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No 53



## Saddleworth Rushcart 2006

by Dave Duncan

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This year's Rushcart was another resounding success. We had 22 sides visit us including many old friends like Helmond Morris Men from Holland who last came several years ago. New sides this year were Colchester, Eynsham, Leicester and Rutland.

This was my twelfth Rushcart as a Saddleworth Man and my turn to be Jockey. It is the responsibility of the jockey to name the cart and design and make the front cover sheet. This year the 'Cart was christened "Victoria Cross" to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this great British medal; what an honour to be jockey!

On top of the Rushcart after all my years in Morris I feel that I've almost done the full gambit having danced Cotswold (with Muddiford & Milltown) & Clog with a bit of Rapper thrown in.

The Rushcart presented to the public on Rushcart Saturday morning represents three weeks of hard work by the Saddleworth lads. We started cutting rushes on the first Saturday in August, always the hard bit, but we somehow managed to get the job done. On Friday 25<sup>th</sup> with the Cart trimmed out with purple heather from the moor we await the arrival of our Morris friends at our 'meeting & greeting' in the Waggon Inn, Uppermill, helped along by "Duncan's Dilemma" a beer brewed especially for me by Pete Percival of Greenfield Brewery.

On Rushcart Saturday morning (2nd Saturday after the 12<sup>th</sup>



Dave Duncan, Jockey and below in Delph

on to High Street and, with two beats of the drum, sixteen Saddleworth men dance the 'Uppermill Rushcart' dance. The weekend has finally started and I climb the ladder to my saddle on top of the Rushcart. What an honour. With 17 stangs' on the front ropes of the 'Cart and 11 to the rear now filled with Morris men we set off on the eight mile walk of the villages of Saddleworth led by the music and drums of the massed Morris musicians, dancing at every village in turn. We return to Uppermill at 6.30 pm (ish) and the 'Cart is parked for the night behind the Commercial. On Sunday morning we set off for the long pull up to



August) with Morris men from all over England (& Holland!) and a large crowd gathering in the square, the 'Cover' is finally revealed. The annual Saddleworth team photo is taken, the 'Cart is moved from behind the Commercial Hotel

St. Chad's Parish Church for the Rush bearing Service where, in keeping with tradition, rushes mixed with fragrant herbs and flowers are spread on the Church floor; though these days they are restricted to the stone aisle. All previous

*continued on page 2*

## Saddleworth continued



*Britannia Coconutters outside Saddleworth Church*



*A Rushcart virgin*

*Dirty Betty*

years covers are hung in the Church. After the service there is dancing all afternoon outside the Church Inn and the Cross Keys following which there are the gurning and worst singer competitions. Unfortunately, the wrestling had to be cancelled this year as the ground was too wet.

To conclude, I want to thank all the Men who came and pulled my Cart around Saddleworth. It was great to see old friends like Barry Care, our honorary 'Dirty Bet', Steve Adamson (now BFB by name only and who walked the whole route for the first time) and many more who support us every year. To sides that have never been to a Rushcart weekend; give it a go. You'll have a wonderful time and we look forward to seeing you in the Waggon.

Saddleworth Jockey 2006



*Jockey in Deiph*

*Saddleworth Processional Dance*



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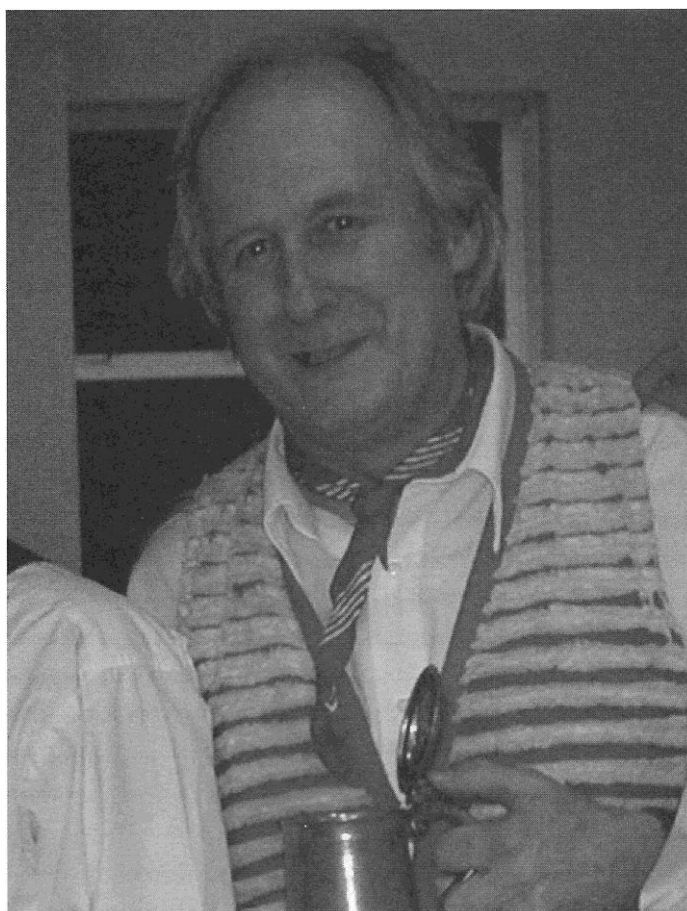
## SQUIRE'S FEEDBACK

My primary task on taking on this job was to stimulate recruitment and to begin the process that would have in place, by the time of the London 2012 Olympics, sufficient young sides able to perform and make the kind of impact, in terms of our national identity and culture, on the world stage of the opening and closing ceremonies and related cultural events leading up to the Olympic Games. The fact that 2012 is the 400th anniversary of the Cotswold Olympics or Dover Games near Chipping Campden and that the French revival Games were inspired by the Olympic Games Society founded in Much Wenlock in 1850, gives us a cultural and national link into the competitive and cultural spirit of the people's games and activities of the Cotswolds and Border areas, in particular and by association to the industrial regions and communities of the South West, the Midlands and the North West and North East.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG SIDES

An audit of the number of younger dancers and sides operating in the various regions and the recent recruitment successes of individual sides is now well under way. The deadline

for this information to be in to me has been extended until the end of November to give some Bagmen and Area reps time to get this material together. Once we have a national and regional picture of the demographics of sides and where successful recruitment is taking place we can use this information, expertise and young dancers to go into schools and clubs to demonstrate and stimulate



*Paul Reece at Winchester Morris Men's feast Feb 2006*

Photo: H Stevenson

interest in dancing our dances. The fact that our traditional dances are not taught as part of the National Curriculum in schools is a disgrace and I, with your help, intend to change this. Steve Lowe of Jockey has raised a side in his school and I have been delivering Morris instruction to a 6th Form B. Tech exam dance group in my school. There is a need and we should be filling it.

In Roger Comley's South Midlands Area, Icknield Way with its large 18-30 contingent, has recently had successes with training scouts to Morris dance for the Centenary of the Scout Movement celebrations in Switzerland for 2007. This is something that other sides could emulate. Kings Stone Rapper has even been delivering long distance

learning of their dances to students from the United States and in Germany. In Duncan Broomhead's North West Area, Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men have 2 qualified Primary and 2 qualified Secondary teachers in their ranks with 4 dancers under 11 and 4 under 18 and a recruitment record of 5 new members in the last 2 years. Banks Lane Junior School, Offerton, Stockport have 65 active dancers under 11 to display standard, 60 of which have been recruited in the last 2 years under the Fossbrooks Folk Educational Trust programme. Similar programmes exist in East Anglia for the development of Molly Dancing. Tap into your regional network. If communication and help is not forthcoming let us know about it.

Most of these developments, it is hoped, will be shown in our Biennial Showcase Event in Birmingham, which the Morris Ring is hosting, where the theme will be The Promotion of Youth and the Future of the Morris. These showcase events will move round the country, Liverpool 2008, Cambridge or Peterborough 2010 leading us up to London and the Olympics in 2012 when we will again host the event.

### YOUTH AND THE FUTURE OF THE MORRIS: THE JOINT MORRIS ORGANISATIONS BIENNIAL SHOWCASE EVENT BIRMINGHAM SATURDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2007.

Birmingham City Council has generously made available, for the use of the 3 Morris Organisations, all of its superb central public Squares and the New Street pedestrian area and the Cathedral in St Phillip's Square. This is sufficient for up to a maximum of 60 sides representing all of our dance traditions, including youth and school sides. The Museums, Education, Cultural and Local Television services have been approached to help promote and co-ordinate displays, information and events concerning our native dance traditions and Morris sides, in particular those that abut or are part of the Birmingham area. The intention is to have a series of central satellite dance stations either adjacent or within very close walking distance of the main arena dance station, all contained in the traffic free square mile of the central area of the city, where everything they will need will be very close

at hand and will be listed in an information pack. Jockey Morris Men assisted by Green Man will be your on site hosts and guides

Depending on numbers, all sides should get a chance to perform a show dance in the main arena, if they wish, as well as doing less formal, street and satellite square performances as part of small groups of sides occupying slots of 30 to 40 minutes between 10am and 3pm. All sides are encouraged to provide taster sessions, instruction and information on their dances. Above all we are attempting to attract the young through vibrant, attractive showcase displays. If your side fits into this category and you have young dancers able to show what they can do, then this is the event for you. 'Your country needs you!'

Your costs are purely those of getting there and what you wish to spend on food and refreshment. Car parking suggestion will be included in the information pack, but rail and waterway connections are excellent and bring you into the heart of the city and our dance locations if you do not want to drive into the city centre. If you think that your side is interested and you want to be part of this seminal event, if you want further information or wish to pass on ideas and suggestions, then please contact me.

### **THE JOINT MORRIS ORGANISATIONS PUBLIC RELATIONS WORKSHOP RICKMANSWORTH**

Most of us suffer from not having the skills, knowledge and contacts to promote, in an effective manner, the Morris in general and your side in particular. When your recruitment poster campaign and flyers fail and the media continues to rubbish and

poke fun at the mere notion of Morns dancing let alone it being elevated to the status of a national cultural icon it is time to rethink, regroup and think survival and infiltration tactics, I mean psychological warfare, product placement, ideological shift and image change.

In a one hour taster session condensed from a one to one and a half day workshop by Steve Rowley our group was galvanised into one mind and purpose by the methods and the how to do it of Morris promotion, recruitment, funding and using the media to get our message across. Surprise, surprise, all bar one of those who attended were trying to reach the same goal, namely recruitment and attracting young members and how to elevate the Morris into the cultural consciousness of not only the man in the street, but those makers and shakers within society who largely affect the way the man in the street thinks and who occupy the larger stage.

Any side and area representative worth their salt needed to have a representative here to share ideas, successful strategies and to learn how to use this powerful tool to grow their side and the place of the Morris in the cultural consciousness of their region, the nation and beyond.

It is hoped to run a further extended workshop or series of workshops starting in the Spring. If there is enough interest these could be based regionally. Duncan Broomhead's Adlington Morris Men, to name just one side, are producing some really exciting professional promotional and recruitment material. Read their thoughts on their recent recruitment campaign as to what works and what doesn't. We need to share and build on the expertise we have if we are to successfully move forward

and recruit new members.

In terms of public relations we have the people in our ranks that can turn around the promotion and image of the Morris. The installing of a public relations and funding officer for the Morris is long overdue. We need to put together a team of advisors to assist us in our quest for improving our image and dealing with the media. On the national and international stage we need to combine forces with the other Morris organisations if we are to be noticed and are going to be strong enough to regenerate ourselves sufficiently to secure our future and to put ourselves across with one voice.

There are vigorous regional Morris related dance traditions that have survived elsewhere and are now growing in areas such as Catalonia and the Basque region, North Africa, Romania, Turkey and India. In 2009, the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Morris Ring, there are plans for a dance event and symposium to be held in Spain and Britain that brings together these traditions and associated strands of the wider and earlier Morris forms. We need to learn from and support each other if we are to grow.

### **THE FUTURE OF THE MORRIS RING MEETING**

One of the interesting things about heading our organisation is that you pick up on a national scale, either directly or indirectly, the moans, niggles and downright dissatisfaction with events that members have been looking forward to for 6 months or more only to find that they have paid upwards of £60 to be stuck in a bus for the best part of a Summer Saturday. When those moans are by seasoned and respected Morris Men who

don't normally have a bad word to say about anybody or anything you quickly sit up and take notice.

There seems to be a growing band of men and sides who do not attend Morris Ring meetings and conversely there tends to be the same core of sides and faces that always seem to attend them. Whether economic constraints combined with an increasingly older clientele, or sheer tiredness of the same old formula, I would like to open up a debate through the pages of 'The Morris Circular' of your views as to what works for you, or what you are looking for and what you are keen to avoid.

The officers have been working hard since the Summer to vet next years Morris Ring Meetings to see if they are financially viable, that the tours are not too long, too crammed, too dependent on vintage transport, especially of the double-decker variety, crawling over hilly routes, disgorging late and tired, overheated and frustrated men to shopping and garden centres miles from a pub and to lunch spots an hour late, with at the end of the tour a tally of just three dances danced by those members of larger sides. Only to be followed by an interminable feast with over long speeches and again little serious dancing.

If this is your view then let us have your constructive suggestions for improving the situation or developing an alternative. Just because that is how it has always been, it does not make it forever the right way. Practices that are found to be outmoded can be changed. With all the guidelines in the world and advice and undertakings given in the end it is up to the host club. When things go wrong, or plans do not work, as they can, especially through



unforeseen circumstances, then we own up and say we got it wrong and try and do something about it. At the end of the day we are all giving up our free time to do something that we believe is important, it is not our main job, we often are not trained to do the job we have been

asked to do and we do not get paid for it.

If the fellowship of the Morris Ring is the all important accompaniment to the dancing and playing and Morris Ring meetings are the natural expression of this fellowship then we have an

increasing number of people who are losing out or are hopefully doing something more exciting. Take the formality out of Morris Ring meetings, make them more relaxed so that everyone has a chance to enjoy each others company, the dancing and a song or two in a convivial

atmosphere and attractive locations and you have something approaching the best days and weekends of dance. Somehow we have to strive to get it right and arrive at the right balance. It is over to you for your suggestions, don't hold back.



*Green Man....*



*Greensleeves....*

*and various musicians at Greensleeves Morris Ring Meeting*

Photos: H Stevenson



## Letters To The Editor

### The Ridgewell Files

No specific letters this issue, although I received many from Gordon Ridgewell, accompanied by numerous newspaper cuttings. As reported in the last issue, I felt that The Ridgewell Files, whilst of some import to the clubs included, local sides know of it and is or will be of little relevance to others. Whilst Gordon's motive's maybe of relevance to him as an historic record and are archived, I have assured him that all Morris Ring Publications are archived so its addition to the Bagman's Newsletter serves that purpose. As a matter of record, I would argue as a collection of cuttings it is incomplete and has a (obvious) bias to East Anglia. If I am inundated with letters demanding its immediate re-instatement I will of course oblige.

### 50 years a 'Nutter' Ron Shufflebottom receives citation



Photo by kind permission of Derek Schofield (Manley Morris Dancers) see below right, next page

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

At the 2006 ARM there had been some misunderstanding on a trivial issue and Brian Pollard read out a letter as an example of 'misunderstanding'. Prior to the letter, Brian gave some background leading up to the letter:

"A young man wanted to purchase a gift for his new sweetheart, as a Christmas present. As they had not been dating for very long, and after careful consideration, he decided that a pair of gloves would strike the right note-not too romantic and not too personal.

Accompanied by his sweetheart's sister he went to Harrods and bought a pair of white gloves. The sister bought

a pair of panties for herself at the same time.

During the wrapping the shop assistant mixed up the two items and the sister got the gloves and the sweetheart the panties. Without checking the contents the young man sealed the package and sent it to his sweetheart with the following note:

Dear Maria

I chose these because I noticed that you are not in the habit of wearing any when you go out in the evening. If it had not been for your sister I would have chosen the 'long ones with the buttons, but she wears the short ones that are easier to remove. These are a delicate shade, but the lady I bought them from

showed me a pair that she had been wearing for three weeks and they were hardly soiled at all. I had her try yours on for me and she looked really smart in them even though they were a little tight on her.

She also told me that her pair rubs her ring which helps her keep it clean and shiny: in fact she had not needed to wash it since she had begun wearing them. I wish I was there to put them on to see you for the first time, as no doubt many hands will touch them before I see you again. When you take them off remember to blow into them before putting them away as they will naturally be a little damp from wearing. Just think how many lips will kiss them during the coming

years.

I hope you will wear them on Friday night.

All my love

Brian

ps The latest style is to wear them folded down with a little fur showing."

So, that leaves me to warn you to be careful when choosing your Christmas presents this year and try to avoid any misunderstandings. I have no idea what the consequences of that letter were, but let's hope they eventually came to terms with it. I understand Brian's been happily married for many years.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year & good dancing



# The Morris Ring Circular Editorial



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The Squire's comments in this issue are his first and address a number of issues: recruitment of youngsters; 'PR' or image of the morris and Morris Ring Meetings.

On the question of youth recruitment the number of clubs having success is to be applauded as is the grand objective relating to the 2012 Olympic Games. Having a fixed date helps focus the mind and enables this common objective to galvanise many a member into positive action. Many Clubs have rejuvenated themselves by planning an event celebrating their birthday. This Circular would welcome reports of individual club's success as well as a report of the Joint morris organisations public re-

lations workshop.

On the subject of PR, there is already an Appointed Officer in this role and its benefit should be questioned along with the Squire's thoughts in this much needed discussion on this subject. The only recent talk that has come from this area has been the Arboretum memorial, but what this has to do with morris, recruitment and positive PR raises questions if only of relevance. Finally, Morris Ring Meetings. The massed displays have grown too long. The Squire should start to exercise his authority: select only the best for shows and introduce a time limit, say 3/4 hour: leave the public wanting more.

Tours should be varied and

lunch of similar standard in relaxed atmosphere. Whilst conscious of the need to keep collections as high as possible, it should not lead to lengthy spells at shopping centres and high streets. The dancers want to enjoy themselves and tours can make or break the weekend. Specific Morris Ring Meetings have not been named because this is not a backward looking exercise, but most men will at some stage have been to Meetings where some or all of the examples have been experienced.

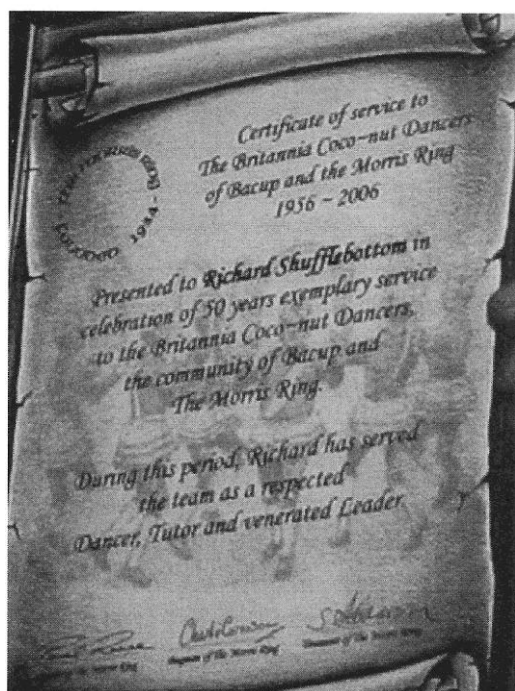
I have not received any reports of the 2006 Morris Ring Meetings, despite many promises. I have included photos of Greensleeves Morris Ring

Meeting, but only because I happened to be there. There is a double spread of the event plus photos throughout this issue, filling in after other articles. Please, do write a report; you will be surprised how many of our readers appreciate it.

Finally, this issue contains the first advertisement for a considerable time. These are to be welcomed both to contribute to the cost of publication and distribution as well as assist in minimising members' subscriptions. Details of advertising rates are given below, with other reminders of The Morris Ring events.

We wish Hastings' Jack-In-The Green event well.

## The Citation received by Ron Shufflebottom from Steve Adamson, Treasurer, the Morris Ring



## Repetition

You could also call it Diary:

Jigs Instructional 19-21 Jan '07  
Geoff Jerram:  
[gjerram@onetel.com](mailto:gjerram@onetel.com)

Musicians Instructional 23-2  
Feb '07:  
[cdumont@blueyonder.c.uk](mailto:cdumont@blueyonder.c.uk)

### The Morris Ring Meeting 07 & other events

ARM 2-4 March Leicester

Birmingham Biannual  
Showcase 14 April Organised  
by the three Joint Morris  
organisations

Kennet 50th Birthday cam trip  
Reading-Bath 5-12 May

Morris Ring Meetings

Thaxted 1-3 June Ripley

29 June- 1 July Stafford

20-22 July Tonbridge 31

Aug - 2 Sept

Details/contacts via  
The Morris Ring web site:  
<http://www.themorrisring.org/>

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.



# Rye Weekend 2006

by Peter Brunton

The Rye weekend is an annual event run by East Surrey Morris Men over the Spring Bank Holiday. It is based at the Cock Inn (previously the Cock Horse Inn after having been the Cock Inn) in the village of Peasmarsh, a few miles from Rye so is also known as the Peasmarsh weekend. There is no Friday Ale, no feast, no speeches and, until recent years, no coaches. The only accommodation is a field with grass and buttercups (sometimes with added mud) up to your armpits and, if that doesn't suit, attendees need to find B & B. On top of that, they are subject to appallingly late nights, music sessions and, if camping, a dawn chorus louder than Keith Gamble's snoring and capable of waking Bob Davies.

Naturally, there are compensations. First and foremost, there are no speeches but, as bonuses, it is a family weekend, there is no attendance fee (so I don't have the Bagman beating me up in an apparent attempt to clear the national debt) the camping field is behind a pub serving food and Harvey's Ales, there are music sessions, campers awake to wonderful dawn choruses and there is much glorious countryside to admire. In case you were wondering, there is a fair bit of Morris dancing as well. In short, the weekend is like no other and I have missed only one since 1967.

In recent years, I have taken a caravan which is useful to sleep in but essential to carry Ray Fuller's clobber and Old Tom, the Club horse. This year, we were a bit late (Jenny, my wife was away playing quartets at a wedding) and so it was probably about 6 o'clock when I finished the first pint and went off to set up



*Adelaide at Battle Abbey*

the caravan. Then it was back to the bar for food, beer and talk until "nearly tomorrow". The guest sides present this year were Greensleeves, Wath-upon-Dearne and Adelaide Morris Men. Our Australian friends were on an extended trip to England to take in as much Morris dancing as they could. Consequently, we were particularly pleased they opted for the Rye (Peasmarsh) weekend as part of their trip. Considering they were off to Thaxted the following weekend, two more different types of meetings are hard to imagine. By the way, the Squire of the Morris Ring was also present — just thought I should mention it.

Saturday dawned (did it have any choice?) bright and dry. Apparently, it had been considered prudent, so far as was reasonably practicable, to protect the integrity of the Adelaide Morris Men's dancing by the simple expedient of driving the Australians around in our cars and putting everyone else on the bus. Consequently, while people milled around the bus and cars await-

ing allocation, I contemplated the prospect of a beerless day ahead. However, I must have done someone a kindness in the recent past because one of my allocated passengers preferred to drive. Naturally I expressed outrage at this but was overruled. So, with concertina and tankard at the ready, Ray riding shotgun with the map and Adelaide Bob driving, away we went to Battle Abbey for our first display of the day. I cannot remember how many years I have been to this site.



For many, we danced on the slope outside the main gate, but latterly we have been able to dance on a substantially flat surface a few yards away. It's better really, of course but I miss the challenge (now passed on to newer dancers) of performing Leapfrog. Uphill was hard work but downhill was the true challenge — one vertical foot upwards and about ten downwards followed by four capers and holding the finish position on one foot — and looking cheerful. Ah! Those were the days.

Three dances each later under the backdrop of the Abbey gates, we were on our way to Sedlescombe Green. Again a beautiful spot and a small, but appreciative audience augmented, this year, by a bridal party based at the hotel nearby. Naturally, we looked after the bride and groom the Adelaide men provided guard of honour and Lee, the



*Wath at Battle Abbey*

East Surrey Head Fool (ESHF) provided entertainment for adults and children alike.

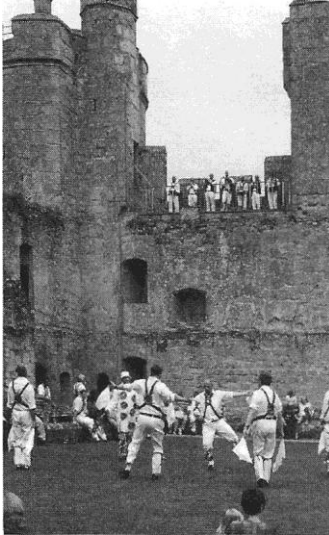
Our lunch spot was Bodian Castle with its neighbour The Castle Inn. Here, it was necessary to split the tour to aid the serving of food. We took the Adelaide men to pub first while Greensleeves and Wath went to the castle. The dancing spot at the pub is cosy without being small and both the beer and food is good. *Adelaide Morris providing the guard honour*



Having replenished bodily stock and performed several dances each, it was our turn to trudge up the hill, around to the far side of the moat and across the causeway into the castle.

In past years, this has been a

*East Surrey at Bodiham Castle*



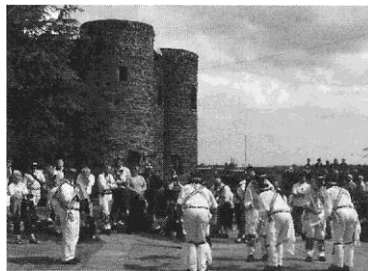
spectacular dancing spot as we have been able to dance on one of the large areas of lawn and even to put the East Surrey musicians in the battlements for added style. Unfortunately, new grass seed last year and too much mud this year, meant that we had to use corner areas of the castle. Whilst this was a misfortune, we had an appreciable and responsive audience for our half-hour show. It's fingers crossed for next year and, in particular, for the following year as that will be the occasion of the fiftieth Rye (Peasmarsh) weekend. Fingers crossed! That's nothing to what Bob Cross must have been doing after an acorn was found to be lost from the Morris Ring bling. Whatever he did worked, however, and Bob was quickly reunited with said acorn. In truth, we were all delighted. (It was found by the fair Helen - whatever would Bob do without her?) So what went wrong after that? I don't know but I found myself stranded with Nick and Lorraine at the Castle Inn. We knew someone would be back

for us so it was just a case of waiting it out with a few pints of Shepherd Neame. And so it proved. Thank you Derek and thank you for not being too quick.

Of course, we missed the attractive very-long-standing spot at Biddenden Green as we arrived just in time for BGG but I suspect it was as good as ever judging by the number of people there.

Time again for another split in the tour with the coach going to Appledore and Stone while we went to The Bonny Cravat at Woodchurch and The Bell at Iden. This is the graveyard time of the day, of course, so we were pleased with the responses at both pubs. In any event, it's nice to be able to take it a bit easy for a few minutes. Then it was back to The Cock Inn for a meal in readiness for the last show of the day outside the pub with all teams taking part.

Quickly following the show, a music session started inside but I can't tell you much of what happened as I retired early (about 11 o'clock) and didn't hear a thing for many



*Adelaide at Ypres Tower hours.*

A few years ago, we discovered that very few of the congregation of Peasmarsh Church knew anything about us and so now the first stop on Sunday is at the church. Parking can be interesting but the location and reception is well worth a few minutes walk with tea and cakes as a bonus from some charming ladies. The first stop in the town of Rye is potentially the dancing highlight of the weekend as it is a massed show in the (roughly circular) car park of the famous

Mermaid Inn and is graced by the presence of the Mayor. Of course, much depends on the weather and this year, it was pretty good. Not only that, but I was reunited with Jenny and some very good friends of many years standing. It also meant that I had a co-driver for later — but, of course, she knew that.

Going back before my time on the Rye (Peasmarsh) weekend, the Club had been able to sit on the lawn of The Castle's beautiful garden, put on a show for a large, admiring audience and then have a few pints and a music session inside. All this seemed doomed about twenty years ago when the pub closed but the new owners not only allowed us to continue using their garden but provided tea, coffee, soft drinks and cakes as well. To say we are very grateful and lucky is the understatement of all time. Suffice, then, to say we were royally looked after yet again and, after presentation by the Club Squire of a token of thanks to the owners, we put on a massed show for the people of Winchelsea.

Our last touring spot of the day was at The Queen's Head in Icklesham. Travelling from Winchelsea, you can see it for miles as it is at the top of a hill with its name writ large upon its roof. It was here that we had the best entertainment of the weekend, however, as access to the pub was by a single track road with no passing spaces and the car park at the end was full. By the time everyone wanting to go in was in and everyone wanting to get out was out, there was time to admire the view with Rye in

*Horse Jumping*



the distance, for a short show and a meal before departure for the massed show back at The Cock.

As ever, there was much drinking and music-making to round off the day before we rushed off to bed in time for the dawn chorus.

And so to the final stop of the Rye (Peasmarsh) weekend at The Bull, Three Leg Cross. We have been using this pub for several years for all the right reasons. After drinks, food and a final show, it was time for prolonged farewells. Another great Morris weekend was over and it was time to go home or, in the cases of Jenny and myself, back to Peasmarsh for another night in the caravan. Ray back to his tent.

In fact, our weekend was not over as Ray had the bright idea of offering to take the Adelaide people to see a rather special pub at a place, too small to call a village, called Snargate. The offer was accepted and we duly made our way to Appledore where we turned right and followed the flats for a few miles. The Red Lion is frozen in the 1940s with beer on gravity, pictures of the wartime Land Army and pub games of the day. Its only concession to modernity is the automatic flush in the men's loo — when it rains, the water runs off the roof into the urinal.

We stayed there for an hour or so looking at the pictures and items of wartime England, playing the games of that time and supping the beer. If you are in the Rye area,

make a point of going there. It's well worth the effort and such gems have a disconcerting way of disappearing. Finally, we had to say farewell to the Adelaide folk. We hope they enjoyed our company as much as we enjoyed theirs.

Then — bed.

Then — home.

Peter Brunton is a member of East Surrey Morris Men

*The Cast at The Mermaid*



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## Plymouth Wander & Bask in Hungary... ...And Star on TV in Serbia

*by John Summerscales*

It was late September 2005 when Plymouth Morris Men (PMM) started to look at the possibility of attending the International County Wandering Festival based in Szeged - Hungary. We soon had a commitment to 18-25 July 2006 against a promise of airport transfers, hostel accommodation with 2 or 4 beds (bunks) per en-suite room, three meals a day, all entry fees paid and an English-speaking female guide for just 15 Euros/day. Accommodation was soon confirmed in Sotthalom - a pretty village with 4200 inhabitants some 30 kilometres from Szeged (county town of Csongrad in the heart of the great Hungarian Plain with a main road running straight from one horizon to the other and almost no traffic. The other side of the bargain was 4-6 performances of about 20-25 minutes on an open stage during the week. Having applied, we had confirmation that we were selected in November.

EasyJet eventually opened for booking Bristol-Budapest flights in December, so we got in early with return flights for less than £56 each. DISASTER struck just five weeks before

we were due to travel: EasyJet cancelled the outward flight! The most practical alternative was to fly out from Gatwick and back to Bristol.

Tuesday 18th July: at 5:00 am, eight dancers and two musicians left Plymouth, the flight was on time and we were met by Ildiko - our guide - at Budapest Ferihegy 1 air terminal. We arrived three hours earlier than other attendees and were treated to a tour of Pest and then Buda (each side of the river has a different character) in the panoramic double-deck Royal Bus that was to be our transport for a week. Then back to airport to collect the 43-member Swedish team before the 180 km drive to the south of the country. The bus had a cracked upper windscreen, and on entering contraflow roadworks on the E75 there was a loud bang and increased vibration in the vehicle. The driver decided to press on with seven of the eight tyres OK as it was only loss of tread and exposed cord on one of the middle axles tyres! Forty five minutes later the bus stuttered to a halt - eventually diagnosed as dirty fuel and by now it was becoming obvious that the air-conditioning would

probably benefit from a major overhaul! Ninety minutes later two 25 litre drums of fuel were delivered in a Renault Laguna registration JYR 666 (are those numbers an omen?). Moments later we are on the move again and crossed the county boundary into Csongrad. On the stroke of midnight, we saw the first road sign for Sotthalom and arrived at the hostel five minutes later. The hostel proved to be modern, clean and well-maintained, but did have the Basque and Sicilian dancers and the northern Italian wind band partying outside our room until 2:00 am with amplified music plus flamenco finger clicking and occasional cheering.

Wednesday: dawn, bright, hot and clear with a breakfast that could have minimised the European sugar mountain. The hostel is associated with an arboretum and had much insect life: notably Cardinal Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary, numerous very small blue butterflies and Common Darter during daylight hours but also hungry midges at dusk. The Festival Opening Ceremony was in the evening in Sotthalom central park on a decent-sized well paved area. Throughout the festival

the performances started with the wind band and then short shows from each group. The various performances ran from 6:00-8:00 PM, then we found that all the bars close at 9:00 PM, except on Friday or Sunday at 11:00 PM, but also that Arany Aszok beer is 50p a pint in the village. As the week wore on the preference changed to the 60p a pint of Dreher beer.

Thursday: the Swedes and ourselves are back on the same coach, with the faulty tyre replaced, but leaving half-an-hour behind schedule due to an accident (not involving this bus) for a tour of the lively city of Szeged (famous for a fish soup). The temperature was 32 deg C so we somehow ended up in the air-conditioned John Bull pub drinking Bombardier ale at an £1.20 per pint.

The afternoon saw us over the county boundary in Kelebia (another place with an infinite straight road). The wind band opened, then all sides performed to an audience significantly smaller than the combined troupes of dancers. Back to Sotthalom for dinner, and a beer in the new bar. It was already occupied by the visiting coach drivers, closed at 9:00 pm, we left at a quarter

past midnight.

Friday: a morning start for thermal bathing at Morahalom - a complex with open air swimming and leisure pools, Jacuzzis, mud baths and most related options.

Back to sotthalom for longer evening performances in the park, dinner and the bar - this time accompanied by the Swedes - to find a handful of youths expecting a disco. The landlord made an instant decision it would be live music tonight and rearranged the back-room. An excellent music session swapping English and Scandinavian tunes but also including Shakin' Stevens "This Old House" sung in both languages simultaneously. Having been granted a one-hour extension by the landlord, the Swedes turned Cinderella and left en masse at the stroke of midnight.

Saturday: the Basques returned from a visit to Szegeď at 5:00 am to discover that the hostel door was locked. What would you do in the circumstance? - they partied until let in at 6:30 am, once again right below our room window. After dinner, we travelled to Hodmezovasarhely where we have changing rooms in the Opera House. The procession is cancelled because the temperature is 40c. Performances by all teams in the main square. After our spot, we somehow get cajoled into dancing Rose Tree (Bampton) with a newly-wed bride as the "victim" slightly away from the main event. Dinner at eight in the town, and return to the hostel, accompanied by a serious electric storm and refreshing rain.

Sunday: to Domascek, a

small village with a striking contemporary church to perform at the village fair (dodgems, candyfloss, etc) and unusually with a seated audience - again on a stage so ideal for Balance the Straw (Fieldtown). The refreshment stall has a pair of six-foot diameter "woks" to cook the food and serves passable chips. Back to the hostel and this time on to the bar, joined by the Swedes and the Basques - a rather livelier session which may account for the digestive disorders the following day.

Monday: a riverboat sightseeing tour on the Tisza from Szegeď, with the birders Recording black-crowned night heron and yellow-legged gull in addition to those birds we might see at home. The evening saw the Closing Ceremony in sotthalom park with the Basques doing something akin to morns that would show up almost all English teams. At dinner, we were joined by the doll-like Latvians (from a dance school for 3-18 year olds) and leather-slapping Austrians. So everyone returns to their respective countries tomorrow, except

Tuesday: our flight arrangements mean we have a day to spare, so arrange a visit to Serbis into Serbia. Subotica is closer to the hostel (as the crow flies) than Szegeď and is similar to many provincial mid/east-European towns with no evidence of the recent problems. In practice, we cross the border faster than we would normally cross the Tamar Bridge coming home from Cornwall. The birders had excellent views of marsh

harriers flying and white storks at nest en route. Others noted an old lady travelling the main road in an armchair on the back of a horse-drawn cart and a farmer harvesting maize with a scythe. Then our hosts want one of our former members to meet us at garage on the edge of town (Bob is married to a Serb and is holidaying in Beograd). Eventually we discover we are parked about 400 yards from the centre of town, so we walk in and meet Bob, Vessa and daughter Adela in Republic

Square (Kortarsasag Ter) - the roving cameraman spotted us and called in the reporter. One dance and we are promised a feature in the Friday 28 July 2006 issue. It was warm so we retreated to a bar ... and the Info kanal Subotica (Serbian Channel 4) TV team turned up. Another couple of dances, including Rose Tree with the lady presenter as "victim", and we are told the footage will go out on the local programme at 16:20, then 18:20 and again on breakfast TV the following day. If we had forewarned the TV they would have organised a stage and audience - in the event, they took a framed presentation picture and contact details and promised to get the mayor to invite us back! A brief stop at Lake Palics, another smooth border crossing, and a return to Szegeď for a restaurant lunch at Aranylabda tterm. Then back to the hostel to have a siesta and pack.

Wednesday: a 7:00AM start for the airport in the same minibus (now plus a trailer for the kit). At the edge of sotthalom, it becomes apparent that a tree-

frog has hitched a lift outside the vehicle window, but before we could alert the driver the frog lost grip. The inbound flight is a few minutes late, but when we are bussed out to board there are fire crews in attendance while green powder under the starboard wheels is cleared. The pilot assured us (well tried to!) that it was hydraulic oil from the previous plane on that stand - the landing gear groaned as retracted, but seemed to deploy OK as we came into Bristol. Would we do it again - most certainly! However, with possibly an official visit to Serbia, and many overseas invitations to contemplate, it may not be the next trip. If you would be interested to join us for the next exploit, contact Andy (PMM Foreman) on Plymouth 300758.

Finally, acknowledgements from the team for the sterling efforts of our Foreman in co-ordinating the trip, and from me to Nathan and Ray for pointing out errors in the draft text.

John Summerscales is a Past Squire of Plymouth Morris Men

*(I am afraid the photos from the web site did not copy into this document well enough for publication; sorry ed)*

Green Man at Greensleeves



Monseaton and the Finger of Fate



# Stockton Morris Men

Half Centurions

*by Keith Gregson and Brian Pollard*

Stockton Morris Men were formed in 1952, were admitted to the Morris Ring at the Coventry Ring Meeting in September 1954. With the passage of time most of our founder members left us to bring up their families, seek work out of the area, or perhaps followed different pursuits. However when we celebrated our 50th Anniversary in September 2002, we still had one founder member, Ken Richardson, dancing with us, he was our first half centurion. Mike "Nipper" Walton followed him in 2004; regrettably both have now passed away- missed greatly by members past and present.

So it was with much delight that two new half centurions appeared in our ranks in the shape of Brian Padgett, our current Squire, and Paul Wesson, both having joined the Side in 1956. With time catching up on them, and knees having to be nursed through practice and displays, they were both delighted when Stockton Morris Men accepted an invitation to dance in Germany, a fitting way perhaps to celebrate their "Golden" moments.

## STOCKTON MORRIS MEN IN GERMANY

Stockton Morris Men had the honour of representing England at the prestigious Finkwarder Speeldeel Centenary Celebrations near Hamburg in September. Here, along with the Stockton Morris Dance Ensemble,

lengthy, stretching back to the 1960's when the Groups first met in Cobh, Eire. In some cases personal friendships had also lasted for over forty years.

With many of the men "doubling up" as partners in the Folk Dance Ensemble,

The Cotswold programme drew upon a number of traditions and included Balance The Straw (Fieldtown), Highland Mary (Bampton) and a show-stopping version of Princess Royal. More modern dances included The Masham and The Three Musketeers.

Friday was the Festivals first big day with all the teams taking a ferry across the Elbe to Hamburg. After a fine lunch at a waterside restaurant, all were treated to champagne at the City Hall (Rathaus) where the men danced Highland Mary.

A large crowd had gathered in the square outside where Vandals if Hammerwich (Litchfield) was performed — more dramatically than anticipated thanks to a couple of major stick breakages!



*Paul Wesson, Brian Padgett and Mike "Nipper" Walton in 2002*

the men joined teams from Switzerland, Poland, Sweden and France in a weekend of intense music, dance and song activity.

The links between Stockton and the Speeldeel group are

the weekend brought plenty of dancing. We spent several months in practice with our Folk Dance partners in an attempt to present a balanced programme. We had included in our planned program, sequences of English and American dances, together with some single dances such as The Queen of Sheba, Levi Jackson Rag, Three Roughish Rascals, so we felt well prepared.

The Morris repertoire included the much- admired Blue and Gold Rapper Sword dancers, featuring three members of the Padgett family — father Brian and sons Kenneth and Stephen. The men also presented a few figures from the North Skelton Longsword Dance.

*Performing Rapper, three generations*

The show then moved onto the more formal setting of a public park (Planten un Blumen) with a stage and dressing rooms. A seated audience were able to watch a Folk Dance sequence while the men danced Constant Billy (Headington), Masham and the Rapper.

Back in Finkenwerder, the whole Stockton group enjoyed an evening meal in a front street restaurant, followed by a rousing late night singaround in a local bar.

Saturday was the Festivals big day. It started with a procession through the town with the visiting groups being joined by a number of German groups and organisations from other leisure pursuits in Finkenwerder.

Fun was had by all; as the procession wound its way







*Outside the Rathaus, Hamburg*

through the old town, residents came out to offer schnapps and rum in return for a quick dance. All in all it took the procession a couple of hours to reach its destination at the Festival Hall. The Hall itself was a huge hanger capable of seating thousands. The Stockton contribution to the main show was very well received with both the Rapper and Princess Royal going down particularly well. After the show, the hosts had arranged a Ball for the

visitors, who boogied the night away to one of Germany's top show bands.

On Sunday morning, guests and hosts were drawn together in a cleverly constructed multi-lingual church service where popular hymns were sung in a variety of languages. All were invited to contribute a reading and a member of the Stockton Men read out a few verses from "Lord of the Dance".

*...and a few more choice participants at Greensleeves*

With formal proceedings more or less over, the Stockton Group joined the visitors from Sweden to give a concert at a local home for the elderly. This provided the opportunity of showing North Skelton and ensured that all the dances practiced had received an airing

The trip ended with a rock and roll extravaganza at the local bar — all provided by group members. This lasted until throwing- out time (literally).

The festival was a huge success and took most of the men back to the days of their youth when such events had been the order of the day. The Stockton performances - both Morris and Country - were both very well received and led to invitations abroad next year. Currently the Mediterranean Coast next August looks very inviting.

Watch this space!

Photos: Stockton Morris Men

*Stockton performing North Skelton*



Photos H Stevenson



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# The Secret Diary of a Night School Instructor

Like many clubs, Jockey has an ageing member base and recruiting new members just seems to get harder and harder. One method of recruiting new members that has often been suggested and discussed is running a night class. This would give an opportunity for members of the public to take a few lessons alongside people of similar experience, get a taste for the activity and give us an opportunity to slip 'The Squire's 5p' into a few polystyrene tea cups.

Earlier this year an opportunity to start a class arose. Our squire, Steve 'Fiddler' Lowe, approached Birmingham Botanical Gardens about including a morris evening class in their autumn schedule. To our surprise and delight they agreed, as long as the class had a minimum number of 10.

Whilst Fiddler is a teacher as well as being an experienced dancer and musician he didn't feel he could take this class on, as he wanted to concentrate his efforts on the side he has successfully formed at school, Crestwood Morris. As I had spare time (euphemism for no job) I agreed to take on the duties.

The following is my attempt at chronicling the project from (nearly) scratch.

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September

Now that we've resolved the insurance issues, today is the first real chance that we, as

a club, have to publicise the classes. We're scheduled to dance at the Botanical Gardens between 1 and 3. Doesn't look too promising. It's decidedly wet and I don't recall that many men being available. What a pleasing turnout; 13 men, including The Squire (who's en route to a gig in Leeds). Shame about the weather. There are three weddings on this afternoon, but no-one's going to come out and watch us in this. Hello, young lady with big camera — must be the press!

I go over and introduce myself. She says she needs lots of photos for two articles; several photos for the back page of 'The Birmingham Post' and another to support an article in 'The Birmingham Mail'.

We dance for a while and Emma snaps away at us. When she's done she leaves and we hang around trying to decide what to do. I manage to give a couple of leaflets about courses away but the weather's against us. The executive decision is made to go early to our next booking — the first Moseley Folk Festival; at least there should be people there.

The festival was okay, still a bit wet; but I did chat to a few more people and pass out a few more leaflets.

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September  
Nothing in the papers

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September  
Nothing in the papers.  
Deborah from The Gardens

called while I was out. Still no great take up for the course. Could I give her a call? Perhaps we might want to set up a cut-off date to decide if we go ahead.

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September

What a result! Just been up to check out 'The Post' and Emma has done us proud — the whole back page of the paper covered with seven photographs of us. I should point out that 'The Birmingham Post' is a broadsheet, so that's a lot of coverage. I don't know what it will do for encouraging people to join the course but it's priceless publicity for us. Must ring Deborah.

Deborah hasn't seen 'The Post' yet. Sounded pleased by the coverage. Only four punters have enrolled to date, but 14,000 leaflets have either been handed out to the public or posted out to Gardens members in the last couple of days. Combined with the press coverage there should be enough profile there. We agreed to review the situation a week before the start date and make a decision about viability then - we need 10 to go ahead.

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September

It's been a week since the article in 'The Post'. There's been no sign of the promised bit in 'The Mail', although it could well have appeared in the localised pages.

I'd just finished off a 10 week lesson plan and was about to

print it and the phone rang Deborah! Good news, there's enough punters to run the course. One slight problem. Perhaps? When Fiddler spoke to Deborah originally he'd put a limit on class size of 12. Some bloke wants to enrol 3 people, which would take us up to 13. On the grounds that it's unlikely we'll get full attendance every week I tell her it won't be a problem. That's one happy bunny at the Botanical Gardens! I arranged to go over and view the facilities myself on Monday.

13? Good job I'm not superstitious!

Tried to email the rest of the club about the news but my e-mail's on the blink, looks like a problem at the ISP's end. I'll try again later. Printed off the lesson plan to get Mick's and Gary's opinions later on.

On the way to the Waggon Mick tells me that loads of people came up to Jockey at Bromyard, commenting (favourably) on the spread in 'The Post'. Same when we get to the pub — other quiz night regulars asking if it was us.. The other guys reckon that the plans are a goer! Didn't win the quiz this week, though!

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September

Had to phone Virgin to get my email account sorted out. Let everyone know the latest situation and made the appeal for a demo dance team for next Thursday.

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## Westminster Day of Dance

by Jason B Standing

The 13th of May started out as meteorologically unpredictable and foreboding as any other day this summer that Westminster have organised a dance-out, however thankfully it didn't turn into the amphibious festival that

our tour with Adelaide Morris Men did. Right from the minute I arrived at The Barley Mow for warm-ups however, and saw Chester already in fine form, I could tell that this Day of Dance was going to be a lot of fun.

As a recently added antipodean member to Westminster's



line-up the sight of hordes of morris dancers ambling through central London is still a new one to me, however a joy to behold. Our tour (Westminster, Long Man and Monkseaton) moved down to the Embankment Steps for our first stand -

pausing only briefly along the way to offer directions to other topographically confused morns men, and the occasional photo opportunity by excited/bewildered tourists. Having grown accustomed to country tours now I'd forgotten how many tourists over a weekend are in the City of Westminster. and how many of them have probably never seen morris dancers before.

We danced on the Embankment Steps to the passing punters. although I was pleasantly surprised by how many stopped and asked what it was all about, seeming satisfied with the answers.

Moving on to The Wellington we quietly dratted our luck al having just missed the crowd who had gone into the Lyceum to see The Lion King. However, we had a quite novel stand which included plenty of creative dodging of the poles bordering our piste. Monkseaton once again demonstrated their deftness it an enclosed area by providing their whirling maelstrom a pure entertainment inside the

Wellington. There seemed to be a good deal more people inside than we'd seen outside, which I'd put down to weather, and that had me quietly worried about what sized crowd we'd see down at Trafalgar Square... Any nervousness on my part proved totally unfounded as there were LOADS of people about! One slight difference with this year's arrangement

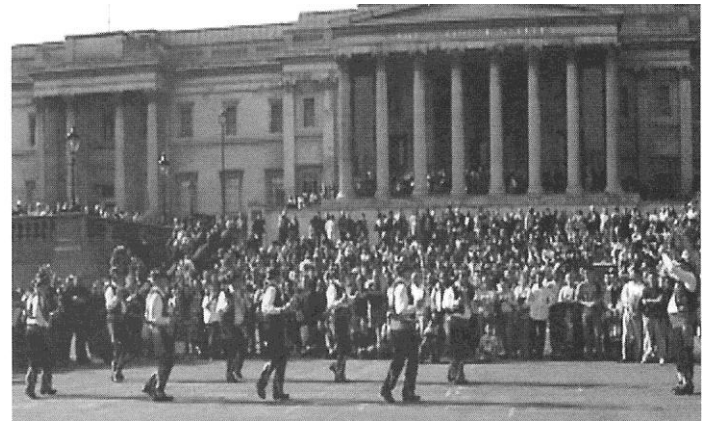


*Monkseaton in a pub*

was that Nelson was all arena and drawing the crowd scaffolded up for his face lift, in, and the sheer eye-bursting and as such rather than setting up spectacle of the couple of at the base of the monument we had our performance area further forward - in effect, in the middle of the square, and this turned out to work exceptionally well, with the

National Gallery steps forming a sort of amphitheatre (and the second amphitheatre we've danced in this year - and this one had almost as any gothic teenagers as the one in Chester). Following lunch, Hartley, Dolphin and Westminster headed off to the Duke of York's steps and successfully distracted quite a lot of the crowds on their way down to Buckingham Palace.

We all met up again at the square to complete the day's dancing, and I must say it's one of those memories



*Chester in Trafalgar Square*

that'll go on the shelf for me - performing a mortis dance in Trafalgar Square to a few thousand

people. What a buzz, and what a great atmosphere - so many excellent teams performing in their distinct styles and varying kits, the beasts and fools moving around the

massed dances that we did. We definitely brightened up an overcast London afternoon. And of course to finish was an excellent feast at The Puzzle - the food, music and singing a fine conclusion to another excellent Day of Dance.

A huge thank you to all of our guests for helping us make the day a great success, and we look forward to next year!

*Thaxted in Trafalgar Square*



Advertisement

# HASTINGS TRADITIONAL JACK-IN-THE-GREEN

FRIDAY 4TH - MONDAY 7TH MAY 2007

If you would like to take part in some of the best Morris dancing to be found on a sunny Sussex weekend, get in touch now at [www.hastingsjack.co.uk](http://www.hastingsjack.co.uk), [keithleech@britishlibrary.net](mailto:keithleech@britishlibrary.net) or 01424 716576, or [feelock@bopenworld.com](mailto:feelock@bopenworld.com) or 01424 436052.

# John Bull (1928-2006)

## Thaxted morris dancer

by Paul Reece

John quite literally had the Morris in his blood, both his mother Rose Wright and his aunt Kate Wright were members of Conrad and Miriam Noel's original Thaxted Morris side of 1911. It was through John that we have had a direct link with the church and the founding of our side and have enjoyed the continuity of our tradition from the earliest days to the period of Father Jack through to our own.

Until the outbreak of the Second World War when John moved permanently to Thaxted, John used to spend his summers here staying with his grandmother. One of the earliest images we have of John is on August Bank Holiday 1937, then aged 8, sitting on his tricycle in front of the Guildhall watching Thaxted dance in aid of the 'Jinkie' Wells-William Kimber Appeal Fund.

John became a member of Thaxted Morris Men and the Essex County side in 1944 and took part in the first display of the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance at the Thaxted Morris Ring Meeting in 1947.



John Bull, IoW, 1979 and below 1981

Photos Simon Ritchie

In 1948 John became Bagman, the last of the three Thaxted Bagmen that uniquely appear on the Thaxted Squires staff of office. John was elected Squire in 1964 and held the office until 1984, the second longest serving Squire after Alec Hunter. After 50 years of dancing John was awarded life membership in 1994 and in 2004 a special staff to commemorate 60 years as a member of the side. In his last years when dancing was impossible he would join us in the Bull Ring at Bank holidays with his tambourine and until very recently would be wheeled at the head of the procession from 'The Swan' to Town Street at our annual Morris Ring meeting, which for so many years he had organised and run. This year he was only well enough to attend on the Sunday.

To us John will forever be remembered as the leader of the Horn Dance with his haunting call of 'All together' as the signal for the dancers to position for the clash. It is said that on one occasion, as the time for the Horn Dance approached John couldn't be found and a search party had to be sent out to look for him. He was eventually found fast asleep. "John wake up you're in the horn Dance"! He slowly

opened his eyes and smiling as if he had seen a vision of heaven said that he was having the most wonderful time: he had dreamed that he was dancing the Horn Dance and had awoken to discover that he was. As a special tribute to John and the 60th anniversary of the appearance of the Horn Dance at the Thaxted Morris Ring Meeting, and John's unique place in it, I would like our next year's Morris Ring Meeting to be held in honour of John.

John's contribution to Thaxted Morris Men and the wider world of the Morris and country dancing and Thaxted's place in it has been enormous. He organised the dance sequences in front of the Thaxted Guildhall for the 1953 film 'Time Gentlemen Please', taught the Morris to Belchamp Morris Men, the Horn Dance to Whitchurch Morris Men and in 1974 was made an honorary member of Cambridge Morris Men. Whenever there was a query concerning our history or how we should dance something John was always on hand with the answer. We would gather round, "Are we all met", he would say, and then deliver the verdict from his encyclopaedic knowledge of the dance.

John was adventurous, well

travelled and had a taste for the good life which accompanied his Morris dancing. This often took the form of dancing in market squares with the availability of local produce being just a galley and a caper away. This trend can be detected in this delightful early piece from the Braintree and Witham Times of 1st August 1957, entitled

### 'Dancers Abroad'

*Holidaying abroad are three Morris Dancers (and still bonny bachelors), John Bull, schoolteacher, Colin Townsend, engineer and Bruce Monroe, auctioneer. They left yesterday by car for a three-week tour of Europe... They have a tent for sleeping and hope to see some of the native dances of various countries. If they get hard up, they can always dance in market squares and pass around the hat. They are skilled dancers and two of them can blow a trumpet as well as any of Father Jack's many pupils.*

Those of us who were privileged to know John could go on with the tales of John's many adventures, his songs such as 'The Saucy Sailor', 'The Holly and the Ivy' and 'Me Taters and My Hot Fried Fish', but time and much else prevents me, as it did John, on an occasion in the village of Burnsall, while on a tour from Oakworth into the Yorkshire Dales. On entering 'The Red Lion' for a drink before preparing to dance the Abingdon Princess Royal, John was shown the door by the landlord who insisted that the pub was closed and was going to remain closed. "Princess Royal", stormed John, "that's our best dance, we are not showing it off in front of them!"

John was a man of nature, much admired and will be much missed, he led, and he took us all with him.

As we call time on his life, his memory and the Morris is the richer for that life and we trust that they will forever live on. For those that shared time with John, we can only look back and say "We had a hell of a time!" God bless you John!



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## Nigel Scott



### North Wood Founder and Bagman

It is with regret we have to inform you of the death in August of our Bagman, Nigel Scott. Nigel was taken ill at the end of April and appeared to be making slow but steady progress. Regrettably he had a very sudden relapse and was unable to recover.

Nigel was one of only two original North Wood men still dancing with the side which makes his loss all the greater. He had held the club's purse strings for many years and

seemed to grip our money tighter than his own! But he could be persuaded to release funds for a worthy cause such as a bottle of port or malt whisky. Nigel rarely travelled with North Wood to Ring Meetings or ales but he would give his wholehearted support at home events.

He will be greatly missed.

Paul Beaumont

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## Chris Green Ilmington and Sydney Morris

*by John Milce*

the end.

I have some sad news to report. Chris Green, once of Ilmington, died in Queensland in September, after a long illness. I don't know the extent of his involvement with The Ilmington Men, but if his contribution was anything like the contribution he has made to the English dancing scene out here in Oz it would have been significant. I'm not even sure when he last danced with Ilmington, as I think he has been out here since the 70's. He remained active in the English Folk/Morris/Country/Playford dance scene right up to

John Milce is Bagman of Sydney Morris Men

*by Colin Towns*

I knew Chris and his then wife Trudi in England before we both moved to Australia (me in Sept 1985, Chris in early 1986). He and I were both surprised to find the other resident in Australia when we met at the National Folk Festival, in Melbourne that Easter 1986.

Chris and I shared a love and passion for English Folk dancing, especially

Playford, morris and sword. One particular achievement was that he and I (at different times) were members of (Sydney's) Albion Fair Clog moms side (all female! !).

He ran the Sydney Playford Group, and Sedenka International Dance group for many years; and performed at the National, Gulgong and other festivals, having a fantastic knowledge of folk dancing from across the globe. Since overcoming cancer, and meeting Sheree, he had moved to Brisbane and has been active in family oriented folk dance

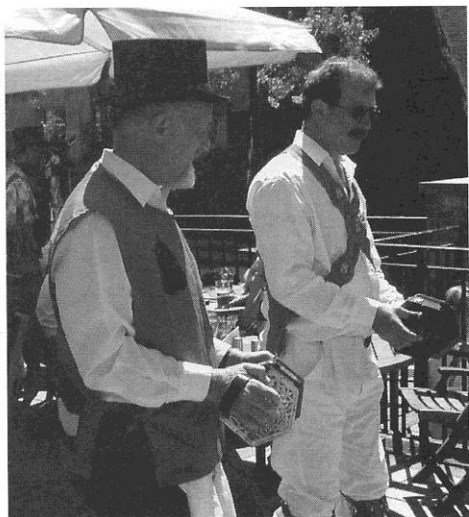
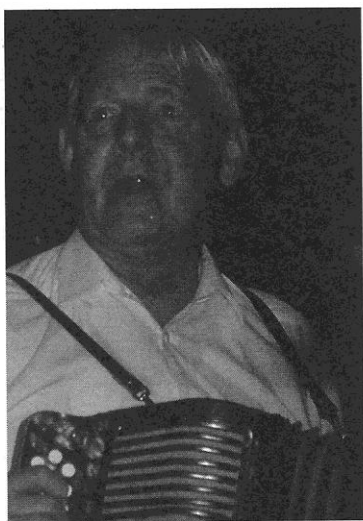
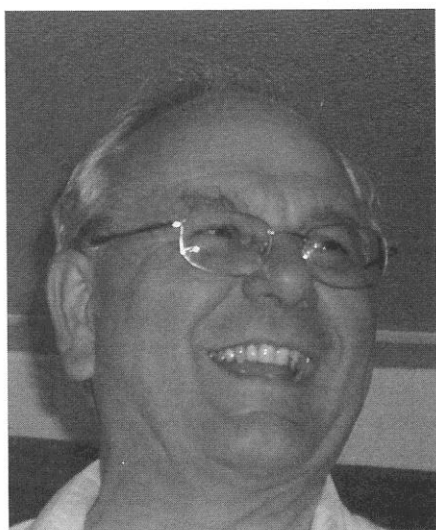
activities there. He had been ill for some time. Having spoken to Sheree this morning, they had just moved into a new house, designed by him to accommodate his wheelchair, and of course a dance floor. Such joy, so little time to enjoy it.

P.S. I also believe he was a member of a UK Rapper Sword side, possibly St Albans. He was also a major organiser and leader of Folk Camps.

Colin Towns  
English Dance, Contra,  
NW Morris, Rapper,  
Appalachian Clog

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## Greensleeves Morris Ring Meeting 2006



## Greensleeves Morris Ring Meeting



*Various Morris Clubs, musicians and individuals that helped create the unique atmosphere at the Greensleeves Morris Ring Meeting in 2006.*

*Photos © Stevenson*





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## Fools and Animals

### Address at the Unconvention

Twice a year I don horns and perform a ritualistic dance considered to be the oldest dance in England. Do I become the spirit of the animal, am I in contact with something that is older than ourselves, that instinct and connection with forces and powers that we have largely lost in our lives that oscillate between the sedentary, the transitory and the fleeting, framed by screens, walls and windows, always on the move? We have lost touch with Nature and our own connections as part of Nature.

Fertility, courtship, combat, birth, death and survival are as vital rituals to Animals as they are to Man. From the earliest times until quite recently the relationship between Man and Animal was completely intertwined. Cave art shows men with antlers and skins performing such ritual dances. Today if you know where and when to look the vestiges and continuation of these fundamental traditions are to be found. We are just the very latest reincarnation of

something that is very very old and very very deep.

Fooling, guising and animal masking, straw bears, horses, dragons, unicorns take us to that realm of magical crossing over the frontiers of Imagination and Nature between Man and Animal, Fear and Longing and the common Dance of Life and Fertility and the Dance of Death and the Macabre. It is the timeless touchstone of the deepest past from where we have come to where we are to go.

Some horses such as those at Padstow and Minehead are particular to those localities and the seasonal festivals such as May Day, others travel and accompany the Morris such as the Sam Bennett's Ilmington horse, and then there are those that invade foreign shores, like the East Suffolk horse, in this case, as part of the Normandy landings and the push into mainland Europe. The secret histories of these animals are fascinating and need to be told. In Winter at the start of the New Year I follow the Straw

Bear, in the early 1980's, as a Morris dancer in Germany, I used to take part in the local Carnival and was made an honorary member of the Kristallkinder Karnevalverein, whose emblem shows three tiny fools with staffs peering out from what looks like a pouch, glove or a bed. Their carnival season significantly starts on the 11<sup>th</sup> minute of the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, the anniversary of the ending of the First World War, with the planning and making of the costumes and masks for the February festivities.

Here I should perhaps pause and confess to Robert\* that about 25 years ago I started a secret life and this secret has remained with me until now. I had made a full size replica of 'Trigger', that accompanied our dancing and notably on the ski slopes of Austria performed an impromptu giant slalom as part of our weeks performance there. Yes you are hearing this from the horse's mouth, it was me inside.

During this last Summer I

visited several animal guising festival sites in Switzerland The Black Forest, and unknown to me previously, that area Austria where I had previously taken 'Son of Trigger' skiing At Bad Durrheim, in the Black Forest, I discovered the delights of the Narrenschopf Museum which has one of the largest collection of fool and animal costumes in the world. I have brought several books showing these costumes of the Alpine and surrounding an here for you to see tonight. Trigger, Gentlemen and your alter animal egos and i personal fool, you are a part something very special, very big and serious, that unites the dance with our audience and makes our dreams, our cont with our ancestors and our ability to laugh at the world and ritually turn it on its head and make fun out of the game of life and death come true Use your powers wisely.

Paul Reece

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\*Robert Chisman, United Fools Convenor. ed



*Abbots Bromley (left) and below, inviting the Thaxted Morris Men to them. Paul Reece in centre below. In Abbots Bromley, Utttoxeter Morris Meeting, 2004.*

Photos: H Steve

