

## THE LETCHWORTH MORRIS MEN MINUTES BOOK, 1938-1987

TRANSCRIBED (AND RE-TRANSCRIBED) MAY 2025 BY EDWARD FFITCH OF LETCHWORTH MORRIS (*former Squire and Foreman of Standon Morris and former member of Baldock Midnight Morris*).

July 2025: Alan Creamer, Archivist and Chancellor of Letchworth Morris checked the transcription (made using scanned photos) supplied by Ed ffitch as above, against the original book and the separate sheet.

There are so many mis-spelled words that I have corrected them where it was obvious what the word should be - I suspect either dyslexia, little education or possibly an excess of alcohol when writing some minutes. Words that are missing have been inserted as *[italics in square brackets]*. Words that remain unclear have question marks added in brackets after the word. Occasional obvious mistakes have had the corrections added in normal round brackets.

Alan Creamer

TRANSCRIPTION BEGINS NOW

### **MEETING JUNE 12<sup>TH</sup> 1938**

After a most enjoyable Morris weekend in Thaxted in which 9 Letchworth men took part, an informal meeting was held in a tea house in Newport (Essex) on June 12<sup>th</sup>. 5 men were present namely Jack Thompson, Jack Hannar, Harry Doherty, Fred Nott, Morris Sunderland. The latter was asked to be Bagman for the ensuing year and Ernie Hales was to be approached to see if he would act as Squire for a year.

After much discussion it was agreed that a monthly meeting should be held, one man was heard to mutter 'Deuce' many times till at last after Miss Ryman's salary and circular saws had been mentioned, the first meeting was fixed for Saturday June 25<sup>th</sup> at Northill. Jack Thompson agreed to act as host and arrange details. Ashwell and Preston were also suggested for future meetings.

Signed J H Thompson 25/6/38

### **MEETING JUNE 29<sup>TH</sup> 1938**

#### **NORTHILL**

This meeting was due to start at the Schoolhouse, Northill at 2pm, but at 2:15 the host and bagman sat only hoping the two men that answered the circular letter at least would soon arrive.

Ernie arrived however bringing Fred with him, after this Sprogs arrived with an unshaven Harry. We now had a complete side so having de-bearded Harry and re-trousered such men as needed it, a move was made to Pavenbury (*probably Pavenham*) where amidst a very fine setting the team took part in massed Morris, the other team being Greensleeves. The dance was 'Step Back' which we could only manage to do by watching to see what G.S's did first. It must be noted here that only five Letchworth men danced this, Sprogs being absent owing to a date

with a rat, Cirol (*prob Cyril*) of G.M.M making up the team. He appeared soon after this, also Sidney who had used all the bus services in the district to get there.

Tea having been taken, a practice was held in the car-park. Unfortunately no-one could think of the tune of 'Banks of the Dee'. Men went mad walking round, hands on ears, trying to shut out the sounds of the Bolero. Each one in turn said "I've got it!" and promptly whistled 'Dearest Dicky'. At last we got going and had a very good practice. During the country dance party later in the evening we danced Flowers of Edinburgh & Banks of the Dee to Gillard Smith's fiddle.

A move was then made back to Northill when the host wished to start a practice. All the men were missing, they were at last found in the local where Sprogs & Ernie got a good beating at darts.

The exhausted men did their best but baths and the meal were most welcome. The Squire then left before the meal so Jack T. took the chair. The next meeting was fixed for Sat. July 16<sup>th</sup> at Letchworth, Sprogs to be the host. A show was to be arranged at the Settlement. Much discussion followed the mention of finance but at last it was agreed to settle up at each meeting and to all pay £1 to cover post etc. The bagman gave a report on the Thursday classes.

It was agreed that in future meetings the host was to be responsible for teaching, music and hall meals etc. but he could get help from other men if required. The meeting was over about 1 a.m. and Sprogs & Harry left. The remainder retired for the night.

Next morning a practise was held in the school playground. The squire came over and a very good practise [*was held*] of set dances followed by jigs and beer. After lunch the meeting broke up at 5 p.m.

Signed E J Hales July 23<sup>rd</sup>

### **MEETING JULY 14th 1938**

This was abandoned as a weekend meeting but a show was given to a small but appreciative audience at the Letchworth Settlement. The program was:

- 'Lads a Buncham'
- 'Flowers of Edinburgh'
- 'Dearest Dicky'
- 'Banks of the Dee'

These dances, although danced in a very restricted space went down well. Country was also danced. Our host said a few words of introduction of an imaginative nature. To make up for the missed meeting Fred offered to act as host on Sat. July 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Signed E J Hales July 23<sup>rd</sup>

### **MEETING AT NEWNHAM, JULY 23<sup>RD</sup> 1938**

Men had been asked to foregather at Old Thatch at 2:30pm. So in accordance with the traditional Letchworth habit the bagman arrived 10 minutes late to find that but for our new member Bill Chapman he was first comer. Bill and our host Fred being deep in speech re wireless sets and horse brass, the Bagman bumped his head mounted the stairs and re-trousered, forgetting the well-known fact that Fred's very

fine cottage, in spite of running water, still boasts of a ghost. He carelessly left his sock lying on the bed while he looked out of the window to see Ernie drive up with Sidney. The ghost of course seized its chance and removed said sock. Jack now rolled up with a car load of tails to-wit Squeak, Nora with fiddle and a gramophone. After much speech it was decided to cut out the dancing at Astwick as it was thought the time would be better spent in practising. By this time Sprogs had arrived with a gramophone, but without Harry who it was understood was battling with a tennis racket and would come through as soon as he was either (a) exhausted or (b) vanquished. The ghost having returned the missing sock by stuffing it in the right-hand coat pocket while the Bagman was not looking, the side adjourned to the lawn to practise, 'Bean Setting' being mastered & the finer points of William & Nancy were gone into. After a slight rest, during which Fred's daughter Frances demonstrated 'Fools Jig', the side practiced Earsdon and had great difficulty in untying themselves from figure 8. Using the gramophone for music it was found that though the two machines were identical in appearance there was a great difference in speed, one being too slow and the other too fast. Difficulty also arose in getting the violin to go fast enough for parts of 'Flowers of Edinburgh'.

A move was then made into the streets of Newnham where a most energetic show was given, Bill taking part in 'Bean Setting'. The village for the most part viewed the show from behind their curtains but towards the end finding the dancing apparently harmless they began to creep out a little.

Men were by this time more or less exhausted so our host led us back to 'Old Thatch' to take nourishment. Being by this time too overcome to stand or even sit, most men just lay on their backs in the grass while our hostess poured endless cups of tea down their throats in her endeavour to revive them. Meanwhile the host fed us on a not unpleasant kind of oatcake. Sprogins on the other hand tried to send men off to sleep by playing German Lullabies on the slow gramophone.

Slowly the torpor passed off and a great discussion started as to the merits and demerits of Morris, Austin and Ford cars. Fearing that this might lead to blows, our host wisely coaxed off the rougher men and showed them how to use the rifle, thereby wasting much lead and spoiling a few cabbages. Tiring of this, at last the three cars, Morris, Austin & Ford were filled with men and impedimenta and driven to Ashwell, where a street show was given before the museum, which made a charming background.

All passed off well and each man in turn tried their hands or rather throats at Town Crying by way of introductory speeches. The back chat from a small urchin at the name 'Bean Setting' was most amusing. No collection was taken but the bagman collected a few green apples thrown by the crowd.

A move was next made to Mrs Bailey's garden, where an old folks tea was in progress, in time to see the reborn Ashwell side finishing Askum (?) Richard and from what was seen there can be little doubt that Sprogins has put in a lot of useful work in Ashwell.

After a short show including a downhill Earsdon the side were duly signed up as Morris Club visitors and given ale in the bar and some also had coffee & sausage rolls in the kitchen. After all this, back to Old Thatch, finding Harry had arrived for the Evening Meal. To overcome the seating problem for this, chairs were borrowed from the Village Hall.

The excellent meal quickly vanished, after which the cost was worked out – the price of carrots being a very hard problem. After washing up the business meeting & drinking started.

The bagman read the minutes of the last two meetings with a voice husky with enthusiasm and beer. The report of the first was passed but exception was taken to certain wording in the report of the meeting of July 14<sup>th</sup>. This was much discussed and put to the vote three times and at last the words “All the facts stated were not absolutely correct but in the main the idea was good” were struck out and the words “...a few words of introduction of an imaginative nature” substituted. The financial statement followed and a report on the Morris classes was given.

Our next meeting was fixed for Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> at Preston, Morris to act as host. This date was fixed because it was the weekend before the Show meeting of the Morris Ring and it was thought that this would be an excellent chance for a practice of our display dances (talk of gaiety girls broke out here). The details of the Show meeting were discussed and all eight men wished to go, transport was arranged for and the dances for display were decided on.

1. William & Nancy (Bledington)
2. Shooting (Brackley)

More talk of gaiety girls without throwing any light on their identity or relevance to the matters in hand.

One man also had to be restrained from going as it seemed he wished to camp some 20 miles away.

A meeting at Thaxted was suggested as it might then be possible to get our two most distant members, Charlie & Bob, to take part. Some men held that it might be too cold to camp so late in the year, but the idea was generally approved and the bagman was asked if he would make enquiries as to the possibility of such a project. The last half bottle of beer being finished up the meeting was then terminated and the men drove off into the night, and in one case a hedge.

Signed Ernest Hales

### **PRESTON MEETING, SEPT 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 1938**

At 2:30, the scheduled time to foregather, the bagman became worried lest none of the men should find their way to the Wilderness, but 15 minutes later the tiny lane outside was full of cars and the house full of men donning ceremonial garb. True, our squire had made an unnecessary detour of 10 miles by confusing Pirton with Preston.

Sprogs brought an Edinburgh man, John Aitchison, who was hastily re-trousered and put in Alec Joseph's coat and told to carry the impaled cake. We were all pleased to see Alec & Charlie turn up.

½ hour after the postered time a show was given under the elms of Preston village green. A large crowd gathered who seemed to enjoy the dancing very much, and after a little persuasion, half the cake was sold for 9/2. Doris played her mouth

organ for one dance, her first time in a street show.

A move was then made by half the party to Gosmore where our banner was set up in the forecourt of the 'Bird in Hand'. Jigs were started to keep the large audience amused till the main body arrived. On its arrival a spirited show was given, and John gave a little speech about the cake, which was duly translated by a Scotchman in the crowd.

This resulted in the selling of the other half of the cake for 7/10. A move was then made to Hitchin where tea was taken in a café, our circusy dress there being the cause of a few strange looks.

Butts Close was to be our next dancing place but the sight of so much grass and not a single spectator weakened us, so the shortest show on record was given, to-wit 'Green Garters' both on & off. It was rather a pity that a passing tramp who recognised it as a dance from Bampton (one up for Letchworth Bampton style) was not given drinks and made to talk, but he got away before the importance of his remark was noticed.

The side then walked through the street collecting a crowd as it went and taking them to our next stand, St Mary's Square, on the smooth paving stones of which the longest & best show of the day was given. This was an ideal setting for the dance with a background of water, smooth lawns, overhanging trees and the fine old church, the balcony & steps making ideal viewpoints for spectators. The pecuniary results of this show was very poor, being only 6/9.

The party then returned to Preston to practise in the Village Hall where Alec showed his usual masterly handling of Morris Men by getting all the men to agree on one or two main points. However, even he was unable to sort out the confusion that arose when eight men tried to do the steps of 'Shooting' in eight different ways as each man was sure he was right, so the dance was abandoned, it also being time for the meal.

This was taken at the Wilderness, where great skill had been shown in seating us all round one table without having the centre column splitting up the party. In the middle of the meal somebody wanted to drive up the lane so all the cars had to be moved. After the meal the business meeting started. The bagman wiped the beer from his lips and trousers and read the minutes of the last meeting and the corrected minutes of the meeting at Letchworth. These were duly passed and signed.

The next meeting was fixed at Thaxted on Oct 8<sup>th</sup>, Alec Hunter acting as host. Shows to be given at Buntingford, Newport and Debden. The bagman was asked to fix up details and to write and invite Bob Fernée. The Nov. meeting was discussed and Ernie offered to be host, and Wymondley and Weston as possible places to dance. A Spring meeting with the Cambridge men was suggested but this was thought to be too far ahead to be discussed. The Bagman gave a report of altercations with the Police re. collections and general discussions about the selling of cake followed.

The suggestion of holding a country dance party with a view to raising funds led to much discussion and the knocking over of glasses of beer.

Comatosis having by this time set in, men retired to bed, one man sleeping on the



### **THAXTED MEETING OCT 16<sup>th</sup> 1938.**

Men were asked to foregather at Buntingford at 2.30pm so that they could walk about and collect a crowd for the show which was posted for 3 o'clock. 2 cars got through on time and those contained therein did their best, and with the aid of the village fool & a 1/9d cake soon had a nucleus of a good crowd gathering. The remaining Letchworth car had by this time arrived but without Sprogs. Soon after 3 the Thaxted men arrived and a very good show was given to a crowd which must have amounted to 2 or 3 hundred, the local Robert managed to keep the traffic moving. The Thaxted fool also danced his own jig 'The Broom Dance'. Sale of cake brought in 11/1.

A great dash across country to reach Newport followed, but owing to the poster being blown away & the cold a very small audience watched the show. Sprogs arrived at this point saying he was delayed by a game of darts. As the rain started to fall a dash to the Paragon café was made and tea taken in the room now famous since the meeting there in June. Collection 4/8½.

After tea the rain was still falling with persistence, so it was decided not to stop at Debden but to proceed straight to Thaxted. Here the Bagman found most of the men & baggage stacked on the steps of the Parish Hall, from whence they were rescued by an ancient man with the key.

After a good deal of searching in alehouses and like places the men were collected for the practice. Alec teaching us many of the recently collected Bledington Dances & a start was made on Sherborne, and a great deal of shuffled back step was practiced.

Bob Fernée arrived at this point & we were pleased to welcome him, & surprised to find he could still do the Morris.

Some men changed their trousers for the feast, remembering no doubt the dire result of beer on white flannel at the last meeting. While this was going on the more temperate of the party, i.e. the Bagman & Roy, went to buy cider for the Feast, thereby depriving Thaxted of draught cider for at least a week.

A move was made to Rails for the Feast, all Letchworth men were present, but no Thaxted. It was at this point that it was remembered that they had promised to buy the alcohol, so a sortie to the Swan was made, thereby finding both men & liquid.

Words cannot describe the meal that followed, for as time passed Charlie said 'Ah' and undid the top button. Later Bob said 'Eh' & took off his big coat, but for the most part little was said.

In due course all were filled to capacity, many were in a complete state of comatose so the meeting was a little flat. After the minutes were read and confirmed, the only point arising was *[the]* fact that the man who removed his trousers at the last meeting ought to be reprimanded. This was done. Our next meeting details were fixed and the Dec. one arranged at Northill on Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>, Jack Thompson offered to be the host. A further meeting with the Thaxted men was suggested and Ardeley was talked of as being a good venue. Alec suggested that *[we keep]* a list of Dances done at meetings. The idea of doing swords was also talked of, Alec saying we ought to wear special dress for this.

The bagman was asked to convey a vote of thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Sunderland.

The meeting finished by singing at which David Bicheton helped greatly. All drinks being finished up, Clifford Yeldon was now found to be sitting in a pool of beer.

As the night was wet & windy all the men but 2 did not camp but slept on the floor of the Parish Hall. Fred & Harry camped as they thought the floor might be a little hard. (It was!)

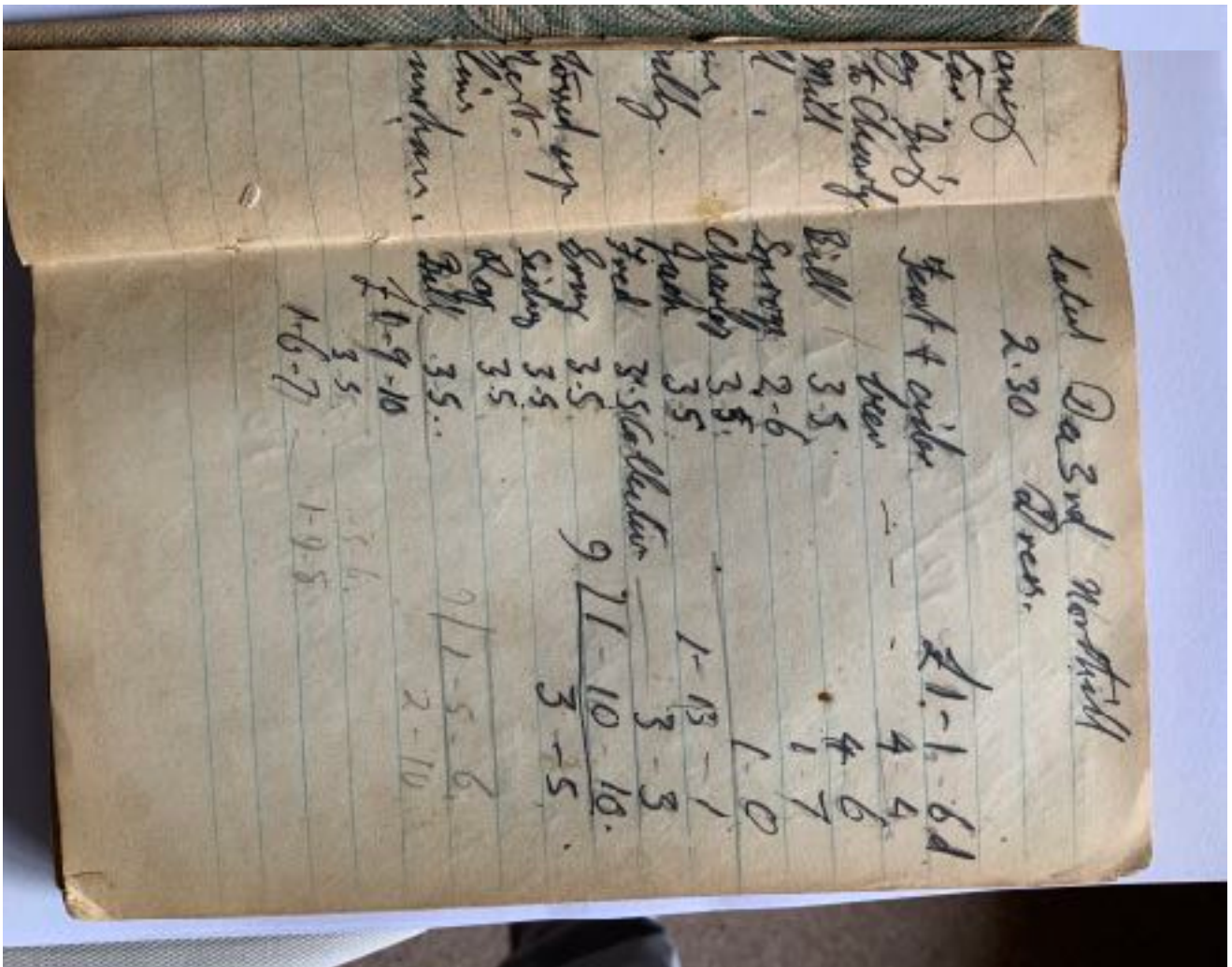
Next morning practice started at 10:00 and Sherborne was danced until 11:00, when we went to church and took part in the Harvest Festival procession. After church & ale, back to the hall for more practice until 13:00. Lunch was then at Rails on the remainder of the feast. After this the party broke up.

Signed Ernest Hales, Nov 19<sup>th</sup>, 1938

*[The following 4 pictures are of pages following the Thaxted minutes, and appear to be the financial accounts of the meeting].*

*[Text from the single separate sheet headed Letchworth November 20th inserted here]:*

**Meeting at Letchworth November 20th [1938]**



Although men had been asked to foregather at Lt. Wymondley at 2.15 it was not until 2.30 that Fred arrived with Sidney and Roy to find the bagman surrounded by impedimenta and many small children. A walk round the village followed and the purchase of the smallest cake on record (6 1/2p) before the Squire and Doris arrived. As Ernie was suffering from a bad cold he was not in ceremonial dress therefore there were only three men fit for the street show. We danced all the jigs we knew and Doris could play before Jack got through [with] Charlie to save the day, Jack having done nearly 40 miles at great speed to do this. We were now able to carry on with set dances and although most of our audience were children they certainly seemed to enjoy it.

A move was then made to Gt Wymondley where we started to dance on the deserted Xroad. In a few minutes a small crowd had collected augmented by some of the very keen youngsters from Lt Wymondley. After a few dances several cars had stopped to the occupants of which 3/3d worth of cake was sold.

Being by now a long time behind program a fast dash to Weston was made. Here we found Sprogs waiting and we now did the more advertised dances [in the ] deepening dusk. After Green Garters off to our Squire's house for the finest tea we have ever had. Bill had arrived by now so a move was made to the Settlement for the practice. During this George Day turned up and we were very pleased to welcome him into the Morris again. The finer points of some of the Bledington Dances being mastered and also a little Sherborne a move was made to our Squire's house for the meal. It is with regret that it must be noted that owing to the breakdown of the transport arrangements 5 men including the bagman had to walk. But the meal made up for it.



The meal started well and the first bombshell was Sprogs appearing in a stiff shirt, the 2nd occurred when Pip started on a poor harmless sausage to the great consternation of Fred. This led to a lengthy discussion re the constitution of jelly. This matter and the meal being disposed of the minutes were read and confirmed, the bagman instructed to write them in future in ink. Details of our meeting were fixed but it was more or less decided not to hold any more weekend meetings until March. The bagman reported on the possibility of holding any more weekend inter-club meeting with Cambridge Morris Men on their suggested date of March 11th. This was agreed on as our first full meeting of the next year. Bimonthly practices to continue as before.

A suggestion that we affiliate to the Hertfordshire branch lead to much discussion, a complete history of the more seamy side of the bagman's past life and a feeling that the motion (which was in accordance with tradition not put to the meeting as such) was quite uncalled for. However, as time wore on and much alcohol had been consumed (it should be noted that by the inadvisable method of mixing drinks Bill had got beside himself) it was proposed that the Letchworth Folk Dance Centre be asked if they would go halves in the cost of a country membership of the EFDSS. This was more or less agreed. The meeting then broke up and men returned to their homes, the impossible having been accomplished, namely to hold a successful meeting in Letchworth.

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*[Unclear what this refers to. No date or place noted].*

Bicheton (Squire of St. Albans Morris). Bledington to be done next term. List of dances for practice. (Earth worms and their habits) by Sidney. Letter read from E.F.D.S. Doris nominated to be Country E.F.D.S. Meeting for May with St. Albans.

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### **NORTHILL MEETING DEC 3<sup>RD</sup> 1938**

The men were as usual rather late in arriving so that a late start was made for the street show at Northill. Here a small but appreciative audience had collected, and a fairly good performance was given to them.

*[Large gap here, date-wise. Only 3 sheets of the notebook separate the pre-war minutes and the seventies entries, but no sheets are missing from the book.]*

### **1977**

At the 'Cock' Hotel Hitchin at 10:30pm Feb 25<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held, so that Letchworth Morris Men could open a banking account to handle the money of the sale of Lionel Bacon's book 'The Handbook of Morris Dancing'!

Present: Morris Sunderland, Jack Thompson, Brian Holman, Mike Chandler.

It was proposed J.T. and seconded B.H. that this Club opens a Banking account at Midland Bank Hitchin. All the members present were in agreement.

The required form was completed and the meeting ended by men taking the ale.

Signed Jack H. Thompson, 20/10/1977

### **MEETING THURSDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> OCT 1977**

At Radwell House, Radwell, Herts at 8:00.

Present: Jack Thompson, Brian Holman, Barry Colbeck. Mike Chandler was absent at a Bee swarm.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. Jack T signed them.

The account of both Book and Tapes were presented. After comments on the Bagman's bookkeeping it was agreed to get John Jenner of Cambridge to audit them when possible. It was also agreed that he be offered honorary membership. The Book account showed £1028.36 in hand after settling all bills. It was agreed that we go ahead and just print 500 more of Lionel Bacon's 'Handbook of the Morris Dances'.

The cassette tape account showed £134 in hand (but it still owes me £50) and 433 tapes to be sold, 4 to 5 we have only just received. The problems of the Border Morris Tape were gone into and we agreed to wait a while for this tape.

It was agreed we should do a tape of Bucknell but the problem of getting Andy to play instead of Russell Wortley is a problem.

Longborough was suggested by two or three music men. Fieldtown we thought could be played by Brian Holman and Mike Chandler.

Our Ladies' Night was fixed for Dec 1<sup>st</sup> at Letchworth Hall Hotel. Having by now consumed most of Jack's ale, the talk [*was of*] our new baldricks, the Mumming play, and red cardinal polish. It was thought the only man living in Letchworth (Mark Elliott) might be asked to join us. The men then went out into the rain.

Signed J. H. Thompson, July 1<sup>st</sup> 1978

### **MEETING AUG 4<sup>TH</sup> 1978**

At the Royal Oak, Chapelfoot nr. Hitchin, at 9:00.

Present: Jack Thompson, Mike Chandler & Morris Sunderland.

As we had about £1000 in hand it was thought some of this should be invested so Morris was empowered to open an account with 'Abbey National' in Hitchin and pay in £500 with Jack as 2<sup>nd</sup> signature. It was agreed that Jack Thompson act as Bagman as his name is on the list of the Ring. Morris to act as Squire. The position of cassettes was discussed and it was agreed to have a meeting at Ludlow in Sept. as Brian Holman would then be present. It was thought we should hear the cassettes should be heard by us all before we put them on the market. The books to be balanced by Aug 31<sup>st</sup> and a statement ready for the next meeting.

Signed J. H. Thompson, Sep 1<sup>st</sup> 1978

### **MEETING SEP 1<sup>ST</sup> 1978**

At White Hart at Kinver nr. Ludlow.

Present: Jack Thompson, Morris Sunderland, Brian Holman, Mike Chandler.

The minutes of the last two meetings were read and confirmed. The accounts of the Bacon Book were produced and show a credit balance of £1031.36. The transfer of £500 to the Abbey National was shown and it was agreed to move this to another account if interest looked like going over £30. Morris agreed to do this.

The Cassette accounts were not produced but Brian made a verbal statement that it has about £300 credit balance. It was agreed to look for another way or person to reprint the Cassettes. This was left to Brian to do. The quality of LMM3 was reported on but it was thought we could sell this if a statement was issued as to pitch & speed.

The time and place of Ladies' night was discussed and it was thought Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> at Letchworth Hall Hotel would suit most people. It was thought Letchworth might dance at Letchworth on that date. Morris as tour leader this being Tour F of the Ludlow Ring Meeting asked the men to drink up and get on the coach, for the next dancing spot Bridgnorth.

Signed J. H. Thompson, 10/9/78.

(Paid Lionel Bacon £22 for a typewriter lever Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 1978) E.M.S. This had been agreed but was not in the minutes.

### **DEC 1<sup>st</sup> 1978**

On Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 1978 the Letchworth Morris Men met for their 2<sup>nd</sup> Ladies' Night at the Letchworth Hall Hotel. Present were: (Sq.) Morris Sunderland and Barbara Sunderland. (Bagman) Jack Thompson and Kerry Wright, Brian Holman and Marilyn, Barry and Lynn Barry, Mike and Sally Chandler, Mark and Heather Elliot, Lionel Bacon and John Jenner. Dora and William Palmer and Jean & John Williams had been asked but could not come.

After drinks in the bar a good meal was had: 10 chicken Maryland & 4 Pork something. The red wine was corked (Mark had been on a wine course) so it was sent back and replaced. The Toast to the Queen was drunk, Navy fashion, seated, Toast to the Ladies was standing & after the Toast to the Club a move was made to the Lounge for coffee and liqueurs. Out into the night to Radwell House where cocoa was drunk. The Bill was £105.73.

### **DEC 2<sup>nd</sup> 1978**

We had agreed to meet at Radwell House at 2:00 for a practice but by 2:15 we only had 4 men in white trousers and black shoes. We tried on our new baldricks made by Lynn. Jack was put into his upside down; it was found at least 16 ways of putting on a baldrick and only one is the right way!!

A telephone rang to say that that Mike had started without his trousers or baldrick or both so had gone back to fetch it or them.

Meanwhile a few jigs were tried to piano and Charles' big box but this is out of tune.

With just 6 men we moved to Letchworth where we had the Council's permission to

dance. At the dancing spot we found John Williams so we had a side and music! Also Bob Aldrich was there with a big box and he kept the crowd of about 50 amused by playing folk tones like Ramones.

Our first dance 'The Willow Tree' warmed us and Mike played on his pipe & tabor. During the Bledington Trunkles John Williams played his recorder but the end fell off. This raised the music by about 2 tones but he manfully carried on playing until the end was and found and refitted without stopping the dance. The crowd had reached about a hundred strong but after dancing 'Balance the Straw' & 'Lads a Buncham' we finished to lots of clapping with Green Garters.

We left Bob to go on playing and we returned to Jack's house to drink tea. It was thought we could stop at Norton. Bill Smith the camera[man] of the Comet was on strike but he came to take pictures just for us.

## **AGM AT RADWELL 5PM DEC 2<sup>ND</sup> 1978**

### **The agenda**

1. Report on Finance on Books
2. Publications 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Of Book Cambridge logs
3. America Sales & Visit
4. Report on Finance of Tapes
5. Report on State of Tapes, Bledington, Bucknell, Thaxted.
6. The Club: Regalia(?) Bells, Members
7. Future dancing, Cambridge Ale Feb 7<sup>th</sup>, A.O.B.

Present: Morris (Squire), Jack (Bagman), Brian Holman, Barry Colbeck, Mike Chandler, Mark Elliot.

The Squire reported on the sales of Lionel's Books and we show a balance of £1,422 with just over a hundred books in stock. It was decided to reprint another 500 books and Jack said these would be ready by March 1979. The idea of printing the Cambridge logs was not approved but it was agreed to look at them when they have been edited.

The Squire asked if he could be sponsored by the Club to visit America but this was not approved, the sales were thought to be too small to worry us.

Brian Holman again did not produce his figures for the Cassette Tape accounts but he did think we had about £300 in hand. It was then revealed that the Masters of the Tapes had been lost by Terry Summers and the redoing of these would be a long and expensive matter.

The Thaxted Cassette was talked about at great length. It was decided that Thaxted must bear the cost of printing the tapes from the master. Some heat was generated by Morris saying that at no time had Letchworth agreed to do this recording. Brian then walked out in high dudgeon but returned to join us in drinking Jack's sherry. We then agreed that we could publish the Bucknell tape but it was thought we should show a profit before going on to the Bledington.

Morris wished to draw a line now, on the Cassettes. (The reason for this was the time had come to hand over to the Morris Ring the work of Letchworth Morris).

Time had passed and a phone call from Barry saying his guests had arrived, and Mark's baby crying for removal the meeting ended without dealing with items 6 & 7. However, the Cambridge Ale on Feb 7<sup>th</sup> was announced to men.

### **NOV 30<sup>TH</sup> 1979**

On the evening of Nov 30<sup>th</sup> 1979 the Letchworth Morris Men met at Letchworth Hall Hotel for their 3<sup>rd</sup> Ladies' Night. The 18 guests met in the lounge for the pre meal drinks.

Present were: Morris & Barbara Sunderland, Jack Thompson & Kerry Wright, William & Dora Palmer, Mike & Sally Chandler, Harry & Gladys Doherty, John Jenner, Charlie Williams, Mark & Heather Elliot, John & Jean Williams, and last but by no means least our honoured guests Lionel Bacon and for the first time his wife Joyce.

The great menus and wine lists being by no means easy, lists were made out, only to be remade when it was found 6 people wanted duck when the place only had 3, so some changed to Ribs of Beef.

At last we sat down at the table (next year I will put place menus to save time). Instead of Grace we held hands all round in silence as we did with Steve Cartwright in the USA (John J & I had lobster soup with flaming brandy). After a great meal with plenty of wine Morris told people to charge their glass for the Royal Toast which was drunk navy fashion seated. Then the toast to our ladies: the men had to stand.

Coffee with more drink and much talking of the past followed – Charlie Williams fixing the Fairy Queen pageant held at St. Bridget, Solershott West, Letchworth by Alec Hunter as 1920, this I think was the first time I saw the Morris [aged 9]. The Christmas Play at Hillshott Instruct(?) at which I played Herod's pageboy was in 1922 and it was here I saw the sword dance, it was North Skelton. How he and Ernie Hales cycled to Thaxted in 1922 for a Morris do reaching the Vicarage at midnight.

The party broke up at 23:00 but we were invited back to Thompson House at Radwell for coffee. 10 people reached it but William arrived rather later having made a detour through a ploughed field, shows how good a Land Rover can be. Dora was better after coffee, so after a pleasant talk there was a passing round of the complete set of Letchworth Baldricks: 1912 from John Jenner, 1920 from William and then 1926 from Charlie & the latest 1978 found by me.

Forward plans for dancing at St. Albans in 1980 and the Ring Meeting in 1984 July 7<sup>th</sup>!

And so out into the night Lionel & his wife to stay with us at 13 Park Lane, Henlow, and Charlie stayed with Jack.

Signed: Morris Sunderland

### **MEETING AT GRANGE HOUSE, LONDON RD., HITCHIN, 7th Dec 1979**

The home of Dr. John Williams.  
[Agenda]

Pass accounts.  
Fieldtown.  
Rapper Alan Brown.  
Prince (?)  
Hinton  
Brackley  
Adderbury  
(Tony Grey ph in cc?).  
Thaxted even.

Present: Morris Sunderland, Jack Thompson, Brian Holman, Barry Colbeck, Mike Chandler.

The accounts of the Cassettes were presented by Brian showing income of £1584.84. Expenditure £1227.24 leaving a balance of £357 with 427 cassettes in hand. These were passed.

Then followed a report on work in hand. Fieldtown, some Rapper, Hinton, Brackley & Adderbury. It was also reported that the Thaxted [*account?*] was now cleared with a total expenditure of £333.34.

The book accounts were submitted for inspection and passed. It was thought we might branch out into something new by us. Jack suggested the increase in price might even mop up our balance. It was left open with no firm direction on this matter.

Then to the Mumming play and the shortest meeting ended.

Morris Sunderland.

### **MEETING AT COVENTRY, 8<sup>th</sup> MARCH 1980**

Present: Jack Thompson, Brian Holman, Morris Sunderland, John Jenner & Mike Chandler.

The Ring's financial position being talked about it was decided to loan the Ring £250 we earmarked for copying the Butterworth Field Note now in Sharp House.

**On June 1<sup>st</sup> 1980** at Market Cross, Thaxted, John Hunter son of Alec Hunter, first Squire of Letchworth handed over the Money Box to Morris Sunderland as this was painted by Edmund Hunter his grandfather for the use of the Letchworth Folk Dance Society in about 1920.

### **MARCH 20<sup>th</sup> 1981**

On the evening of March 20<sup>th</sup> 1981 the Letchworth Morris Men met at Letchworth Hall Hotel for their 4<sup>th</sup> Ladies' Night. The time of 8:30 and the month from Nov to March had been arranged so that Brian Holman would be present.

The 14 guests met in the Lounge for Sherry (on the bag).

Present were: Morris & Barbara Sunderland, Jack Thompson & Kerry Wright, Sidney & Elsie Freeman (1<sup>st</sup> time), Mike & Sally Chandler, Mark & Heather Elliott, Brian & Madeline Holman, Barry & Lynn Colbeck. Unfortunately Lionel & Joyce Bacon could not attend as they had a date with lots of Alpine Society [*people*] to see their garden. William & Dora Palmer did not get through as William was ill in bed.

This year the Bagman had fixed the menu (No. 13) Turkey which saved a lot of trouble. We had six bottles of wine. The meal started with Grace said seated by Morris: 'For food, for friends & good fellowship, we thank you, Oh Lord'.

Trout with eggs, a good soup & turkey followed by ice cream etc. The Loyal Toast was missed but the toast to the Ladies was drunk with the men on their feet.

Coffee and liqueurs were then taken in the lounge. Men & ladies moved off to Jack Thompson's Radwell House for the hearing of the recording of Tom Prince of Newcastle.

More coffee and drinks, piano playing which led to 2 couples dancing (1 man, 3 ladies) Dorset four hand reel. The men not to be outdone danced 'Mrs. Casey' Fieldtown (we had to teach it to Sidney who had never heard of it!!). The long version of 'Queen's Delight' led by Brian and 'The Quaker', we had no bells to take off and only one man (Jack) had even one handkerchief. So out into the night at around 2am.

Sidney and Elsie stayed with a daughter in Stevenage and Brian & Madeline stayed at Chingford with Lynn & Barry.

Signed: Morris Sunderland

### **AT THE OFFLEY LADIES' NIGHT – OCT 22<sup>ND</sup> 1982**

An informal meeting of Squire and Bagman decided to admit Albert Openshaw as he lived in Letchworth & for Jim Catterell to be asked to play for us at Thaxted next year. Both wives to be invited to our Ladies' night.

Signed Morris Sunderland

### **NOV 20<sup>TH</sup> 1982**

The Letchworth Morris Men met at Letchworth Hall Hotel for their 5<sup>th</sup> Ladies' night. Present were Jack Thompson & Kerry Wright, Morris & Barbara Sunderland, Mark & Heather Elliott, Mike & Sally Chandler, John & Jean Williams, Albert and Elaine Openshaw. Although Jim Catterell & his wife had been invited they were unable to be with us.

Sherry was taken in the Lounge (and a few pints) while the wine list was discussed at length. The Head Waiter being satisfied with our order led us past a wedding party to our table. The menu No. 14 fixed by the Bagman was I hope enjoyed by all. Prawn Cocktail or Chicken Vol au Vent. Beef, lots of it with trimmings. Sherry trifle. Grace had been said and the only toast was to the Ladies, no reply. Coffee and Port were taken at the table as the Lounge was full of jiving wedding guests!

The Bagman paid the bill of £162.70 and a move was made to Jack's house at Radwell for coffee and Brandy. The tape of Wally Newall singing was played, then Mark & Albert sang the Letchworth Shanty! The men being too late(?) danced Saturday Night, the Willow Tree and Dearest Dicky to Letchworth tapes and the

meeting in April was discussed and the idea of going to Malvern next year. It was agreed I think that we dance at Thaxted at their Ring Meeting in 1983, that being their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of having a meeting there. The 1984 Ring Meeting was talked of at the N.E.C. 50<sup>th</sup> of the Ring. 3 places had already been booked at the Banquet by Jack £9.

Signed: Morris Sunderland

#### **FEB 24<sup>TH</sup> 1984**

Informal meeting after Sunday lunch at The Morris Ring ARM at Rickmansworth.

Present: Jack Thompson, Brian Holman, Mike Chandler & Morris Sunderland.

The Ring had talked about reprinting Lionel's Book with tunes all in C and additional dances from Roy Dommett but as this seemed it would take a long time we agreed to reprint it as it is!! 500 copies, we have enough money to do this, about £2500 in hand.

Brian said the Bampton Tape is progressing but he had problems finding someone to play all the tunes.

#### **MAY 12<sup>TH</sup> 1984**

Letchworth ran a Morris Tour to join up at Birmingham at Metropole Hotel for the Jubilee Feast of the Morris Ring. Heather Elliott did 30 copies of tour for £3.34. As we did not have enough men on our own we invited Whitchurch to join with us. We met at Bedford River Bank Hotel for coffee.

Present: Jack Thompson, Morris Sunderland, Mark Elliott, Albert Openshaw. Mike Chandler was of course with Whitchurch but he danced with us. Then on to Malton where we danced two dances.

Lunch was arranged at the Telegraph, paid for by Letchworth £32. On to Coventry to find 300 men in the ruins of the Cathedral, without anyone to run the show so as Past Squire of the Ring I did just that.

On to Birmingham here Letchworth danced in the Entrance Hall as one of the sole founder members of the Morris Ring.

On **18<sup>th</sup> Sept** we had the 500 copies of Lionel's Book paid. Hive Printers £2915 this had the corrections included on yellow paper.

#### **1985**

Teaching 11 year-old boys at Norton School, one of the lads said his uncle danced with Letchworth. This turned out to be Sidney Freeman now living in Reading. Hats & paper baldricks. 8 & 9 yrs old.

On **May 1<sup>st</sup> 1985** the Boys of [Norton School] danced for the school at 9:30. Bean Setting and Bromsborough Heath to a record player. They did well.

On **May 12<sup>th</sup>** Norton School boys 11 years old danced at their May Revels. The usual cold day Bean Setting, and Beaux of London City not very good. Black waistcoat with rosette. Music from cassette.

#### **JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 1986**

At the Thaxted Ring Meeting after the Feast Jack Thompson, Mike Chandler, Dr Lionel Bacon, Morris Sunderland talked over the future of the Bacon Book. (Jack is not happy at the price and is going to look at this matter). Mike wished to print 1,000 copies and buy Ring Binders as required. He had prices and as Jack did not wish to go on with the printing this was agreed. I too wish to give up the distributing of the books, so will hand this job to Mike. The Ring will write to him to make this official.

The matter of a letter from the American C.D.S. was gone into. Lionel still wishes to keep to his undertaking not to make a profit so Morris was asked to write and try to clear up what they intend to do. They wish to order 100 but we only have 50 copies so that must wait. I passed on 15 books to Ivor Alsop & had a cheque from the Ring for £150.

*[The text below was written and then a single line crossed through it. It appears to be a note to himself by Morris Sunderland, rather than Letchworth Morris minutes].*

### **Upton on Severn**

From Maud Karpeles' notes by Harry Oakley (Fiddler of old Morris side):  
'Any Hornpipe does for the Stick Dance & any jig for the Handkerchief Dance'.  
4/3 step free leg swing across on 4<sup>th</sup> step.

William Stephen *[of]* Upton said:

'Ladies used also to dance *[this]* (not with the men)'.

### **12/11/87**

Jack has printed 1000 books, 500 without covers. I have paid his bill for £3711. Now all are in Mike Chandler's hands but I have 15 & Ivor Alsop has 30 books.

Morris Sunderland.

*[This text is on a separate page, and again appears to be notes to himself by Morris].*

Headington Tunes

Morris On (Bidford) Jour EFDS Vol 8 Dec 1959 Peter Kennedy

Morris Off Jour EFDS Dec 1950 Maud K

Address of Herschel

29<sup>th</sup> May: 6 Morris dances & Jigs

Jour EFDSS Vol. 1 p.150 Schofield. Bledington Sherborne (?)

William Sanisford(?)

Tune as the Willow Tree

The Weeping Willow Tree

Jour EFDSS Vol 8 Dec 1959

As Page 210 The Willow Tree

**December 3rd 1988**

8 Letchworth Morris plus 4 from Three Shires Morris\* sat down at 8.30 pm at Letchworth Hall Hotel for their 6th Ladies' Night.

*[\*NB: Three Shires Morris, originally Staplers Morris, part of Staplers Country Dance Club in Hitchin, were a non-Ring side approached by Morris & Barbara Sunderland when out dancing on two or three occasions, and then invited to join Letchworth Morris Men by Morris, in 1988. This was done in 1989, and Morris lived to see a rejuvenated Letchworth Morris Men dance at Thaxted in that year, which had been a long-held wish of his. Letchworth now always wear rosemary, the herb of remembrance, in their hats as a tribute to Morris. Alan Creamer].*