



The Newsletter - No. 22 – January 2002

Greetings,

We are pleased to note that The Treasurer is now reconnected to the Email system.

A welcome to new Associates, **Stourvale Mummers**. They joined in October, but their welcome was overlooked by the Ring Bagman – apologies. They are closely associated with **Bourne River**, and have a common Bagman [I will rephrase that, a Bagman in common].

We are very pleased to see that several Associate Sides are now poised to progress to Full Membership [subject to formal approval at the ARM].

Also enclosed with this mailing are:

- A **Summary** of this Newsletter – as the last page of the Newsletter.
- Inevitably, more **Amendments** to the 2001 - 2002 Directory. A new Directory will appear shortly after the ARM, with the next Newsletter.
- A **Booking Form** for the Adderbury and Longborough **Instructional**.
- If available, a copy of the revised **Insurance Letter**.
- If available, your copy of the **Morris Dancer**.
- **ARM Papers:** -
- The **Agenda** for the **ARM** [the Minutes of the 2001 meeting were with Newsletter 20].
- An **Enabling Proposal** to formalise the suggested change in the subscription.
- A note of Associate Sides that the Officers recommend be **Admitted into Full Membership** of the Morris Ring. [see Section 8 of the Constitution].
- Details of the **Candidates** for the Office of Squire, and their nomination papers.
- For each Member Club, a **voting paper** for the election of the next Squire.
- For each Member Club in the North-West Area, details of, and a **voting paper** for the election of their new Area Representative.

Remember: Unless you pass on the content of this Newsletter to the Men in your Side, the information stops with you. A summary is included on the last sheet.

E-mailed versions of these Newsletters are available on request [ideally as an attached Word document; please order and specify by Email].

IN MEMORIAM

Lloyd Howitt, founder member of **Stafford**, died in early December following an illness. Not active as a Morris Man in the last six or seven years after a heart attack, he did play a considerable role in Stafford's early years. His favourite dance was Banbury Bill, Bampton, although it is understood that he was also a keen Rapper man. The Funeral was on Tuesday 11th December at Stafford Crematorium and afterwards at the Chetwyn Arms, Cannock.

John Middleton, also of **Stafford**, died a few weeks earlier, following heart attack on the golf course. John was an active member, and particularly remembered as one who always volunteered to help putting out tables and other such tasks at feasts, ladies' evenings etc. He came to Stafford from Sides in the "remote regions of Leicester or Nottinghamshire".

[Information from **Alan Dandy, Stafford**]

Charles Bardswell who danced and played pipe and tabor for many Morris Sides in the 1920s and 30s, and toured the world with the National EFDSS team [see Newsletter 19], died, aged 93 in early January. His funeral was at Walkern Parish Church.

[Information from **Roger Comley, Letchworth**]

NEW YEAR HONOURS

Congratulations to **Malcolm Taylor**, Librarian of the EFDSS's Vaughan Williams Memorial Library on his award of an OBE in the New Year Honours List.

Also, **Robin Saunders** received an MBE for services to the community in Eynsham, Oxfordshire -- in addition to his running of the "best village shop in England" (as described by The Sun newspaper) he is a member of Eynsham Morris.

[Information from **Derek Schofield, Manley**]

ELECTION FOR SQUIRE – 2002

Three candidates have announced that they are standing, and have submitted papers. This mailing includes a voting paper for each Member club.

Bob Cross [Chalice]

Contact number Tel: 01934 632850. No Email at present, but his address is 22, Clevedon Road, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset BS23 1DG.

Cliff Marchant [Chanctonbury]

Contact numbers: Tel: 01273 204891 or Email: cmarchant@UKonline.co.uk.

Bob Pierce [Gloucestershire]

Contact numbers: Tel: 01285 821433 Email: b.pierce@fluid-transfer.co.uk.

Please Note: For the avoidance of misunderstandings. If you are attending the ARM, and representing and voting on behalf of **more than one Side**, please ensure that you have **ALL** the necessary voting papers. If this presents any difficulty, ensure that you have, either, appropriate written authorisation from the other club/s, or that they have advised the Ring Bagman as to their alternative representation.

NORTH-WEST AREA REPRESENTATIVE

Ron Yates the North-West Representative is standing down at this ARM. Clubs in the area had proposed two candidates by the due date. The candidates are **John Squirrel** [**Saddleworth** – and formerly **Mossley**] and **Duncan Broomhead** [**Adlington**]. A voting Paper [with candidate details and voting guide lines] is included for the Northern Area Member Sides

OTHER AREA REPRESENTATIVES

John Davies notes re: the Area re-elections “I am seeking re-election at the 2002 ARM as the representative from the West Midland Area. I will, if re-elected, continue to involve myself in Ring matters where I can ensure that this Area does have a voice and is represented. It is essential that the Area Representative is available to the Member Sides when called upon; has the support of all; and to be the ears and eyes of not only the Ring Officers, but of all to the benefit of the Morris Ring.”

Dudley Binding is also seeking re-election for the South-West Area at the 2002 ARM.

FORTHCOMING EVENT - ARM 2002.

The 2002 ARM will be hosted by **Stafford**, at the Moreton Millennium Centre, Nr. Newport, Shropshire and will be held on **1st – 3rd March 2002**. With the ARM itself on **Saturday 2nd March**. A Booking Form was included with the last Newsletter.

Subject to final ARM approval, **Isca** will be hosting the **ARM** in **2003**, probably in the Monmouth area. Ideally, in 2004, the ARM venue should move North – are any Northern Sides interested? – Contact the Ring Bagman.

INSTRUCTIONALS - Forthcoming Instructionals include: -

Longborough and Adderbury Instructional with **Jack Brown** and hosted by **Stafford**, **27th – 29th September 2002**. An Application Form is enclosed

and ... **Bucknell and Badby**, with **John Burke**, **King John's** in **November 2002**. More details of this latter, and booking form, nearer the date.

OTHER RING EVENTS

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, the **Fools and Animals** are set to convene in Polperro, Cornwall from **11th – 13th October 2002**. The hosts will be a joint **Plymouth** and **Trigg** team. As advised, an overseas trip was “too local”. An application form should appear in the next Newsletter – but note the date.

Excursion to the **Cotswolds**. The Morris Ring “North” and “North Midlands” Areas’ trip to Bucknell; Wheatley; Headington; Banbury; Adderbury; Hinton-in-the-Hedges and Brackley on **14th September 2002**, is now **fully booked**.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - RING MEETINGS – 2002

Richmond on Swale, Silurian and Bristol are FULL. Applications may still be submitted to **Thaxted** and **Hartley**. Sides may also apply, even if they are already attending another Meeting. Sides wishing to apply should do so as soon as possible.

7th - 9th June THAXTED. Contacts below:-

| | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Thaxted MM [Ring Meeting Bagman] | David Brewster 10, Chancery Place, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3DY | davidbrewster@freeola.com | 01245 420742 |
| Thaxted Morris Men [Bagman] | Geoff Walker Tower Cottage, Cutlers Green, Thaxted, Essex CM6 2QA | walkerthaxted@hotmail.com | 01371 830489 |

30th Aug - 1st Sept HARTLEY. Contacts below:-

| | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Hartley Morris Men [Ring Meeting Bagman] | David Hughesman 30, The Oaks, New Barn, Swanley, Kent BR8 7YQ | wendy@elemental49.freeserve.co.uk | 01322 667484 |
| Hartley Morris Men [Bagman] | Tony Tomlin 139, Farleigh Hill, Tovil, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6RQ | Hartleymen@aol.com | 01622 685960 |

OTHER EVENTS**Morris Federation Instructionals.**

These are also available to Ring Members. Forthcoming Federation events:

Morris Issues for Discussion and Debate – Cecil Sharp House – 23 February 2002.

Details from the Morris Federation Events Officer: Nicola Bouault; Tel: 01332 882857; mob: 07811 833693; Email: niq@supanet.com.

Banbury Hobby Horse Festival. 29 - 30 June 2002. See web <http://hobbyhorsefest.has.it>

International Traditional Drama Conference. 19th – 21st July 2002, Halifax Hall of Residence, Sheffield University. Details from Eddie Cass. Tel: 0161 881 8640 [or see details on http://www.folkplay.info/TD_Conf_2002.htm].

Gloucester International Pipe and Tabor Festival, 27th -29th September 2002. Contact **Stephen Rowley** [Gloucestershire]- Festival Director [Tel: 01453 763181]

PLANNING TOURS

We can all learn from a problem on a recent Tour [not a Morris Ring event fortuitously]. The junior members of one of the guest Sides were not admitted to one pub venue - in spite of being in kit - prompting a walk out, and general bad feeling on both sides that did not reflect well on the Morris. A lesson for us all – under 18s are not allowed by some licences to enter some [generally] town pubs. Ensure that you know the licensing conditions of your pub and similar venues ¹ **and** the composition of your guests' Sides. Forearmed with the information, itineraries can be planned to save disruption to the tour and embarrassment to all.

¹ See also the Item on Pub Entertainment Licences under "THE LAW" on the next Page.

OVERSEAS FESTIVALS

John Maher has asked us to publish this note from Joe Maloney of CIOFF. John comments “I did not get to the CIOFF AGM - it was in Billingham - but have 'phoned Joe, and we agreed that his suggestion is a good plan. The Ring is an associate member of CIOFF, and some Morris sides have joined individually (Hexham and Sheffield)”. Joe Maloney writes: -

“We have just come back from the CIOFF World Congress in Portugal, where we received quite a few invitations specifically for Morris Men Groups to attend the Festivals in Europe and around the World. We have been thinking about a way to involve the Morris Groups, who are the members of your organisation, in CIOFF UK festival planning, and have a proposal, which we would like to discuss with you. We do understand that it must be quite difficult to try and persuade individual Morris Group to join CIOFF UK, so we would like to suggest the following: Any Morris Group - Members of Morris Ring Organisation, who would like to receive information on invitations from International Festivals and would like to be listed on CIOFF UK Web-site can become CIOFF UK "members by association" with the annual fee of £10.00. This is just a suggestion, and we would like to discuss this matter with you further at the AGM, which we plan to hold in the middle of November.”

ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to **John Burgess** and **Len Bendall**, who have both achieved 50 years of dancing the Morris. Both started with **White Horse** in 1951, and after varied Morris careers are, by quirks of Morris fate, again in the same Side with **Mendip**. Also to **Bert Cleaver**, who this year also celebrates his 50 years of dancing, which started in January 1952. Initially this was with his university side, he didn't join **Greensleeves** until the following year

Well done **Yateley** on completion of their 25th Anniversary Year [see various News Items].

THE LAW

In late November, the Government introduced "anti-terrorist" legislation. This contains clauses forbidding masks to be worn in street demonstrations. The question was asked. “Is blacking-up or painting of the face included?” How will it affect Mummers and Molly and Border sides? It appears that, as with the drinking in the street legislation, it does not stop the wearing of masks. However, it does give authority to police officers in uniform, under the appropriate circumstances, to ask for the removal of any disguise. If you fail to do so, an offence is committed.

And on the subject of Entertainment Licences for Pubs: ---

Mr. David Heath (MP for Somerton and Frome): “Is it not ridiculous that, in the unlikely event of Michael Jackson and Madonna teaming up to do a gig down the local pub, they could so, yet three people singing Somerset folk songs would not be able to do so? Does the Minister not recognise that live music in pubs and inns has the potential to make a major contribution to tourism in rural areas, which we have already said we want to promote?”

Dr. Howells: “We are straying into very dangerous territory. For a simple urban boy such as me, the idea of listening to three Somerset folk singers sounds like hell. Having said that, the hon. Gentleman is right: music does enliven many pubs and restaurants. It should thrive. Silly rules are preventing it from doing so.” --- indeed so, **this can make joining in the choruses illegal !!!**

NEWS

Yet another follow up to the **Greensleeves** Ring Meeting. *Chris Benson* writes, “An amusing little footnote to our Ring Meeting: a report in the Bucks Free Press on our visit to the Bekonscot Model Village referred to us as the "Greenflies Morris Men". I hope this does not mean we are undone.”

The award winning beer JHB is brewed to the original recipe of *John Wood*, founder of Oakham Ales and presently Squire of **Rutland**. Rutland danced at the Oakham Brewery [now in Peterborough] when the award for JHB being the CAMRA Beer of the Year 2001 was presented.

Horwich were pictured, dancing at Whitby, in “The Independent” dated 10th October 2001.

Omitted from No. 21 – **Cambridge** Feast on 27th October, held in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. “The Guest”, who becomes an Honorary Cambridge Man, was *Roger Comley*, Fool of **Letchworth** – a Side with many connections with Cambridge from Ring formation onwards. He was “introduced” by *John Frearson*, **Bedford**, an honorary Cambridge Man.

In October **Long Man** joined forces with other local Morris sides and members of the “Harvey Hoppers” as guests of Harvey’s Brewery for the annual celebration of their Old Ale.

Green Man’s Feast [17th November] celebrating their 45th Anniversary, was attended by representatives from **Bedford** [the Ring Bagman], **Chanctonbury** [an aspirant Squire], **Harthill**, **Jockey**, **Lichfield**, **Shakespeare** [including the Ring Squire] and **Uttoxeter**. Dancing preceded the excellent meal [washed down with local Batham’s Bitter [4.5%] and Ratar’s Bitter [4.8%]]. Toasts were drunk to The Immortal Memory and the Queen in reverse order [no doubt, another precedent will now have been set!!] The guest, the Rev. Peter Thomas, spoke of absent friends and remembered *John Venables*; also *Sybil Clark*, the last President, who had founded the Side and had presented a tankard as a Loving Cup for toasts. *Arthur Curzon*, had been elected the new President of the Club – he had been a member for 45 years – and had succeeded in avoiding office of any sort until that date. The **Ring Squire**, read a poem, which for fear of offending the sensibilities of our readers, I shall quote neither in body or title!!! To conclude “the formal business”, various songs were sung and then more dancing followed.

Hoddesdon Crownsmen and **Stevenage Sword** were in fine form on a Rapper Day in Oxford pubs, with Sides from the other Organisations, as guests of Mabel Gubbins Rapper.

The **Mendip** Ale was held on 14th December – representatives attended from **Bathampton**, **Bristol**, **Chalice**, **Dartington**, **Exeter**, **Isca**, **Letchworth**, **Martlets**, **Plymouth** and **West Somerset**, as well as the **Ring Squire** and **Ring Bagman**. A good selection of dance items and songs were presented – and many pints of RCH’s PG Steam washed down the buffet. Christmas was declared to have begun once *Bob Cross* of Chalice [accompanied by *Alan Dyer* on concertina] had sung “The holly bears a berry”. Past Squire, *Geoff Jerram* [**Winchester**] sang “To hail the happy morn”, and *Bob Higgs* [**Exeter**] “The Rock Island Line”. The hosts danced “Signposts”. The occasion of the 50th Anniversaries of dancing the Morris of Mendip’s *Len Bendale* and *John Burgess* is noted elsewhere.

Ripley Guisers – were out on the four Fridays before Christmas. The Ring Bagman hitched a lift on their mini-bus on 7th December. Visiting some fifteen pubs each evening [and performing twice in some], the final collection, including the proceeds of their Boxing Day bag, was **£1293-97** for the Friends of Ripley Hospital. It was handed to Ripley Hospital on 27th December. Many congratulations to Ripley.

On the first Saturday in December, **Long Man** were “... supporting the Dickensian Christmas Shopping evening in the picturesque downland village of Alfriston as a preamble to arrival of Santa Claus, escorted by torch bearers from the Firle Bonfire Society and pipes & drums of the Eastbourne Pipe Band. A couple of Saturdays before Christmas we took to the crowded streets of Eastbourne, to entertain the shoppers, at the invitation of the Eastbourne Chamber of Trade.”

Coventry Mummers were out around the pubs of Warwickshire in the pre-Christmas season.

Lawrie Hodges, Bagman, **Wadard**, reports on their Eynsford Carol evening [18th December]. “It began last year as an alternative to our usual 'Carols and Mumming' in one or other of the pubs in our circuit, an event which had been rather less successful in recent years. The new event serves to strengthen our relations with our local villages, Eynsford and Farningham, and to form a new part of the 'tradition' of the side. Last year we gave the bag to Farningham Church fund and this year to Eynsford Village Hall fund. We started at eight with the singing of carols in the open air on the green by the ford. Mulled wine and roasted chestnuts were served. The group adjourned to the village hall. There we ran a bar, the takings from which covered most of the cost of the evening. The entertainment for the rest of the evening took the form of a Christmas Music Hall with a short Christmas play, songs and music, a monologue, the Sutton at Hone Mummer's play, a ghost story and some Appalachian dancing. **Keith Ford**, dressed flamboyantly, acted as MC, but also took his turn as solo raconteur and singer and one of 'Hat Trick' close-harmony group. We finished with a country dance and waltzing”.

Bedford performed carols and Border dances in “blacked-up” mode at four Bedfordshire pubs on the Friday before Christmas. The last spot was approached with caution, the pub had been hosting a funeral “tea” – however, they were welcomed in, and the grieving family, and an office “party” joined in with a will [... pun not intended!!].

The following day [22nd December] the **Welsh Border** dancers and musicians, including a number of past Ring Officers, took breakfast [and beer] at the Fox at Monkswood. They then embussed [on a 55 seater] for White Ladies Aston; Pershore; and Upton upon Severn, to dance the villages' own dances in-situ in the original **Dave Jones** style. Then to Worcester for a final spot [and a beer], before returning for supper [and a beer] at the Fox.

John Price, Bagman, reports that **St. Albans** were out at the Rose and Crown, Sandridge, on the Sunday before Christmas – in a joint mid-day dance-out with Cottonmill Clog Morris.

Dave Milner, Bagman, reports “Over the midwinter, **Frome Valley** have taken out the mumming play they have performed since 1978. Once done in Broadwey near Weymouth, this year we have performed on three nights, at a pub folk night, a four pub bus tour by arrangement with friendly landlords, a village Christmas concert/singsong in a deconsecrated church, another pub and a village entertainment night, provided by us - dancing, singing and drink/food. Some recent publications on folk customs have suggested that mumming plays are very rare in the South West, indeed, "hardly ever performed", but I know of several in our immediate area of Dorset, often connected with Morris teams, but by no means all of these.”

Paul Woods set the quiz in the “sordid **Bristol** Morris Men's Christmas card” and entries came from around the world. Joint winners, Rag Morris and **Stephen Bazire** [**Kemp's Men**] with US runner up Griffin's Corners Morris.

BOXING DAY

Douglas Adams reports that the **Blackheath** Annual Boxing Day visited the Princess of Wales on Blackheath at noon; moving on to The Crown in Blackheath Village and the Richard the First (Tollyshop) in Greenwich. Guests included Fowlers Molly, **The [Insert Name Here] Mummers** and odds and sods from **MC Morris and the Knuckle Rappers**.

Sandy Glover reports that Father Christmas, as always on Boxing Day, joined his good friends, **St Albans'** Mummers on their tour of the historic city of St. Albans, on a very pleasant (but cold!) day. Good crowds [with spectators from France, US and Russia - (as well as quite a lot of Brits!)] enjoyed five more-or-less related versions of the play.

Chris Avery, Bagman, sends news of the **Mendip** Boxing Day Tour. "We danced in Yatton at the Railway Inn at 12.00 then at our 'spiritual' home, The Plough at Congresbury at 1.00. Due to blanket advertising in both villages, we played to huge crowds and a jolly good time was had by all. Also on our Boxing Day tour, we were pleased to welcome back *John Jarlett* who is now working in Germany. Highlight of the Congresbury spot was a 2-man jig "None so Pretty" danced by *John Burgess* and *Len Bendall* in celebration [by both!!] of 50 years in the Morris! Medals were presented by our Squire, *Doug Schofield*, who despite recovering from his serious illness braved the cold to be with us." [It is hoped that a photograph may feature in the Circular]

Bedford performed two Boxing Day spots, on Bedford Embankment and at the Swan Hotel for the annual Boar's Head ceremony. The Mayor attended at the latter. A good bag was bagged, and the iced Christmas cake was dished up from its sword by the *Ring Bagman*.

Chanctonbury Ring "were out in force" at the Maquis of Granby at Sompting [and there are colour photos in the local "Advertiser" to prove it]; and speaking of Sompting, has everyone seen the extremely tasteful Nude Morris calendar [if that is not a contradiction in terms] produced by the mixed Sompting Village Morris side? – **Bristol** eat your hearts out!!!]

Paul Montague writes "**Yateley** had an extremely successful end to their 25th Anniversary year on Boxing Day, with their two performances in Yateley and Finchampstead bagging over £200 between them. Two enthusiastic audiences were extremely appreciative of not only their dancing but also their Mummers Play, which was pepped up by some changes of role for the performers this year. At their Christmas party, Yateley presented over £750 to three local charities - the Frimley Park Hospital, the local medical centre and a children's hospice. They hope to be presenting a further £500 to two more deserving causes early this year with a view to giving away a total of £2002 in this Jubilee Year."

Long Man write "... Our annual Boxing Day morning dance-out takes in The Bandstand and The Lifeboat Museum on Eastbourne Seafront to entertain the promenaders and Christmas visitors. Our bag for one hours dancing was more than £400. Our collections from dancing in Eastbourne at this time are donated to the RNLI. Long Man had great pleasure in passing over a cheque for £450 to Ray Isaac, Chairman of the Eastbourne Branch, at our 10th Wassail evening on the 5th January at the Star Inn, Waldron. Looking forward to 2002, Long Man take pride of place on the Harvey's calendar for the months of May/June."

Also out Mumming on Boxing Day: **Rutland** in Uppingham; **Bristol** in Keynsham; **Merrie England Mummers** in East Dean and Peacehaven, Sussex; **Coventry Mummers** in Leamington Spa and Stoneleigh [performing the Stoneleigh Play]. No doubt, other Sides were performing likewise elsewhere.

[N.B. Information and performance dates for English Folk Plays can be found on the Web at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/~tdrg/Programme_2001_2002.htm a very useful source]

... and to conclude the Boxing Day review:- **Pete Thomas** of **East Kent** relates that they have a spiel about Bonny Green being " ... composed by Henry VIII, who allowed any lady wearing a green garter to join in the dance. We follow this tradition and any lady wearing a green garter may join in, if she shows it to all the men in the side first." They had not been taken up on this until, at The Ship Inn at Sandgate on Boxing Day, a lady from the audience lifted her skirt and showed a Green Garter to everyone, including the audience, and then joined in the dance!!

Just after Boxing Day, **Lawrie Hodges**, Bagman, advises that the **Wadard** Mummers performed on 27th December in the small and very crowded "Wheatsheaf", at Westwood, near Longfield.

Doctor Dodd: Arise, arise you Turkish Knight. Lay hold thy sword and learn to fight (Pause for rather too long) ... Arise ...
 Turkish Knight: (not very "sotto voce" from somewhere on the floor)
 I can't get up. Someone's treading on my helmet!
 Doctor Dodd: (also not very "sotto voce") Sorry Fred. There's nowhere else to put my feet.

THE NEW YEAR

This year Straw Bear did not clash with **Hinckley Bullockers** day out [5th January]. **Steve Tunncliff** [also **Rutland**] noted "It was a privilege to be part of that "travesty of a quadrille, with ad lib stamping and shuffling of feet" (AB & S Evans, Leics. Words Phrases and Proverbs, 1882, p.215). I did my bit to ensure the travesty bit in the quadrille." **Phil Preen** [also **Anstey**] noted "Yet again we were extremely lucky with the weather. I expect the sun was shining brightly above the fog." Several **Anker** men could also be readily recognised despite their red raddled faces.

Later that evening **Stafford** hosted their annual Feast. Sides or representatives were present from **Chapel-en-le-Frith; Coventry; First Sedgeley; Green Man; Jockey; Uttoxeter** together with the **Ring Bagman**; three Past Squires [Messrs **Jerram; Chandler** and **Yarnell**] and three Area Representatives [Messrs. **Davies; Binding** and **Thompson**]. An aspirant Squire who could not finally be present sent a bottle of port to represent him, Stafford await similar from the other two candidates!!! An excellent meal of many courses [with two very unusual beers from the Paradise Brewery, Cheshire].

The same night **Northampton** also held their Ale. Representatives from **Bedford**, and indeed other Sides were present [but who is uncertain – hopefully the report will arrive for No. 23!!

Plough Monday [for those using the early/correct 7th January date] was celebrated by **Bedford** who took the Branston Plough Play around four Bedford pubs, and even danced a White Ladies Aston in the normally music free Wetherspoons, to the delight of the drinkers there!!

Jockey's annual Plough Tour in Birmingham was on 12th January, with guest Sides **First Sedgeley, Coventry** and **Green Man**. A splendid day, and splendid weather. The day started with the blessing of the plough in Birmingham's Central Square, and then a show. Several further spots followed, before a refresher at a Wetherspoons watering hole. Here, the sticks were taken into safekeeping, in case any visiting football supporters also arrived!! Another spot and then a "sit-down" lunch, a late Christmas turkey special. This was followed by songs and other items from those present. One further dance spot and with the temperature falling rapidly, it was time to depart.

Also on the 12th January, the Straw Bear at Whittlesea. *Alan Jeffries, Greensleeves*, notes “... five of us made the potentially perilous journey by train from Wimbledon (SW London) to Whittlesea. Since this involves three trains from separate train companies and one underground train, our arrival to see the start of the procession, can only be considered as miraculous. The weather was certainly a lot warmer than two years ago, but gave us little excuse to shelter in one of the many inns. So, we had to watch the dancing - which was no great hardship because of the variety and quality on display. It does make a change not to have to worry about the Squire giving orders about which dance we're supposed to be doing next. The trains also behaved themselves on the way back as well!”

On the evening of 12th January, **Foresters** performed their Plough Play at four pubs, [The Royal Oak, East Bridgford; The Royal Oak, Car Colston; The Durham Ox, Orston; and The Red Lion, Bottesford]. An excellent evening finishing with a music and song. On Sunday 13th they took in two more Nottingham venues.

Also on the Sunday 13th January, **Lord Conyer's** and the combined **Lincoln** and **Micklebarrow** Side [not quite yet in their new kit, though it is well in progress] were guests of Sullivan's Sword in Nottinghamshire. After a village Plough Blessing service at Morton; the dancers moved to Rolleston for the over-lunch period, before returning to Morton for the afternoon session.

Yateley note that “Their summer dancing programme this year recognises the national celebration: most venues have been chosen with a royal connection in the name, e.g. numerous 'Queens Head's and 'Crowns' are being danced, as well as 'dry' spots such as Jubilee Drive & Coronation Close. Dances such as Queens Delight - Bucknell and Jubilee - Ilmington will obviously figure prominently throughout. Hopefully their award winning local brewery will be requesting their assistance in launching their celebratory 'Jubilee' ale! New to their repertoire will be some Stanton Harcourt as they are looking forward to an instructional which is being run by their good friends, **Icknield Way** early in February - details of which will surely be forthcoming in the next newsletter!”

As this goes to press, stalwarts will be gathering at Sutton Bon(n)ington for the Morris Ring Jigs Instructional 2002. **Dolphin** are again doing the honours as host Side, and the omnipresent **Bert Cleaver**, teaching, playing, dancing, cooking – and no doubt still getting to the pub before anyone else – fresh as a daisy, and looking as if he had been there since last year!!! It is noted from the attendance list that all three candidates for Ring Squire are attending, to brush up something suitable should they be elected. Well that is good positive thing!!! In all fifteen Sides will be represented – no doubt a fuller report will become available in due course.

Also at press date, we understand that **Walter Abson**, the first Ring Bagman, is unwell and is in hospital. We wish him a very speedy recovery.

[Information from **Barbara Sunderland** via his son who lives near her]

SNIPPETS

An un-named [for legal reasons] Side, arranging a Boxing Day outing, tells of a pub landlord's noise problem. His neighbour objects to late night noise and had called in the Environmental Health people to rule on, and licence, any entertainment. When the worried landlord asked whether he needed such a licence for the visit of Morris Men, he was told: "No, they don't count as entertainment, and anyway, if you ignore them, they'll go away”.

[Retold with permission, but anonymously, to protect the pub at a difficult time!!]

From **St Albans** on the MDDL: **Sandy Glover**: “In view of the fact that Earth escaped collision with a large meteoroid by around four hours today, perhaps we should be asking whether meteorite impacts are prevented by a morris performance. All I know is it's worked until now ... ” ; a response from **Brian Bending**: “No, but we once had a parachutist land, literally, in the middle of the set. We were at a large fete, which included the Army parachute demonstration team. Our guy missed the dropping zone and we were privileged to overhear his sergeant give a frank commentary upon his performance”.

Steve Cunio in the MDDL noted that in the January "Accounting Technician", there were procedures to determine between bogus and genuine requests for help from staff. Titled "**Alarm over Morris dancing**", it reported “There are many genuine reasons for asking for time off work. Family or health reasons are among those, which any fair employer would consider acceptable, for example. Yet one boss was stunned when a new recruit left work early, saying that he had to attend "an unscheduled emergency meeting" of his local Morris Dancing Club.” --- that seems fairly normal and genuine enough!!

IN CONCLUSION

As ever, please to keep the News [Gossip and Scandal] flowing in and, as usual, report any changes for the Directory [which is available at any time, in its latest form, by Email].

The next Newsletter will probably be produced in April. It should include the Application Forms for the “Fools and Animals” and the Bucknell and Badby Instructional; the Morris Circular, and a new Directory.

Whilst on the subject of the Directory, can anyone help with a programme to produce the Member and Associate location Maps to a better standard ?

At the **Stafford** Feast, the Ring Bagman was interested to find that the retiring Stafford Bagman, **Alan Dandy**, could not find a successor, and that his role has been divided up and is being taken on by ten separate “Baglets”!! [The new Ring Contact “Baglet” is listed in the latest Directory amendments]. Mindful that volunteers are not yet rushing forward to take on the Ring Bagman role, it is hoped the Ring does not have to appoint an equivalent number of “Ring Baglets”!!!

Wassail

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring

The Newsletter - No. 22 – January 2002

Ask your Bagman to show you / provide a copy of the full Newsletter.

IN MEMORIAM - *Lloyd Howitt*, founder member of **Stafford**; *John Middleton*, also of **Stafford**; and *Charles Bardswell* who played pipe and tabor for many Morris Sides.

NEW YEAR HONOURS - Congratulations to *Malcolm Taylor* OBE, of EFDSS's Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Also, *Robin Saunders* MBE a member of Eynsham Morris.

ELECTION FOR SQUIRE – There are three candidates; *Bob Cross* [Chalice]; *Cliff Marchant* [Chanctonbury]; and *Bob Pierce* [Gloucestershire].

NORTH-WEST AREA REPRESENTATIVE - *Ron Yates* is standing down. The two candidates are *John Squirrel* [Saddleworth] and *Duncan Broomhead* [Adlington].

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - **ARM 2002** hosted by **Stafford**, in Shropshire on **2nd March**.

INSTRUCTIONALS - **Longborough and Adderbury** with *Jack Brown* and hosted by **Stafford**, **27th – 29th September 2002**. **Bucknell and Badby**, with *John Burke*, **November 2002**. The **Fools and Animals** convene in Polperro, **11th – 13th October 2002**. The hosts will be a joint **Plymouth** and **Trigg** team.

RING MEETINGS – 2002 - **Richmond on Swale**, **Silurian** and **Bristol** are FULL. Still some space at **Thaxted** and **Hartley** – book now.

ANNIVERSARIES - Congratulations to *John Burgess*; *Len Bendall* and *Bert Cleaver*, who have all achieved 50 years of Morris.

NEWS of Ales, Feasts, Tours and Mumming over Autumn, Boxing Day and the New Year period from – **Anker**; **Anstey**; **Bathampton**; **Bedford**; **Blackheath**; **Bristol**; **Cambridge**; **Chalice**; **Chanctonbury**; **Chapel-en-le-Frith**; **Coventry**; **Coventry Mummers**; **Dartington**; **Dolphin**; **East Kent**; **Exeter**; **First Sedgeley**; **Foresters**; **Frome Valley**; **Green Man**; **Greensleeves**; **Harthill**; **Hinckley Bullockers**; **Hoddesdon Crownsmen**; **Icknield Way**; **Isca**; **Jockey**; **Kemp's Men**; **Letchworth**; **Lichfield**; **Lincoln and Micklebarrow**; **Long Man**; **Lord Conyer's**; **Martlets**; **MC Morris and the Knuckle Rappers**; **Mendip**; **Merrie England Mummers**; **Northampton**; **Plymouth**; **Ripley**; **Rutland**; **St. Albans**; **Shakespeare**; **Stafford**; **Stevenage Sword**; **The [Insert Name Here] Mummers**; **Uttoxeter**; **Wadard**; **Welsh Border**; **West Somerset**; and **Yateley**.

Wassail,

John Frearson, Bagman,
The Morris Ring