great Wall wasn't quite the last dance of the trip. Foreman John Blackburn danced a jig in the aircraft galley at 32,000 feet somewhere over Mongolia.

We have to thank Phil Heming of Bear Street Pharmacy for his generous financial contribution, Baz Bix who did the lion's share of the organisation, Shelley, who organised our programme in Yangshuo; the Bideford Bridge Trust, Arts and Business Working Together and the East of the Orient Restaurant for financial support.

Keith Lascelles  
On behalf of Tarka Morris Men (Keith is a member of Sweyn's Ey)  
Photos by George Collett, Baz Bix and Glen Bower.



watching cormorant fishing and attending an amazing waterside son et lumiere show, with a cast of 600. We left Yangshuo never establishing the role of "pyjama man", a man of some authority who just seemed to be everywhere that we were.

Next to Guilin for a day, where we danced in the Culture Park, with semi-professional local dancers. At the evening meal, the restaurant musicians, playing traditional Chinese instruments, seemed surprised that we actually listened to

Feast shared with some very gifted Mongolian traditional musicians who also happen to be a celebrated pop group. The main course was two roasted sheep, blessed with water and the wearing of blue silk scarves before being served. We drank tea with mares milk and salted yak butter, and numerous toasts with a fiery spirit. We spent another evening in Beijing in the courtyard of the International Youth Hostel; music and singing with people of many nationalities.

Rather than risk causing an



*Tarka in China*