



The Newsletter - No. 27 – January 2003

Greetings,

How did I ever have time to fit in the day-job!!! Thanks for all your good wishes, I am now earning at least enough for breakfasts as a Technical Consultant to RMC Packed Products [effectively half of my old job!!!]. I will continue to supplement the calorie intake thanks to your generosity with Ale and Feast invitations !!!!

The old [Rugby and RMC] Email numbers continue to work for the time being – but **RingBagman@TheMorrisRing.org** is still best for Morris Ring Email communications.

The **ARM** is only a month away [**7th - 9th March 2002**] --- **Book Now** - if you have not already done so. This mailing includes various papers relating to the Meeting.

We welcome two new Associates: **North British Sword Dancers**, a well established Side of “no fixed abode” comprising invited dancers from a number of clubs. They often appear at Saddleworth Rushcart and at other Festivals. Also, **Yelvertoft** [just down the road from Rugby!!!], a new Side, that started from a Pantomime cast, and is now assisted by **Kevin Downham** [ex **John of Gaunt**; **White Rose** and **Leyland**].

Also enclosed with this mailing are:

- A **Summary** of this Newsletter – as the last page of the Newsletter.
- As expected - **Amendments** to the Directory [collated with the Newsletter].
- The **Agenda** for the **ARM**; the **Treasurer’s Report** and **Summary Accounts**; and any other relevant papers.
- Your copy/ies of the Morris Dancer.
- For its Members – **Minutes** of the last **Advisory Council Meeting**, an **Agenda** for the next [and also Notes on the History and Role of the Advisory Council].

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].

INSTRUCTIONALS

Musicians' Instructional. *Clive Du'Mont* advises that there is still space at this Instructional, hosted by **Mendip**. It runs from **21st – 23rd February 2003**. Information from: Clive Du'Mont: Email: cdumont@blueyonder.co.uk (preferred) or Tel: 01454 773895.

Funding Instructional: Initial details of this were given in the last Newsletter. *Stephen Rowley* of **Gloucestershire** is a contemporary artist, as well as a Morris dancer. He recently expounded his thoughts on arts funding and Morris on MDDL. He will be leading an Instructional / Seminar on funding on **Saturday, 25th October 2003**. It will be open to all three Morris Organisations and will cost £10 per head including lunch. An Application Form will be in the next Newsletter, but interest may be expressed now to the Ring Treasurer.

ARM 2003.

This mailing includes the **Agenda**, and any other papers relating to the **ARM**. With only just over a month to go, you should have booked by now. If not do so **NOW**. **Isca** will host the Meeting at the Bridges Community Centre, Monmouth with overnight accommodation [and showers] in the function room of the Monmouth Rugby Club, “five-ish” minutes walk away. **A Booking Form was with the last mailing.** [Further copies from the Ring Bagman]

Under Item 16 of the Constitution “Details of the nominations for the positions of the Officers ...” [The Bagman is due for election or re-election] “... and the Elected Members of the Advisory Council ...” [The Northern; The North Midlands; and The South Midlands Area Representatives are due for election or re-election] “... and formal resolutions for discussion at the Annual Meeting of Club Representatives ...” [There is a formal motion from East Kent] shall be circulated by the Bagman to Member Clubs at least one month before the Meeting. This Newsletter [and the earlier Email circulation to Member Clubs] constitutes that due notice.

As already noted, *Steve Parker*, the Area Representative for the South Midlands has moved to Devon. Also, *Paul Campbell*, the Area Representative for the Eastern Area has a new job. They can neither make themselves available and have both stood down.

New candidates will be required for both these Areas. Sides in the Areas have been notified. As no candidates had been formally notified by the due date, any/all candidates proposed between that date and the consideration of the item at the Area Meeting at the AGM, will be considered, and voted upon by those at that Area Representatives Meeting.

There is one formal Motion from **East Kent**, that “*The Morris Ring accepts that any member side who wishes to attend any meeting organised by or on behalf of the Ring, is free to bring any musician the side wishes to use.*”

There will also be a Discussion Item on promoting music and dance. To provide some background to attitudes and current practice, an Emailed survey is being carried out. Hopefully, most Sides' E-mail contact will have been able to provide some feedback to assist the Squire when handling these items.

Ideally, in **2004**, the ARM venue should move North – are any Northern Sides interested? – Please contact the Ring Bagman.

RING MEETINGS AND RING EVENTS – 2003

There is still some limited space at **Thaxted** Ring Meeting [30th May - 1st June] if any Sides would like to attend. Please contact **David Brewster** [Tel: 01245 420742] without delay.

This year's 3rd **Cotswold Tour** will be on 6th **September 2003** – with places limited to 49 men, to ensure no overcrowding and sufficient dancing. The Tour will visit Bledington, Ascott under Wychwood, Ducklington, Sherborne, Longborough, and Oddington. Cost £17 “first come first served” Deposit £5. **David Thompson** on: tradcap@btopenworld.com

OTHER EVENTS

Scarborough Fayre Morris Dance Festival - Yorkshire - 27th - 29th **June 2003**. Details: Wendy Bostock, Yorkshire Coast Morris, Email: wbstock@mistral.co.uk

Cecil Sharp Centenary Event in Somerset – 20th - 25th **August 2003**. On 22nd August 1903 Cecil Sharp noted his first folk song, The Seeds of Love, from John England in Hambridge village in Somerset. It is proposed to hold an International Conference [probably in Taunton] and a centenary celebration in Hambridge, involving the local community in a festival of song and dance. Information from: **David Sutcliffe** (Committee Chairman), The Old Vicarage, Hambridge, Langport, Somerset TA10 0BG Tel: 01460 281205 Email: sutcliffedt@aol.com or by Email from the Bagman.

18 – 30 Morris Group. Following their success this year, they have already suggested a date for next year's meeting [again in Oxford] from 26th – 28th **September 2003**. They anticipate Leicester in 2004. Contact: **Ben Higgs**: ben_the_juggler@hotmail.com.

Pipe and Tabor Festival, Blackfriars, Gloucester. 26th – 28th **September 2003**. Details to follow. Contact: **Stephen Rowley**: Tel:- 01453 763181 E-mail: steve@artension.com.

ANNIVERSARIES

The Britannia Coconut Dancers of Bacup celebrate their Centenary in 2003. The present team of Coconut Dancers was formed in the Britannia Workmen's Club in 1903.

White Rose celebrate their 50th Anniversary. They opened their Anniversary year with an excellent illustrated article in the Huddersfield Daily Examiner [*They passed !!*]. Formed in 1953 by a group of **Leeds University** Morris Men and others who wished to form a non-University Side, they were helped by **Ron Smedley**, then EFDSS Yorkshire Area organiser. They were admitted to the Ring in 1959, moved to Huddersfield in 1971 and organised the 215th Ring Meeting there in 1986. **Cliff Barstow**, the Founder Member continues to support the club and his son and grandson are members of the present Side. They spawned the young Dog Rose Side that has performed at various national shows. Their celebrations will include a special weekend in September.

MEDIA

Apparently **Hartley** were shown dancing on a Channel 4 programme called Born Sloppy on Friday 6th December, repeated on 11th. **Tony Tomlin**, Bagman, Hartley writes, “My daughter had one of those “Oh! No! it's my father!!” experiences”

CIOFF

The Morris Ring has an Associate Membership of CIOFF, so that Ring Sides have access to CIOFF festivals [via John Maher]. The General Secretary of CIOFF UK has arranged that any Ring Member or Associate Side can have access to the CIOFF festival system for an extra £10 per side. The address for this is: CIOFF UK, Joe Maloney, General Secretary, Stockton Business Centre, 70 Brunswick Street, Stockton on Tees, TS18 1DW. E-mail: billingham.festival@virgin.net Tel 01642 651060 fax 01642 602839.

NEWS

Martin (Shag) Graetz, Bagman of *Pinewoods* has sent "... something you don't see very often. Actually, you don't see it at all, at least, not while I've been Bagman. To wit and namely: A report on the activities of the oldest overseas member of the Morris Ring, that is to say, the Pinewoods Morris Men."

"For various reasons, our dance year begins in September. For years, our annual Fall Tour started things off at the end of the month, but a couple of years ago, one of our resident Limeys, *Geoff Thompson* (of *Handsworth* and *Packington*) arranged for us to visit Providence, Rhode Island, a week or two earlier, for a walking tour along the river among the arts festival crowd. We meet around noon at the Union Station brewpub (in the former railway station) for the necessary fortifications and warm-up dancing in what serves as a forecourt. Then we walk along the embankment, dancing wherever there seems to be a likely audience, for the rest of the afternoon. Then back to the pub. Then home (though sometimes we stay for the "Waterfire", a hokey but effective string of wood fires lit along the middle of the river).

"The Fall Tour, on the last Saturday of the month, is our oldest regular event, having been started in 1966 by the then undergraduate Tom Kruskal (now our chief musician) as a tour of various Harvard campus locations. It's evolved into a two-part affair: Harvard in the morning, Boston in the afternoon. We usually invite one or two guest sides to join us. We take lunch at the reliable John Harvard brewpub in Harvard Square, then hop the Red Line subway (read: Underground) across the river for the afternoon. The day usually ends with a potluck supper for all and families out in the suburbs. In 2002, our guests were Marlboro Morris and Sword.

"After the Fall Tour come regular practices, which almost always means getting something up for the Christmas Revels, the annual holiday pageant in Cambridge, which we have been associated with from its beginning in 1971. It's very stagey, and the directors have had some odd notions of how a Morris team should fit into the production, but generally they don't muck with the dance itself. And we get a good bump in the treasury for it. This year our participation is minimal, because the theme (there's always a theme) is Caucasian, as in Mountains. All we have to provide is two dancers as a nucleus for the Abbots Bromley, and to perform "Lord of the Dance", this weird combobulation of Morris steps and figures that is best left undescribed.

"Come the new year, practices will begin in earnest to prepare for the new season (*I know I said... never mind*). Most of the time, our first dancing out is at the end of April, when we ferry over to the offshore island of Nantucket, to be the feature entertainment at the Daffodil Festival. Hordes of people come over for the event, and we bag scads of money. It's also a team/family affair; we have a big feast on Saturday night, and plenty of time for sightseeing on Sunday if the weather's good. Regardless of the weather, we always dance for the crowds departing on the noon ferry.

"May and June are our frequent-dancing months. A few years ago, we added a walking tour (we love that kind) in the attractive North Shore town of Newburyport, Massachusetts. After two years of brutally hot temperatures in the middle of June, we decided to shift the date to mid-May in 2002. Not to worry about the heat; on the morning of 18 May, it was snowing. We stayed home.

During these months, we usually find somewhere to dance on the odd weekend, or even on occasion in Boston of an evening during the week. As often as not, we're invited to the Marlboro Ale over the Memorial Day (read: Spring Bank Holiday) weekend, a tent-or-dorm-room affair at Marlboro College

in Vermont. This is our (America's) oldest weekend gathering; it was founded by the redoubtable Tony Barrand in 1975.

"A week or two later, we might put together a side for the SUDS, the Bouwerie Boys' all-male event in western Connecticut that John Dexter deliberately modelled on the Thaxted Ring Meeting.

"Our regular dance season ends around the end of June, unless we manage to organize a visit to England. The year as a whole ends in August with the Ale (read: AGM) on the shores of Long Pond adjacent to the dance camp where we were brought into existence and from which we take our name."

Packington and Man Friday held their first Joint Feast on 23rd November. Sides represented included [allegedly]: **Anker, Anstey, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Dolphin, Ebor, Green Man, Harthill, Icknield Way, Ivanhoe, Jockey, Kennet, Leeds, Leicester, Lincoln & Micklebarrow, Lichfield, Ripley, Rutland, Shakespeare, Stafford and Thaxted**; together with the three Ring Officers – there being no duplication of events for a change!! The meal started with "Smuggled French Pate", followed by "Cobbled together Salmagundi Road-kill with Loose Road Chippings". [This came complete with an assemblage of small bones and shot – enough to have taxed any forensic anatomist for quite some considerable time]. Whilst delicious, it was labour intensive, and some wished that they had registered vegetarian in view of the excellent alternative provided. Christmas Tart and Cheeses followed. The beers were from Burton Bridge and included their Golden Delicious [3.8%], Bridge Bitter [4.2%] and a superb Burton Porter [4.5%]. Various speeches followed and then a fine selection of songs. The tables were cleared for dancing that continued until near midnight, when the some settled down for the night in the hall, and refreshment and conversation continued in the kitchen.

Wessex recently fell foul of the strict interpretation of the "Two in a bar rule", with the result that they were unable to perform a mummers play in a pub at Cerne Abbas. The front page (with photo) report by James Tourgout in the Dorset Evening Echo 18th December 2002 stated: "***Morris men's traditional mumming play banned after mystery complaint***"

"Morris dancers have been kicked out of West Dorset pubs because council officers insist a licence is needed for them to perform inside. The **Wessex Morris Men** were forced to stage their traditional Christmas mumming play in the street a Cerne Abbas despite having performed inside pubs for the last 18 years. The drama came after council officers warned that a public entertainment licence was needed for the group to perform indoors at the Red Lion and New Inn pubs. **David Pritchard**, Wessex Morris Men Squire, said "It was a shame". "The mumming play was something we do to entertain people at Christmas with no profit involved and as a bit of fun. "It was disappointing that it should be prevented for some small reason over rules they might have over licensing". Morris dancers suspect that the licensing warning was sparked by a complaint to West Dorset District Council by someone who spotted the event being advertised. He added: "we were upset more than annoyed that someone would have been bothered to inform the licensing authority and that they were bothered to come out to the pub." The dancers were due to visit the New Inn and the Red Lion before having sandwiches and a few drinks as part of their Christmas gathering. They staged the play outside after a council officer warned that a special licence was needed if more than two people were to provide entertainment inside. A district council spokesman said: "We advised the landlord of the Red Lion pub that a public entertainment licence may be needed if a play involving two or more performers was going to be held in the pub and the public allowed access. "We also advised them that a street collection licence would be needed if they planned to collect money for charity in the street outside the pub". Dick Foad, New Inn landlord, said: Scrooge is alive and well in Cerne Abbas. "It was a letdown as we had people waiting here and they were disappointed. I have had morris dancers for 15 years. I was a bit taken aback when the licensing authority came about the public entertainment licence". Mr Foad added that the licensing officer's hands were tied because he was acting on a complaint. The morris dancers, which are based at Cerne Abbas, said the mumming play went very well outside and that they were well looked after by the Red Lion when they went inside afterwards. Mr Pritchard added that the traditional village life and music was under threat from new

government proposals to introduce entertainment licenses for performances everywhere – including churches. The morris mumming play dates back to the 19th century and involves drama and dancing.” Alan Curtis [on MDDL] noted “A later report on BBC Radio 4 at about 8:20am GMT was pretty positive, they interviewed Dave Pritchard (squire of Wessex Morris) and the landlady of the Red Lion, and followed it up with an interview of a spokesman for West Dorset District Council (the Licensing Authority). It seems the Council played the Health and Safety (especially fire) card, which raises the question whether a pub is supposed to be safe when no-one is playing but becomes a potential death trap when someone gets out an instrument. In effect there is good reason for reform of the licensing rules, but clearly the current Bill (which would remove even the "up to 2 in a bar" allowance) is unsatisfactory and must be amended.”

Mendip hosted their pre-Christmas Ale Feast on 20th December – no reports have appeared – so it must have been a good one. The following day found a bus filled with the **Original Welsh Border Morris** on their tour of White Ladies Aston, Pershore, Upton-upon-Severn and Worcester.

Sandy Glover notes that “**St Alban's** Mummers had a good day out on Boxing Day. The rain tried very hard, but somehow we managed five performances whilst getting only slightly wet. Surprisingly good crowds turned out, and seemed to enjoy the shows.” Pictures will appear on their website <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/captainwebb/mummers/>

Bedford were also out on Boxing Day – with excellent weather and very good crowds. They sung the Boar’s Head Carol before distribution of the same at the Swan Hotel. Bedford’s new directly elected mayor was in attendance.

Jockey kicked off 2003 with their traditional Plough Tour of Birmingham City Centre on Saturday, 4th January .. “*(a week earlier than normal - so much for tradition, then!)*.” “Guests this year included sides from our good friends and neighbours **Green Man** and **First Sedgeley** - and only a poorly car prevented us having a Royal Flush of Ring Officials. We were very honoured by the presence of Squire of the Ring, **Cliff Marchant**, and Ring Bagman, **John Frearson**. Unfortunately car trouble meant Ring Treasurer and honorary member of Jockey, **Steve Adamson** was unable to join us.” The Wetherspoons pub stop was memorable for the four ales from Springhead – including their delicious “Puritan’s Porter”.

That evening **Stafford** hosted their Feast, with representatives from **Anker, Coventry, Faithful City, First Sedgeley, Green Man, Jockey, Lichfield, Uttoxeter, Wantsum, and Winchester**. After a preliminary hour of dance and socialising, there was an excellent meal of Soup, Spiced Pork, a range of fattening sweets and cheese. Beers were sourced from Shropshire’s Wood’s Brewery. During the meal, **Jack Cotteral** of First Sedgeley, presented a cake to Stafford in recognition and memory of **Roger Entwistle**. The Ring Squire, **Cliff Marchant**, who, last year, had been represented by a bottle of Port, appeared in person, to propose the Immortal Memory. He included also all those others who had collected song and dance, and noted that he wore a Stafford badge on his collar, which he had been given by **Johnny Burke** of Stafford, who had guided his start in Fooling. If it were not for that badge, he would not have gained the Squire’s badge. **Alan Dandy** proposed “The Visitors” and **Mike Austen** [Wantsum and Winchester] replied – seeking a suitable tale to tell, he remarked “how can you be rude about a Side who are always gentlemen” – we would all concur. **Roy Yarnell** was appointed an Honorary Member “for rescuing Stafford on many occasions”. Songs were sung [by among others: **Pete Grassby** [Coventry]; **David Thompson** [Ripley] and The Squire] and then the tables were cleared for dancing until midnight. This was interspersed with jigs, entertainment [**Terry Carter** [Stafford] on medieval violin] and further songs [a fine rendition from **Geoff Jerram** [Winchester] – N.B. it is time we recorded that talent!!].

Hinkley Plough Bullockers were out on Plough Saturday 11th January. Comprising “raddled up” **Anker**, with representation from **Anstey** and **Ripley**, the plough was dragged from Sharnford, by way of Sapcote to Stoney Stanton. The group were joined at the refreshment stop between the latter two, by Owen Brown. It was he, and his mother, [and her diary], who provided much information about the Sapcote Bullockers, that reinforced the information on which the Tradition was re-founded. Despite below zero temperatures and fog, a good day was had by all.

On the same day, “ ... despite freezing fog elsewhere, the sun shone on Whittlesey ... ” for the Straw Bear. *Steve Tunnicliff* noted that among Ring Sides present were **Rutland**, **Hagenath**, **East Suffolk**, and **Mid Winter Mummers**. **Anstey** were also present, despite being split between Whittlesea and the Bullockers. As customary, **Peterborough** were supervising the Plough at the front of the Procession, and **Stevenage Sword** were dancing in the pubs. A contribution by Pauline Woods-Wilson on the MDDL noted “... we saw an excellent performance from Stevenage Sword in the Ceilidh upstairs at one of the pubs ... Stevenage were fast and energetic. It was just one great figure after another, hardly pausing for breath, straight into the tumbles, and the Tommy joining in and out with ease. The highlight was when the Tommy did a tumble, but was held upside down with legs flailing for what seemed like ages.”

As this goes to press, the masochists are assembling for **Jigs – 2003**, once again at Sutton Bonnington and hosted by **Dolphin**. Once again the infatigable *Bert Cleaver* and his team are offering their antidote to PCB (Post Christmas Blues/Belly). A Report is awaited.

AND FINALLY !!

The Bagman advised the South West and Wales Area that Area Rep, *Dudley Binding*, now had Email. To which *Idris Roker* of **Bathampton** responded “You’ll be telling us to believe in Father Christmas next...”

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 May, and should include the next Edition of the Circular.

It would appear that in the absence of any competing candidates for the role of Bagman, readers will have to continue to suffer this compiler of the Morris ~~Beer~~ Notes Newsletter. Anyone who wishes for a change in style, should have a discrete word – and is welcome to take up the reins !!!

Wassail

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring

The Newsletter - No. 27 – January 2003 - Summary

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

The Bagman thanks you for all your good wishes, and is now half-employed for half a year!!

ARM -- This is only a month away [7th - 9th March 2002] --- **Book Now** - if you have not done so. This mailing includes various papers relating to the Meeting.

NEW ASSOCIATES -- Welcome **North British Sword Dancers, & Yelvertoft** [nr. Rugby].

INSTRUCTIONALS -- Musicians' **Instructional**, hosted by **Mendip, 21st – 23rd February 2003. Funding and Grants Instructional**, on Saturday, **25th October 2003.**

ARM 2003 -- The **Agenda**, is with this mailing. If you have not booked – book **NOW**. Representatives required for the *South Midlands* and the *Eastern Area*. There is a formal Motion from **East Kent**, that *“The Morris Ring accepts that any member side who wishes to attend any meeting organised by or on behalf of the Ring, is free to bring any musician the side wishes to use.”* There will be a Discussion Item on promoting music and dance.

RING MEETINGS – 2003 -- Some space at **Thaxted Ring Meeting [30th May - 1st June]**.

OTHER EVENTS -- **Cecil Sharp Centenary Event, Somerset, 20th - 25th August 2003 -- 3rd Cotswold Tour - 6th September 2003 -- 18 - 30 Morris Group, Oxford, 26th – 28th September 2003 -- Pipe and Tabor Festival, Gloucester, 26th – 28th September 2003.**

CIOFF -- The Ring is an Associate. For £10, Sides can have access to CIOFF festivals.

ANNIVERSARIES -- **The Britannia Coconut Dancers** celebrate their Centenary in 2003, and **White Rose** celebrate their 50th Anniversary.

MEDIA -- **Hartley** were on Channel 4 “Born Sloppy”

NEWS -- A *Report* on **Pinewoods**'s year. -- *Feasts and Ales* hosted by: **Mendip** [their pre-Christmas Ale Feast]; **Packington** and **Man Friday** [their first Joint Feast]; and **Stafford. Wessex** fell foul of a strict [and probably incorrect] interpretation of the “Two in a Bar” Rule -- *On Tour: Original Welsh Border Morris* [pre-Christmas]; **Jockey** [Plough Tour of Birmingham]; **Hinkley Plough Bullockers** [on Plough Saturday]. -- *Out on Boxing Day: St Alban's Mummings* and **Bedford**. -- At *Whittlesey* for the *Straw Bear: Anstey, East Suffolk, Hagenath, Peterborough, Rutland, Stevenage* and **Mid Winter Mummings**.

ALSO MENTIONED -- **Anker, Anstey, Bathampton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Coventry, Dolphin, Ebor, Faithful City, First Sedgely, Green Man, Harthill, Icknield Way, Jockey, John of Gaunt, Kennet, Leeds, Leicester, Leyland, Lincoln & Micklebarrow, Lichfield, Ripley, Rutland, Shakespeare, Stafford, Thaxted, Uttoxeter, Wantsum, Winchester** and **White Rose**.

Wassail

John Frearson,
Bagman, The Morris Ring