



The ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER of UNITED FOOLS

Below is the outcome of a conversation between Trevor Hull & Eric Pressley

Many years ago, back in the 60s, the then **Squire of the Ring** wanted to change something at the Thaxted Ring Mtg, The motion was: To Ban all Fools from the massed meetings. (it might have been **massed shows or dances – Trevor was knockin' on a bit**)

The **4 fools** who camped regularly at the end of the Vicarage Orchard, (fools Paradise) at the A.G.M. which at the time was held during the Thaxted Ring Meeting, all **disagreed** with the Squire, and **voted against, thus squashing the motion** , and carrying the day.

As they walked out of the meeting **Trevor Hull** turned to **Morris Sunderland** and said “ **Well done united fools** “ To which **Morris** replied “**Well Trevor you've got to face it, Squires of the Ring may come and go, Bagmen of the Ring may come and go, but it's the fools who get things done** “

Trevor went away with thoughts of doing something more positive about **Morris's** comments, and so he made 4 badges, kept one himself, and presented the others to the three fools at the meeting, they seized upon them, and they became known as **United fools..**

THOUGHTS & FACTS

From conversation with Ivor, Bert, Johnnie & John Burke plus what I have derived from my own archives, and time as Scrivener & Convenor.

Weekend Meetings were initiated by **Ivor Alsopp**, who in his second year as Squire of the Ring (1978) thought there must be a possibility of an Instructional for fools, Beasts and Characters within Morris Dance Sides, I think his idea was that there should be a forum where fools could benefit and learn from senior fools, Beasts could learn design and techniques, and how to behave (or not!!!) and for novices / beginners to pick up ideas, thus raising the standard of fools , Beasts and characters on the periphery of the dance.

Paul Davenport (Green Oak @ Doncaster) was quite active within the Ring, at this time and Ivor met Paul to discuss his idea and the outcome was the first weekend instructional of **The Illustrious Order of United Fools** (the original name) which was held in Tickhill, at The Red Lion, hosted by **Paul & Green Oak M.M.** in 1980.

1981 saw the second meeting in Tickhill, but at that meeting it was found that we could not use the venue anymore (for what reason I can't remember) during the discussion to find a new venue, **Rev Kenneth** uttered the immoral words - “ **Eric my boy, how about that wonderful pub in Wath** “ (Mary & Geoff used to spoil him whenever he went in) so I approached Mary & Geoff, and the rest is history.

The first meeting in Wath was Oct 82, organised by **Eric Pressley** and aided by **Wath M.M.** It was at the meeting of **1984** that the name changed from **United Fools to The Unconvention of Fools & Animals**, I was made Meetings Organiser by Trevor, who was still Scrivener / Convenor, and so it continued until **1988** which we knew we couldn't hold in Wath, due to alterations to the Red Lion, so with help from **Chris Barber** and **The Forest of Dean M.M.** we held the meeting at the Village Hall in **Soudley / Gloucestershire**, as was the **89 meeting**. **The 1990** meeting saw the return to **The Red Lion in Wath**, which was christened our “**Spiritual Home**” by the senior fools. At the **1990** meeting, it was decided that we would hold the Unconvention for **two years at Wath**, and hold it elsewhere on **the third year**. This was the first year without Morris who died at the end 1989: it also turned out to be the last meeting that Trevor would attend.

Below is a timeline of events that I have found out from my own archive, or I have remembered from my time as Scrivener / Convenor. The only question mark is, that I seem to remember **Johnny Burke** being the only senior fool at a meeting, after the passing of **Morris & Trevor**, I don't know why, but I remember him giving out pot washing chores to people, at a Forest of Dean meeting, which would make it **1991**, that would mean **3** out of **4 meetings** were held at **Soudley**, I think we only had **2** – (88 & 89). It is possible that it might have been the 1989 Meeting, Morris was in hospital and Trevor didn't attend the meeting if he was ill. A message to **Chris Barber** might clarify things if you need to know.

TIMELINE

1960s	Thaxted Ring Meeting	Founding of United fools (1962 ?*)
1978	Ivor Alsopp	Idea for instructional for Characters in the Morris.
1980)	Meetings of The Illustrious Order of United fools	Paul Davenport & Green Oak M.M.
1981)	Held at the Red Lion @ Tickhill	
1982	Meeting moved to The Red Lion @ Wath-upon-Dearne	Eric Pressley & Wath M.M.
1983	Meeting held in Wath	Day Instructional held at Yateley hosted by Morris Sunderland.
1984)	Meeting held in Wath	Name Changed to The Unconvention of fools & Animals
1985)	The Senior fools designated the Red Lion as the Spiritual Home of the Unconvention	
1986)	Meeting held in Wath .	
1987)	Meeting held in Wath .	
1988)	Meeting moved to Soudley Village Hall in the Forrest of Dean	Organisation of weekend ably
1989)	assisted by Chris Barber & Forest of Dean M.M.	Morris Sunderland Deceased Nov.
1990	Move back to Wath	The Red Lion. Decided to hold alternative meetings at Wath, then at a different location.
1991	Meeting held in Wath	Trevor Hull dec. Eric Pressley becomes Scrivener / Convenor
1992	Helmond, Netherlands	Maarten Niesen & Helmond M.M. – Roger Green for overnight arrangements In Norfolk.
1993	Meeting held in Wath .	
1994	Brighton	Cliff Marchant & Chanctonbury Ring M.M.
1995	Meeting held in Wath	
1996	Claygate	Phil Underwood & Thames Valley M.M.
1997	Meeting held in Wath	
1998	Plymouth	Julian Kohler & Plymouth M.M.
1999	Meeting held in Wath	
2000	Meeting Held in Wath	Eric Pressley Retires as Scrivener /

Eric Pressley

Retiring Scrivener – October 2000

***Addendum PdeC**

The 1962 Thaxted Ring meeting log records:

“The Squire congratulated the clubs upon the standard of the day's dancing but considered that the fooling needed more thought. He asked Morris men not to display on their Morris dress badges of political bodies or particular causes. The Morris was non-political and undenominational. All views were respected but as Morris men they should be only Morris men.”

S.A. (Nibs) Matthews MBE is listed as Squire from 1960 – 1962.