



October 2008
No 57

The Past Squire

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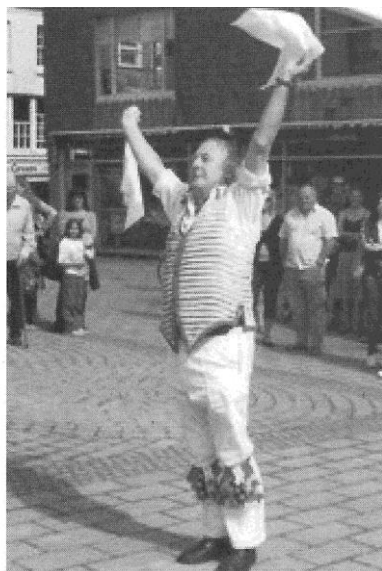


Paul Reece at Dartington Final day as Squire of The Morris Ring



Paul Reece's 'dancing-out' Vig: 'Bold Nelson's Praise' Ilmington, with musician Dave Brewster. This was preceded by an explanation of the news of Nelson's great victory and death being intercepted by the Cornish fishing fleet and announced at Madron Church above Penzance before it arrived at Falmouth and travelled overland through Devon to London in 1805.

Photos: Marion Reece



The Outgoing Squire's Report

Out with the old

While the nation debates how to celebrate Britishness and a new British Bank Holiday and Lord Coe speculates on the form that the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics should take following the success of Beijing, the answer of course is the same, '5000 Morris Dancers'.

Lord Coe's remark says it all. The positive take up of the Morris with the media that runs and runs has been truly astounding. Morris dancing is so established in the national consciousness that it is now practically synonymous with sport and of course the Olympics. Every effort should be made to build on this wave of support and enthusiasm. We must, while we have a favourable climate, keep up the momentum, be clear as to what we need to achieve and refuse to be side tracked.

In struggling to find solutions and a celebratory expression for the people, their traditional games have always provided that focus for fun and competition. The Halgavor or Cornish Games near Bodmin, the annual Dover Games or 'Cotswold Olympics' as originally styled in 1612, the annual Wenlock Olympic Games from 1850, on which the modern French revival Olympic Games are based, are testimony to this long pedigree of the people's games out of which our sports and pastimes were born. Each region has its particular culture, forms of expression, games and festivals that can be focused into a celebration of the spirit of who we are.

We have come a long way in two years, we can stare the future in the face and with confidence, purpose and imagination say that this is the way we should go, this is what we have got in place to make it



The Squire at Dartington

Photo: Marion Reece

happen and this is what we still need to do to make our future certain by 2012.

For any Olympic performance and even more importantly for our own long term future, we need to:

1. Train up new crack, regionally based, young teams to perform, demonstrate, recruit and deliver with energy and panache at important events regionally and nationally.
2. Continue to develop our national and international image through a proper PR forum and website.
3. Have an educational programme that puts traditional dance back into schools so that we can recover from the lost generation that have not had that initial grounding in their cultural heritage. National school competitions would significantly enhance this process as would the development of regional recruitment cluster groups to promote and teach the Morris.

In all these endeavours, as with our insurance, it must be the Joint Morris Organisations (JMO) working together to achieve these common goals

and benefits.

We have literally and metaphorically come through Storms and floods to arrive. We cannot turn back now but must continue to push forward to achieve for all of our collective endeavours a stronger and more secure future.

My two years as Squire have given me the opportunity

to promote youth and the future of the Morris and attempt to influence the way that the Morris is received, particularly through the media. Several sides such as Jockey and Chalice have successfully embraced this approach, the former with 'Team Spirit' for BBC Radio 4 and the Trinny and Susannah series 'The Great British Body' for ITV, and of course the JMO Big Birmingham Caper which they hosted.

This JMO showcase event attracted 555 members of the Morris, including youth laden sides from Bampton, Bristol, Moulton, Chipping Campden and especially the Crestwood School from Dudley and Dartington, where the boys side stole the show, as they did at my dancing out at this summer's last Morris Ring Meeting at Totnes, which celebrated Dartington's 40th year.

Other Morris Ring Meetings which stood out include Stafford. They showed the true 'unsinkable spirit of the Morris', the Morris Ring and Captain Webb shining through at its best, despite all that was thrown at them. We all succeeded triumphantly over

that weekend and I believe that we are all considerably stronger because of it. The Mersey Morris Ring Meeting was a perfect balance of the metropolitan delights of Liverpool City of Culture with the rural delights of the Wirral and the banks of the Dee at Parkgate. The 75th weekend of dance, which was the Thaxted Morris Ring Meeting, which starred Monkseaton, Saddleworth and Helmond surpassed even the previous year's perfection by being pure magic from start to finish, the best for some 20 years according to some, again under clear air traffic free skies.

The jigs instructional at Sutton Bonington, hosted now for ten years by Dolphin, another side celebrating their 40th year, has gone from strength to strength, there being successfully trialed this year two parallel sessions for beginners and advanced. A must, that at least one dancer from each side but better would be two, should contact Geoff Jerram to sign up for the next session in the new year. In the spirit of success and service Dolphin were presented with the commemorative Jig Tyg for their quiet and tireless service to the Morris Ring for hosting this event.

Finally the amount of work that I have been able to get through on behalf of the Morris Ring could only happen through team work and the unstinting support of the other officers to bring in overdue reforms to make this organisation more responsive and fit for purpose for the future. I will continue to work for the wider promotion of the Morris. With the nation behind us we should once more be a cultural force to be reckoned with.

Paul Reece
Chairman the Morris Ring
Advisory Council and Immediate
Past Squire of the Morris Ring

Bampton 2008.. ...continued



In the last edition of The Morris Ring Circular an article attributed to Banbury Bill was published, providing an entertaining account of The Bampton Morris Men celebrating 'the true magic of Whitsun at Bampton' in 2008. At the time we published photos from the traditional event in 2007. These photos are from 2008 celebrations and are attributable to S. J. Croft (top and bottom) and the middle two photos to Mollie Care. The left middle 'Group' photo includes 'an old dancer just celebrating his 94th birthday'- Sonny Townsend.

Photos contributed by Barry Care

Winster Centenary Celebrations

This is it and that is it...

by David Thompson

**...and this is Morris dancing;
the piper fell and broke
his neck and said it was
a chancer.
You don't know and I
don't know what fun
we had at Brampton,
with roasted pig and
a cuddle duck and a
pudding in a lantern.**

This rigmarole is sung before Winster dance to the well know tune that is used for the procession at many Morris Ring Meeting. Cecil Sharp wrote in his Folk Dance Tunes, "Extremely pretty and picturesque to see handkerchiefs (32) waving in the air at the end of every 4 bars." He was also very taken with the extra characters: the king, queen, witch and fool.

Sharp went to Winster, the



lead-mining town in the Derbyshire Peak District, on two occasions in 1908, the first time to men's practice on Thursday 25th June and Wakes Saturday which in that year was the 4th July, the traditional time for the appearance of the dancers.

During millennium year the



idea was muted of celebrating the centenary of Sharp's visit to the village in some way. Over the intervening years plans were gradually developed to re-enact the visit of 100 years ago and to involve the other traditional teams that Sharp saw dance whose dances he published in the Morris Books.

The idea was that Sharp's visit was to be re-enacted from the details that had been discovered by Ian Russell. It was that he arrived from London by train at Darley Dale Station and was

then taken by pony and trap to meet Winster

Lead miners coming off shift at Mill Close Mine, at Stanton Lees. From there he was taken to Winster Primary School to hear The children sing and play their games. Later he visited The cheese factory for some stilton cheese, Derbyshire is

one of three counties that are allowed to make this type of cheese. In the evening he attended the morris dancer's practice to collect the 5 dances: processional, morris dance, reel, blue-eyed stranger, and gallope. The men were happy to give him the dances but were more circumspect about the tunes.

Grass Theatre Company were

As part of a recruiting drive over the last eight years men



have been into three local primary schools to teach the dances with the aid of a teaching



pack. With the support

of the three local primary schools, South Darley, Winster and Elton this was to form the basis of a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other grant-making bodies. A local theatre company of professional actors, Cotton

to incorporate a recreation of the visit with actors playing the part of Cecil Sharp and later to perform a play about the life of Cecil Sharp and his collecting, at the same time as the children presented their work to the village on Friday evening 13th June 2008.

Saturday 14th June was to be a celebration of morris dancing; we invited Abingdon, Bampton, Eynesham, Headington as their dances had been published along with Winster in Morris Book 1-3. Thaxted were also asked because they are the oldest revival side and could dance the other dances published by Sharp in the Morris books. We set off on two coach tours: one going north to Youlgreave, Bakewell, Great Longstone, Monsal Head, and Tideswell. The other went to Wirksworth, Cromford, Matlock Bath, Winster and Hartington.

The high point of the day was the procession down Main Street and a station was made opposite Woolley's Yard and each of the sides danced. This was the largest collection of traditional morris sides in one place since the time of the Dancing England events, possibly ever! Winster during that hour when the street was closed was truly '**a desperate morris place**'.

Michael McNamara B.Sc.(Hons) C. Eng., MBE

1926-2008

by Stephen Matcham

It may be truly said of 'Mac' that he led a very full life and that he brought much enthusiasm to his many varied interests. Born and brought up in Exeter, in his youth he developed three enduring passions: railways (especially the GWR), scouting and folk dance, the last of which was suggested to him in his teens as a means of meeting girls and by which means he met his wife Doreen.

On completing his sixth-form studies in 1945 he joined the Royal Engineers as an Officer Cadet, and after training in Railway Operations at Longmoor, was posted to Germany, where he joined the effort to recreate a functioning transport network at the end of hostilities. Mac's role there was to prove far from routine, for in 1948-49 he was put in charge of running freight trains into Berlin, in defiance of the Soviet blockade.

On demobilisation, Mac took up a place at Portsmouth Technical College to study Civil Engineering at degree level. Following graduation Mac began his career in the water industry, and in 1953 became a founder member of Winchester Morris Men, the club with which he was twice elected to the office of Squire, first in 1960 and again in 1964, (the year in which Winchester hosted the 96th Meeting of the Morris Ring). His professional experience was to have benefits to the Winchester club in the planning of tours, through a detailed knowledge of the topography of Hampshire, based on the location of bore-holes, water treatment plants and pumping stations!

With the reorganisation of the water industry in the 1970s Mac was relocated to Worthing, home to the headquarters of Southern Water, where he took up a position in senior



Michael McNamara

Photo: Courtesy Martlet Morris and Sword Men

management. In 1985, shortly before his retirement, he was awarded the MBE in recognition of his part in the development of radio communications in the water industry. As a Sussex resident, he became a stalwart member of the Martlet Sword and Morris Men, holding office as Bagman from 1986-1988 and again from 1999 to 2001. As

Bagman he worked behind the scenes to foster good relations with neighbouring Morris Federation Club; Sompting Village. This was at a time when the traditional view of women's Morris was dominant in the Martlet Club. He maintained, with some justification, that Sompting's women's side were *better* dancers than their men.



He was also instrumental in unifying the appearance of the Martlet's bell pads by the adoption of a standard array of ribbons (produced with the assistance of Doreen). Mac was still dancing into his seventies, only latterly opting to play concertina in the Martlet Band. Busy to the end, his attendance at club meetings had become only slightly less frequent in recent years, as he gave more time to duties as a grandparent.

The funeral was held on the 8th July at St Andrew's Parish Church at West Tarring, where he was an active member of the congregation. At Doreen's request, following the service the Martlets and members of Winchester Morris Men performed 'The Valentine' and 'Bonny Green Garters' at the church gate. Afterwards the mourners gathered for a reception in the grounds of High Salvington Windmill, a place close to his heart where he had served as treasurer to the mill's managing trust.

Stephen Matcham is Bagman, Martlet Sword & Morris Men

Mac was a staunch supporter of the Winchester Morris Men and despite moving to Sussex was a regular attender at WMM Feasts, Morris Ring Meetings and many other events. He also had an amazing memory. When WMM scrapbooks went 'walkabout', Mac wrote about his early days in Winchester and, along with Lionel Bacon and 8 others, was indeed a Founder Member of the Winchester Morris Men. Thanks to Mac, we have some written evidence of the Club's early years.

The picture (left) sees Mac presented with the only Founder's Medal by the then Squire of Winchester Morris Men, Geoff Jerram, at the Club's 50th Anniversary in 2003. Our thoughts are with Mac's family as we remember a Gentleman and Morris Dancer. Ed.

Letters To The Editor

From Christina of
Red Stags

Harry,
Please, could you
include that following
in the Morris Ring
Circular, where it
might reach the eyes
of past members?
Red Stags Morris
still dancing after all
these years - will be
celebrating our 40th
anniversary on Sat.
23rd and Sun. 24th

May 2009.

We would like to
invite as many past
members as possible.

If you are, know of, or
suspect anyone else of
being a previous
member or associate
of the side and are
interested, please,
contact me at mail to:
christina@

redstagsmorris.org

Also, if you have any
photos, newspaper
clippings, amusing

anecdotes, etc., we
would be grateful for
copies of these for the
archive.

Many thanks,
Christina
Bag for Red Stags
Morris

From Mrs J. Gendall
of Liskeard, Cornwall
Dear Sir

I prepared the
enclosed for a Morris
dancer in Cornwall
who had been told.

rather rudely, that such
dancing had no place
here, it was "English
not Cornish."

Having done the
research, I thought
you might like a copy.
I hope it might be of
interest.

Yours sincerely
J. Gendall (Mrs)

(Ed. I happily publish your
research on page 10.)

And this is it and that's about it!

At the Morris Ring
Meeting in
Dartington in early
September, those
present witnessed the
change-over of
Squires from Paul
Reece to Brian
Tasker. Geoff Jerram
was asked to be a
neutral prior to the
formal hand over of
the Squire's
paraphernalia.
Geoff Jerram
attempted to sum
up the emotions of
the two, prior to
Paul's and Brian's
speeches:

'Paul has spent the
first year (as Squire)
trying to find out what

*the hell he should be
doing, the last year
thinking he has come
to grips with it and
now, just at the time
when he has finally
got to grips with what
he should be doing,
he's got to hand over
the job to another.
'We are coming to
the end of Paul's
Squireship. It is
the highlight of
his life and, please
understand that he
will feel emotional.
If he doesn't, we'll
bloody well make
sure he does.*

*'..and on the
incoming, Squire,
Brian Tasker in a*

*matter of 2 minutes I
am landing Brian in
the poo! And he has
2 years to extricate*

*himself from it. Brian
Tasker will suddenly
think, what the bloody
hell have I done!'*

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The Morris Ring Circular Editorial



Editor: Harry Stevenson 59 Oliver's Battery Road North
Winchester Hampshire S022 4JB
01962 855911 trunkleshs@btinternet.com

As Paul Reece's Squireship ends and Brian Tasker's begins it is perhaps a time not only of reflection, reviewing Paul's time as Squire, but also one of looking forward and building on some of Paul's successes. Without doubt there have been considerable media, successes and indeed Paul himself writes on page two 'Every effort should be made to build on this wave of support and enthusiasm. We must while we have a favourable climate, keep up the

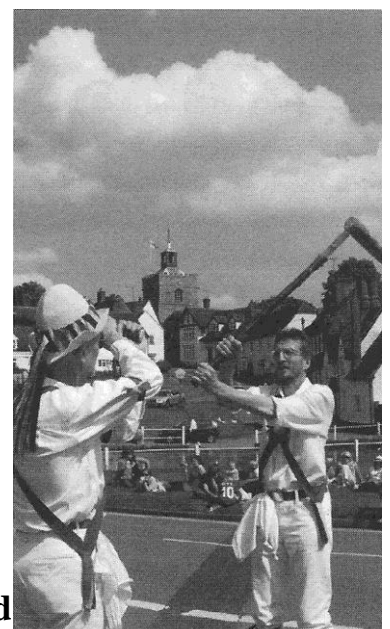
momentum, be clear as to what we need to achieve and refuse to be side tracked.' Paul has also put much effort into supporting, promoting and encouraging young teams. His emphasis on working together with the Joint Morris Organisations in these initiatives is to be applauded. Brian, you have a hard act to follow. Your tasks (sic) are to build on Paul's determined efforts- they will not happen without your own brand of leadership, enthusiasm and

determination. However, you are fortunate that The Chairman of the Advisory Council is Paul Reece. Not only has he already committed himself to continuing to fight for these initiatives, but you also have a very able and wise counsellor to help you through the maze of your Squireship. His advice and counsel are free. Use it. I have and will continue to do so. It is important that I receive as varied and content as possible

and volume helps too. I am grateful to all contributors and welcome new ones.

A particular and especial thanks must go to Hilary Blanford, not just for this issue but for many issues where without her excellent photos and meticulous descriptions, this Circular would have been bereft of much needed copy. (see below)

Your photos are much appreciated.

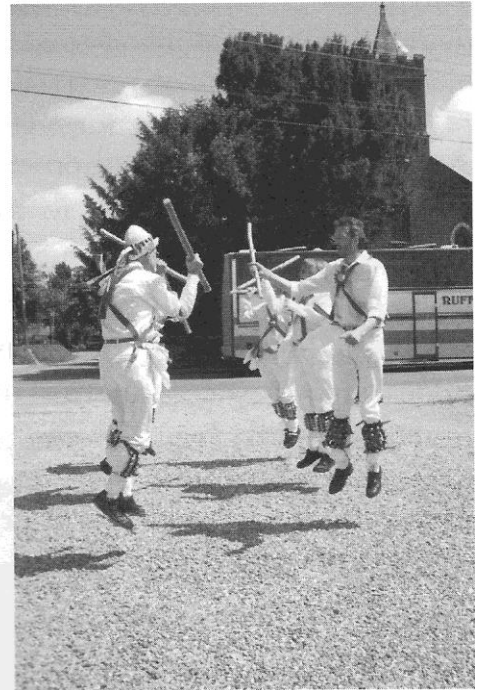


Monkseaton, left, Cambridge above and White Rose right, at the Morris Ring Meeting in Thaxted, 2008

Photos: Hilary Blanford

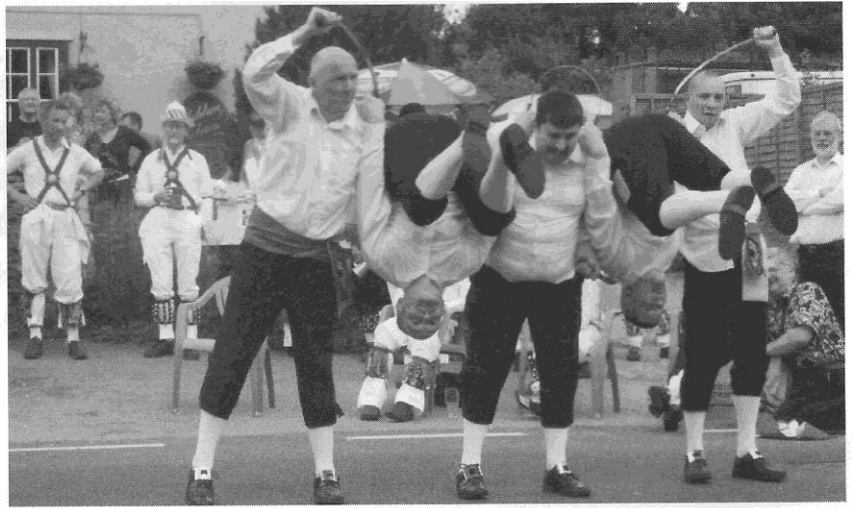
The Morris Ring Meeting

Thaxted 2008



Monkseaton above and below. Top right and bottom left, Cambridge Morris Men and bottom right, White Rose, whose Report appears on adjacent page.

All Photos: Hilary Blanford



The Morris Ring Meeting

Thaxted 2008

by Richard Fowler

A telephone call from Will (our foreman, the best dancer and a formidable musician). "Hey, Richard, bad news: me back's gone at practice. I'm knackered for Thaxted. And Robert's got a terrible chest, so he's not going, and Simon's also cried off. Doug can go though, but he will need picking up at Doncaster station". The best laid plans... a healthy ten last week becomes a bare seven the day before we are due to travel down to Essex. Nothing new there, then.

We manage to fit everyone, kit and tents into two cars. I have two of the children, 13-year-old Alex (our very own Billy Elliott, a ballet dancer brought reluctantly to practice a year ago by his 'Grange', Angela, to learn traditional morris and who has stayed ever since) and our legendary squeeze-box player, Waggy, who's late 50s going on 13.

After a remarkably stress- and flatulence-free journey down, we gather on a sunny Friday evening at the school football pitch campsite in the lovely village of Thaxted. Me and Waggy were here with Oakworth in 1990 and 1987 and Ned with the last White Rose visit in '87; the others are Ring Meeting virgins.

There's a good 'buzz' about the place and the weather looks set fair for Saturday's tours so it's down to business: a portion of fish and chips and a few pints at *The Star* to get everyone in the mood for the weekend and a reasonable night's kip under canvas (or nylon).

We find ourselves looking for the Tour A coach after breakfast on Saturday, teamed with Cambridge, Monkseaton and London Pride. First stop is *The Bluebell* at Hempstead and we line up for our first dance, *The Quaker*, danced in our style of Bampton-in-the-



White Rose at the Bluebell Inn, Hempstead

Photo: Terry Thompson

Bush. There's Ned and me at the front, Alex and another 13-year-old, Joseph (Ned's son and grandson of Cliff, who founded the side in 1953), in the middle and Liam (Joe's cousin) and Doug (who was this year's Whittlesea Straw Bear) at the back. As usual, we remind Waggy of the tune by whistling it and off we go... No problems and a good response from a potentially very critical audience of

morris men.

The rest of the cloudless — and very hot — day is a blur of dancing, drinking beer and trooping on and off coaches at picturesque villages ("...and this is where they filmed *Lovejoy*". Lovely). After very welcome tea and cakes back at the school we wander into the village for a 'wet' and a game of pool at the *Rose and Crown* before heading up the main street to join the procession.

White Rose dancing Step & Fetch Her from Bampton-in-the-Bush danced at the Bluebell Inn, Hempstead

Photo: 011ie King of Cambridge MM



All of a sudden it's our turn to dance in front of the (to us) enormous crowd by the Guildhall. Ned has chosen another Bampton-style dance, *Go Shake Yourself* (cheekily formulated by our previous foreman, Robin), which involves the dancers beginning from the front in pairs ("don't start!" we threaten the middle and back pairs) and also lively, linked-arm swinging. The young boys risk the wrath of our Squire by running in and flinging themselves around each other, much to the delight of the crowd. It's gone in a flash and we wait around for twilight and the arrival of our near-neighbours, the lads from Saddleworth, to clog impressively into the arena and set the scene for the wonderful Abbot's Bromley Horn Dance. Our young pair dive to the front of the crowd to get a good view of something they might never forget.

Cockles with 'moppies' from the Aynsley Harriet look-alike seafood vendor in the car park of *The Star* is followed by even more beer, a bit of dancing and some music. A cracking day.

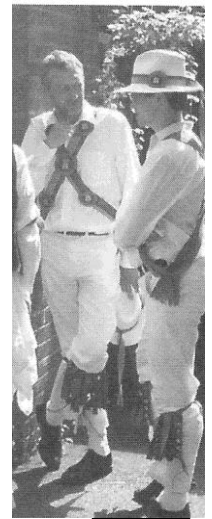
Sunday is a bit cloudy. Nevertheless, we (some of us) file into church and purge our souls followed by a bit more dancing outside (we choose Oddington *Skirmish* for this one, which Ned manages to get through on his by-now dodgy knee). It's fond farewells — including Jason, bagman of Westminster via Adelaide who once danced with us at Moulton — and back on the road to Yorkshire.

Thaxted has been one of the highlights of our year and long may it thrive. I reckon we will be back before too long (and not another gap 20 years!)

Richard Fowler, Bagman
2001-2008, White Rose
Morris Men

314th Meeting of The Morris Ring

Whitchurch 4th-6th July 2008



Right, Wnchester men at White Swan, Whitchurch: Photo: 'Paul' from the White

Top l-to-r Durham Rams, & the Hosts in Aylesbury; second row Winchester Morris Men and Etcetera; 3rd row: Winchester, Leeds, Martin Kennard of Winchester & inset, Whitchurch; bottom row: Durham Rams and Max Haynes of Stafford

photos: Harry Stevenson



Dancing in Cornwall

by Mrs J Gendall

If you are a Morris Dancer you will already know some of the following information but you may wish to pass this on to others who are unaware of certain facts.

In the medieval period Morris dancing was also called Moresco dancing with variations of this spelling. It matters not what it was called, both words mean the same thing. Morris (and its variant spellings Morisch, Moryssh etc) are Saxon and Flemish equivalents of the Mediaeval Latin Moresca meaning Moorish in style or a Morrish dance. Other Romance (that is Latin based) languages use forms of this such as Morisco (Spanish =Moor, Moorish), Moresque (French =Moor, Moorish in style) In the Cornish documents we find Moruske, Morrishe, Morice and Morishe.

It is easy for Kernowphiles to say Morris in an English tradition that has no place in Cornwall, but that is simply not true. Morris dancing came into Cornwall at the same time that it came to England. We cannot

know the precise date, but we can tell from the records when it was already considered an established dance form. The earliest English record is dated 1448. In Cornwall it is first recorded in 1466 as part of the Arundell household accounts (ref R.I.C. Courtney Library HK/17/1, f 3v). There are three references to Moruske dancers, one entry giving the cost of four dozen bells, that being three shillings.

1505-6 brought dancers from St Erne, Boscastle and Minster to Bodmin, (CRO B/Bod/314/3/22). Visiting dancers, we may expect them to be Morris, visited St Breock in the latter half of the sixteenth century and records of their payment exists in the Churchwarden's Accounts. There were dancers from Ludgvan in 1565-6, from Grampound in 1567-8 and from St Eval and Phillack in 1574-5.

Morishe dancers are specifically named in 1595 in Camborne's St Meriadocus and Martin Churchwarden's Accounts where they are identified as visiting troupes from St Leven and Gunwalloe.

(Ref. CRO PD/322/2). The record is of their payment.

The Green Book of St Columb shows clearly that this village had its own troupe of dancers and there are records of the costs of Morris bells and costumes over a number of years. In 1584-5 the church possessed five coats for Morris dancers, along with twenty-four dancing bells and a streamer of red moccado and locram. Moccado is a corruption of the Italian word "mocaiao" meaning mohair, and the material was much used to clothing in the 16th and 17th centuries. Locram or Lockram was a linen based fabric. The streamer is mentioned several times in connection with the Morris dancers, and must have played some role in the dance. In 1587 there is another mention of five Morrishe coats, and another was added in 1594. By 1596-7 we know St Columb had seven costumes presumably including the bells. With the records of the clothing of the Morris men are mentions of a "friar's coat". Since there is no mention of a fool, `oss or Betty, it would appear that a mock friar played

the role usually adopted by one of these. Also listed with several Morris accounts are six yards of white woollen cloth, although it is unclear how this is used.

Bishop John Woolton's Visitation Articles, 1579, mentions Morice dancers in a most disparaging way, which seems odd since Parish churches are recorded as having paid them!

All these records show that Morris dancing has a long history in Cornwall. What we do not know is the style of Morris danced, whether it followed the Cotswold, Border or any other tradition. There are hints that it may have been similar to Border. These dancers are known for their ragged coats and we do have specific records of Morris coats as opposed to the crossed baldrics found in the Cotswold tradition. The use of a moccado streamer and a friar may indicate that we had a distinct style of our own, but if so we do not have the necessary details for an accurate reconstruction.

(see letters, page 6)



***Morris Dancers in Cornwall: current Century,
Trigg Morris Men dancing at Morgon Porth,
during the summer holidays of 2005***



Hartley Ale 2008 Photo Album



*Top left: Victory dancing
Glorishears, Oddington*

*Above, Kennet dancing
The Rose. Fieldtown*

*Left, St Albans dancing
Jockey to the Fair, Ascot
under Wychwood*

*Below left, Broadwood
dancing Nutting Girl,
Ducklington*

*All photos on this page
at Ightham Mote
except below right: St
Albans dancing
Rodney, Headington at
The Square, Wrotham*

*All Photos on this page
Hilary Blanford*



More Hartley Ale 2008 Photos



Group Picture at Goatcher's Brewery, copyright Kent Messenger. Right, a massed Balance the Straw at Ightham Mote. Below, Broadwood dancing a Border dance, Not for Joe also at Ightham Mote



Broadwood at Wrotham, Right. Below left, John Whelan from Bourne River and below right Bonny Green Garters at The Square, Wrotham

All photos, except where stated, Hilary Blanford



THAXTED MORRIS MEN 2008 BUS PASS TOUR

by Geoff Walker

One afternoon after our usual Bank Holiday dance in Thaxted, Thaxted Morris Men were winding down in the Swan when the conversation turned to the use of the new bus passes. Who used them, where they were used and how useful they were for Park & Ride schemes. We came to the realisation that many of our members were the proud owners of these passes.

Roy Page, our bagman, carried out a quick assessment of the membership and found that we easily had enough 'bus pass' members to form a dancing and playing side. At this point he suggested a Bus pass Tour and this was greeted favourably by all present. Within days we received an e-mail, or letter for those without the wherewithal, asking who would be interested in a local tour using the Village Link service. The response was very positive and it was thrown open to family and younger members. Many of the guests were wives, who also qualify for bus passes, although you would not have thought they should, as they all look much younger than the men! The spirit of the venture was that we were free to dance wherever we wanted to. The practicalities were that



it would have to be after 9.30am, when the passes were valid and not on a Sunday as local buses do not run on that day. We chose a Wednesday, which unfortunately excluded a few members, as they could not get time off work. Once the bagman knew he had a full side, he proposed a tour and checked out likely dancing spots. We knew that the drivers were fairly flexible on our chosen route as they are used to being

flagged down anywhere within reason. Roy found three pubs near existing bus stops and a fourth, which had unfortunately closed. These seemed very workable and the time table allowed us to return to Thaxted in the afternoon to dance outside the Guildhall, have tea, dance outside the Church and then retire to the Swan. Everything was in place and we had twenty participants with dancer, musicians and guests.



Come Wednesday morning, we all duly assembled at 9.30am. [Well, most of us!] We were delighted to see that Des Herring of East Suffolk was one of the guests, so we had an extra dancer. Dave Brewster, who is a leading light in the Chameleonic Morris Men and a Thaxted musician, had a surprise in store for us. He produced a set of specially prepared baldrics for us to wear on the day. The central rosette included a motif of a vintage single decker, in red and white livery, with an appropriate local number plate. When these baldrics had been put on, each member was presented with an appropriate service badge, which included the FF code to signify our bus region, the function of the person i.e. dancer, musician or squire and a number which signified the qualification and registration of the person. Curiously, in each case, the number corresponded to the date of birth of the participant! When we were all kitted out, we were presented with yet another badge. A commemorative badge or every person on the tour. Dave, his brother Peter and Simon Ritchie had been very busy, preparing for this day. I also understand that a member of Blackmore

The programme for the day was:

09.30am	Meet at Post Office, depart at 9.59am.
10.46am	Hatfield Heath. Dance at The Stag. Depart at 11.30am.
11.37am	Hatfield Broad Oak. Dance at the Cock Inn followed by lunch. Depart at 1.37pm.
2.00pm	Mole Hill Green. Dance at the Three Horseshoes. Depart at 3.00pm.
3.17pm	Thaxted Guildhall. Dance.
3.45pm	Tea
4.45pm	Dance in the churchyard.
	Retire to the Swan
	Depart

Morris was also involved in the capacity of consultant regarding the bus details.

When everybody was fully kilted and ready for the first dance of the day, the local press appeared, so we were involved in the usual poses at the bus stop with passes held aloft.

After this, we really did get to do our dance at the bus stop and shortly afterwards the Village Link No.5 bus arrived. We boarded the bus along with a few members of the public who had joined the bus earlier in the route. Fortunately there was standing room so we all managed to fit on the bus. We were less than a mile from Thaxted when our shy, retiring musician, Simon Ritchie, started playing. The members of the public soon got used to the fact that they had inadvertently joined a Morris Tour and even began to enjoy it. Most of them got off at Stansted Airport and we continued our journey, picking up other bemused passengers who soon warmed to the occasion.

We reached The Stag and we were greeted by one of our retired musicians, Ed Goatcher, who lives not far from Hatfield heath. The company immediately sprang into action and ordered drinks. We then danced outside the pub, avoiding contact with the truck delivering dairy produce to the shop next door. After several dances we made our way to the bus stop for the second leg of the journey. We boarded the bus from Bishops Stortford, to be greeted by the same



driver, who was now quite used to us. We arrived at Hatfield Broad Oak

just about on time and introduced ourselves to the landlord of the Cock Inn, negotiated the menu for lunches and agreed on a suitable time to eat. We then danced outside and had quite a reasonable audience for Wednesday lunchtime. Some of the audience were there for lunch, others came because they had seen the poster and some were passers-by. A very pleasant stop.

At the appointed time, we queued on the pavement to hail the bus, as this

as some of the group have mobility problems and no, I do not mean the dancers! The bus was already 10 minutes late when with much relief we saw it rounding the corner. There was much waving of arms and the bus pulled up. As we were boarding and talking about going to Mole Hill Green, the driver informed us that he was going to Blocks Corner. We got off the 347 and quietly waited for the right bus. This duly arrived, was flagged down and even had a different driver. We did have two of the same passengers, returning from Bishop's Stortford who joined in again with Simon Ritchie's medley of songs relevant to transport. The highlight for me was his rendition of 'We are the Bus Fare Dodgers'.

We picked up a few more passengers at Stansted Airport and got off the bus at Mole Hill Green. Once the group had stocked up with refreshment and found suitable seating for those not performing, we realised that again

continued overleaf

Thaxted's 'Mature' Tour continued...



we had an audience, several of whom had come specifically to see us. We started our dance and became aware of a television camera and presenter. The dances were filmed and there was much talking from the presenter during our set. When I asked the landlord who was filming, he explained that it was Anglia News who was covering the possible BAA sell-off of Stansted Airport. The crew were at the pub and he had told them about our visit, so they left part of the crew to film the dancing. We were eventually used as a backdrop to some of the presentation on the evening news.

At 3pm. The bus arrived and we boarded the bus, to be greeted by some of the passengers who had left Thaxted with us, earlier in the day. By this time, everyone was in good humour, so there was more singing and playing. When one of the tunes was recognised as

the 'Gay Gordons', Mr & Mrs Joe Hobbs treated us to a demonstration. We disembarked at 3.17pm in Thaxted and performed several dances outside the Guildhall, where again we had an audience of friends and tourists. One of the audience was Mike Goatcher, son of Ed who joined us at Hatfield Heath. Mike cannot dance at the moment but it was a nice example of the continuity in the side and the tour itself.

When we had finished dancing, we were invited to have tea with Bobby and Simon Ritchie at Market Cross, adjacent to the Guildhall. This was most welcome, very pleasant and most appropriate as this had previously been the home of the Hunter family, which included Alec, the first Squire of the Morris Ring. This was another example of continuity that day. Refreshed by the tea and cakes, we processed from

the Guildhall, through the churchyard and danced outside the church before retiring to the Swan, to round off the day. This we did with eating dinner and telling tales of the day and recalling other memories. This brought us right back to where the whole thing began some months earlier.

During that evening we discussed whether we could organise our annual Ring Meeting on bus passes to make it cheaper or move it to mid-week to take advantage of OAP lunches! Unfortunately, it would exclude all those younger members that we desperately need and would like to encourage. Perhaps we will restrict our activities to the 60-81 group, not to be confused with the 18-30 group.

It is interesting how an odd comment in a pub can lead to such an enjoyable day out. We left the Swan at about 10.30pm. having danced, played and enjoyed the good company. I must thank all those that put in such effort to make it such a wonderful day but especially Roy Page for the initial inspiration.

*Photos by Dave Brewster
of Thaxted Morris Men
and Chameleonic Morris
Men*

