



## The Newsletter - No. 32 – January 2004

### *Greetings,*

We hope you all had a good Christmas and New Year. There is a note from the Squire on Page 3, encouraging you to attend the ARM and giving an update on the Licensing Law.

**Did you remember to pay your subscription?** If the last Newsletter did not include your Insurance Certificate, you may not have paid, and may not be insured. Contact the Treasurer.

Congratulations to Past Squire *Barry Care* on his MBE – more details on Page 2.

Welcome as Associates, the **St Nicholas-at-Wade with Sarre Hoodeners**, from Broadstairs in Kent. The Treasurer is working out how to get all that onto the Insurance Certificate!!

**REMINDER:** *Have you booked for the ARM – last minute bookings are subject to a surcharge. Anyone may attend the business meetings free of charge.*

Also enclosed with this mailing are:

- **Amendments** to the Directory, they keep coming in!!
- Your copy/ies of the **Morris Dancer**.
- A draft **ARM Agenda**. The 2003 Minutes were with the October Newsletter.
- The **Treasurer's Report and Accounts**.
- The **Nominations for Squire** – and a **Voting Paper**. **Remember post any Postal Votes in good time – I am not at home every day – and the post is not infallible!!!**
- The **Agenda** [and hopefully, the **Minutes**] for the Advisory Council Meeting is/are also enclosed for its Members.

**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

### **William (Bill) Seddon [John O'Gaunt]**

*William Donald (Bill) Seddon* died on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2004 aged 68.

Bill danced with **John O' Gaunt** during the 1980s and 1990s. Morris men will know him as "Big Bill" for obvious reasons and for the quality of the food he prepared for Days of Dance. He was also a great favourite as Father Christmas during the festive season.

A service was held at Lancaster & Morecambe Crematorium on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

[Information: *Rodney Briddon*, Bagman, **John O' Gaunt**]

## NEW YEAR'S HONOUR

### **Barry Care MBE**

Past Squire [and Past Treasurer – and current Photo-Archivist], *Barry Care*, received an MBE in the New Year's Honours List. Our CONGRATULATIONS.

His son, *Simon Care*, wrote on MDDL "It has been awarded for services to the community in Moulton, Northampton. As well as his Morris dancing activities, he has been recognised for other achievements, including running the Village Festival for 30 years; bell-ringing, formation of the local Conservation Group; Parish Council for 30 years and numerous other local activities. I would personally like to thank the peoples who proposed and supported his nomination. It came as a great surprise to all of the family. Especially, my father. When photographed for the local paper, complete with Morris Hat, he announced that this was the last of his team recruitment activities!!!!!!!!!!" It is understood that he will be receiving his award at Buckingham Palace on February 18<sup>th</sup> 2004.

## **ARM 2004.**

The Application Form for the ARM has already been circulated. If you have not yet booked – do so NOW. The **2004** ARM is being hosted by **Mossley** [with support from **Saddleworth**] and will be held at Mossley from **12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2004**. The cost of the business parts of the Meeting will be met from Morris Ring funds – thus no one is disenfranchised by cost. This means that the remaining "social" part of the weekend will also be proportionately less expensive.

The **ARM Bagman (Mossley)** is **Roy Blick**, 77, Springfield Road, Droylsden, Manchester M43 7RD. Tel: 0161 2923794 Email: **RoyBlick@lineone.net**. An Application Form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

Two Nominations have been received for the Office of Squire. Details of the candidates are enclosed, together with the required supporting statements. No other Nominations have been received for Treasurer. No Formal Motions or Resolutions were received by the due date. Any other items of business can be dealt with under AOB, and, ideally, be advised to the Bagman in good time to allow sufficient time to be included in the timetable for the day's business. The Advisory Council meeting will be held on the Sunday of the ARM weekend.

## **THE SQUIRE - and a LICENSING UPDATE**

The *Squire* sends “Greetings, ....

“May I start by wishing you all a Happy New Year. As you are all aware the ARM is being held in Mossley on the 13<sup>th</sup> March. This **your** meeting, so please make every effort to have your Side represented. There are two candidates for the election of Squire of the Morris Ring: **Paul Reece** of **Thaxted** and **Bob Cross** of **Chalice**. I wish them both good luck, just remember if at first you don’t succeed, try again.

“On the subject of Licensing. We have learnt that some town and city Councils are pre-empting Government by drafting their own “Guidelines” before DCMS has issued any. My town (Brighton) has, as have Lewes and Canterbury. Will you please check with the local Council in your area and report back to me.

“The Morris Ring, The Morris Federation and the Open Morris, are continuing to look for ways that they can continue to work together. I have asked the new President of the Federation, Trefor Owen, to write down some of his views for the next Ring Circular; the last Federation newsletter included a few lines from the Ring Squire!

“Finally may I wish you all a successful dancing season, no doubt I will meet up with many of you at the various Ales and Feasts, and of course, at the ARM.

“Wassail, Cliff.”

## **RING MEETINGS – 2004**

There is still space at the **Thaxted** Ring Meeting over the weekend 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004

## **APOLOGY**

An apology to **Patrick Harries**, who had a front-page mention in December. He points out “I am NOT Squire of **Wessex** these days ... I am a PAST Squire and Bagman ” Apologies also to **David Pritchard**, current Squire, who was the actual interviewee on "Today".

## **OTHER EVENTS**

“**Tommo’s Tours**” announces that there is to be a **4<sup>th</sup> Cotswold Tour** on **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2004**. Visits to Badby, Oddington, Lower Swell and Minster Lovell are proposed. Details from **David Thompson** at **thompson\_capers@tesco.net**.

**The Pipe and Tabor Festival** – is now **9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> July 2004**, and will be in Stroud, Gloucestershire. Workshops, concerts and performance. Guests: Angel Vallverdu (Catalonya) and The Rose Moresk (The Early Morris Project). Contact: **Stephen Rowley**, Tanronen, Lurks Lane, Pitchcombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL6 6LL. Tel: 01453 763181 Email: **steve@artension.com**.

**Sidmouth** – To give balance, a “well-respected” member of a “Morris Ring” side, ideally one who goes to Sidmouth, is required to help judge the John Gasson Jig Competition. He would be judging the technical aspect of the dancing . If you know anyone, contact the Bagman, or Tracey Rose on **chris@ewell.demon.co.uk**.

## ARCHIVE

In the October 2002 Newsletter it was reported that **Leyland** had been awarded some £25,000 to produce a professionally made video and a book about the Leyland tradition. The money was part of the Local Heritage Initiative from the Countryside Agency. The project ran until January 2004, and under the authorship of **Roy Smith**, they have produced the said video and book right on time. Copies were offered in return for a donation, via the MDDL, and a set has been provided for the Morris Ring Archive. Both are excellent. The book gives a concise history of the Side, and the video some history and shows highlights of a year. Dance extracts are shown, but no “record” shots of full dances. Hopefully those are also preserved elsewhere. The local press has finally caught up and given some further coverage to the productions, and a press cuttings is available. [Information from **Roy Smith**, Leader, **Leyland**]

Three 8mm films of Morris dancing have been presented to the Ring Archive by **Alf Denham** of **Mendip**. One of the films includes a short excerpt of a 1950/60s Ring Side, **Luton Longstraw**, performing Morris and folk dance, probably in Summer 1959. It includes Alf's first attempts at Morris dancing!! The other two films are of Mendip [and other Sides] at the ?1963 London Ring Meeting [on a rather dark day]; and of the 1974 **Winchester** Ring Meeting. These have all been converted onto a master video and various further copies have been produced.

In the April 2002 Newsletter it was reported that, **Les Chittleborough [Isca]** had located the log / album of the **London Rodney** side – for the period from its formation in 1952 until the mid 1960s. Subsequently, at the ARM at Monmouth in 2003, its holder, **Vic Street** who was a member of London Rodney, and who had loaned it to the Morris Ring so that copies could be made, very generously suggested that the Ring Archive should keep and preserve it.

## NEWS

**Alan Couchman**, Squire of **Weald of Kent**, featured in the press after foiling an armed attack. An article by Emma Lund in the Kent and Sussex web-site notes “The Brave owner of a Horsmonden service station single-handedly foiled an armed raid on his business on Christmas Eve. Alan Couchman, 61, who describes himself as a “morris-dancing grandfather” refused to let Rams Hill Service Station on Maidstone Road be robbed by a balaclava-clad man wielding a pistol. At about 3.20pm, he looked up from the cash till to see the man standing in the doorway with his faced covered and a gun in his hand, saying: “I want money.” The gunman aimed at Mr Couchman's chest and fired a shot. He put his hand up to protect himself, receiving an injury to his finger. He said police think the pistol fired ball-bearings or was a gas-powered gun due to the noise it made. Mr. Couchman said: “I swore at him, using language I didn't know I knew, then moved very quickly to get him out of the shop. He was standing in the doorway so when he took a step back he was outside. I slammed the door on him and locked it.” He added: “Looking back, I think I was rather foolish but at the time I was incensed. We never have much accessible cash on the premises anyway. I thought it was a joke at first.” The would-be robber did his best to get back in the door but when that failed he smashed a window, even though bars across it would have prevented him from getting in that way. He shouted abuse and possibly fired more shots. Police arrived about half an hour later by which time the gunman, described as in his 20s with a local accent, escaped with an accomplice in a green Peugeot 406 saloon. Mr Couchman said: “We have never had anyone come in here with a gun before and this will hopefully be the last time. I am so angry that they tried to rob me. “I feel I should have managed to keep him here, I'm disappointed he got away. But I didn't let it ruin my Christmas.” Mr Couchman's family has run the business in Horsmonden since 1906. As it was Christmas Eve he had let other staff go home early, leaving him alone in the shop.

## **Boxing Day**

In Leicestershire on Boxing Day there was a choice of events. This year, instead of The White Horse in Seagrave, **Anstey** were out at The Bull's Head in Markfield for a change. **Leicester** were, as usual, at The Griffin Inn, Swithland and **Packington** were out at The Bull and Lion in Packington. [Information: *Phil Preen* on MDDL]

**Rutland** were in Uppingham Market Place from about 12.15pm, variously dancing and mumming. [Information: *Steve Tunnicliff*, via MDDL]

The **St Albans** Mummers were around the City. The itch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout were treated at the Town Hall, at noon at the Clock Tower, and later at the White Hart Hotel, the Fighting Cocks, and the Verulam Arms. [Information: *Sandy Glover* on MDDL]

**Bedford** were dancing Border Morris and sang the Boar's Head carol at the annual Boar's Head ceremony at the Swan Hotel.

The activities of the **Hinckley Bullockers** on Plough Saturday was reported in the Leicester Mercury, and copied on MDDL by *Phil Preen*. "A farmer's plough was driven through Leicestershire villages as part of an ancient ritual. The Hinckley Bullockers, adorned with ribbons and sashes, danced alongside the decorated plough as they celebrated Plough Monday. Plough Monday used to be held on the first Monday after Twelfth Night. Dancers would turn up at pubs, farms and large houses and demand cash or drink as payment. If it wasn't forthcoming they would plough up the landlord's driveway. The tradition died out at the turn of the century but was revived in 1987. Because Bullockers work during the week, the event is now held on the Saturday, which follows Twelfth Night. A group of red-faced dancers, known as Molly dancers entertained drinkers in pubs with dancing during this year's parade which started at The Countryman Pub in Sharnford, and ended in the Francis Arms, Stoney Stanton."

Also on Plough Saturday: **Jockey** were out with their plough in the centre of Birmingham, together with guests from **First Sedgeley**; **Green Man** and **Lichfield**. The Ring Bagman [for some of the morning] and the Ring Treasurer were also present. Other Sides were in action no doubt at Whittlesea for the Straw Bear.

In the evening **Stafford** Feast took place – no report has yet appeared.

On Plough Monday **Bedford** performed the Branston Plough Play and danced Border Morris at five pubs in the centre of Bedford.

## **CONCLUSION**

Please to keep the News flowing and report any changes for the Directory. The next Newsletter should be produced in May and include the next Morris Circular.

## *Wassail*

John Frearson, Bagman, The Morris Ring