



The Newsletter - No. 38 – April-May 2005

Greetings,

We are saddened to announce the passing of two Past Officers:-

Walter Abson, first Bagman of the Morris Ring, who died at the age of 94 on 27th February.

Roy Yarnell, Past Squire, who died on 14th March, after a short period in Hospital.

Some notes are given on Page 2/3, and fuller obituaries are given in the Morris Circular.

Our best wishes to **Sonny Townsend**, Fool for **Bampton** for many years. He had a fall and broke his hip when leaving the party in Bampton that celebrated his 80 years with the Morris.

We are glad that **Steve Adamson**, is up and about, indeed flourishing, since his “routine maintenance”. He is to be congratulated in “chasing-up” 100% payment of subscriptions, and ensuring that you are all insured. However, he should NOT have had to do this – it is your responsibility to ensure that you are paid up and thus insured – Steve is not a Morris Nanny!!!

A very warm welcome to Bagman Elect, **Charlie Corcoran**, of **Leicester**. He will dance in at **Thaxted** – the hand-over will hopefully be near complete by then. By all means copy him in on any correspondence, and send us both your Programmes. Contact details on this page.

Welcome to new Associates, **King Stone Rapper** from Chipping Norton. Founder, **Garry Gibbons**, is a former **King John's** man and also a member of **Charlbury**.

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

- **Amendments** to the last 2004-5 Directory and a copy of the **2005-6 Directory**;
- The **Application Form** for the **Fools and Animals Unconvention**;
- The **Minutes** of the **ARM**;
- For the Advisory Council – the **Minutes** of their last meeting at the **ARM**;

Your copy / copies of the **Morris Circular** will be mailed separately.

Remember: Unless you pass on the content of this Newsletter to the Men in your Side, the information stops with you. E-mailed versions of these Newsletters are available on request .

IN MEMORIAM

Walter Abson – Cambridge and London Pride

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of *Walter Abson*, peacefully, at about 3.30pm on Sunday 27th February 2005. He was 94. He was able to take Communion that morning and the Morris Ring Squire was able to speak to his family and visit him during that afternoon, shortly before he died. The Hospital Chaplain, and John and Stephanie, his son and daughter, were with him when he died.

Walter Abson was the first Bagman of the Morris Ring from 1934 until 1946. He had remained a very active member of the Advisory Council until about a year ago.

His funeral was at his own church in Bromley. There was a very good attendance by the Morris, in kit, with many members present from his own Sides, **Cambridge** and **London Pride**. There were representatives from **Bedford** [the Ring Bagman]; **Chalice** [the Ring Squire]; **Dartington** [Past Squire, *Tim Sercombe*]; **Letchworth**; **Martlets**; **Oxford University**; **Thaxted** [Past Squire, *Daniel Fox*]; **Wadard**; **Winchester** [Past Squire, *Geoff Jerram*]. Barbara Sunderland was also present, wearing *Morris Sunderland's* Past Squire's badge.

During the service his eventful life was described by several speakers: his academic and research work, particularly his wartime work with the RAF on radar; his subsequent career in the Civil Service; his Morris "career" [he upheld the view that Morris dancing was not just "fun" but a unique part of our heritage] and his part in the formation of the Morris Ring; his family life; and his work for his local Church at Bromley.

After the funeral, the pall-bearers paused outside the church, whilst a final Bonny Green was danced, before the coffin was borne away. There was then a gathering for reflection and refreshment in the Church Hall, and, as is customary, the men danced a selection of old favourites.

An Obituary was published in the Times, and another is included in the Morris Circular. Some further tributes that may not have reached the official Obituaries are given below:-

Derek Schofield wrote "In looking again at some of the things he wrote, he was good at writing the accurate, yet detached, account of what happened, and even though he was centrally involved, his role is left out. I did visit him once, and talked with him about the early years of the Morris Ring. I always enjoyed his company – he always had interesting perspectives on things – and we corresponded and spoke on the phone, especially in his determination to counter-act Georgina Boyes's emphasis on the role of Rolf Gardiner. We met up on many other occasions – a great gentleman.

Eddie Dunmore wrote "... I shall never again have the experience of sharing a train journey with Walter and being treated to his reminiscences of the incunabula of the Morris revival and the Ring. I shall miss the occasional guilty enjoyment of detecting his editing processes of stories that I had heard many times before. Most of all though, I am profoundly grateful for sharing just the occasional part of this journey with a sometimes exasperating man who could also be interesting and funny."

Our thoughts and prayers are with his son, John, and daughter, Stephanie.

Roy Yarnell – Past Squire [**Jockey** – also a Member or Honorary Member of **Green Man, Litchfield, Shakespeare, Stafford and Welsh Border**]

The tragic news that Past Squire, *Roy Yarnell*, had died was received universally with shock and great sadness. He had been ill since Christmas, and been in hospital in Birmingham, and everyone had awaited his speedy recovery. Sadly, his condition did not improve and he died on 17th March 2005.

A fuller Obituary is included in the Morris Circular.

Roy's funeral was held at Christchurch, Lichfield, on 8th April 2005. *Bert Cleaver* played the Morris Call as the coffin was carried into a church, filled to capacity by family, friends, work colleagues and Morris and other dancers. Some of the extracts below are taken from a Report by *Steve Holder* who was one of the six pall-bearers found by Jockey Morris.

“It is said that the worth of a man can be measured by his friends, if that is so then I can truly say that Roy was a priceless treasure.

“Hundreds of his family and friends packed Christchurch in Lichfield to say goodbye one last time. Tens of Morris kits were on display, and not just those of Ring Sides. The vicar read some of the words from the online book of condolences. *Derrick Philips* of Jockey, a long-time friend shared memories of Roy's life outside the Morris; Jockey's bagman, *Dick Franks* told us of his time with the side; and current Squire of the Ring, *Bob Cross* reminded us of what an excellent and popular Squire Roy had been. Each of them offered a few moments of lightness; from burials at sea of worn hats to Roy's special technique of finding out people's names! The one hymn, fittingly was ‘Lord of the Dance’; Roy's son-in-law, Ian, read a passage and *John Stait*, another long-time friend and Jockey member, sang a song. Jockey danced ‘The Maid and the Palmer’ a traditional Badby-style dance ‘discovered’ by Roy, probably in Birmingham! They danced it well, and I for one, couldn't help but feel his presence.

“Following the service we processed to the burial site where we laid our friend to rest in a peaceful, shady spot beneath a tree. The nearby hall was filled as we gathered afterwards to share thoughts and memories, study an amazing display of photographs and drink a glass to his memory.

“Naturally, we danced.”

The mourners included nine past Squires of the Morris Ring; and a past Treasurer. The three Officers and the Bagman Elect were present, as well as many Area Representatives and Appointed Officers. Sides represented included **Adlington; Anker; Barnsley; Bedford; Bristol; Boar's Head; Chalice; Chanctonbury Ring; Coventry; Dartington; Dolphin; East Suffolk; Exeter; Faithful City; First Sedgeley; Green Man; Greensleeves; Handsworth; Harthill; High Spen; Jockey; Leicester; Letchworth; Lichfield; Man Friday; Ripley; Saddleworth; Shakespeare; South Shropshire; Stafford; Thaxted; Uttoxeter; Welsh Border;** and **Whitchurch**. The Morris Federation was represented by Sally Wearing and the Open Morris by Penni Gillis. Many of the other clog and other dance sides that Roy had supported and accompanied over the years were represented, many of the dancers also being “in kit”.

We all send our condolences and best wishes to Roy's wife, Janet, and their family at this difficult time.

THE TREASURER'S RAMBLINGS

My thanks to all of you who passed on your 'get well and good luck' messages during my sort-term medical incarceration in January of this year. The bad news is.....I'm back !!

My heartiest congratulations to **Harthill** for a very successful Annual Representatives Meeting. During the Treasurer's report I informed the assembly of my intended '2005 Treasurer's Review' project. This will involve looking at what we do, how we do it and in some cases 'why'. A large part of this will involve closer scrutiny of how we finance particular aspects of our activities. This is long overdue.

I can now report that all aspects of this project are going very well and I will be in a position to comprehensively report on this at the 2006 ARM hosted by **Chalice**. It is also worth mentioning that the position of Morris Ring Treasurer is up for re-election at this meeting. This is where you, the membership, will have the opportunity to pass judgement by results.

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Are you and/or your side travelling in the **European Economic Area** in 2005? All E111 forms obtained and stamped pre 31st December 2004 are now invalid.

The E111 application form and certificate can be obtained either on-line or at your local post office. On completion of these forms return them to any post Office where they will retain the application form and hand back the stamped E111 certificate. If the certificate is not stamped, it remains invalid. Your new certificate will provide the necessary cover only until 31.12.2005 when it will be replaced by the E111 plastic card.

Because of the national rush on these forms some post office supplies are either low or exhausted. Both forms can be obtained by entering [*Applying for an E111 form*] into any search engine. Please read the instructions carefully.

CEILIDHS (rpt)

Recent telephone enquires have caused me to feel the need to repeat some of my earlier Treasurer's Ramblings re Ceilidhs.

One of the most recently asked insurance question is, "Our Morris side is organising a Ceilidh. Do we have public liability insurance for the event?" The answers are:

YES.....if you are hosting the occasion as part of a Morris event for Morris people and the Morris musicians are providing the music. This includes Ales, Feasts, Instructionals and Ring Meetings.

NO.....if you are selling tickets to the general public and hiring a professional ceilidh band. Public liability insurance for such an event can be provided on request but will incur a single additional premium of £25 (plus insurance tax at 5%). If this is the case, please contact me as early as possible and we will get it sorted out.

Because of this year's enhanced level of indemnity to £10m, the additional premium is currently undergoing re-negotiation. However, the stated additional fee is correct at the time of this Newsletter going to press. The safest way is, if in doubt.....ask.

THE MORRIS SHOP.

As seen by many at the ARM, The Morris Shop continues to flourish. We still have some Morris Ring meeting T-Shirts at only £6.00 plus P&P (Please telephone me or see me a Morris gathering)

And the new Morris Tradition brochures are even better value than before, were 70p each, now only 50p each for a box of 270 (£135). They sell at what ever price you feel happy with. I sell them to the public for £1. Because the brochures are either impossible or at best prohibitively expensive to mail, please contact me before any particular Morris event ~ or ~ we have supplies deposited with:

John Frearson, Rugby or Sandy
Charlie Corcoran, Leicester

Cliff Marchant, Brighton
Bob Cross, Weston-super-Mare

THE MAGIC OF MORRIS (£15.00 + £1 p&p, Double CD)

Over the past few months, we have been working on this project with 'Talking Elephant records'. I am pleased to report that this double CD set is now available from The Morris Shop, either mail order or at various Morris events.



I believe that we are all aware the both William Kimber and Fr Kenneth Loveless MBE are phenomenal icons with the Morris world. However, I have always found that listening to their various recordings in bouts of 45 minutes at a time, more than a little hard work. Then we thought of 'why not mix the old with the new'. This resulted in 51 tracks on '*The Magic of Morris*' with an eight page colour booklet.

The artists are: Albion Morris Men, Ashley Hutchings, Black Pig Border Morris, Chris Leslie, Crucible, Cry Havoc, Fr Kenneth Loveless MBE, Grand Union Morris Men, Jake Walker, James Melville, Jim Catterall, Jockey Morris Men, Morris On Band, Moulton Morris Men, Silurian Border Morris Men, West Hill Morris, White Rose Morris Men, and William Kimber.

I am absolutely delighted with the end product (I would say that, wouldn't I). It is hoped that this will be the first of a series. We'll just have to wait and see.

I hope to see as many of you as possible during the ensuing dancing season.

Steve Adamson BFB

Treasurer, The Morris Ring.

THE ARM - 2005

The ARM hosted by **Harthill** over the weekend 4th – 6th March 2005, was a great success. Excellent accommodation, and catering – and above all attentive hosts to look after our every need. There was discussion on many topics, though no particularly controversial issues.

Charlie Corcoran of **Leicester** was confirmed as Bagman Elect. He will dance in at **Thaxted**. There will be a gradual hand-over period leading up to and beyond that date. You will be advised when you should contact him rather than the current Bagman. The main business is reported in the minutes that accompany this Newsletter.

The ARM Feast was a fitting climax to an excellent day. After an excellent meal, the Bagman Elect, **Charlie Corcoran** gave the Loyal Toast; The Squire, **Bob Cross** proposed The Immortal Memory; **Derek Leigh** proposed “The Visitors” and Past Squire, **Barry Care [Moulton]**, replied. **John Jenner, Cambridge**, provided a few words of summary and recollection of the life of **Walter Abson**, the first Bagman, who had so recently died. There was then a selection of songs and recitation before the “tables were cleared” for dancing.

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

RING MEETINGS – 2005 – UPDATE

There is still a little space available, if required, at **Thaxted, Durham** and **Long Man**. If any Sides wish to attend a Meeting [or an additional Meeting] and have not yet applied, please do so immediately. Dates of Meetings still available are given below. Contact the host Side direct please.

3 rd - 5 th June	THAXTED RING MEETING
17 th - 19 th June	DURHAM RAMS 40th ANNIV. RING MEETING
22 nd - 24 th July	LONG MAN RING MEETING

MORRIS RING - 2005 TOURS - T-SHIRT.

As mentioned in the “Treasurer’s Ramblings”, there are still a few 2005 - Tours “T-Shirts” left. They are 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

OVERSEAS TRAVEL

IMPORTANT - Whether you are travelling abroad for Morris, **or for your own holidays**, we understand that the E111 form is now out of date. Ensure you have the right documentation by visiting you Post Office [with your Medical Card] or documentation and get the replacement. Thanks to the Squire [or to be exact, Mrs Squire, Helen Cross] and **Ron Shuttleworth [Coventry Mummers]** for this important information. [For fuller details – see also the “Treasurer’s Ramblings”]

ARCHIVE NEWS

At the ARM Members voted funding to assist with the micro-filming of further Cecil Sharp notebooks, in order that they are more accessible and preserved. The Morris Ring is pleased to assist with this important work.

MORRIS RING - AND RING MEMBER -EVENTS

Hartley Weekend of Dance - 10th - 12th June 2005. *Terry Heaslip* advises that there is some space on this weekend event. If any Side would like to attend, please get in touch with him at Terry@heaslip.fsnet.co.uk.

Misdemeanours – A Celebration of Combating 350 years of Unreasonable Authority. *John Edwards* of **Stafford** invites Sides to this Celebration. **15th to 17th July 2005.** Details of this event were included in the last Newsletter; further information from John Edwards (01785 823067) or lapley@staffordmorris.org.uk or visit www.staffordmorris.org.uk and click “Misdemeanours”.

Tommo’s **Cotswold Tour 2005**, arranged by *David Thompson*, will be on **10th 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.

Yateley, 30th Anniversary Day of Dance - Saturday, 10th September 2005 – “We continue to be disappointed with the response from Ring sides to our first troll of invites. This year we return to our more usual cottage pie and vegetables, all washed down with some of our excellent local ales. An invitation is extended to all Ring sides - we would very much like to celebrate our first 30 years in the manner to which we have been accustomed, namely with male dance sides, for without their support I fear that our membership will seek the only obvious course open to us when trying to present a spectacle to the discerning audiences who support us in Yateley & that is to promote mixed days of dance in future.”

The **Fools and Animals Unconvention**, will be held over weekend **21st -23rd October 2005** in Cromford, near Matlock, Derbyshire, and hosted by **Ripley**,. An **Application Form** is enclosed with this Newsletter. This will again be open to the other Morris Organisations. Contact **Rob Chisman**, 01503 272250, E-mail triggertrouter1@aol.com for information.

Jigs Instructional - Although Bert Cleaver has stepped down as Jig Instructional maestro, the Jigs Instructional will be repeated on the same weekend next year [**14th - 16th January 2006**] under the capable guidance of **Geoff Jerram**. An Application Form will appear in due course.

OTHER EVENTS

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 upon Tyne** on **23rd 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.

OTHER EVENTS - continued

Polperro Festival. There is still room for a team to attend this year's Polperro Festival - useful if your team has been turned down for a Ring meeting, or still looking for somewhere to go for a weekend. The second weekend is still free, **24th -26th June**; free camping, small fee paid, dancing Saturday and Sunday lunchtime. Details from Rob Chisman, 01503 272250, E-mail triggertroutter1@aol.com

Banbury Hobby Horse weekend - 1st -3rd July 2005. Great weekend for any Animal - not just Horses! I can try and answer any queries, and forward those I can't! Details from Rob Chisman, 01503 272250, E-mail triggertroutter1@aol.com

Town and Country Festival – Stoneleigh Park - August Holiday [27th – 29th August]. They still require Sides to feature Morris dancing in the Country area. If you want a day out [fee unlikely!!] in Warwickshire with the family, in return for dancing a couple of spots during the day, contact Helen Arnold at helen.arnold@haynet.com or 024 7685 8237

Battle of Trafalgar - We understand that there will be various celebrations of the 200th Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar on **22nd 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.

A FURTHER REMINDER - INSURANCE

Please note: From the 14th 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, but are also 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 all the Morris Ring publications:-

The new Bagman, *Charlie Corcoran* will edit this Newsletter. Contact him at

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.freeserve.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.

PEL – and MUMMING

Thank you to all those Sides [over 80 far or nearly half] that have responded to the survey. It is amazing how many different ways the [apparently simple] questions could be interpreted - no wonder Opinion Pollsters can get things so wrong. Anyhow, with a bit of general knowledge about the Sides concerned it has all been analysed – and this is on-going. It is still not too late to send information [or your programmes – which are easier to add-up than surfing the net for your web-sites].

The results suggest that Morris Ring sides alone are involved with in excess of 8000 separate events or dance spots every year. This would suggest that Morris and traditional events overall probably total some 25,000. How is it that some people say they have never seen Morris dancing – with that many events they should be falling over dancers every time they go out of the door!!!

However, whilst Morris Dancing is exempt, Mumming and other activities are not. The survey suggests that Ring Sides may be involved with some 800 Mumming “performances” each year and perhaps a couple of hundred other events which may be licensable.

Whilst we have not yet produced a “letter” for pubs – and with potential changes after the election, it might be premature, Sides do 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.

THE MORRIS ORGANISATIONS

Most will realise that the Morris Ring Insurance is now organised through a “holding company / organisation” called “The Morris Organisations”. However, Insurance is not the only thing that is done “Jointly”, by the three Morris Organisations. Some information on current issues of concern, and in most cases, the considerable progress on these, is given below.

Performing Rights - Most will hopefully be aware of the annual “subscription payment” that is made to the Performing Rights Organisation and is arranged jointly by the Morris Organisations. This ensures that Sides are already covered for royalties payments, should they occasionally use non-traditional or copyright tunes to accompany their dances – or in their apres-morris pub sing-songs. [Please note this is quite distinct from any requirement under the new Licencing Legislation for the venue etc. to be licensed for such activity!!!]

Media – and the problems of “blacking-up” - As many will have read [and as reported by the Squire at the ARM], the organisers of the “centuries-old” Cornish festival known as Darkie Days, in which locals “black up” and tour the town of Padstow singing minstrel-style songs, faced potential prosecution following a complaint that they had committed an offence under the Race Relations Act. The Commission for Racial Equality said it had no links with the organisation that made the complaint, and a CRE spokesman said it was not aware of the Darkie Days festival and said “We have never received a complaint about it”.

Fortunately the Crown Prosecution Service decided that a prosecutable offence of inciting racial hatred or similar, had not been committed, but it is understood that the organisers have been given “guidance” as to how to ensure that offence is not given in the future. However, this does show that “blacking-up” is not always understood – especially by those who wish to go out of their way to stir up trouble.

The Joint Morris Organisations have discussed this issue. One key item that can cause offence is if the blacking-up is interpreted as being akin to a “Black and White Minstrels” type activity rather than being used as a traditional disguise. In particular, it is suggested that Sides DO NOT USE any “minstrel-style” tunes.

It is suggested that Sides that do “Black up” should be ready and primed with a response to any queries to explain why “blacking” was the most available disguise and why it was used, in times when soliciting for funds was even more hedged with legislation than it is today. Fee Lock, Secretary of the Morris Federation provided the following text as background to what she says about “Blacking Up”.

“No, it's not racist, it's remembering the tradition of disguise.

“It's easy in this day and age of machine tools and chemicals to forget how important the seasons were, right up until the end of the second world war. And far more people lived by the seasons and on the land than lived in the towns. Going back even just three generations (your grandparents!) it's possible to have been completely dependent on what you could produce yourself. If you had some land of your own you would spend nearly all year planting, nurturing and harvesting everything you could in the hope that you'd live through the lean months of winter and spring. If you were a tenant farmer, you relied on the master to make sure you and your family didn't starve.

“It doesn't take much for food to be scarce: a wet August ruins grain crops and it's almost impossible to dry it out in bulk, and men and horses take six weeks to bring in the harvest (hence the long school holidays where children were more use in the fields than learning to write) as opposed to the week and a bit with the use of tractors. You could be as good at husbandry as it's possible to be and you'd still go hungry in January and February. No welfare state, no benefits and no one else could afford to look after you. You and your family could starve to death.

“Dancing throughout the winter was one way of keeping yourself going. Money or food, it didn't matter which as long as it was something. Dancing can be a very loose term: these people were performing in their own villages - most people could expect to live and die in the same house - and often they were trying to get something out of their employers. I can just imagine it: ten minutes of dancing up at the manor house then knock-knock at the door: "Give us some bread and cheese, missus, we're starving!". And what if there wasn't much to go round? These people were hungry, frightened, desperate. Weak children and the elderly are particularly prone to failing to thrive, let alone thinking about how much extra nutrition a pregnant woman needs. You bet they disguised themselves - I damn well would!

“So they'd disguise themselves simply but effectively, with tatter coats, made from old rags kept behind the sink, like we all do! Free and easy to make, they bulk a person up and make everyone look the same. Add a shapeless old hat and some burnt cork or soot, easily available and Bob's your uncle. A perfect disguise for probably more threatening behaviour than we'd like to believe today.

“And carbon is black. If cork burned red like iron oxide, we'd be talking about “redding-up”.

“Just as an aside, black skinned people from the Australian aboriginals to the bushmen of the Kalahari desert disguise themselves in ritual dances by whiting up. Racist? I don't think so!”

Camping / Touring Caravan Exemption Certificates – This may be an issue if an event also allows outdoor camping – or use of caravans or similar. It may be that a school field or whatever, cannot be used as a campsite, unless an appropriate exemption is granted. As this has given problems in the past, the Open Morris has been obtaining guidance and working to obtain the appropriate “Exemption Certificate”. These are issued by DEFRA who also produce a Guide. An Exemption Certificate is currently being obtained in the name of The Morris Organisations. As more information is available, it will be passed on – but if any Side has a problem with “outdoor camping”, please contact the Bagman in the first instance.

Child Protection Policy – There have been understandable concerns that Morris Sides are not sufficiently aware of current Child Protection legislation and good practice. Some Sides will be aware of requirements when they undertake “teach-ins” for schools. With an emphasis on recruiting younger members, it is essential to “be aware”.

A Child Protection Policy has been drafted by the Morris Federation from a version drafted by Bev and Ray Langton, (who organise a number of children’s festivals throughout the country) on behalf of the Association of Festival Organiser. The Policy is intended for use by Morris sides when holding workshops or other events where Morris dancers come into contact with unsupervised children.

For children joining Morris sides as members, this policy should be viewed alongside the approach that – *“it is for the parent or guardian of the child to decide how much unsupervised contact his/her child will have with the side. If the parent or guardian feels the level of contact, on a ‘weekly practice basis’ is inappropriate, it is for the parent or guardian to arrange for supervision”*.

This Policy also satisfies a number of concerns that Morris sides have about children joining what is, in essence, an adult hobby, particularly regarding dancing in licensed premises.

The policy will need to be amended for use by any particular Morris side, by including the name of the Side or organisation holding the event. Electronic copies of the Policy can be obtained from the Morris Ring Bagman or from the Morris Federation secretary at sec@morrisfed.org.uk.

NEWS

Gordon Ridgewell has provided a news cutting with colour photograph of **Monkseaton** dancing [or at least a member of Monkseaton dancing at the Ship Inn at Monkseaton on Boxing Day. Apparently huge crowds turned out – maybe not surprising as the competing event [also reported] was the Panama Swimming Club’s annual dip in Whitley Bay!!!

Those who attended **Standon’s** 50th Anniversary Day of Dance last year will remember the final venue – the Catherine Wheel at Albury - where **Gordon Ridgewell** danced the Fool’s Jig. We are saddened to hear that the pub burned down shortly afterwards. A letter appeared in the Hertfordshire Countryside magazine, illustrated by a photograph of **Helier**.

Chalice ladies night – a resplendent Black Tie “kit” event was held at the Woodlands Hotel, at Brent Knoll on 22nd January. The Bagman’s fears were allayed when he found that a barrel of RCH “real-ale” was provided as part of the bar-furnishings for the occasion!!! An excellent meal [and only very few speeches] contributed to a very convivial evening for all.

Bob Hart, Bagman of **Claro** reports that their member **Geoff Knight** won the World Indoor Rowing championship for his age group, in Boston, USA. “Geoff has been indoor rowing for several years (in order to keep fit for Morris?) and has several times been UK champion. This year as a 70 year old Veteran he moved into a new class and this winter has won the 70-75 age group Championship for the UK at Reading, for Europe in Amsterdam, and now The World title. Regular Thursday Morris practice is worthwhile training after all!”

Woodside Ale was held on 28th January 2005 in Sarratt Village Hall. An event to a traditional – but winning – formula, attracting a faithful set of returning Sides, and, usefully, held on a Friday night and thus avoiding clashes with other events. Plenty of dancing, the traditional supper of Shepherd’s Pie and Cheese and Biscuits washed down with an excellent beer from the local Tring Brewery [their “Side Pocket for a Toad” at a sensible, modest strength] ensured a good night out. Sides represented included: Mayflower;

The following Saturday evening – 29th January - provided a traditional clash of events. The Squire attended the **Ripley** Feast, the Bagman and Treasurer attended **Uttoxeter** Feast. The Bagman had to stress to Ripley that the fact that the Burton on Trent Winter Beer Festival was on that same afternoon, was a mere coincidence [it was – honest]. The Bagman experienced the excitement of a bus journey escorted by *Adrian Wedgwood* [other users of this fascinating means of transport may find it useful to have coin of the realm available – Change for a £20 note has a considerable weight!!!].

The **Uttoxeter** event provided Pheasant in Red Wine; Apple Pie and Cheese washed down with St Modwen's Ale [4.7%]. After the traditional speeches and toasts, there was dancing for those still capable of such after such splendid fayre. The Treasurer's shop was in competition with the "Honey Stall" run by Past Squire, *Mike Chandler*.

No report is available from **Ripley** – so it was probably well up to its usual high standard. Rumour has it that some left the pub just in time for breakfast!!

A further two events coincided on the following Saturday evening, 5th February. Feasts were held at both **Leicester** and **Winchester**. No reports are to hand at present.

The **Lichfield** Ale was held in the splendid historical surroundings of Lichfield City Hall on 19th February. Sides or representatives were present from **Ancient Men; Anker; Brackley; Chapel-en-le-Frith; Coventry; Devil's Dyke; Ebor; Green Man; Harthill; Jockey; John of Gaunt; King John's; Man Friday; Plymouth; Ripley; Shakespeare; Stafford; Sweyn's Ey and White Hart**. The mid-time break allowed consumption of generous portions [and seconds and thirds] of the Lichfield traditional vegetable curry – together with baked beans, baked potatoes and onion pickle. The liquid refreshment included Blythe Bitter at 4% and Palmer's Poison 4.5% from the two year old Blythe Brewery in nearby Rugeley. Dancing then continued until near midnight.

During the evening, those present signed a "get well" card for *Roy Yarnell*, and gathered together to allow a mass photograph to illustrate it. Sadly, on this occasion Morris Magic was not sufficient. Roy, who was the current Bagman for Lichfield, will be sadly missed by the Side.

Aldbury Ale, is another event benefiting from being held on a Friday night [25th February] – and attracting a good turn out from local Sides. Those present or represented included: **Bedford; Grand Union; Letchworth; Offley; Thames Valley; Westminster; Whitchurch and Woodside**. As usual, the proceedings went at a pace and a halt was called mid-evening, when the local "Chip Van" arrived. As well as the Fish and Chips, there were bread, cheese and apples available for afters, to fill any space – and the Chiltern Brewery's delightfully nutty-tasting "Beechwood Bitter" assisted in washing it all down [as, for those in their vicinity, did Bedford's bottle of "Taylor's Chip Dry Port"!!!!]

Devils Dyke Ale was held on 26th February 2005 at Burwell, near Cambridge. A well attended event, with many local [and not so local] Sides represented [including: **Anker; Cambridge; Colchester; Cotton; Hagganeth; Harwich; Letchworth; Mayflower; Peterborough; Rutland; Standon; Thaxted; The King's Morris** and English Miscellany]. All three Ring Officers [and the Morris Shop] were in attendance. Non stop dancing – except for a well earned break for a bread and stew supper [a choice of hot pots / thick soups].. Refreshment of an even more liquid form was provided [Bitter at 3.8% and Blond Bombshell at 4.2%] from a new micro-brewery "Old Cannon".

DETT - 4th - 6th March 2005 - The *2005 Dancing England Rapper Tournament* in Preston was won by a group of girls from a school in Maltby. It was very encouraging that there were lots of very young teams. Probably 50% of the 32 teams were under 25! The Premier Class was won by **Sallyport**, so that trophy returns to Newcastle in the Rapper heartland.

The Squire was out and about over Easter. He visited **Saddleworth** on Good Friday and Bacup to see the **Britannia Coco-Nutters** on Easter Saturday. He had hoped to visit **Mossley** for Pace Egging on Easter Monday. But even Squire's have homes to go to!!!! To quote him, it was "well worth the trip".

AND FINALLY

Jonathan Unna, Rutland was pictured in a "feature" in the Daily Mirror in a "spin-off" article inspired by the film "Meet the Fockers". He was included in an article on children who are embarrassed by their parents' hobbies or jobs. Apparently Toby dreads Bank Holidays as "...his dad Jonathan goes prancing around...". This would seem to rather less to bear than the mother whose dancing was as a night-club stripper and strippergram!!!

CONCLUSION

The next edition of this Newsletter will be produced by **Charlie Corcoran** - please keep the News flowing, send him your programme, 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 June - ish, or when the new Bagman has recovered from the shock of what he has let himself in for!!

I shall probably see a good number of you at this year's Ring Meetings, but meanwhile, may I take this opportunity to thank all of you who have assisted me with material for these Newsletters - and also for your friendship and hospitality at so many events.

Wassail

John Frearson,
Bagman [now retiring - and going to have a good rest - until the next Morris event !!!],
The Morris Ring