

INAUGURAL MEETING

The Ring was fortunate enough to be offered the use of Cecil Sharp House free of charge for the Inaugural Meeting on Oct. 20th 1934. The proceedings began at 3.30 p.m. when, to the tune of the Morris Call, the men assembled in the Main Hall, one representative from each club occupying a seat in an inner ring of chairs, the dancers sitting in large rings outside. The following clubs were represented; Cambridge, Chelmsford, Clifton, Lads of Southwark, Letchworth, Liverpool, Greensleeves, Bovingdon, Oxford, St. Albans, East Surrey, Thaxted, and Wargrave, and Mr. William Kimber of Headington was present as guest of the Ring.

Kenworthy Schofield proposed, and Alec Hunter seconded, that Douglas Kennedy should occupy the Chair, this was carried unanimously. After welcoming the dancers the chairman then called upon each representative to rise and announce the club he represented, after which the Bagman was called upon to read the constitution drawn up at Thaxted. Cambridge proposed and Letchworth seconded the adoption of the constitution. This was carried unanimously.

No other nominations having been received, the chairman announced Alec Hunter to be elected Squire of the Morris Ring, and Walter Abson to be elected Bagman of the Morris Ring, for the ensuing two years. The chairman then presented the Squire's symbol of office, a silver mounted staff (the gift of the E.F.D.S.), pointing out that it was not merely a rod with which to beat the unrighteous and chastise the Philistine, but a symbol of connection between the Society and the Ring, and between the Ring and its constituent clubs. The Squire then took the chair, and presented the Bagman with his symbols of office, the minute book and money box.

The Squire then welcomed Mr. William Kimber as guest, to which he replied cheerfully, and after notices from the Bagman closed the meeting.

At 4.15p.m., after light refreshments, the dancers returned to the Main Hall to dance the following programme. (It had been hoped that some street dancing would be possible, but in view of police objections this had to be abandoned.)

Wheatley

How d'ye do, Sir?

Dearest Dickie

William & Nancy

Display Dances

Flowers of Edinburgh

Rigs o' Marlow

Swaggering Boney

Getting Upstairs

Display Dances

Lad's a Bunchun (Adderbury)

The Buffoon

Shepherd's Hey (Field Town)

Banks of the Dee

Constant Billy (Sherborne)

Display Dances

Leapfrog (Bledington)

Trunkles

Blueyed Stranger

Green Garters

During the display dances William Kimber performed the Headington Jig in a very spirited manner, to the great delight of all the men present.

At 7.00p.m. the men gathered in "Trefusis" for supper, notable for the large quantity of beer and cider provided by the Society. With all the men standing in their places, the Squire addressed them in the following words:

"Before we sit down I am going to ask you to drink to the memory of the one man above all others to whom we owe our knowledge of the English Morris. Cecil Sharp through a chance

meeting with the Headington Dancers perceived the full beauty of the English Folk Tradition, at a time when it was either unknown or despised in the wider world. By his delight in all that is strong and vigorous in art; his love and respect for humanity, and his boundless enthusiasm he was able, in spite of physical illness, to collect and preserve the great tradition of the English Morris and to hand it on to us who are here today. Many of us knew and loved him, all of us have delighted in his work. Let us drink to his Immortal Memory."

The Toast being drunk, the men sat down to a very welcome meal, towards the end of which Joseph Needham rose to give the toast of "The Morris Ring" in a memorable oration, followed by the Squire who gave the toast of the Society, to whom the Ring owed a great deal for the success of its Inaugural Meeting. Douglas Kennedy replied, after which the tables were cleaned and the company gathered round the Squire to drink beer and discuss many matters.

The squire opened the discussion by emphasising the all-importance of the club spirit in Morris dancing, and exhorted the men to aim at a high standard of technique in their club and individual dancing. The question of admitting newcomers to a club was raised, Cambridge explained their recent method of admitting novices to a 1/2 hr. practice, and Kimber described how new dancers were allowed to watch the Headington side and given tuition for about 1/2 hr. afterwards. He emphasised the importance of turning no-one away, and explained how the older men in his club coached the younger ones. Several men gave accounts of teaching Morris to boys, and the majority seemed in favour of this method of bringing on new dancers. The Squire said that newcomers should be allowed to dance with the club, even if not very good, as it was in the club and not the class that Morris was learnt. The question of the symbol was raised, the Squire suggesting a stick for each club, and expressing his willingness to attend any beer-drinkings for the purpose of presenting the symbol. This idea seemed to meet with approval and the stick was decided upon as the symbol of association in the Ring.

The Squire spoke of the importance of dancing in the streets; Thaxted proposed that the next Thaxted Morris weekend should be arranged by the Ring. Kenworthy Schofield suggested a meeting in the Cotswolds, Chipping Camden was a possible town for it; this met with opposition from Arthur Peck on account of the Chipping Camden Traditional Team; Douglas Kennedy suggested several tours arranged by clubs to culminate in a weekend gathering in September. Winchcombe was also put forward as a place for a gathering of the Ring. The Squire suggested Sept. 7th as a suitable date; this appeared to be suitable for the men present.

William Kimber then described the way in which the Headington side toured the country near Oxford during the fortnight after Whitsuntide, dancing in Oxford, Headington, Melton, Haxley, Long Crendon, Kirklington where they danced with the Bampton men, Adderbury and Deddington. He also impressed on the men the necessity of teaching the young blood, and encouraging newcomers to the Morris, and of the importance of keeping the Squire and Bagman in their place. He also spoke of the duties of the Squire in acting as leader of the Morris Men, and in keeping the Bagman up to scratch.

This discussion lasted until about 9.30p.m., when William Kimber sang "Up with the lark in the morning", Douglas Kennedy "On Ilkla' Moor baht 'at", and Francis Fryer "Here comes the Cannibal Man". A very elated company of men then dispersed from Cecil Sharp House, convinced of the great success of the Inaugural Meeting, and that the Ring was now rolling on its way.

[signed]

Alec B. Hunter

During the winter the following clubs applied for association in the Ring:

Lakeland
Colchester Junior
Bishop's Stortford & Thorley
Morley College