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## Newsletter No.68

## July 2010



**Brian Tasker**, Squire of the Morris Ring, makes the annual presentation of Red Roses to the lady of the house in Thaxted where the Morris Ring was founded. The house boasts a Blue Plaque to mark the event.

**The highlights of Newsletter No. 68 include:**

	Page
Message from the Squire: Brian Tasker	2
Recruitment of New Members. Peter Halfpenney MR Squire Elect	2
Archive News	4
Bramble Bank: A poem by Pete Bradshaw	6
Rumford Morris Golden Jubilee & Belchamp MM at Evesham	7
Morris Ring Advisory Council: Discussion Points	8
Sad News	10
Potty Weekend Report	11
Chalice by the Sea for MacMillan Cancer Support	12
JMO Events	13
2012 UpDate	14
John Gasson Memorial Jig Competition 2010	16
Future Meetings of the Morris Ring	17
And finally....	21

### **An apology to the sender of this email:**

*"Thanks for sending the paper version of the newsletters out by second class post, unfortunately my envelope was not franked and thus cost the princely sum of £1.51 to receive the envelope!*

*This extortionate amount included a £1.00 fee for administration by the Post Office. I hope that you do not get too many of these e-mails!"*

Thankfully I didn't but clearly the new franking machine pulled two envelopes through together. My apologies if this happened to you.

Charlie

### Message from the Squire

This summer there have been a number of very successful initiatives which have got young people dancing the Morris. As we approach the Autumn please consider getting involved personally in projects to bring the Morris to a new generation. The Morris Ring Youth Fund is there to help with some of the costs of setting up and running sides of young dancers. If you are interested have a look at the scheme details on the Morris Ring web site. To use the well-known phrase "Our future is in your hands."



Brian on the Isle of Man. Performing with North British Sword

### Good Quality Action Photos wanted –such as these snaps of the Dartington Boys and



the Horwich Prize Medal Morris Dancers. I have received some excellent photos for the new display stands and we will soon be finalising the design and getting them produced. They will be of the roller-banner type for ease of transport. Each Area Rep

will have a set which will be available to sides in his area for advertising and recruitment purposes. It is not too late to submit photos for consideration. We are looking for action photos which show the Morris in its various forms at its best.



**Whitby Festival: Workshop Opportunity.** I will be teaching the longsword workshop at the Whitby Festival in August. If any of you are at the Festival and would like to learn the Escrick dance, please come along. (More information from Brian directly or visit <http://www.whitbyfolk.co.uk/> )

**Brian Tasker** Squire of the Morris Ring

### Message from the Squire Elect: Recruitment of new members

It is no secret that the Morris Ring has its very own demographic time-bomb and the early warning sirens have been screaming at us for some while. Brian Tasker's recent survey collated from his Morris Ring Questionnaire has given us three valuable markers:

- a) 70% of our members are over 50 years old
- b) In less than 10 years only 30% of clubs now in existence will still be viable
- c) We now have a base point from which we can judge future progress

I declared in my candidature for Squire of the Morris Ring that recruitment will be the number one priority during my term of office. Not to fulfil that promise would be failure and I don't do failure! Brian has kindly given me a free hand to start on the project immediately and this announcement is the start of that process. To forge ahead I need full co-operation from all our Member and Associate Sides, Morris Ring Officers and Area Reps.

Whilst the Morris Ring will do what it can to help in preparing the ground nationally, it boils down to each individual Club to take whatever steps are necessary in its own local area. As the ancient Chinese proverb says: *Man may sit for long time with mouth open waiting for roast duck to fly in!*

For the long-term the Morris Ring is already addressing such issues as teaching of Morris in schools, youth clubs, and organisations like scouts and boys' brigade. These areas are important however it will be a considerable time before these endeavours bear fruit. What we need is new blood, younger blood and we need it NOW.

Efforts to improve our relations with the media and to encourage them to be more positive about reporting on Morris stories and events are beginning to work. National perception of our art is getting better. There is definitely a sense amongst our audiences and the general public that they understand that Morris has been around long enough to be considered as an indigenous treasure of which we should be justifiably proud. For its part the Morris Ring will continue to work at this. We have a professional PR representative to help us and propose to use his skills to aid in enhancing national awareness of our activities in a positive fashion. This should help to make the ground more fertile for your own individual recruitment efforts.

The Morris Ring is a network and we need to draw on the experience of those within it who have had success with recruiting and to share their methods with those who have not been so successful. To this end I propose that we take the following immediate action. At the end of this Newsletter there is a short questionnaire through which I would like all of you to report back telling us your success stories. This information will be collated into a recruitment pack to be provided to all our members. We need it soon so that sides can act upon it during the summer months whilst we are out and about amongst our audiences.

Seeking out potential recruits and speaking to them face to face in an enthusiastic and encouraging manner is far and away the most fruitful method. By following this methodology I have personally unearthed three potential recruits in as many weeks;

one for Swaledale, one for Thaxted and a musician for Foresters. I believe there to be a really good chance that all three will at least come to a practice then it is up to the clubs to make them stick.

As a precursor to the recruitment pack I recommend that each side prepares the ground as follows:

- a) Appoint a recruitment officer. Ensure that all members of your side know who he is and that they steer potential leads to him.
- b) Announce that 'you have a recruitment drive in operation at the moment' everywhere you perform.
- c) Make sure an enthusiastic, informed, and personable member of your side talks to anyone who shows interest. If they ask questions, they're interested!
- d) Always get a phone number and follow up contacts .....soon.
- e) Offer them a lift to practice/dance venues
- f) Don't wait until September - involve them immediately.
- g) Start teaching straight away (on a separate night from your usual outings if need be).
- h) Give new guys a sense of inclusion. Don't leave them sitting alone or apart.
- i) Take their partners on one side and emphasize to them how much their encouragement and support would help.
- j) Newcomers feel safety in numbers. Look for nests (such as other clubs they belong to) and encourage them to bring a mate.
- k) Build up a relationship with your local press/TV. Help them by providing carefully thought out press releases whenever you have a significant outing so they publish what you want them to say. This saves them a lot of wasted time doing research, which usually just leads them to weak and jocular drivel such as has emerged in the past.
- l) Make sure that all members of your side read these bullet points

Many of you will be doing much of this already. I don't want to teach my grandmother to suck eggs but I do guarantee that there will be somebody doing something somewhere that you haven't thought of that might just make a difference.

Peter J Halfpenney Squire Elect

**Archives:** Great News - Chris Metherell (Chair of Morris Ring Archive Group and ex-MR Archivist)) reports that he has successfully moved the Morris Ring Archive to Essex last weekend (3<sup>rd</sup> July 2010) and had a useful meeting with Geoff Douglas (Mayflower MM) who has volunteered to take over from Chris Metherell as Paper and Film Archivist. Geoff lives only about 10 mins from the Essex Records Office so the relocation is ideal!

**Please remember** that all of the Morris Ring Archivists are always looking for materials to archive. Follow Pete Bradshaw's example. Archivists contact details available from the Morris Ring Bagman and are on the Morris Ring Website.

Archive Group (Chairman)  
Keeper of the Paper & Film Archive  
Keeper of the Mumming Archive  
Keeper of the Ring Photograph Archive  
Keeper of the Sword Dance Archive  
Keeper of the Sound Archive  
New Dance Collator  
Scrapbook Keeper & Recorder

Chris Metherell  
Geoff Douglas  
Ron Shuttleworth  
Duncan Broomhead  
Ivor Allsop  
Andy Padmore  
Mike Wilkinson  
Keith Francis



**Adelaide Morris Men**, formed in 1980 received their staff of Morris Ring membership from the Squire Brian Tasker when they 'danced in' at Thaxted 2010

**Scrapbook of Morris Kits** Hilary Tindall, of Shinfield Shambles (a Ladies Morris side from the village of Shinfield, which is just outside Reading, which dances in the Welsh Border style), is compiling a scrapbook of the different kit that the various sides wear. She has already been working on it for 16 years. She is asking for a photo of one of the side as example, with the name of the side; what you dance and where the side is based (Town and county). She can be contacted via [hilary.tindall@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:hilary.tindall@tiscali.co.uk)

**Outings: Bramble Bank** Pete Bradshaw (ex Men of Wight Squire and now with Woodside) sent a delightful book of poems called "The Light of Day", published by the Toddington Poetry Society, for the Morris Ring Archive. It contains his poem commemorating the Bramble Bank meeting of the Morris Ring.

*This poem was written for the Toddington Poetry Society's October 2009 evening on the theme of 'Outings'. It commemorates the massed Morris dancing on Bramble Bank, a dune one mile off the Hampshire shore that is exposed once a year.*

**Outings: Bramble Bank**

Eighteen hundred  
Sea area Solent  
Southerly two  
Mainly smooth  
Moderate or good.

Jade green sea, summer blue skies  
Red Jet Ferry, sun bright buoys;  
Bramble Bank in shallows lies  
Once a year its dunes arise.

Eighteen thirty  
Hoverjet One  
Clear from Ryde  
Eighty six on board  
Morris dancers.

Waves breaking, low water falls  
Dancers descend with sticks and bells  
Music playing, foreman calls  
Traditional jigs in aquatic pools.

Nineteen hundred  
All aboard  
Tide is rising  
Bank is sinking  
Memories are forming.

© Pete Bradshaw

## RUMFORD MORRIS GOLDEN JUBILEE. "This year Rumford Morris are celebrating



50 Years of dancing since we were formed in Romford, Essex in 1960. We are a Cotswold side performing traditional dances and continue to create new dances.

As part of our Golden Jubilee celebrations we held a Day of Dance in Romford, Essex on Saturday 12th June. We were joined by

several other Morris sides and it was a great day of celebration and dance, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part. We danced in the town centre and finished the day with a song at music session in one of the local pubs.

We will continue to celebrate throughout the year, performing at pubs, summer fetes and other events, culminating with a weekend of celebration, the highlight of which will be a Feast followed by an evening of song, music, and dance.

50 Years of Keeping English Tradition Alive!

Sue Fuller, Bagman, Rumford Morris.

**Belchamp Morris** On the of 19th and 20th June, Belchamp Morris travelled to Evesham to take part in a joint Morris weekend, spectacularly well-organised by Judy and Jeff from the local sides, Belle d'Vain and Pebworth Morris.

Based around the nationally-renowned Evesham Rowing Club, with widespread and tidy camping on adjacent common land, this involved various tours (we went with the Oyster Girls, from the Isle of Wight, and our guides for the day, Angela and Sam from Belle d'Vain) to excellent local pubs - the NT -owned Fleece at Bretforton and the Anchor at Fladbury being worthy of special mention - plus the joy of a boat trip, where we exhibited our best navigational skills and scared numerous wildfowl and courting couples, ensconced in the supposed privacy of the riverside undergrowth. The Saturday evening had a ceilidh for those who were still up to moving but we chose to return to the site of our earlier triumphs, the Fleece, to mix with the locals and to annoy a man from another side who obviously didn't understand that session music and song is something of a come-all-ye and who asked one of our members to desist from playing along, on the grounds that he hadn't rehearsed with him; if only we practised, we wouldn't be twice the side that we aren't today - silly sod! We found Lola's slippers and returned to the campsite, where our Squire had, injudiciously,

fallen deeply asleep much earlier in the evening and could be heard sawing away from about 100 yards' distance.

We rose on Sunday, to an excellent breakfast, provided by the ladies of the Rowing Club - who balked at bringing it to my tent (can't think why - atmosphere too eggy already?) - and a number of our side packed their things and roared away on a variety of large, throbbing motorcycles, leaving the rump to watch Jerry lower his wigwam (not a euphemism, I promise you) before we joined, if that's the correct term, the rest of the sides in a procession (we don't process, we amble or shamble) to the main square, plus one or two other spots, for more dancing and the presentation of the Evesham Stick to the best all round side(s) of the weekend; as we had already won the Duck Race and, despite being far and away the most unpopular but entertaining side, roundly sneered upon by sundry more staid and refined outfits, we were not in the running. In my opinion, Saddleworth should have walked away with it, as the show dance they did in the Square that Sunday lunch time was absolutely bloody storming - and I told them so - twice! But they didn't either - I forget who did but they richly deserved it.

Halfway through the afternoon, we left, all agreeing that it had been the best of weekends and that we would, if asked (very unlikely!), return at some future date.

**Jason Rosser aka 'Moose' Belchamp Morris**

**MR Advisory Council Meeting** There is a meeting of the Advisory Council planned for Sunday 3rd October 2010 in Packington, Leicestershire. This coincides with the Morris 18-30 Weekend which is based on Packington and Burton-upon-Trent. The Advisory Council will meet late morning, have a break over lunch to watch / support the 18-30 lads and then reconvene in the afternoon. Brian Tasker, who will by then be Chair of the AC, will confirm the Agenda in September and it is hoped that all the Area Reps will be able to attend as issues to be raised at the ARM will be discussed.

**Membership of the MR Advisory Council** One such issue is the suggestion that the length of time Past Officers serve on the AC be limited to six years. After this period they could if they were so minded use their experience by standing as Area Reps or assisting their Area Rep.

It is clear that Brian's Questionnaire raised lots of issues which require further discussion and consultation. Whilst much of the broader membership is only concerned with the dancing the Morris Ring does need to ensure that it has the basic structures in place to provide the necessary support for our membership.

**Brian reports:** "If you look through the summary of questionnaire responses to Q1.2 many sides say that the size of the AC should be reduced and a good number say that this should be done by limiting the period of service of ex officers.

There is more concern about old attitudes being a brake on progress than on retaining expertise. There is nothing to stop previous MR Officers being consulted on issues on which they have knowledge and experience but they don't necessarily have to be members of the AC. There is a continuum between advice, influence, and power. My experience is that the AC are to the right of influence and I think many members share this view. If any ex officer wishes to remain on the AC after the six year period he can obtain a fresh mandate by standing for election as an Area Rep."

**Paul Reece responded:** "As for limiting the number on the Advisory Council it is the quality of the contribution that is all important not the number of people attending or the period since they were in office. Many of the wisest, most constructive and useful contributions have come from past officers who continue to support the MR in very practical ways not least annual workshops despite having been officers some considerable time ago. Additionally some issues and topics fall within the special interest and experience of some members where the arbitrary limit on time to serve would prevent these very valuable contributions."

"The Area Reps made a powerful show at the AC meeting following the ARM and were going to draft their own job description or assessment of what needed to be done in their area and how they might use their particular skills to move things on.

There is nothing to stop Area Reps co-opting other people to assist them, working as a team in their area - especially as some areas are ridiculously geographically large for one person to cover. Some of those assisting could be past officers in their area when their expertise could be invaluable. They may also be able to attend meetings of the AC if the area rep was unable to attend, or the items for discussion were not particularly relevant to the area rep."

In light of this Clause 6 of the constitution could be amended to read as follows:

*"The three officers, officers elect and all past officers of the Ring for a maximum of six years following the conclusion of their term of office, together with the nine elected members shall constitute the Advisory Council of the Morris Ring. The duty of the Advisory Council shall be to advise and assist the Squire and the other elected officers to further the objects of the Morris Ring and to take action in an emergency. The Advisory Council shall meet at*

*least once a year. In such cases where it is entrusted with executive powers, a quorum shall consist of five members, including three elected members."*

**MR Advisory Council Meeting: Suggested Terms of Reference for Area Reps:**

1. There are 9 Areas and 9 Area Reps
2. Area Reps are elected to sit on the Advisory Council (AR).
3. Area Reps are elected at an ARM for a 3 year period. Three Area Reps are elected each year.
4. At AC meetings, Area Reps represent the region for which they were elected. They are to present a report at the ARM AC meeting.
5. Area Reps should establish contact with sides in their area, and set up a data base for contacts.
6. Area Reps should highlight success and problems in their area to Ring Officers.
7. Area Reps are to encourage best practice in recruiting, local events and media



**Sad News:**

- i. **John Shiell** Horwich Prize Medal have experienced a second bereavement this year of an until recently active dancer. John Shiell passed away on 17 June,, aged 67, a fortnight after diagnosis of bowel cancer. John had been with Horwich for over 15 years, having started Morris with Coventry. Members of Horwich attended the funeral at Bolton Crematorium in kit and danced afterwards at The Crown in Horwich, the team's local. Also in kit were members of John's other team, Stone the Crows, a non-Morris Ring border tradition side based in Chorley, who also danced, plus representatives of Seven Stars Sword and Clog. John was an incredibly active man, always good for a chuckle. He is greatly missed by his wife Gill, daughter Lynne and grandchildren and his mates in Horwich.

**Bob Bradley Secretary Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men**

**Geoff Rye** (27<sup>th</sup> June 1915 - 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010) Geoff's funeral was held at St Nicholas' Church, Radstock, on 12th July 2010. Mendip MM attended and danced Shepherds Hey, Fieldtown as their tribute. Geoff was instrumental in many people getting involved not just in the Morris but in the wider Folk world - Bob Cross (Past Squire of the Morris Ring) and myself included. To quote from Mike Wilson-Jones' citation when Geoff was rather belatedly presented with his EFDSS Gold Badge in 2005:

*"The Mendip Morris Men also started up at this time (the mid fifties) .....giving the young dancers at (Weston-super-Mare Boys' Grammar) school a chance for wider experience. Geoff was a founder member, initially playing the part of the Fool, a role that was considerably enhanced when communicating with an audience, because of his stentorian voice!*

*Joint Morris and country dance tours at Easter and Whitsun around the villages of Somerset were a regular feature, as was SYD 613, the Rye family Dormobile that helped to ferry many young people on these enjoyable outings."*

I was one of those young people. He was an outstanding, inspirational man. He will be sadly missed.

Charlie Corcoran MR Bagman & ex-Mendip MM

**The Lobster Potty Weekend** The 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> July) found several Morris Ring sides among twenty or more dance groups at the 17th "Potty Fest" in Sheringham, Norfolk.

Belchamp, Harwich, Kemps, Leicester, Milton and Peterborough (with your correspondent) were the Morris Ring sides attending one or both days. The weekend was notable for blazing sun and temperatures of 23° - 26° Celsius.

The Saturday morning procession dispersed into 6 dance locations in a town already geared up for its high season visitors. Ringing the changes on six dance spots, each with four teams ensured we met about half the other visiting sides. Sunday was the hotter day, but the pace, thankfully, was more relaxed. Notable displays for me were:

On Saturday, a set from Kemps Men joined by two of their younger recruits. (If street-cred were measured by how low-slung one's breeches can be before they sink south of the crotch, then we witnessed there a superb example of junior "uber-cool".) Leicester (augmented by Leeds MM) fielded about 50 men (well, several 8-man sets) for their Arena show. So, on numbers alone, I think they won. Non-Ring notables were Witchmen (border Morris). They won "largest band". Among performances by the ladies I'd mention Briggate (in clogs) from Leeds and Maids of the Mill from Holland who danced a very energetic Eynsham Figure Eight. I suppose I should also mention the women of Loose (in Kent) and their very racy lacy bits.

Jig high points on Sunday were the double jig, Bampton Princess Royal, by Matt and Ollie in Peterborough's set at the Two Lifeboats, followed at the Arena by the representative of Utrecht MM giving his Ladies Pleasure from Bledington. (*This is a reference to the dance of that name, not a news item.*) Despite the heat, by Sunday

afternoon the wind became quite strong. Of the kites flying on the camp-site, one was distinctly large and tent-shaped. (I suggest more tent pegs next time - you know who you are!)

While I am sure there are Ring members who might prefer not to perform at such a mixed event, I would offer my opinion that amongst all the variety of "street" dance on show at Sheringham, much of the Morris danced by the Morris Ring sides shone out as performances of quality and true respect for the tradition. I enjoyed it and the audiences, Morris and non-Morris, alike, certainly made their appreciation known. Well done!

Mike Stevens Peterborough Morris Morris Ring Eastern Area Rep

Chalice by the Sea.



"On Saturday 26 June we danced out for the day in Weston-Super-Mare, West Huntspill, Burnham on Sea, Bridgwater and Wells in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. Although it was a stunningly hot day we were able to raise the sum of £248.10p and with help from our partners, wives and daughters, Not only did we have help with collecting from them but they were able to fly the flag for Macmillan by wearing the sashes provided. Some of our guys even wore Macmillan sashes to dance in. It was a very enjoyable day and was made even better by the Landlord of The Crossways Inn at West Huntspill providing lunch for all at cost price! It felt like eating out in the '60s!!

Our dancing on Wells Cathedral Green was a bit marred by The BBC who were filming an interview for some programme or other who sent some poor girl over to beg us to stop as we were audible on the equipment. Just five minutes they said. Soon our crowd had to leave to catch their coach and we danced to our selves approximately 35 to 40 mins later. I said they'd be more than 5 mins Ho HUM." <http://www.burnham-on-sea.com/news/2010/morris-dancers-seafront-27-06-10.php>.

Bob Cross. Chalice MM

## JMO Events

**Report:** In April, The Joint Morris Organisations Day of Dance hit Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk with a resounding "thwack."

This small market town seemed relatively unperturbed by the influx of 40 + dance teams, including 9 Morris Ring sides. It was clearly a centre for tourists and I suppose the residents just thought it was market day. East Anglia seems to have blossomed dance teams, a number being of the "molly" and other seasonal varieties. Although most dance genres appeared to be represented, there was a strong contingent of Cotswold - traditional male sides and some less traditional examples.

For instance, as Peterborough arrived at our first designated spot (at the back of Debenhams, no less) we happened upon the officers of a certain Morris organisation (other organisations are available) already performing and very "pretty in pink", I might add.

We moved on to a spot rather closer to the hub of the town, bumped into the Ring Treasurer nursing a Starbucks (it seems you can no longer carry an English beer in the street but you can wave around a steaming coffee from Kenya). There can be few images sadder than a lone northwest Morris dancer in clogs, hat and full regalia, but without the rest of his team or band and without a beer. We went to speak to him to cheer him up.

By this time we took our allocated lunch-break in the small picnic yard of a side-street ale-house in company with several dozen others. After lunch (yes, there was an after lunch) we followed our designated route down the hill to the Abbey Gardens. We did not have time to search out the relics of St Edmund, wherein the town enjoyed medieval fame. It was getting warm. The sky was as clear as I have ever seen, it being several days into the ban on flights into and out of British airports, hence Squire of the Morris Ring was stuck in Belfast and not Bury St Edmunds. But we soldiered on.

A further spot in the clearing in front of the Abbey Gate brought forth gasps of wonder and amazement from our audience at our performance. And we watched entertaining displays by Chelmsford, Hawksword (a rapper team) and Little Egypt (where they come from).

Last stand was a pleasant pub spot at the Fox Inn, a gentle flip-flop of dances with "Lagabag", whom we had met previously at the top of the town, Danegeld, whom we hadn't and the senior representative of the Fed, dancing with Redbournstoke, a men's side from near Ampthill in Bedfordshire. By this time the beer had flowed, the pace

had slackened and members of the audience were beginning to get involved. A couple of lads, abandoned by wives in search of shops, managed a creditable Hinton "Getting Upstairs". Eventually, we all finished with a BGG, not noticeably disadvantaged by the inclusion of more onlookers.

Some dancers went on to a locally organised evening ceilidh, whilst others of us drifted to the now convenient car park and off up the A14. Whilst we enjoyed stands with 14 teams and sort of bumped into friends from other sides on our ways hither and thither in the town, we Morris Ring sides (all but Dolphin from the Eastern area) were spread quite thinly, I suppose in an effort to show as many as possible how it should be done.

Morris Ring sides attending were:-

Belchamp Morris Men  
Colchester Morris Men  
Dolphin Morris Men  
East Suffolk Morris Men  
Hageneth Morris Men

Kings Morris  
Milton Morris Men  
Peterborough Morris  
Standon Morris Men

Mike Stevens Morris Ring Eastern Area Rep

➤ **2<sup>nd</sup> October JMO Recruitment Brainstorm** Michael Stimpson is organising a JMO Workshop /Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October to discuss recruitment. Full information will be distributed when available.

➤ **JMO Dance Day 2011**

The Morris Ring, in alliance with Sheffield City Council, is delighted to announce that the Joint Morris Organisations **National Morris Spectacular** will take place in Sheffield City Centre on **14<sup>th</sup> May 2011**.

We can comfortably accommodate hundreds of performers showcasing their talent in squares and open areas within easy stroll of each other in the heart of the city. The central hub will be a rolling massed display in Tudor Square in front of the world famous Crucible and Lyceum Theatres.

Your side will not want to miss this so polish your bells, iron your hankies, sharpen your swords and make a diary note NOW to reserve the date.

**JMO 2011 SHEFFIELD – SATURDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2011**

**2012 Update** Mike Garland reported *"I saw one of the directors of the Olympics talking on television the other night, when they appointed the film chap to devise the opening. The Director said that many people had been talking about what might be shown, including Morris Dancing. Well, he said, it's just not going to happen!!"*



Read what the Daily Telegraph reported (unlike The Times this is still free):

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/othersports/olympics/london2012/7839954/Danny-Boyle-unveils-epic-and-intimate-2012-Olympic-opening-ceremony.html>

### **Paul Reece (Chair of the MR Advisory Council) Update**

The annual Open Weekend for the Cultural Olympiad started last year and is operated in the various regions, although how it is operated, who is invited is dependent on the regional Creative Programmer and them achieving an Olympic Inspire Mark. Not all regional Creative Programmers are necessarily keen on dance as each region has largely decided what their emphasis is going to be.

The South West region, where I've been working with the steering committee, were very keen to have the Morris and the *Dinosaurs Not Allowed* Annual Youth Dance Festival is the result. At a meeting I had at the Olympic HQ in London, chaired by the Southwest Creative Programmer, attempts were being made to hopefully open up and influence other regions to adopt something similar and perhaps relax the rules.

The Cultural Olympic people are notoriously slow at getting their act together and publicising what they want. Now, only a month away from the event, with the date having been fixed since last year, apart from encouraging clubs to get involved with projects, which I've updated through the Newsletter and at the ARM, no further guidance or advice has been forthcoming.

As members of the JMO all the Morris organisations have been working together on the Olympics. As to the Artistic Direction and Creative Team responsible for the ceremonies, this is completely separate from the Cultural Olympiad, and should have been announced in April!

I have heard that the question of Morris Dancing, along with the traditions usually associated with host nations, being incorporated into the opening ceremony was put to, I think, the artistic director, Danny Boyle and rejected. We can continue the pressure through the media and Bob Russell MP for Colchester and Lord Redesdale for the exposure of this English Cultural Icon in the Olympics. However, in the meantime we should:

- show what we can do in the regional Cultural Olympiads,

- use regional television to get recorded for onward use by foreign television companies in their coverage of the Olympics and English culture,
- have a presence at Olympic sites (they will have their 5000 Morris Dancers whether they like it or not),
- get involved in the Torch Ceremonies,
- publicise 2012 Morris Ring Meetings including the Chipping Campden Cotswold Olympic event celebrating the 400 anniversary of the Cotswold Olympics or Dover Games and
- stage at long distance Morris relays connecting centres of the tradition with London and Stratford.

If we are totally rejected we will milk the publicity and have our own Peoples Games as was originally the case.

Paul Reece Chair of the Morris Ring Advisory Council



### John Gasson Memorial Jig Competition: Sunday August 1<sup>st</sup> 2010

If you want to enter this year's John Gasson memorial jig competition at Sidmouth, please be warned - there are a limited number of slots available and they are filling earlier than usual. There is a real chance that all the available places will be filled before the weekend of the event. For further information visit the competition website: <http://www.johngassonjig.org.uk/> It would be great to have more members of Morris Ring sides entering.

Details of other attractions at Sidmouth this year visit the festival's main website: <http://www.sidmouthfolkweek.co.uk/>

### MORRIS RING PUBLICATIONS

**Harry Stevenson:** Editor of the Morris Circular

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Copy date for next issue: 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010

## Future Meetings of the Morris Ring

- **ARM 2011** 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> February Hosts Mendip Morris Men
- **Morris 18-30 Weekend** 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> October Packington & Burton upon Trent
- **Instructionals** My annual appeal for hosts / suggestions for instructionals has resulted in the now customary deafening silence even though I suggested that these can be morning / day / weekend events. Brian's offer to provide instructors in almost every tradition almost anywhere in the country has also not had sides clamouring to either host or attend but the offer remains as they say 'on the table'
- **Jigs** 21<sup>st</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011 Sutton Bonington  
We will again be offering a £10 subsidy to sides for first time attendees and a £5 subsidy for any first-timers who attended last year who return for a second helping. *Application Forms and additional information will be in the September Newsletter.*
- **Musicians Events.** There are TWO musicians' events on offer:

### 🎵 **Morris Ring Musicians' Weekend 1** 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Hosts: Whitchurch MM Book up now!

Venue: Wilstone Village Hall, Herts (just a few miles to the east of Aylesbury)

Cost: £45 for the whole event (including basic accommodation)

This popular, informative and enjoyable weekend will once again be held at Wilstone VH. We'll meet on the Friday evening to settle-in, have a play and get to know each other and then on Saturday there'll be two parallel sessions:

- i. For those who are fairly new to Morris playing or who haven't joined us before, who, through an exploration of some basic theory and practical sessions, can expect to find the day both interesting and challenging, so *be prepared*;
- ii. For more experienced players, who'll get the chance to explore some tricky aspects of Morris music and consider how these can be dealt with to best effect.

On Sunday we'll reflect on the special requirements of playing for massed dances, such as at Morris Ring Meetings, and also, recognising that many clubs now have "bands", we'll spend an hour or two exploring and experimenting with alternatives to multiple musicians all just playing the same notes together (or not!), the aim being to enhance the quality of the music without, of course, detracting from the needs of the dance or dancers.

Whilst we'll focus on Cotswold dances, the fundamentals of playing for the dance are the same for all styles and traditions, so if you're a swordsman, cloggist, or whoever, you too will find benefit ...and, naturally, have a great weekend to boot!

It's not just musicians who have found these weekends useful. If you're a Squire or Foremen, you will be most welcome, especially if you would like to gain a better understanding of what makes us musicians tick and recognise how we need to address the dance if we are to help you achieve the best overall performance.

Our hosts, Whitchurch Morris Men, always look after us well - especially the inner-man - and so good and plentiful food, ale and company are guaranteed.

Basic sleeping accommodation for male participants will be available in the hall, whilst there are a number of hotels and the like within a few miles for any ladies who'd like to join us, or those chaps who might require a little more privacy or comfort.

Whilst organised under the auspices of the Morris Ring members of the other Joint Morris organisations are welcome. For further information, and to register an interest, please email Clive Du'Mont: [cdumont@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:cdumont@blueyonder.co.uk) .

♪ **Morris Ring Musicians' Weekend 2**      25<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2011

Hosts: Moulton MM      Book up now!

Venue: Moulton VH

Cost: £TBC for the whole event (including basic accommodation)

*We are arranging for some leading musicians with extensive experience of playing for Morris but also well known folk performers in their own right (eg Chris Lesley for the fiddle players). Further information to follow*

➤ **Fools and Animals Weekend** 22<sup>nd</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup> October 2010

Details and application form included in previous

Newsletter. Full information available from

[triggertrotter1@aol.com](mailto:triggertrotter1@aol.com)



### **Advance Notice of 2011 Meetings of the Morris Ring**

In light of the current economic climate we need all sides to give very early consideration to their attendance at meetings of the Morris Ring next year.

Responses to the Morris Ring Meeting section of Brian Tasker's Questionnaire have shown that there a wide divergence of requirements and expectations and we hope that over the next few years experienced and new host sides will emerge with offers

that can cater for all tastes: from those who want beds and full catering to others who are content with self-catering in a tent in the grounds of a village hall. There are obvious cost implications and in the case of the higher price range options greater risks and the consequential need for earlier firm commitment and deposits - as we would expect if we were booking a holiday.

**326<sup>th</sup> Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> May**

Hosts: Moulton Morris

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of revamped Moulton Festival

Estimated Cost per man: £30 / £35

**327<sup>th</sup> Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> June ~ 5<sup>th</sup> June**

Hosts: Thaxted Morris

"Thaxted Morris Centenary"

Estimated Cost per man: £ 70

**328<sup>th</sup> Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> June**

Hosts: Wath-on-Dearne Morris

Estimated Cost per man: £100

Accommodation is planned to be at the Park Inn, Wath-on-Dearne, a 4 star hotel based on 2 men sharing a twin en-suite room. There are all the facilities you would expect including gym etc. Details can be found at:

<http://www.parkinn.co.uk/hotel-rotherham> . Single occupancy is available at an extra cost of £50.00 per man.

The weekend will follow a tried and tested format of Friday gather and meal, Saturday tours (based on our annual "Pretty Villages" tours - Beautiful locations rather than shopping centres) and Sunday church, dance & depart after a light lunch.

We realise that the price of the weekend is an issue but we have worked hard to secure a brilliant deal on the hotel to get the price down below £100. We feel that there is a market for this type of accommodation and our watchword for the whole weekend will be "quality" in all aspects.

This year we paid £70.00 to sleep on a shared floor in Thaxted. For £30 more we can offer a comfortable bed, en-suite facilities in all rooms, TV, gym, tea making facilities and a much more relaxed experience.

If it proves that there is no market or appetite for this type of event, then so be it, but we feel that this is the accommodation which would appeal most to us at a Morris Ring Meeting if offered as a choice.

**329<sup>th</sup> Meeting**      **8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> July**  
Hosts:                Greensleeves Morris Men Ring  
                             Based at Chipperfield  
Estimated Cost per man: £TBC

**330<sup>th</sup> Meeting**      22nd-24th July  
Hosts:                Rutland MM

### **Morris Ring Meetings - 2012 and beyond.**

#### **2012**

3 <sup>rd</sup> ~ 5 <sup>th</sup> March (?)	ARM Hosted by TBA
25 <sup>th</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup> May	Chipping Campden Cotswold Olympic Morris Ring Meeting
1 <sup>st</sup> June - 3 <sup>rd</sup> June	Thaxted Morris Ring Meeting
27 <sup>th</sup> - 29 <sup>th</sup> July	Hartley 60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Morris Ring Meeting
TBC	<i>Letchworth Centenary Morris Ring Meeting</i>

#### **2013**

? March	ARM Hosted by TBA
31 <sup>st</sup> May - 02 <sup>nd</sup> June	Thaxted Morris Ring Meeting
TBC	Dolphin Morris Men

### **And finally.....**

A big **Thank You** to those who have contributed news and information for inclusion in this Newsletter.

I have had an article written by Zebedee Helm in the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010 edition of 'The Lady' magazine pointed out to me. It contains this wonderful statement:

*"The young and old alike are turning in droves to Morris dancing. Like gardening it extends your life and is extremely good exercise - I have heard of plenty of octogenarian Morris dancers and some in their 90s."*

Sadly it also contains several glaring inaccuracies (and exaggeration of our power even if we wanted it - which we don't!):

*" The Morris Ring, the organisation that represents Morris dancing , founded by Cecil Sharp in 1934\*, forbids women dancing the Morris".*

*\* For the record - Cecil Sharp died in 1924*

This week I have received two letters from ministers of the cloth. The first, addressed to "The Director of The Morris Ring", was from a Rector who explained:

*" We are trying to re-build the community in our village which has been shattered by a motorway and over-development.*

*.....was a great advocate for you (The Morris Ring), and I am therefore writing to ask whether and how we can start a Morris Dance Team here."*

This is a wonderful confirmation that there is still the belief that the Morris can and should be at the heart of a local community. We are currently discussing the possibilities with the Rector.

The second, via airmail, was forwarded by "The Bagman: Keith Francis" (who was Bagman from 1984-91). It was a long begging letter purporting to be from a Reverend in Malawi. Amongst a lot else he writes:

*"By God's grace we came across your address and we are humbly requesting you to kindly assist us with £2,500. This money will help us to buy food, clothes, blankets, plates/cups, shelters and education learning materials."*

I in turn passed this on to Eddie who suggests that it might be a scam. Astute man our Eddie!

Please be reminded that this is not intended to be the 'Bagman's News' letter. I could write at length about my impressions of the Thaxted Meeting (great fun); the excellent Dales Tour hosted by Leeds Morrismen (celebrating their 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year *i*), and the stupendously laid-back Forest of Dean Family Weekend, both of which I attended with Leicester Morrismen. I could enthuse about the beautiful countryside surrounding Liverpool, which I toured as a guest of Mersey Morris on their surreal Golden Jubilee Tour (Subtitled "From Stockport to the Sea"). I could extol the virtues, or otherwise, of many of the sides I have seen, of the lunches I have eaten and the ale I have consumed but this newsletter should NOT be about me. I need your news; your information; your appeals and your advertisements..

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*i* They have produced an excellent history of the side "Leeds Morris Men 1950 – 2010"

A final message - from our re-vamped display board - a quote to inspire you as you talk to the wondering and adoring crowds:

**"How about you?** Would you like to try Morris dancing to see if it does for you what it does for us? If you know of a club in your area, have a look on the internet to find out about them and go along and have a chat with the dancers. Many clubs hold special sessions for potential members to come along and try it out. Before long you too could be a Morris Dancer!"

Charlie

**Bagman of the Morris Ring**

**P.S.** As this goes to print I have received this from Paul Reece (Chair of Advisory Council):

"I've had a request from Voluntary Arts England, part of the Voluntary Arts Network (VAN) for the Morris Ring to assist them on a couple of pieces of work they are leading on:

1. **Epic Awards 2010 - spread the word and make sure The Morris Ring members are represented.** For more details see: [www.epicawards.co.uk](http://www.epicawards.co.uk)

For an official press release and queries contact:

0191 230 4464 or [info@vaengland.org.uk](mailto:info@vaengland.org.uk)

2. **Tell us about The Morris Ring for the chance to win £50 worth of gift vouchers.** A Survey of voluntary arts umbrella bodies currently operating in England. Same contacts as above deadline Friday 30th July

## RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

**Your Side:**

**Area:**

**Contact details:**

- a) How many new recruits have you attracted in the past 3 years?
- b) What ages are they?
- c) In each case how was initial contact made?
  
- d) What made them want to join? (Don't surmise – ask them!)
  
- e) Having joined, what makes them want to stay? (Don't surmise – ask them!)
  
- f) What actions have you taken that you feel have been particularly successful in attracting & supporting new members?

Any other comments:

Please return to Peter Halfpenney ASAP either by post or (preferably) email.

Your future and that of others depends on it.

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Founded ~ the MORRIS RING ~ 1934 ~