



June 2008
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Get your real Pens out
boys!

THE MORRIS RING Circular

The Morris Ring Meeting in Tonbridge

by Brian Tasker

The final Morris Ring Meeting of the summer of 2007 took place over the weekend of 31 August/2 September. It was a joint event organised on behalf of The Morris Ring by the Ravensbourne Morris Men, the Hartley Morris Men and the White Star Sword Dancers. The sides were celebrating their respective 60th, 55th and 21st anniversaries.

The meeting was named in



Above, Etcetera MM at the Bell and Jorrockes, Frittenden, dancing Queen Eleanor's Jig, composed by their musician Left, White Star

Photos: Hilary Blandford

memory of Geoff Metcalf who was a founder member of Ravensbourne and Hartley and Squire of the Morris Ring from 1952 until 1954.

The weekend was blessed with fine weather and all three

tours enjoyed dancing to large crowds. Massed displays were held in Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells. Other venues included: Sissinghurst Castle, Groombridge Place and the Spa Valley Railway. Our guests at the feast were Phil Heaton and Aubrey O'Brien, the Secretary and Chair respectively of the newly formed Sword Dance Union, and Eddie Jenkinson, a founder member of Ravensbourne, aged 98, who was made a life member of the side at the meeting.

An innovation on the Sunday morning was the introduction of workshops. We offered Headington jigs, longsword, rapper and a musician's workshop. They provided an opportunity to learn something



Victory dancing Richmond Hill

Photo: Hilary Blandford

(continued on page 3)

The Squire Elect, Brian Tasker

The Editor of the Morris Circular has asked me to do a write up to introduce me to those of you I have not yet met but whom I hope to meet over the next two years. I wrote a message in the newsletter but Harry wanted something in greater depth.....

I got involved in folk through my wife. When she was at teachers' training college she went to her local folk song club. When she completed her course and returned to Kent we both joined the Farningham Folk Song Club where we came upon the Hartley Morris Men, many of whom were regulars at the club. In the summer of 1970 we went to many of their stands. My wife then uttered the fateful words: "Why don't you join them?" She has had thirty eight years to regret saying that.

So the years rolled by. I gave details of the sides I dance with in both my biographical sketch and in my piece in the newsletter, so I won't repeat that information here. Suffice to say that I dance Cotswold Morris, rapper and longsword. Whatever may have been the situation in the past, the fact is that today there are women's sides and mixed sides as well as men's sides. My main concern is the standard of the dancing whatever the gender of the dancers. In general I prefer sides with dancers of a single sex, though I have seen mixed sides who dance to a very high standard. The three Morris organisations work together very well and put on a combined show every two years. I am very much in favour of working together to improve standards and raise the profile of the Morris.

We are a democratic organisation but decisions are made by those who attend the ARM. Postal voting is only



Brian Tasker, dancing Elgin Sword Dance with North British at the Sidmouth Festival

allowed for the election of Morris Ring Officers. I was elected in March by a majority of the 55% of member clubs who decided to vote. A large part of the membership was not involved. At the ARM mention was made of extending postal voting to resolutions. I think this would be a good idea if the problem of amendments to resolutions at the meeting can be overcome. However, on the basis of the recent election only about 50% of the membership would participate. One of my objectives as Squire is to increase the involvement of our members and associates in the organisation

I intend to travel during my two years as Squire and visit as many clubs as possible. This brings me onto the subject of my expenses. I have to look to you for reimbursement and this may put you off inviting me, which would be sad for me at least. I will apply the following principles with regard to my expenses:

1. Whenever possible I will travel by train. I travel standard class using my railcard which usually reduces the cost by one third. I book in advance to take advantage of cheap offers. It would be helpful if I could be met at my destination.
2. If car travel is unavoidable I will charge only for the cost of my petrol.
3. Upon receiving an invitation

I will give an estimate of my expenses. If these are too high I will quite understand if the invitation is withdrawn!

4. If your side is broke, please explain this and I will do my best to come anyway.

5. If your event is one to which I will be coming with one of the sides I dance with then I will not charge for expenses.

I really hope that this issue will not put you off inviting me to your events.

I fully support Paul's initiatives to involve young people in the Morris. However, I am not convinced that in the short term at least, these will provide the men needed to replace those retiring from dancing. It is natural for some clubs to fold and this is no great problem as long as there are new ones coming along to replace them. I see this happening in the Morris Federation but not so much in the Morris Ring. I do not think that it is realistic to expect young men to be happy dancing with a side of sixty year olds. They should be off forming their own clubs and leaping about with youthful vigour! The greatest contribution we can make is to teach them the basic skills and leave them to see what they can make of it. That does not mean that I am unconcerned about the future of our well established sides: just that we are not looking in the right place for our recruits. Men in their thirties and forties would fit in far more easily with an older side. To get them we need to be far more aggressive in our recruitment.

Here are some ideas:
1 At the end of a show open up Bonny Green to the whole audience. Walk them through it and then get them dancing it. Have a leaflet prepared giving full details of your side and inviting them to come along to a "Have a go at the morris evening".

2 Work closely with all the sides in your area. An advertising campaign will cost less if it shared among a number of clubs.

3 The better you dance, the better will be the quality of your recruits. Good dancers will be attracted to good sides.

4 Offer transport to practices to those without transport of their own.

5 Appoint one of your members to be a public relations officer. Good contacts with the media, local authorities and event organisers will bring much free publicity.

6 Look at the content of your programme. Is it sending out the right messages?

That's enough to be going on with. I hope to see many of you at the events I am going to this summer. I will be dancing in as Squire at the Dartington Morris Ring Meeting which is being held over the first weekend in September.

If you see me before I see you, please come and say hello.

Brian Tasker

Tonbridge Morris Ring Meeting

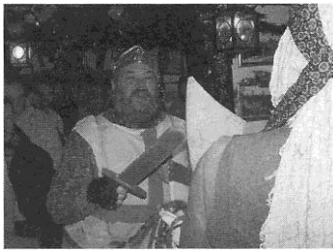
new or improve on existing skills and were enjoyed by all those who took part. After the workshops there was a procession along Tonbridge High Street followed by a

display on the Castle Lawn. Paul Reece surprised us all by announcing a garland dance. This was surprising as no such dance had been seen all weekend. All was made

clear when Mike Garland stepped forward with his son and grandson to dance a jig to music provided by his son-in-law to be.

Our thanks go to all the sides

who attended for making it such a memorable and enjoyable weekend.



by Adrian Norman

On the weekend of 22nd/23rd December 2007 the World Famous Ashdown Mummers undertook their annual Christmas Mummer's Play tour - performing at pubs in Turner's Hill, Ardingly, Lindfield, Crawley Down, Coleman's Hatch, Isfield, Hartfield, Groombridge, and Fairwarp (all in Sussex). For the first two performances we were accompanied by a freelance cameraman. Although I understand he was more familiar with covering wars he seemed to enjoy coming out with us round the



pubs, and his video was

World Famous Ashdown Mummers

A fashionable green Father Christmas

Beezelebug with beer and codpiece

Little Johnny Jack (with wife and family on his back)

A mounted St George takes on the Turkish Knight

subsequently shown on Meridian TV News (I am told we were on after the fat dog and the piloted doodlebug!). We were also approached by a TV production company who were interested in using us as extras for a scene set in the 70s which required a group of middle age men in a pub - however when I asked about payment they didn't call us back! In previous years WFAM have featured in The Times (Things to do at Christmas), The Guardian (a full theatre review), and on CNN News Worldwide, as well as in the local press.

Money raised from the tour will be donated to Forest Row (Sussex) Scouts and Eridge Riding for the Disabled.

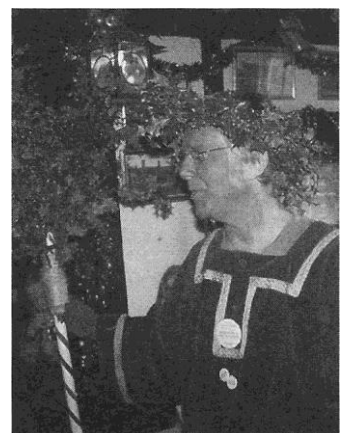
WFAM were founded in 1973 to revive a Sussex Mummers Play previously performed just before the First World War. At the time several of us were already morris dancers (Ashdown Forest Morris Men) and thought it might be a laugh to do a Mummer's Play as

well. We had no thoughts beyond performing at a few local pubs that year and drinking to excess. Looking back, I wonder what the audiences made of a group of 17 -19 year olds dressed in rather odd costumes bursting into their local pub, reciting strange rhymes, and hitting each other with wooden swords! Somehow since then the play has become an annual fixture even though we are now a lot older and scattered across the South of England. Three members of the group (who now play St George, The Doctor, and Beelzebub respectively) have been in every performance of the play, while most of the remainder have each been involved for nearly 20 years. Hopefully over the next few years we can start getting our sons involved to continue this tradition. The play itself takes about 20 minutes and is pretty much unaltered from the original version. Performances are (usually) to a high

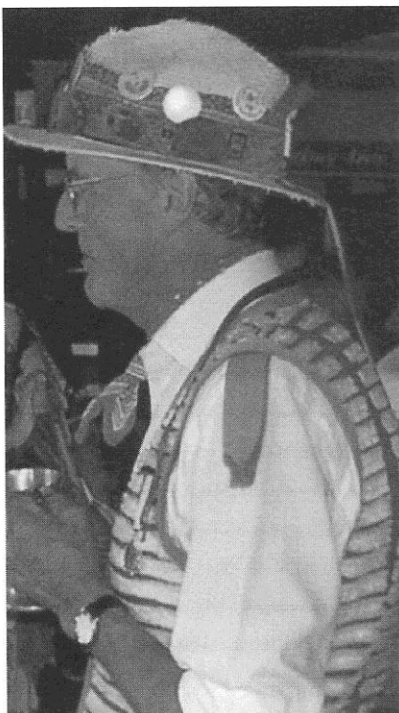
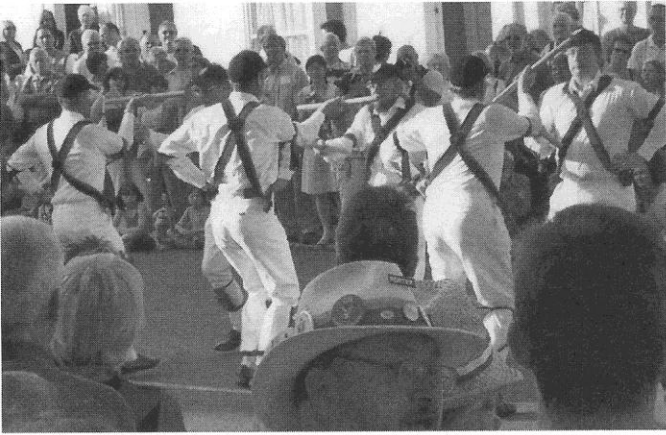


standard - provided everyone drinks enough and doesn't try to think too much! As well as performing the Mummer's Play every Christmas, WFAM undertake very occasional tours with their Border Morris Dances.

The Photos are courtesy of an audience member at "The Crown" Groombridge, and very crowded. We haven't yet got a copy of the Meridian TV clip. Other pics can be found on our website www.mummers.org.uk along with more info about the play and our Border Dancing.



The Morris Ring Meeting Thaxted 2007



The Morris Ring Meeting Thaxted 2007



*All photographs
taken by Gordon
Ridgewell in and
around Thaxted at
the Annual Morris
Ring Meeting,
hosted by Thaxted
Morris Men*



GOOGOL! OXFAM! TANZANIA! MORRIS!!

by Les Fowler

I nearly didn't go! TANZANIA; it's t' other side of equator; malaria, yellow fever, gippy tummy! I'm 70; got to be careful. Oxfam girl Fiona could go without me; she's keen, confident, 33. The Tanzanians will love her; Shinyanga local OXFAM personnel will look after her; she can show me the photo and the video at OXFAM HQ later, of the Opening of the Sheilagh May Teachers' Resource Centre (T.R.C). Fiona can cut the ribbon. I don't need to go. Thinks: "Come on Fowler you great wimp! You told Sheilagh in her last days in the Hospice of the Good Shepherd that if, in spite of your prayers, she 'was going', YOU would build a clinic or something and name it after her. It's her T.R.C; you've got to cut that ribbon! Come on! Show a bit of Shackleton spirit!" Terry, Kinnerton Morris Men's bagman, drove me into Chester, then a pleasant National Express to Heathrow, a quiet Heathrow. Half way into my coffee Fiona arrives.



Nearly ready. No music. The Tanzanian drum band didn't know Valentine

"Thank you Shackleton!" British Airways to Dar Es Salaam; next day Tanzanian Wobbly Airlines (I jest!) to Shinyanga airstrip, two-hour flight. Two days later, 28th November 2007, the Opening Ceremony of Sheilagh's T.R.C., which is 20 miles from our hotel and no tarmac. I enjoyed the Land Rover journey even though we did not hit all the larger mounds! Across the 'road' from the T.R.C was a nice flat area. Two African gazebos each seating about 50 persons, erected about 14 yards apart, facing each other, the '14' being the performance area. So with Fiona, the Anglican bishop and I in the best seats, the performance began. First, the school

choir singing, in Swahili, of the way their education has improved. Then the teachers' choir. Next,

but the temptation is too powerful. "Fiona," I whisper, "At a suitable time could you get my morns kit

five male dancers in kit with a sixth guy in jeans, who 'dances' with a very large, long snake. At times the snake is trying to bite him, but when guy and snake get really close, it doesn't; strange. Hello, these five dancers in kit, thumping the ground, are wearing bell pads, Tanzanian bell pads, round their ankles. The bells give me a tempting thought. I try to think calmly

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Saddleworth Rushcart 2007 Album 1



*A selection of photographs taken at
Saddleworth Rushcart 2007*

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Saddleworth Rushcart 2007 Album 2



A pride of Past Squires, above, another on the left, off the ground! Below, the Jockey climbs, mounts and ready! Bottom right, a bit of a tangle? Probably (k)not!





King John's Day of Dance 2008

I am indebted to Barry Care for emailing these photos via Jon Gale of KJMM, who took the photos. The picture of the young Moulton Dancers is exceptional; in fact I think they all exceptional.



FROM THE SQUIRE

BLACK MAN TO GREEN MAN: THE SPRING OFFENSIVE

Black Face, Red Face, Molly, Mummer, Border, Bullocker, Straw Bear, Plough Play, Jag and Jig these are a few of my favourite things, dangerous, but life giving at this the dead and darkest time of the year. My east-west, north-west passage through the regions has included the Original Welsh Border Tour, Thaxted Boxing Day, the Good Easter Molly Gang Plough Monday Tour, a very brief skirmish with the wild northern tribe of the Banchory-Ternan Taleban disturbing their Hogmanay band preparation and the limp from the Jockey Plough Tour and culinary delights of the Stafford Feast to those of the Jigs Instructional at Sutton Bonington and the Ripley and Winchester Feasts.

A Penny for the Ploughboys

The only sad omission for me so far this year was the Good Easter Molly Gang annual visit to the Whittlesey Straw Bear where the Gang, after continuous attendance since 1982, have been banned for life for traditionally doing what we have always traditionally done, dancing and singing in the old Little Downham style entertaining the locals. Suffocated with red tape, don't-cross-the-police-line tape, don't dance in the road tape, only at the given time and as per the programme tape, the festival has become over restrictively marshalled and has grown to the point where it has killed spontaneity as well as Cock Robin. Has it lost its way, lost contact with its roots, lost touch with what it is all about? In cutting its fringe, has it

cut off its manhood, its bear necessities, its credibility and its all important relationship with its community?

Let's Face the Music and Dance

The Jigs Instructional ably run by Geoff Jerram brought together as usual from the length and breadth of the country and from Banchory to Chantonbury in one family. The best and most enthusiastic and spirited dancers wanting to improve the standard of their dancing, extend their personal repertoire and confidence at the most concentrated form of the dance traditions: the jig. This year's successful innovation was to run dual sessions on most of the traditions for the novice and experienced dancer. Whether you have relatively new dancers, fewer dancers or older dancers with bad habits this is one of the best ways to improve your stepping and invigorate your dance programmes. Bampton dancers start by learning the jigs as they contain all the steps of the tradition. When they are ready they then move on to the set dances, which are referred to as six handers. Our considerable gratitude must go to Dolphin Morris Men who have hosted the Jigs weekend at Sutton Bonington for the past ten years. Any local sides or individuals who would like to assist or even take over the hosting of the Jigs at Sutton Bonington or elsewhere please let myself or Dolphin know.

The Cultural Olympiad

This four year UK-wide festival of regional showcase events should be featuring our regional variants of the Morris as representatives of our culture. Saddleworth are keen to be part of any North West contingency. I have already contacted the chief Olympic events officer and the regional Olympic Creative Programmers as a preliminary overture to any involvement. The criteria for the assessment of local projects are due to be published in March.

Recruitment

In terms of recruitment and PR we have the expertise to assist clubs in methods and techniques that have been found to work. The setting up of regional recruitment cluster groups and workshops to share this expertise, which is waiting to be used, is potentially of great value. We have the expertise, but we need to direct it to where it is needed. It is usually a chance remark when I talk to sides that come together to realise that some are extremely stretched, some are reverting to sword through lack of numbers, some only come to light when their subscriptions are due and we find that the side has folded. Clubs with websites should establish links to their local school, college, adult education centres, branches of the WEA, tourist boards, regional arts, health and media sites with an encouragement for them to reciprocate with links to your own site.

The Morris Cousins Project

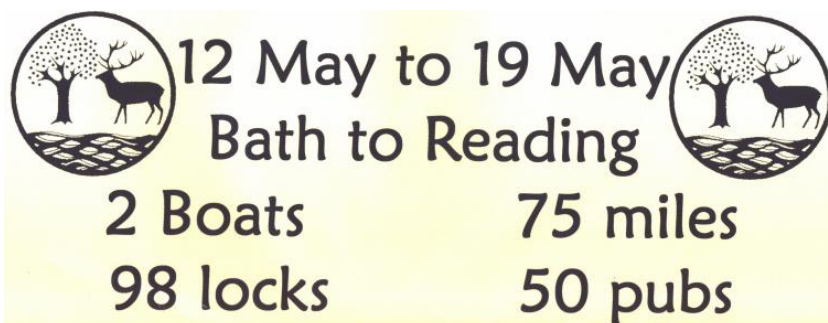
Planning has started for this large project and congress to be held in the Catalan area of Spain with a follow up congress in this country. It is hoped that Basque, Catalan, Rumanian, Croatian, Egyptian, Indian and South American sides will perform in addition to our own sides. There is no reason why these sides cannot be invited to attend your event or Morris Ring Meeting with the possibility of you being invited to join their events. The Basques for example are hoping to attend the 2009 Thaxted Morris Ring Meeting, the 70th anniversary of their last visit to this Morris Ring Meeting and nearly 27 years since a return visit was organised to go over there.

One of the distinct features of the Catalan and Basque groups is that the older dancers provide all the logistics to bring on and develop the younger dancers, providing recruitment, venues and publicity. From virtual extinction their traditions are flourishing again.

There is a sea change in the acceptance of our folk culture and a determination to be proud of what we have and to see it grow with the next generation. From the plough to green shoots let us prepare the ground to make it happen and make the Summer a memorable flowering and harvest of our art.

Paul Reece

The Kennet Morris Men Golden Jubilee Tour



The photos above and right were taken on 15th May 2007 of Kennet Morris Men on a Kennet & Avon Canal cruise to celebrate their 50th year. Location is The Barge Inn, Honeystreet, Wiltshire. (Geoff Jerram)

Below, arriving at the Oracle, day 9 and below right, the Kennet horse pulls barge on day 7 at Kintbury.



We were seen off by the Mayoress of Bath on Saturday 12th May and greeted by the Mayor of Reading on our arrival there a week later on 19th May. (Chris Hutchinson, KMM)





The Morris Ring Circular

Editorial



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The dancing season is well under way and I have heard some excellent reports of Morris Ring Meetings, Days of Dance and Feasts. Reports of these are most welcome.

I am grateful to Barry Care for the Jon Gale pictures of The King John's Morris Men Day of Dance, in April 2008 to find their way to me. In the absence of content from this Year's Thaxted weekend, I have included an excellent set of photographs from Gordon Ridgewell from 2007: I intend to feature the 2008 Thaxted hosted Meeting in the next issue. This year's event was followed by a supportive article in The Times headlining that Morris Men are returning to

their spiritual home. Arguably true. Paul Reece, Squire of The Morris Ring, followed up with an excellent letter. Pictured above Paul's letter were Cuphill Morris Men taken on the top of Hydon Ball on 1st May 2008. Copyright prevents me publishing the photo but the search engines may reward the diligent. Kennet Morris Men's Golden Jubilee Tour is on the adjacent page.

An informative journey of Icknield to Ireland, filming for the next series of The Tudors, to be screened on BBC TV later this year is also featured. Les Fowler, an obviously sprightly 70+ years young, writes a moving and amusing

account of his trip to Tanzania to cut the ribbon on the Sheilagh May Teachers' Resource Centre. I thought a definition to Googol was appropriate but I felt a little like my predecessor in that I may have caught geekitus! With appropriate apologies to Eddie.

Saddleworth's 2007 Rushcart has a photo display, and 2007's final Morris Ring Meeting gets the front page.

The Squire Elect, Brian Tasker introduces himself on page 2. Your responses to his article are eagerly awaited.

Finally, an excellently written article from the ever alliterative Banbury Bill, on Bampton's Bank Holiday Tour

in May 2008.

Thank you all for your contributions - please keep them coming-they are welcome

An Apology

On page 9 of issue no 55 of The Morris Circular I inadvertently failed to credit the photographs To Gordon Ridgewell.

NB

1. Please note my new email address as above.

2. Copy date for issue No. 57 is 31st August and issue No. 58 is 31st October.

NORRIS 'WIN' WINSTONE 95' BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE

Every now and then someone comes along who is capable of outshining all others in their field in terms of their commitment and their ability to enthuse others in their chosen art. They do not seek fame, but quietly get on with the job. When others have given up or modified their output through age, Norris Winstone, or 'Win' to his friends, has been involved with the Morris since 1926 and at 95 is determined to just keep on going. He has taught countless musicians and dancers who have carried the tradition on throughout the country and continues to inspire and provide the music for his local Kemp's Men of Norwich side, which he founded in 1956 with 30 years experience of the Morris already under his belt. Win has been no 'Nine Daies

Wonder' with ample rest and recuperation stops along the way, but a 'Nine and a Half Decades Wonder', a marathon man extraordinaire in the true Olympic spirit.

Win has become in his local region and beyond, a legend in his own life time, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Morris and an ever lively desire to pass it on and to continue to perform. The tributes paid to him as 'the boss', in the Assembly Rooms in Norwich and the flooding of Norwich with Morris dancing in every square should make Wins' birthday a yearly celebration as St Win's Day to rival that of the Mayors Day in the city. At the very least a boss in his honour in green and gold should be erected in the cathedral precinct to

complement those of the Greenmen, the Creation, the Arc and other wonders of Norwich so that we may look up to him as true artist and craftsman of the Morris tradition. As St Georges Day approaches what a perfect way this was of getting Norwich prepared and in the spirit.

In order for the Morris tradition to grow and be taken up by the next generation it is incumbent on those who are custodians of the tradition to make every effort to facilitate and manage its continuity amongst the young, in the context of Win this means everyone under 95. This is the special role that senior members of the Morris should be taking. Win has been a one man band in this department, an inspiration to us all in his tireless promotion

and service to the furtherance of the Morris tradition as one of our country's most enduring cultural icons.

The presentation of a specially designed ceramic tankard by John Brooke Steel of Denby showing Will Kemp doing his famous jig on one side and 'Win' Winstone playing on the other, is inscribed around the base' for a lifetimes achievement in the Morris'. 82 years of achievement and still going strong is some lifetime achievement as will be being retired as a teacher longer than he taught. Win is a truly remarkable man and we salute him.

Paul Reece

Morris Dancing in "The Tudors"

by Sem Seaborne, with helpful
comments from Jim Birch

For those of you who missed it, "The Tudors" (First Season) was a 10 episode BBC TV screening in 2007 of a programme "loosely" based on the life and times of Henry VIII ca. 1530 at the time of his disenchantment with his first wife (Catherine of Aragon), his attraction to Anne Boleyn and the demise of Thomas Wolsey. The series starred Sam Neill as Wolsey and Jonathan Rhys Meyers as Henry VIII.

I use the term "loosely" because a certain amount of literary licence has been taken by writer Michael Hirst, who readily admitted in his Radio Times interview that this is a dramatic production designed for entertainment, NOT to be mistaken for a documentary. Hence events such as Wolsey's suicide, the murder of the King of Portugal by Henry's sister, and others should be viewed in this context and not taken as an accurate record of history.

I open with this caveat to commence the defence against possible forthcoming observations on the morris dancing scene set to appear in the Second Season scheduled for screening this year. This is currently due for February, so depending on Harry's publication date you either may, or may not, have seen it yet.

Producer, Michael Hirst, who also wrote the screenplay for "The Tudors" was Oscar nominated for his script for Cate Blanchet's first great success "Elizabeth", and has for some time been a friend of Martin Foster, the present Squire of Icknield Way Morris Men. As anyone who knows Martin will testify, when he hits his vocal stride he isn't easily stopped, and he has been badgering Michael for some time to include some morris in

his Tudor creations.

Hence the telephone call that came out of the blue in mid-September 2007. Although yet to be shown in the UK at that time, the First Season had seen great success in many countries around the world and filming was underway at AB Productions in Co. Wicklow for the Second Season. The production team were shooting a Whitsun Sportes scene with

will see in the world of show-biz historical accuracy is a secondary consideration.

Our thinking started with what music to use, knowing that most of the tunes we use these days date from post-Tudor times and have origins in country dancing. Also the reference musical works covering the period such as the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book (1610), D. R. Wilson's Historical Dance,

appear that this was based on elite sources and was therefore likely to be more biased towards court morris as opposed to rural morris. The tune in question was the antecedent of the Stanes Morris (Staines Morris) tune from which other varieties branched. With no time to explore these further (e.g. Weelkes versions) we opted for Stanes as one tune to work



Icknield Way Morris Men in heir rather fetching Tudor kit for the Television series

Photo: IWMM

Anne as the new Queen (she was crowned June 1533 so presumably Whitsun 1534) and morris dancing was IN! IWMM were asked to get a team together, fly to Dublin ready for a days filming on a specific date.

The Squire duly picked a select 6 plus musician and the team grey-beards started to debate what Tudor morris might have looked and sounded like without time to really do any adequate research. I have tried to note some of our thinking in this account but as you

Orchesography (1589) by Jehan Tabourot (aka Thoinot Arbeau), and Tylman Susato's Book of Dance Music (1551) are really aimed at recording the Pavanes, Galliards, Branle, Allemandes, Tourdion and other formal court dance styles rather than morris (mourisco etc.).

We were also aware of John Ward's hypothesis (1) of a single musical origin for a particular morris tune of which he traced many variations. In John Forrest's analysis (2) of Ward's argument it would

with. A further possibility was The Kynges Morisco; present in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, a tune of Moorish origin and popular throughout Europe in the 16th century. Unfortunately the format did not easily lend itself to the dances in mind. We therefore settled for La Mourisque from Tylman's Danserye, courtly and contemporaneous with the dramatic activity. We has settled to dance to recorder and drum since as Henry VIII had a collection of over 70 when he died it seemed like a good

instrument with which to curry favour with the monarch.

As for dances, we had been given no idea as to what was expected of us and prepared for being both in a fixed location or processing on. The most comprehensive guide to what may have happened in Tudor morris is John Forrest's Chapter 4. Already the dance was influenced sufficiently by country dancing for there to be a differentiation between rural and court morris (outdoor and indoor dances). Unfortunately our designated activity didn't fit either category in that it was a court event (the Whitsun Sportes were intended to be in Royal grounds with Royal entourage in attendance) but clearly outdoors with various other activities (Maypole dancing, archery, etc) underway.

It seemed reasonable to distil from Forrest's accounts that the court dance may still have a competitive nature to it as opposed to a country dance approach. Also that a ring dance would be a possibility, although the dancers might be described as "loosely" in a circle with individual competitive actions. There is plenty to validate the use of six dancers but no scope on the day to introduce competing for the favours of a lady(ies) central to the dancers.

The first dance we chose to adapt was "Green Garters" the Ducklington maypole dance with plenty of circular figures and asking dancers to individualise as much as possible. This is an interesting concept when you've spent most morris practices trying to knock them into all doing precisely the same thing! The modern version of Stanes fitted the dance well.

The second dance adapted was Bledington Saturday Night, largely because it is mostly figures in line (not unlike the scene in Vinckenboom's "The Thames at Richmond"

ca.1620) and can finish with a circular figure. Although from a later period there is some suggestion that dances may have been in a single file at times and this dance did offer the "getting on" opportunity if we needed it. Again Tylman's tune fitted perfectly.

We had given some thought to costume and referred to the useful short history by Borys (3) although we knew this was in more than capable professional hands. Joan Bergin won a Primetime Emmy for the Tudor costume designs in Season 1 and has been nominated for the Costume Designers Guild Award for 2008; she also has 7 other award nominations to her name.

It had been decided we were "a morryske dancyd by the kynges yong gentyllmen..." and as Knights of Court we were suitably attired. Even earlier than this period there are accounts of dress uniformity for the dancers although many descriptions suggest more glitter and elaboration than we ended up with. Yes, we used handkerchiefs and this was solely our decision to deviate from the almost certain absence of handkerchiefs in morris at this time. Handkerchiefs seemed to appear after the flappy pendant sleeves became a victim to changes in fashion, but on the day we were one act on a set of over 180 performers and our reasoning was that handkerchiefed arm movements would elevate our performance above head height and be more conspicuous on camera.

Having made as good a preparation as we could muster in short time the select and freshly instructed seven duly set off to Heathrow to fly to Dublin at the appointed time. However no sooner had they parked their cars when the message came through the mobile telephonic device that it was bucketing down in Co.

Wicklow and all filming was off, - try again next week.

Well, this is all well and good for professionals but for at least 2 of the elite group their day-job was going to put them out of the country on business. So there was hasty regrouping and new men drafted in. The next Thursday we got away successfully but with Graham, our sole recorder player in Bratislava and despite 5 concertina players in the group we could not produce our music in period style. However, a hasty call to the Director's resourceful assistant discovered a musician in the cast and "Props" had found a very nice 16th Century bass recorder.

The day of filming started at 5:30 and we spent 14 hours on set, fighting the onset of dusk. The first problem was that despite having a Grade 8 in Jews Harp or whatever, our new musician (Enda Gallery) couldn't get a squeak out of the ancient recorder, let alone Stanes Morris! Plan B was to record 2 concertinas playing it and playback over the set sound system; however whilst still in the planning stage the call came to get the morris dancers on set and see what they do. Since most of the extras and crew were Irish none of them had a clue what to expect from morris dancers. There was no choice but for one of us to hum Stanes whilst going through our carefully rehearsed evolutions. The trial take went very well until the assistant Director came on set saying "Er, we're picking up a humming noise in the cans, can we lose it please?"

We duly explained that morris dancing usually accompanies a sound of some sort but when we came to shoot the live scene with 180 people about their activities (and the set sound system pumping out a Maypole Dance), it was pretty hard work concentrating on the humming. As it happens

the scene only allowed scope for the Green Garters circular dance so once Enda had seen the dance a few times he could at least nod his recorder in time with the humming.

A second problem was that the Tudor shoes were exceedingly uncomfortable to walk in, never mind energetic capering. This problem was relieved by doing the rehearsal shots in trainers and changing for the live shots. It will be interesting to see if continuity picked up on this and whether we were consistent! Needless to say there were umpteen takes for different events and camera angles, finishing with an overhead shot from a crane requiring a very tight circle to get on screen. Come nightfall we were pretty exhausted and glad of a microbrewery down the road in Bray where we enjoyed a few pints of porter. We have recently learnt that Season 1 of the Tudors, with 2 Golden Globe nominations, is still being sold to numerous countries all around the world with viewing figures now over 200 million, including coast to coast screening in the USA, and is grossing millions of Euros. We settled for a one off lousy payment instead of a lucrative box office deal; **we've got to get a new agent!**

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Bampton 2008

by Banbury Bill

A car door slams and figures in whites scramble through the pub door clutching their treasures under waterproofs whilst the rain bounces off the pavements around their feet. The smell of the bacon sandwiches fills the bar, and the landlord tops up the plate with fresh supplies. Handshakes and gossip occupy the spare moments amidst the tying of bells and fixing of ribbons. Glances from the windows confirm the severity of the precipitation outside and practicality moves the stools and tables for the start of the days dancing. Two or three six-handers, and a couple of jigs later, it's time for that first pint, although a few had that with their bacon sarnies.

The walk down the street to the old folks place is wet, dodging puddles and the splashing cars, but then the pleasure of another re-union with an old dancer just celebrating his 94th birthday. He sits opposite another one with over fifty years of past Whitsuns to remember. A few stray notes and the musician sets their fingers tapping out the rhythm and the set of dancers forget the wet and the world outside to recreate the old men's memories and weave them into present reality. The inevitable posing for photographs follows and the promises to return next year and the coats are pulled back on to move to the



Morris Clown. It's still raining hard and the dancing is once again all inside the pub. The bacca pipes jig pulls a crowd close round and then it is tight six-handers with the watchers pint pots rescued from flying handkerchiefs before the contents fly too.

The walk up to the next spot brings a meeting with members of one of the other teams, and contact with a couple of men who have changed sides since last year. Pleasantries are exchanged but uneasily, one set of eyes barely hiding their feelings of betrayal by friends, looking into another set full of guilty glances, and the words exchanged are friendly but lacking meaning. Moving on comes as a relief to both sides. Rain is still the real problem and the craft stalls in the Institute get an unexpected treat of dancing. The hot lunchtime meal drives away the dampness from our souls and it's off for another pint at The Horseshoe.

We struggle to get through the door and weave our way in and

out of the beards and bellies up to the crowded bar. All the usual 'well-knowns' are there and their folkie friends are having a splendid musical session, taking possession of the pub with their wall of sound. It has stopped raining at long last and our dancers form up outside the front of the pub. Fighting the effects of the strong cold wind and ignoring the music coming from the massed band inside the pub our musician plays and the



magic of Bampton's Morris is once more stepped out on its hallowed ground. Off we go round the gardens of Bampton then, to The Old Dairy to enjoy some fresh baked sausage rolls; to Glebelands next where a brief shower of rain sends up scurrying into the garage for our dancing; and finally The Deanery where the usual hospitality is much appreciated. The afternoon dancing is concluded at Gothlands close to where The Eagle used to be. A cup of tea is a welcome treat here and does much to dispel the inner cold that the cruel wind inflicts

on us.

After tea in the old Scout Hall we are joined by visiting guest teams and soon it is off to dance the streets once more. The rain is gone completely by this time but the cold wind persists! Many folks have taken to the pubs by now and as we walk by the Romany the youngsters there are noisily supping their bottles of Becks to the sound of loud canned pop music, seemingly oblivious to the tradition outside that makes the day special. Our crowd of watchers bravely follow us and our visiting sides from pub to pub and all the dancing is well appreciated.

So it is that towards the end of the evening two young men in their whites step up to dance a jig. As they dance the quality of their steps and dancing catches the attention of the watchers and the chat among the crowd begins to quieten,



and the age old tune played out in this village over the centuries leads the young men on, drawing ever more Morris from them, so that all of us who watch, know this is the true magic of Whitsun at Bampton. The roar of the crowd as they caper to the final steps drowns out the traffic, the noise of the pub and the world around. We all were suddenly confident that Bampton Morris is still alive and well. Our generation honouring all those past years of Morris simply by keeping it up.

(Photos from 2007, Geoff Jerram)