



## The Newsletter - No. 37 – January-February 2005

### *Greetings,*

A very happy and successful New Year to you all.

The Squire thanks you all for the Christmas cards and seasonal wishes that “poured in”. The Bagman and Treasurer likewise.

We are sorry to hear that Past Squire, *Roy Yarnell*, has been in hospital – we wish him a very speedy recovery. Likewise, the Treasurer, *Steve Adamson*, who took the opportunity of a cancelled bed-space to have some “routine maintenance”, and is now back home [and doing far too much!!] – so do not hassle him too hard for a while unless really necessary.

Did your Side send their subscription? There are still a [very] few Sides that have not. If you paid, you are covered and your Insurance Document should be enclosed. If it is not, and you have not paid, then you will NOT be covered by insurance when practising or performing. [Some Documents have been sent separately, if needed, and “later payers” will also have been mailed separately]. Queries - to the Treasurer, who is chasing the unpaid and uninsured.

Thanks to all those who take, and forward, the Newsletter to their Sides by Email. This assists communication – the Bagman received it by Email from **Bedford** [and another Side!!].

An “official” welcome to **Morris 18 – 30**. They are now Associate Members, in their own right; and covered by their own Insurance.

Also enclosed with this mailing [or collated with the Newsletter] are:

- **Amendments** to the current 2004 - 2005 Directory,
- A **Draft Agenda** for the ARM;
- The **Draft Accounts** for discussion and approval at the ARM;
- The **Proposal** documents for the next **Morris Ring Bagman**;
- Your **Insurance Document**. If it is not enclosed **YOU MAY NOT BE INSURED**.

*Remember: Unless you pass on the content of this Newsletter to the Men in your Side, the information stops with you.*

*As already mentioned, E-mailed versions of these Newsletters are available on request as an attached Word document; please order by Email.*

**IN MEMORIAM****Rob Roy Mhacgregor - Gloucestershire Mummers**

*Rob Roy Mhacgregor*, squire of the **Gloucestershire Mummers** died in Hospital 5<sup>th</sup> January 2005. [Information on MDDL from *Roy Claridge* <royclaridge@shelquip.com>]

**Arthur Curzon – Green Man**

*Arthur Curzon*, one of **Green Man**'s longest serving members and the chief cook at their Feasts, died unexpectedly in mid-January 2005. In addition to the role in which many will have met him - as chief cook - he was also Green Man's President and Quartermaster. He will be sadly missed. [Information from *Jim Pennels, Green Man*]

**THE ARM - 2005**

As already notified, **Harthill** are hosting the ARM, from **4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005**. An **Application Form** was enclosed with the last Newsletter. Further copies can be E-mailed by the Bagman if required. The late booking fee may apply by the time you read this Newsletter.

The Draft Agenda is enclosed – any other items for discussion should be advised soonest.

The formal papers, whilst possibly not required as there is no election, for the Nomination by **Anker of Charlie Corcoran of Leicester** as Bagman, are enclosed for your information.

As already advised, all three Representatives for those Areas where re-elections are due [those from the western side of the country] have indicated that they are willing to continue in office. No other candidates were proposed and the current Representatives will be re-appointed at the ARM. They are for the **North West - Duncan Broomhead**; the **West Midlands - John Davis**; and for the **South West and Wales - Dudley Binding**.

The Advisory Council will meet on Saturday afternoon, after the main meeting [which will hopefully be shorter than some!!], so that its members do not have to stay over until Sunday.

**Chalice** have offered to host the ARM in 2006. If any other Sides wish to bid / offer to host then, or in 2007, or a later year, please advise the Bagman.

**RING MEETINGS – 2005 – UPDATE**

There is still a little space available, if required, at **Thaxted** and at **Durham**. If any Sides wish to attend a Meeting and have not yet applied, please do not delay. Dates of Meetings still available are given below. At this stage Sides may apply to attend an additional Meeting if they so wish. Contact the host Side direct please.

3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> June  
17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> June

**THAXTED RING MEETING**  
**DURHAM RAMS 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIV. RING MEETING**

## **MORRIS RING - 2005 TOURS - T-SHIRT.**

As already advised, the Morris Shop is stocking T-Shirts in a tasteful heather grey with blue print. Morris Ring logo on the front and the 2005 Ring Meetings listed on the back. To view this 'must have', go to the Morris Ring website "sales page" to see it being beautifully modelled (no, not by the Treasurer!). Fruit of the Loom (Premium) £6 + P&P

## **ARCHIVE NEWS**

The last Newsletter reported that **Hoghton Rapper** had finally laid down their swords. Now that they have finalised their finances, they have made a very generous donation to The Morris Ring "to be used for the Archives for whatever project they choose". It has been suggested that the initial archival use for these funds would sensibly be for any work that might be required to assist with the preservation and propagation of the Hoghton archival material [when it is sorted and received into the Archive]. Our thanks to Hoghton Rapper.

## **TOUR**

Tommo's **Cotswold Tour 2005**, arranged by **David Thompson**, will be on **10<sup>th</sup> September 2005**. Venues should include: Badby, Hinton, Brackley, Bucknell, Oddington and Stow. Details to follow – or from Dave on Tel: 01332 770578 or Email: tradcap@ntlworld.com.

## **OTHER EVENTS**

**DERT 2005** - The **2005 Dancing England Rapper Tournament** will be held in Preston (Lancashire) on the weekend **4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005**. The weekend will include workshops and informal events, and the Rapper competition, which will occupy most of Saturday. This will include dancing in the pubs of central Preston as well as outdoors at the Flagmarket, and a display when there will be a chance to see all participating teams. There are typically about two dozen Rapper teams at DERT, and whilst most choose to compete, some come simply to exhibit and to mix with other dancers. Prizes will be awarded for dancing, playing, and Tommying/Bettying. Indoor camping and a late bar will be available on Friday and Saturday nights. The price will be announced soon, and there will shortly be a website for the event. Meanwhile, if you would like more information then contact **Andrew Kennedy** [88, Liverpool Road, Penwortham, Lancashire. PR1 0HT Tel: 01772 741503 andrew@north-british.co.uk] or **Jeff Lawson** [110, Park Road, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 1QY Tel: 01257 249686 jeff.lawson@btinternet.com].

**Chris Harris Workshop**. This one-day workshop entitled "**Tom Foolery**" and dealing with Fools, Betseys and Animals, is now scheduled [as per the Email update] for **9<sup>th</sup> April 2005**, at Bristol University. Details were in the last Newsletter – and can also be obtained from [www.bris.ac.uk/drama/lifelearn](http://www.bris.ac.uk/drama/lifelearn) or Tel: 01179545471 or email: drama-lifelearn@bristol.ac.uk

**St George's Day – Newcastle upon Tyne**. Following the success of the Trafalgar Square event, celebrating the progress with the Licensing Law exemption, it was decided to run a similar event in the North. This will be in **Newcastle on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2005**. All three Morris Organisations will be involved, and there is support from the local council. Sides without other St George's Day commitments and interested in performing on that day in Newcastle should contact the Ring Squire for more details.

### **Misdemeanours – A Celebration of Combating 350 years of Unreasonable Authority.**

**John Edwards** of **Stafford** invites Sides to this Celebration. **15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

“In 1655, Morris Dancers, male and female, were arrested by the Puritan Vicar of Lapley in Staffordshire and taken to the Stafford Assizes for their misdemeanours.

350 years later **Stafford** Morris Men and other local groups are hosting a commemorative weekend of dance. This is an open event and Ring sides with lady musicians would be particularly welcome. We also expect Morris Federation and Open Morris sides to attend, in line with *Cliff Marchant*'s appeal for closer co-operation. We hope to have 300 participants staying over, and the magic number of 350 for the Saturday evening display.

“The event is from Friday 15<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2005. It is based on Penkridge, south of Stafford, and will cost £39 per adult for the weekend. Tours are to be arranged around the area and dancing in the home villages of the original participants and locations they knew.

Details are on the Stafford Morris web-site and an application form is included. Responses and deposits are required by 20<sup>th</sup> February 2005. This is a first come first served event, although we will try to include as many types of traditional ritual dance and like activities as possible.

“Last year we cracked the Licensing Act and in 1655 they weathered the wrath of the authorities at the Assizes and the Quarter sessions to establish their right to dance. Come and help us celebrate both actions, either as sides or individuals. Contact John Edwards (01785 823067) or lapley@staffordmorris.org.uk or visit www.staffordmorris.org.uk and click “Misdemeanours”.

**Town and Country Festival – Stoneleigh Park** – allegedly one of the largest Festivals in the Midlands – held over the August Bank Holiday [27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> August]. They hope to feature Morris dancing in the Country area. If your Side might like a day out in Warwickshire to visit the show with the family, in return for dancing two or three spots during the day, please contact the Bagman asap. It is anticipated that there will be a fee / some expenses for each Side – plus free entry and a guest ticket for each Morris participant. Ideally say four or so Sides each day to provide morning and afternoon sessions. Details and more information when we know level of interest. The invitation will probably go out to Open and Federation Sides who might like to be involved in this “Showcase” event for the Morris.

**Battle of Trafalgar** - We understand that there will be various celebrations of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar on 22<sup>nd</sup> **October 2005**. The Morris Ring had been invited to be involved. If individual Sides wish to join in with any local events, that will be a matter for them. The date is provided for information.

### **INSURANCE**

**Please note:** From the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2005 **NO ONE** can give formal insurance advice unless they are regulated by the FSA [Financial Services Association] – indeed it is a criminal offence so to do!!

**ALL QUESTIONS WITH REGARD TO INSURANCE MUST BE REFERRED TO OUR INSURANCE BROKER / MANAGER - MICHAEL STIMPSON.**

[Michael Stimpson's telephone number - **01923 770425** - is on the Insurance Document.

Notes on the Insurance Scheme were provided with a previous Newsletter – copies are still available from the Treasurer. All enquiries regarding subscription aspects are, of course, still dealt with by The Treasurer.

## **RING PUBLICATIONS - EDITORIAL UPDATES**

A reminder that there are now **NEW EDITORS** for the Morris Ring publications:-

**Harry Stevenson** will edit the "Morris Circular".

Contact him at:- Erin House, 59, Olivers Battery Road North, Winchester SO22 4JB. Tel: 01962 855911 Email: [harry\\_wmm@trunkles.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:harry_wmm@trunkles.freeseve.co.uk)

**Sean Goddard** will edit the "Morris Dancer". Contact him at:- 142, Hollingbury Road, Brighton BN1 7JD Tel: 01273 559107 E-mail: [s.p.goddard@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:s.p.goddard@sussex.ac.uk).

**WARNING: Beware of eye strain.** The current Editor of the Morris Dancer apologises for the small print size of the latest edition of the Morris Dancer [which should arrive / have already arrived under separate cover]. It seems that the Printer's computer used its "initiative" in selecting a "missing" font. As the Editor was on holiday, the Printer could not contact him to check up on what he unfortunately assumed must be a new house-style!!

## **PEL – and MUMMING**

Hopefully, Sides are establishing what their Local Authorities are doing with regard to Guidance on Licensing. If you have done nothing yet, please refer to Newsletter 35 and the item by John Bacon, and Newsletter 36 and the comments by our Advisor.

As you will be aware, from the News, this legislation is proving to be a political minefield because of the implications and costs of dealing with "24 hour drinking". Our concerns on Morris Dancing – and the greater one on Mummung, are likely to be well down the agenda.

**REMEMBER...** "The advice is still to think about where and when you do what you do, and make sure that the licensees include your activities in their applications for variation after 7th February 2005. If they don't, the net result will be to kill it stone dead. It won't matter that the DCMS will be putting a Licensing (Amendment) Bill to Parliament in two years time - that will be too late. Don't forget that post November 2005 (when it will probably come into force) will be too late and too expensive".

The Morris Federation has designed a flier on licensing – and our legal team are in the process of updating this to fit the current situation. This will probably not be included in this Newsletter because of various time constraints. It should include, on the reverse, a draft text of a letter appropriate to send / give to your local pubs – where you expect to dance and perform mummung plays and undertake related Morris activities. [Do not be mean, give them two copies, so they have one to pass on to the owner, brewery or whoever].

We need to ensure that pubs [and other venues] list Morris and the other activities when they first register – in this way they should not incur extra costs of "adding on" activities later. Whilst we cannot know the exact way things will develop [or be liable for any advice given] we can hopefully point publicans and pub owners in the right direction and encourage them to include on their form ALL the other activities that could possibly occur in their pubs.

If this is not included with this mailing, the documents will be Emailed to all clubs with Email contacts. It will be Emailed in any case, so the draft letter text can be copied.

## EFDSS – “CRY ST GEORGE FOR ENGLAND” CAMPAIGN - 2005

Last year, in conjunction with Musicians Insurance Services, the English Folk Dance & Song Society ran the "Cry St George for England" competition to encourage and support the celebration of St George's Day (23<sup>rd</sup> April). The winners were **Rose and Castle**, who generated numerous local radio features and newspaper articles.

Their publicity materials were displayed at the EFDSS AGM on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2004 and are available for reference in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House. The EFDSS campaign continues, to make St George's Day a day of national celebration: The 2005 competition will be judged after the event, on the strength of publicity generated in the run-up, on the day and immediately afterwards. We hope that a larger exhibition will result, to be shown at the EFDSS 2005 AGM and National Gathering, featuring a variety of events and associated publicity.

Entry is open to all. Here's how to enter:

- Decide how you or your organisation will mark St George's Day 2005.
- Lobby local papers, radio stations and other clubs and organisations in your locality to raise the profile of St George's Day and to encourage them to create their own St George's Day event.
- Keep detailed records of your event and associated publicity: photos, recordings etc and compile them into a report to be sent to Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 7AY to arrive by 7<sup>th</sup> May.

The reports will be featured in EDS (English Dance & Song) Magazine and held at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House. The best of them will stand a chance of winning a prize fund of £500. The competition is sponsored by Musicians Insurance Services.

Contact info@efdss.org or Felicity Greenland, EFDSS Publicity, ENGLISH FOLK DANCE & SONG SOCIETY, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 7AY  
Tel +44 (0)20 7485 2206, Ext 21; Fax +44 (0)20 7284 0534 Web: <http://www.efdss.org>

## MUSICIANS' INSTRUCTIONAL

**Thaxted** hosted the Musicians' Instructional over the weekend 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> December. The Squire commissioned two reports – both were delivered – and are provided below to give an impression of what was obviously an excellent weekend. Our thanks to the Instructors [see below]; the hosts/dancers; and the prime mover and administrator, **Clive du'Mont** of **Mendip**.

**Jack Summers-Glass, of Whitchurch** writes:-

“I hadn't attended the Morris Musicians' Instructional since it was hosted by **Whitchurch** a number of years back, so, this year, I thought that it was time to attend the one at **Thaxted**.

On Saturday morning, everyone gathered in St Margaret's Hall for the initial talk by the esteemed Mr **James Catterall**. Having compared myself to the four conscious/competent combinations of musician type highlighted by Jim and decided I must be in a fifth group, the incontinent malcontent, I duly decamped, with a number of others, to Jim's house for the “seasoned players” session hosted by **Mike Howley**. The intention of this group, as I saw it, was to hone our skills in balancing musicality with the need to play for the dance.

The first thing was for Mike to give us the music for a new, unseen, tune of his own devising to learn. As he ran through a demonstration (just as well since I don't read ‘the dots’), we played along with a completely different tune but very quietly so he wouldn't notice. Being in the comfort of Jim C's home, we inherited Maggie (Mrs C for those not in the know) as the tea and biscuit provider and after the very welcome morning break, resumed our session. At intervals during the instruction, we had more runs through the new tune and by lunchtime we had reached the heady level of awful.

Lunch for all was at the Star followed by some impromptu music, apparently in the style of Michael Schumacher, and then we drifted back to our respective afternoon sessions.

We covered a number of points during the day, encompassing all manner of improvements that we should be considering when we play for the dancers and, predictably, often ended up discussing our viewpoints and eventually arriving at a mutually agreed stance.

Once the business of the day was over, we all kitted-up for the Feast. A superb repast was provided by the multi-talented Catteralls, followed by some excellent singing from around the tables. By the end of the day, all the “seasoned” attendees had totally forgotten the tune they had been learning earlier!

On Sunday morning, our group continued discussing ‘lift’ before joining the main group for the ‘Playing in a Massed Band’ session where Jim and *Mike Chandler* cringed in a corner while the musicians managed to produce the well-known ‘Wall of Sound’ with consummate ease. Of course, we all thought it was fine until we heard the playback. Mind you, it may be time for Jim to get a new tape recorder, we couldn’t have been that bad, could we?

Sadly (yeah, right!), we were not able to play our newly-learned tune for any dancers but Mike Howley did give a demonstration of the tune to the assembled masses, who had, of course, not heard it before. The fact that he had also forgotten it made us feel a whole lot better!

By the time we wandered down to the Star for lunch before going our separate ways, I think we all agreed that, at whatever level we were, everyone had got a lot of useful information out of the weekend. I can even remember that tune now as well.”

*Alan Whitbread*, of **Shakespeare** writes:-

“I have been playing my English concertina for just four years and, while I have experience at playing for Morris, it has been in a small band, rather than in the lonely and exposed position of a solo musician. Therefore, I thought it might do me some good to attend the Morris Ring Instructional at Thaxted in December 2004. Well, I was right!

Having arrived in Thaxted fairly early to find the church hall locked and in darkness, it was not an auspicious start. But things soon looked up when another man arrived and we found our way down to The Star for a nice pint of Adnams Bitter! With the gradual arrival of others, we were soon having a very sociable pub session. This was followed by food back at the hall, more socialising and music.

Work started in earnest on Saturday with nearly 20 musicians of mixed ability and from just one year to 20+ years’ experience. There was also a variety of instruments, from a snare drum to fiddles, English and Anglo concertinas, accordions and, of course, the ubiquitous melodeon. Men - and one lady - had come from all over the south of England and there were even three from **Furness** who travelled all the way from Lancashire, not to mention one from **Durham**. Now that’s commitment!

*Mike Howley* from the *Men of Wight* took a masterclass, while *Jim Catterell* from **Thaxted**, assisted by *Mike Chandler* from **Whitchurch**, treated us to an exposition about the basics of *helping the dancers to dance better and to look better*. Was it magic? No, just the appropriate use of a variety of techniques, such as giving more contrast, playing in a more staccato style, positively using the silences between notes, varying the speed and providing lift.

We all then got the chance to play solo for a side from **Thaxted** – a nerve-racking experience for those of us who, like me, were used to playing in the background to a reliable lead musician! As I play a lot of my music at sessions (some of it at 100 mph!), even though I tried not to I played slightly too fast and without the feeling I would have liked to put into the music. But I did not break down and they did get through the dance, even if a bit puffed! Obviously, even if you know what you are aiming at, you cannot change overnight. Happily, we have a winter of practice ahead of us and, with a bit more practice at playing solo, I would hope to become a more mature Morris musician. Only time, and loads of practice, will tell!

After all that pressure we relaxed on the Saturday evening with a pub session, a wonderful cordon bleu feast cooked by *Jim & Maggie Catterell*, some smashing singing and a modicum of music, drinking and socialising.

On Sunday, we practised playing in a large Morris band for massed dances. With all our different styles and levels of experience, we found it difficult! Again the importance of keeping a clear beat and playing more staccato came to the fore.

The general feeling was that we had a very useful weekend. Thanks to everyone involved! So, do you play for the Morris? Do you want to be inspired? Well make sure you put your name down for the next Morris Ring Musicians’ Instructional!”

## MEDIA

**Steve Holder** of **Jockey** writes: - “One of the plays in the BBC’s forthcoming new series of ‘The Afternoon Plays’ - ‘The Singing Cactus’ contains significant Morris content; and the word is that it actually appears to be positive! [now **BBC 1; 14.30; Friday, 28th January**].

“For a couple of days in September of last year a scratch side of **Joe Oldaker (Anker)**, **Pete Grassby**, **John Edwards**, **Martin Trewinnard** (all **Coventry**), **Bill Kinsman**, **John Stait** and **Steve Holder (Jockey)** shared time with the luvvies, adding that special Morris element.

“We filmed several scenes; from a wedding to a funeral, from practice to dancing out. If the production is cut properly no-one may ever notice that the only dancing we did was the world’s longest Bampton Highland Mary ‘F’ up (judge for yourselves what the ‘F’ stands for when you watch the play!).

“Just being there for a couple of days filming made it hard to get a full feel for the plot, but it involves the relationship between a boy and his dad, a magical cactus... and a wolf is in it!

“Of course, we don’t know what may have been added in subsequent scenes, or what may have been edited out, but there was a genuinely positive feel. The author was on set on the second day and during chats with him I felt he was sincere when he said the last thing he wanted to do was to ‘take the ‘P’.

“The play does have its faults, no Morris man watching will find the scene where a mini bus pulls up outside a pub particularly plausible. The time it takes to empty that bus (especially if you know some of us on it) just does not compare with reality, but I suppose it is just fantasy!

“By the way, if anyone is curious about why we only got as far as the ‘F’ up – it’s because one of the actors (who shall remain nameless) struggled a bit and gave up! The other guy, however, was keen and doing alright, so if an actor called Stephen Aintree ever turns up at practice - give him a go.”

Channel 4 has been running the "St Trinians" films at lunchtime – these included the "Great Train Robbery" episode. **Sandy Glover [St. Albans]** remarked “One of the plot(?) lines hinges on a display at the school's Open Day by **Westminster** dancing "Queen's Delight". I had the film running in the background, and, sure enough, up came some familiar faces, albeit incredibly youthful. Funnily, or perhaps not, the Morris dancers' presence was played absolutely straight - no cheap jokes, nothing. Frankie Howerd did replace the "fool", in a quasi-WMM kit, but his interaction with the dancers wasn't hammed to death. The music was good too. I hope WMM had a good contract for residuals; if they had, I'll have my drink next time we meet.”

**Duncan Broomhead** saw rap-style Morris on 'The Culture Show' on BBC2 on 20<sup>th</sup> January featuring Morris Ring sides. His enquiry for information elucidated replies from **Rhys Jones [Sweyn’s Ey]** and **Andy Padmore [Dolphin]**. It seems this was “... a promo video for 'As Serious as your Life' by Four Tet (essentially solo artist Kieran Hebden).” “Much of the video was shot at Chipperfield near Kings Langley, at a weekend hosted by **Greensleeves**.” **Steve Adamson** advises that much of the content was from video material filmed by **Ivor Allsop** for the Morris Ring Archive, and that a suitable “fee” was obtained. The Ring negotiated power of veto; acknowledgement of the Sides and insertion of the web-site reference. The Sides featured are reported to be:- **Greensleeves, Bathampton, Dolphin, East Sussex, Faithful City, Icknield Way, Winchester, Wadard, Hartley and Greenwich**. The DVD “... is probably still available in HMV shops and can be viewed at: <http://www.dominorecordco.com/videolist.php?artist=60>” At the end are the credits for the ten Sides featured ... “... and a full screen caption saying 'Interested in the Morris? Find out more at [www.themorrisring.org](http://www.themorrisring.org)”.



## NEWS

**Green Man** Feast was held on 20<sup>th</sup> November in Sutton Coldfield. This being on the evening after a meeting of the Advisory Council, the Side very generously opened the invitation to all those who had been in Birmingham for that Meeting. This most welcome antidote to Morris politics was taken up by a goodly number and a splendid evening was had by all. Following Grace from **Andy Spencer**, the feast comprised leek and potato soup; Beef Casserole; Bread and Butter Pudding; Cheese and Coffee. Afterwards, **Tony Critchley** gave the immortal Memory, and the recent passing of **Roger Venables** was remembered. **David Easton** proposed “the Guests” and the Bagman of the Morris Ring replied, welcoming the inauguration of “Morris Package Tours”. At the conclusion of his thanks the Squire of Green Man, **David Reeves** reminded those present that it was likely to be the last Feast at which the current Ring Bagman would be present in that post. He then presented the Bagman with a Green Man wall plaque as a memento of the occasion. The Loving Cup circulated – as did a smaller version in memory of Sybil Clark, and then songs were provided by **Dave Reeves** [John Barleycorn]; **Geoff Jerram** [I love my love]; **John** from Jockey [Punch Ladle]; **Gerald Willey** [The Rosabella]; **Michael Spencer** [**Green Man**] [the Coventry Weavers Song]; and **Tony Critchley** [Jones Ale]. Dancing followed until near midnight when Bonny Green was called.

**Shakespeare Mummers** performed at various pubs in the period around Christmas. The Bagman, hoping to have a quiet beer and watch the entertainment, found himself recruited and blacked up as the Turkish [or French] knight in the Snowhill mummers Play. Complete ignorance of the script was not accepted as an excuse!!! The pool table had been moved to the side of the room. However, the overhead lights had not, and were brought down with a crash of light-bulbs as the King George defended himself from the first onslaught!!!!

**Coventry Mummers** performed their “spectacular English traditional drama” at various locations in the Christmas season. At this season they performing four plays collected in Warwickshire. On each outing, a different play is performed at locations in its original village. The Bagman was able to see the plays from Harborough Magna and Newbold on Avon, both convenient to Rugby [he was very pleased NOT to be recruited into the cast!!!]. Other plays from Bishop’s Tachbrook and Stoneleigh were also performed in their own localities by this talented group.

**Graham Hubbard** [**Icknield Way**] was spotted in a photo in the CAMRA North Oxford magazine – sporting his elegant jacket made from brewery bar towels.

**Mendip** Ale heralds the start of the Christmas season – and was held on 17<sup>th</sup> December. Full Sides were present from **Bristol; Chalice; Dartington; Exeter;** and **West Somerset;** several other Sides were represented, and the three Officers were present. The buffet feast included ham rolls and a succulent turkey and ham pie; cheeses and assorted pickles. All this washed down by ales from the local RCH brewery – “Pitchfork” and “PG Steam”. Vocal contributions included “The Apple Tree” from **Geoff Jerram**, with further accompaniment from **Steve Adamson** on whistle - they had apparently been practising the item for some considerable time prior to the performance [“well several minutes anyway!!!”]. **Chalice** provided a “novelty” dance this year with the team fully garbed in fencing “white” and masks, dancing the Bledington “Grenadiers” with sabres. The now traditional duet “The Holly and the Ivy” from Squire **Bob Cross** and **Paul Wilson**, heralded the official start of the Morris Christmas season.

The **Original Welsh Border Morris** were out in strength on the Saturday before Christmas. The dances of White Ladies Aston; Pershore and Upton upon Severn were danced in their original villages, together with a number of other border dances in the unadorned form as originally collected. Dancing also took place in Worcester, and an additional stop was made in Hanley Castle to sample the beers at the Three Kings Inn. During the stop in Pershore, the Officers arranged a brief “committee meeting” in the Brandy Cask [home of the brewery of that name] in order to strengthen the nerve of the Squire, **Bob Cross**, who was later to be formally admitted to the side with the appropriate ritual – he is understood to have made a near total recovery!!!

The Ryton Mummers performed another Warwickshire play, the Ryton play [again conveniently close to Rugby] on the Sunday before Christmas. Although not a registered Morris Side, the local village cast [including the vicar - **Anker** member and former **Forest of Dean** man – **Dave Wintle**] was suspected to be augmented by a strong **Anker** presence, under the overall covering of rag costume.

**Bristol**'s Christmas card and competition by “Uncle Happy” was well up to standard, although the photograph exposed less members of the Side to the elements – the vital attributes of one member were no doubt especially well chilled!!! The Bagman is prepared to show his [card!!] around to those interested, and over 18!!!

**Bedford**'s Christmas events were used to collect for their chosen charity for this year, MacMillan Cancer Care. A morning spot in Bedford town centre in mid-December; a carols and capers tour of four pubs on the Wednesday evening before Christmas; and two spots on Boxing Day, allowed the Side to raise a record £1000 from some very generous audiences. The cheque was presented to MacMillan's local representative on Plough Monday, when the Branston Plough Play was performed at the Three Cranes, Turvey; the Red Lion, Stevington and the Wellington, Bedford.

**Sandy Glover** - aka Old Father Christmas reports that the **St Alban's Mummers** “... enjoyed bright sunshine for our Boxing Day tour, and the crowds turned out in, well, crowds. Slick professional performances were among the things absent, but great fun was had by all at every one of the five spots. We'd like to thank especially whoever it was arranged for far too many shots of whisky to be supplied to the Mummers at the Fighting Cocks; feel free to do the same next year. New this year. There is an English-language school for Japanese students in St Albans, and a large party of young ladies turned up to watch the Mummers. In their honour, I announced that we were performing a "Noh" play. They agreed that it was, indeed, like no play they had ever seen. Bunting and frolics all round. I hope everyone else had as good a time.

“This year, the Doctor in St Alban's Mummers, one **Gordon Myland**, also holds the (much less prestigious) office of Mayor of the City and District of St Albans. Each Christmas, the Mayor has an "official" Christmas Card, which he sends on behalf of the city to many hundreds of the great, the good (and the political). Gordon decided that this year's card should feature St Alban's Mummers, so he chose a picture taken last Boxing Day. This picture was "doctored" by the PR warlocks, and has now appeared on the card, together with a few words on the Mummers, and the URL of our website. It also appeared on the web, at <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/captainwebb/mummers/> where it may be viewed by those not fortunate enough to receive their own autographed copy. It's certainly the nearest thing we've ever had to official recognition (though not the first time we've appeared on a Christmas card). I admit to a degree of satisfaction that, across the world, hundreds of people of a certain status are going to open the envelope and say "Mummers? What the \*\*\*\* are Mummers?" With luck, a few might even take the trouble to find out. Maybe even a politician or two...”

The Squire, **Bob Cross**, reports that he had "... a thoroughly enjoyable day on the Christmas Sunday" [aka Boxing Day!!] "with **Wath** at Wentworth and **Barnsley Longsword** at Cawthorne. **Bert** and Anne **Cleaver** looked after me beautifully and kindly drove (well, daughter Sarah drove) me to both events".

The choice of Boxing Days this year gave opportunity to see Sides that might normally have performed on the day following Christmas. A good crowd, augmented by the Ring Squire and the Bagman, visited **Grenoside** for their traditional Longsword performance, and then dashed across Sheffield to see the **Handsworth Sword** perform their Mummers Play; sing carols and perform their own Longsword dance. A great opportunity, that may not be possible for several years to come, for those having their own events on "Boxing Day".

**Keith Lascelles, Sweyn's Ey**, reports "We struggle on with dancing, but have had a most successful mumming season over Christmas, collecting £500 for a local charity helping the mentally handicapped. We also met a man who remembers (or claims to) performing Crwmpyn John, one of our local mumming plays seventy years ago as a boy".

On Plough Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> January, **Jockey** were out in strength with their plough in the centre of Birmingham. [There had been some difficulties with the Council over permissions [now near resolved, thanks to Jockey's diplomatic department – and a superb letter!!]. However, after a service of blessing in St Martins Church in the Bull Ring; an excellent modified tour of the city centre was made with guest Sides from **First Sedgely** and **Green Man**. The Ring Squire and Bagman were also present.

After the Tour – and a suitable refreshment stop – a number of those present travelled North for the **Stafford** Feast. "This took place in the Church Eaton "Institute" [i.e. the village hall]. The Feast was memorable for the enormous quantities of food. After a soup [and seconds] sufficient to nourish an army; the main course comprised a pig roast – the said beast rotating and roasting on a spit in the dancing area!! Glorious [full cholesterol] "crackling" – but the assembled Men were unequal to the task of stripping the carcass!! [even with the help of the ladies who had their own "feast" in a residence in the village]. Cheese boards followed, groaning under their load. The usual speeches and toasts followed; the loving Cup was passed around; songs were sung - and the ceremonial "Sandwich" was formally returned to **Jockey**. Despite the interlude for digestion, the dancing that followed did not rise much from the ground!!!"

It is assumed that Sides various were in action on the same day at the Whittlesea Straw Bear, which had a long write up in the Times: the main conclusion of the reporter was that it was just a means of keeping warm – but there were a couple of reasonable photographs – no publicity is bad publicity as they say!!.

**Graham Baldwin, Vancouver**, advised "The 13th Annual Perambulation of the Plough in Vancouver took place on 9<sup>th</sup> January, as part of the Vancouver Morris Men's Plough Sunday "ritual". There was a few inches of snow on the ground and the temperature was hovering around zero °C - mild by general Canadian standards (but cold for Vancouver). We ended the day with a feast and more dancing (and yet another rendition of the play) at one of our favorite pubs on the North Shore. And a good time was had by all!" There are photos of the event at <http://www.vancouvermorrismen.org/PloughSunday2005/>.

**Sandy Glover, St Albans**, advised that they were expecting to undertake their second annual "Wassail" in the orchard of the Watercress Association in St Albans on 15<sup>th</sup> January "guns to be left at home – party poppers were to be used"!!!!

The **Jigs Instructional 2005** took place over the weekend 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> January 2005, hosted by **Dolphin** at Sutton Bonnington. This being the [alleged] final one to be led by the indefatigable **Bert Cleaver** who has run some 25 annual sessions. A brief report of the event, prepared by Alan Dandy [Stafford] for their own Newsletter is provided below. Hopefully, some photographic coverage may be available for the next Morris Circular.

“Some 30 men enjoyed and endured the last Jigs Instructional under the directorship of **Bert Cleaver** at Sutton Bonnington. Covering in some detail 26 jigs from 9 traditions in six, “hour and a half” sessions and finishing just before Sunday lunch with the 7<sup>th</sup>, and traditional “Once thru’, one from each”. The weekend easily held up to it’s reputation as one for only the hardened Men of Morris. Men from **Anker, Chanctonbury Ring, Chalice, Coton Village, East Surrey, Furness, Grenoside, Handsworth, Harthill, Leicester, Man Friday, Mersey, Stafford, Thaxted, Uttoxeter, Wath and Winchester** were attended ‘hand, foot, & .....stomach’ by the hosts **Dolphin**.

Renowned then across the Morris world for the necessary physical stamina, significant aspects the weekends are the depth and quality of instruction, which, as was pointed out, can be used to improve any Side's dancing. Covered by just three coaches and admirably demonstrated by a gallant few, was Fieldtown, Bledington, Oddington, Bucknell, Bampton, Sherbourne, Ascot, Longborough and Headington Quarry. Most survived but there were notable absences, particularly one well known plumber (absent from the start) and others from time to time during.

By Saturday evening having done most of the work, we were given one of the most splendid Feasts ever run at the weekend, and that’s not said lightly. Friday night in the King’s Head was ‘instruments only’ - well that was up to about 1.30am when I left. Packed and standing room only by midnight, most of the ‘locals’ had abandoned ship. From then on it was Morris territory only. A good natured (deputy) Landlord and some fine Ales contributed to a superb evening’s entertainment, only exceeded by the Saturday night which was almost entirely ‘vocal’. Voices ‘honed & pitched’ by a Feast of “White Bean Pate“, “Mouton Rouge”, “Caramel Oranges”, Cheese, Ale, Porter and the odd dash of Malt Whisky or liquor had provided a robust foundation for the fullness of the song which poured from every portal, resounding across the road from even before 10pm as I and a few others arrived. At the Feast, harmony from 5 or 6 ‘Sheffield’ men, narrative from **John Baxter (Furness)** and song from the ‘rustic’ voice of **Geoff Jerram** provided some (there were others) of the ‘milk’, cream being added by **Tony Foard (Mersey)** with a song of Jigs. Some scrolls of biblical antiquity, allegedly found recently near Baghdad and recognised by a Morris man who, by chance, was part of the investigating team provided material for the song, presented in Tony’s inimitable style. The chorus, which baffled international experts for some time was eventually translated as:-

He’s the Caliph of Capers,  
The Sultan of Splits,  
Of Hocklebacks he’s the Emir,  
He’s the Sheik of the Shuffle,  
The High Priest of Heys,  
He’s Abdul AbulBert Cleavere.

Bert’s “parting” gift from Dolphin was a bottle of Brandy; from the Morris Ring a leather bound triple miniature flask set and from the ‘Old Stalwarts’ – a set of Royal Doulton Cut Glassware, comprising a Whisky Decanter, two Tumblers and (of course) jigger, a Pint Tankard and a bottle of Malt. I guess the jigger will be the only thing not used !

Just pre-lunch Sunday, a round discussion was convened by **Bob Cross** to provide pointers for **Geoff Jerram** who is taking over as “director” and bringing in additional instructors to augment the team. Geoff said that he would, at least initially, keep the same format. It’s a difficult act to follow, but there’s probably none more capable than GJ.

**(Note: Bert is NOT retiring from Morris nor Instructionals - just the Jigs Instructional).**

## AND FINALLY .....

Amid a long article by Nigel Farndale in the Daily Telegraph [16<sup>th</sup> January] commenting on Price Harry's choice of fancy dress, was the following:-

“The Sex Pistols were at it in the late 1970s, ... "It just seemed like a good way of shocking people and having a laugh." He's right, it is a good way of shocking people, right up there with incest and Morris dancing.”

Perhaps not quite the ideal quote – it is far too well worn – but the Morris does seem to be stuck with it. Can we resolve to try to find, and market, some more positive “quotable quotes” on the Morris – perhaps we should offer a barrel of ale [or equivalent value] for any really positive quote that really catches on – the judging panel will accept entries until 2020.

And also in **Keith Lascelles'** report:- “Another non starter from my point of view was when I was at an event (in England) where a chap was trying to recruit dancers for "Mid Morris". Mid turned out not to be a geographical term but a TLA (three letter acronym) for "Men In Drag"!!!!”

## CONCLUSION

Please to keep the News flowing and report any changes for the Directory. Ensure your event is advertised and/or reported by sending in a flyer or Report by Email. Editing takes less time than copy-typing.

The next Newsletter should be produced in April / May. Hopefully my successor will have a considerable input then – or shortly thereafter!!

It should also contain the next Morris Circular, edited by the new editor, **Harry Stevenson** of **Winchester**. Send suitable contributions to him and get him off to a good start.

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*Wassail*

John Frearson,  
Bagman, The Morris Ring

## STOP PRESS SIDMOUTH - JIGS COMPETITION

Despite the non-occurrence of the normal Sidmouth Festival this year, the Morris Jigs competition will go ahead at the “reduced” Festival. Funding has been procured and arrangements are under way. Details were expected for this Newsletter – but have not appeared and will be Emailed, or appear in the next edition. If you want to enter, start getting your jigs brushed up!!