



KENNET KAPERS



THE WINTER 2014 NEWSLETTER KEEPING UP WITH THE KENNETSHIRE KINGDOM

VOLUME 1 number 3

News and views of all things Kennet – a seasonal newsletter for all citizens of Kennetshire, present, past and future – written by a Fool.



Kontents

About Kennet Kapers.....	2
About Us.....	3
What have we been up to?	3
Squire’s Report for 2014 AGM	3
Our New Leader.....	4
Always a Chinese Cracker	5
Kennet Karols.....	6
The Ultimate Hangover Cure	6

About Kennet Kapers

Not all citizens of Kennetshire are fortunate enough, or have the stamina to attend all our events to be able to keep up with current news of major events. This seasonal newsletter, which we hope to publish three or four times a year, will attempt to keep you in the picture and inform and entertain. It is no substitute for our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page but we hope will become a useful addition for our friends - and members.

All suggestions for improvements are welcomed.



About Us

The Kennet Morris Men are based in the Reading area, although you can see us performing throughout Berkshire and South Oxfordshire, hereinafter referred to as Kennetshire. This season we will be performing dances in the distinctive styles that developed in the Cotswold villages of Bucknell, Ducklington, Fieldtown, Hinton in the Hedges, Illmington, Oddington and Sherborne, and farther afield in the City of Lichfield and Upton upon Severn.

Our dancing season starts at sunrise on May 1st and continues through to the end of September. During the season we go out one evening each week to dance at many of our favourite local hostleries, often with or as guests of neighbouring teams. Some weekends we can be seen dancing at fetes and shows, and we often go on tour with other Morris sides. From October to April we meet on Monday evenings at St Mary's Church Hall, Church Lane, Shinfield RG2 9BY, to continue practising our dances, to learn new ones and to train new dancers.

We dance the Morris because we enjoy it, because we want to maintain a unique part of our cultural heritage, and because our audiences are entertained by watching us and participating in the Luck of the Morris. To add to the occasion most of our evening performances conclude with a Pub Session, an "all come ye" where everyone has the chance to sing or play – not too seriously – the emphasis is on enjoyment.

We are always pleased to welcome new members as either dancers or musicians, to ensure that Morris continues to be danced in the Reading area for many more years to come. Why not come along to a practice - there's still plenty of time to get involved before the new season begins in earnest. You'll like us.

What have we been up to?

We've tried to give a taste of what we've been up since our autumn newsletter – so it's a short one as all we seem to have done is practice, practice and practice. Just wish it made a difference. ☹ Fortunately, the festive season is upon us and there are a few highlights to look forward to.

Squire's Report for 2014 AGM

Chris Newman took the opportunity to take a look back at the last year – these are the highlights of his report as he handed over the squireship:

"Some of the more notable places we've danced in this year have included:

- performing Monk's March on the steam train on the Watercress Line,
- the new improved surface at the Goring Heath Almshouses,
- a hall full of a rowdy bunch of Caversham scouts,
- the new overbridge at Reading station (to the amusement/bemusement of passing commuters), and
- in the centre of the maze at Sonning Common Herb Farm. (I'm just relieved everyone made it out of there without the need for search parties).



Chris returns to normality (???)

We made a big push this year on trying to recruit new members – raising our profile in Reading Town Centre, gaining a smart new banner, beer mats, business cards etc



I'd like to put on record my thanks (in no particular order) to:

- Jon for doing such a jolly good job of organising our social calendar
- Tony for keeping the accounts so well and for keeping us solvent
- Dave, for his time and patience in keeping us metaphorically (if not literally) on our toes as foreman, and to those who've deputised for him
- Brian, Pete de C and Neil, for their efforts in recruitment sub-committee
- Each one of you, for making my 2nd year as squire so much fun. You've all been great company; I've thoroughly enjoyed the year, and hand over to Brian with the wish that he enjoys his time as squire as much as I've enjoyed mine."

Chris Newman

Thanks Chris for a great couple of years- from all the Kennet lads and ladies.

Our New Leader



A snap from our Annual General meeting with Brian Jones (on the right) tasting power for the first time, adorned with his precious squire's badge of office. (Chris Newman, now Kennet's immediate past squire, or kipper for short, looks very relieved.)

Brian may be short in stature but he is certainly long in pedigree. He comes from a folkie family, son of Cyril – caller and founding leader of the EFDSS children's branch, the Hobby Horse Club. Brian started Morris at Reading University as founder squire of the Whiteknights Morris Men in 1969, though his first significant Morris performance was at Sidmouth in 1965, when he danced as the horse for Chingford Boys Morris. He later joined Hammersmith Morris, which was during the time when Hugh Rippon and John Kirkpatrick were members. He played a number of parts in plays with Reading Mummers and was a regular floor-singer at Reading Folk Club. He was first recorded as dancing with Kennet as a "member of another club" at the Manchester

Ring meeting in April 1971 but by June was being counted as a Kennet man. Sadly, after a number of years, he had to drop out due to family and other pressures.

In the early eighties he was one of the youngest chairmen of the English Folk Dance & Song Society, having become well-known as a caller on the country dance and Céilidh circuit. Prior to returning to Kennet in 2008, he danced with Reading Cloggies, becoming leader of its successor, Aldbrickham Clog and Step Dancers. At the same time as re-joining Kennet, he and his wife Judy started dancing with Hurst Morris People. Brian stayed with them for a couple of seasons, but Judy continued and is now Foreman.

Brian is now in his late sixties. Having been absent when Kennet moved to a policy of two-years-as-a-squire-then-you've-done-your-turn, he felt he owed it to the side to take his turn to shoulder the burden while he still has a good bounce in his steps. Let's hope he keeps bouncing for the next couple of seasons.



Brian in 1973.
Before colour
photography?



Always a Chinese Cracker

Every couple of months or so (twice this November) The International Study and Language Institute (ISLI) at the University of Reading invites us to entertain the new intake of students from China who come here to improve their English teaching skills. ISLI specialises in providing a range of language courses and academic training to international students and the wider University community. The relationship with Kennet goes back over 10 years when the courses were run at the Bulmershe campus – in fact despite a couple of venue changes, the evening is still known as a “Bulmershe Do”, as is any similar instructional we now put on elsewhere.



The evenings are usually hosted by our Foreman, Dave Tindall who regales the assembled students – often 40 strong – with well his rehearsed presentation covering the origins of Morris (usually summed up by ‘We don’t know’), its history, ancient and modern, who we are and what we do and, often unexplained, why we do it. His talk is interspersed with dance displays ... and Foolish interruptions. We hope to convince most of the audience that Morris is still danced by all English men, every Sunday, after archery practice, before the pub.

The climax of the evening is a “teach in” where all assembled are taught a dance, usually a version of Shepherd’s Hey. We then have to allow quite some time to pose for photos. The Chinese have a very sensible tradition of “Selfies” – get someone else to take it. In this instance with you dressed in a rag coat, a morris hat, and a morris man by your side. The number of cameras swopped about is boggling - as are the kit changes.



After all these years we wonder just how many Chinese school children have been taught The Shepherd’s Hey – or at least the rather unique version we have adapted for a side of 40 + !



Kennet Karols

This newsletter should reach you before one of highlights of the year; our pub carols session in the Six Bells at Burghfield. We will be working our way through the [Kennet Carol Song Book](#) – which could mean 50 different songs! The tunes, as rendered by our magnificent musicians, may not always be the ones you're used to. We have found some original traditional versions, but also some morris tunes that fit the words wonderfully. The standard of singing is best described as "Lusty", although the assemble WAGS do try to make it less of a dirge.



Polly, the lovely landlady who has been putting up with us for many a year, may even provide mince pies!

The Ultimate Hangover Cure

The lovely Sharon & Simon, mine hosts at The Calleva Arms have "sold up" and are taking a well deserved break. In their place the locals are enjoying the tender care of the new landlady and landlord, Keren and Stuart Spratley who are looking forward to their first encounter with Kennet on New Year's Day. We'll be kicking off the celebrations at 12:30pm with dancing – no doubt culminating in one for everyone to join in – followed by more lusty singing and music. We first started the tradition of the Calleva opening for New Year's lunch time morris back in 2008. Let's hope we'll be able to keep the fun going for many more years.

If you want to learn even more, visit our Website www.kennetmorrismen.co.uk where there is a mass of information about our dances, our full programme, maps of the venues and our video and picture gallery.

You will also find other booklets in this (growing) series. U-Spy Kennet Morris, the complete spotters guide to the Kennet Morris Men; U-Spy Kennet Morris Dances is a guide to our 2015 season's dance repertoire; Your Welcome to Kennet Morris, an introduction for anyone considering joining us, and a companion volume, The Kennet Morris Men – A Foolish History. Have fun.



Yours foolishly Peter de Courcy webmaster@kennetmorrismen.co.uk

