



## The Kennet Morris Men – A Foolish History



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# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



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## The Kennet Morris Men – Living History

Whilst that description undoubtedly applies to several members of our side, Kennet are proud to be part of England's heritage, perpetuating a dancing tradition that remains one of the few truly national icons not in ruins or belonging in a museum - although we have been described as both.

Founded in 1957, we are based at Shinfield near Reading and dance throughout Berkshire and South Oxfordshire during the spring and summer. We have performed Morris dances in the distinctive styles of the Cotswold villages of Adderbury, Bampton, Bledington, Bucknell, Ducklington, Fieldtown, Hinton, Ilmington, Kirtlington, Oddington and Sherborne, and with occasional dances from places further afield such as the City of Lichfield and Upton upon Severn. Some we dance as they were collected from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, others we've adapted and a few we've invented. Many, we've forgotten.

We've been active members of the Morris Ring, at the time the British association of men's morris clubs, since we were elected in 1962. We regularly meet up with other members of the nearly 200 sides who enjoy the fellowship of The Ring at venues throughout the UK. We have been known to travel even further afield, to celebrate the most English of our traditional past-times with our European neighbours, who sometimes appreciate The Morris more than some English audiences!

I've been The Kennet Fool for over 40 years and, as it seems I'm fast becoming part of our history, I thought I'd do a little for posterity and share some of what I've learnt about our Morris inheritance – foolish or not.

## History, but not as we know it

The Morris Dance is often referred to as one of the oldest continuing traditions of rural Britain and there are many claims that its origins were to welcome the spring and to ensure the fertility of the year's crops, and even the village maidens. Unfortunately, whilst ancient men certainly practiced such rites, Morris itself almost certainly evolved from performances by "professional" players and dancers making a living in Tudor times. Our Victorian and Edwardian ancestors loved to bestow antiquity on anything they considered to be part of our Sceptered Isle's Golden rural heritage. The fact is no-one has proved from whence it came, and there are probably as many theories as dancers.

If anyone tells you that they know its origins, then you can safely say "Pull the other leg, it's got bells on" (well, not safely if he's a big stick in his hand and looks tired and emotional). All that can be said is that it is ancient and has had many influences but, despite the appearance of some of the Kennet Men, we were not around at its incarnation and can't offer first-hand experience.

It must be said that the origins of the Morris are the subject of much speculation and little actual knowledge. There are English records mentioning the Morris Dance dating back to 1448 but these earliest discoveries relate to objects, not references to dancing in England. There is plentiful written documentation dating from the sixteenth century, including references in the plays of Shakespeare, indicating that the dances were considered ancient at that time and that they were a popular





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spectacle in a variety of forms. But were they English? The infrequent written records might indicate not a rural tradition, but perhaps a touring company of European entertainers. But without the benefit of photography, TV or YouTube, it takes some imagination to describe the costume or choreography of the dancers – or even their nationality. And some historians and antiquarians had more vivid imaginations than is helpful when researching Morris! (See [page 6](#) for a good example.)

Many of these theorists were looking for a single point of origin, when in fact the evidence points to parallel developments. Or they relied on circular arguments thus:

1. *Morris was attacked by The Puritans*
2. *Puritans attacked the works of the devil*
3. *Paganism is the religion of the devil*
4. *Therefore The Morris must be pagan – “The Devil’s Dance” (although we’re supposedly flicking the devil in the ey with our handkerchiefs).*

or:

1. *The present essence of Morris is ritualistic*
2. *Therefore Morris originates in primitive ritual*
3. *Sticks striking a rhythm on the ground must be waking up mother earth.*

or:

1. *The present essence of Morris is a merry romp*
2. *Therefore Morris must have originated in secular fun and games – with a “Hey Nonny No” and off to the woods.*

Or even perhaps:

1. *Morris Dancing is foolish*
2. *Only a fool would be a Morris Dancer*
3. *A Fool must have invented Morris Dancing.*

The classicists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century went further, searching for a “genesis”; looking to Greek Antiquity and convinced themselves, with no evidence, that a Pyrrhic war dance was the holy grail of Morris! And so on, and so forth – theories of anthropology, etymology, geography, choreography or musicology or most any ology you care to mention – all usually leading to speculation suiting the searcher’s motive and often presenting previous misrepresentations as facts. In fact quite illogical.

So who better to attempt to answer the unanswerable? You can trust me – I’m a Morris Man and a Fool – and I’ve read, and even paid for books, some of which I’ve actually understood and most I’ve unabashedly borrowed from (please accept my grateful acknowledgement) ... such as:

- “All About The Morris” by Mike Salter
- “The Ancient English Morris Dance” by Michael Heaney
- “Annals of Early Morris” by Michael Heaney and John Forrest
- “Cecil Sharp and the Quest for Folk Song and Dance – a New Biography” by David Sutcliffe
- “Explore Folklore” by Bob Trubshaw







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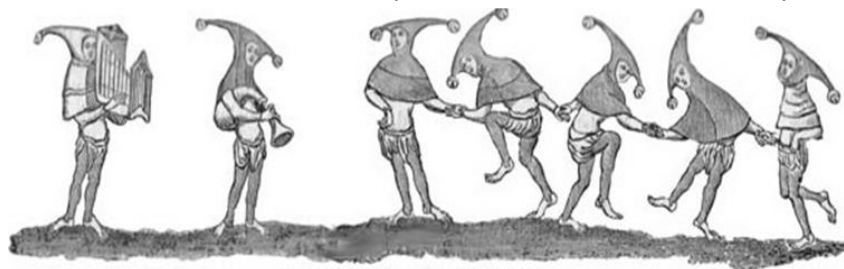
- "History and The Morris Dance" by John Cutting
- "The History of Morris Dancing 1458 – 1750" by John Forrest
- "The Morris Books" by Cecil J. Sharp
- "Ribbons, bells and squeaking fiddles" by Keith Chandler, (who joined Kennet in 1972)
- "Russell Wortley" by The Cambridge Morris Men
- "Six Fools and a Dancer" by Anthony G. Barrand
- "What You Didn't Know About" Morris" and many other papers by the wonderful Roy Dommett (who we were proud to have as an honorary member of Kennet).

The late Roy Dommett's input at various stages of this booklet was absolutely invaluable and has led to a much improved and more thoughtful document. But he certainly did not subscribe to all my foolish opinions and irreverence! But more of Roy later...

We are also very fortunate in Reading to have accurate transcriptions of several church wardens' medieval records published by Charles Kerry in 1883 and The Garry's in 1893, and the original documents in the Berkshire Records Office. Being the [Morris Ring Website](#) Editor has also helped!

## Foolish Origins

As the Fool to The Kennet Morris Men, one attractive theory is that The Morris had its origins in "A Fool's Dance", an illustration of which is preserved in The Bodleian Library dated 1344.



61. A Fool's Dance. - XIV. Century

A vestige of the fool's dance, preserved in a MS. in the Bodleian Library, written and illuminated in the reign of King Edward III. and completed in 1344.

Early descriptions of the dances describe individual high leaping and gesturing as the main features, with the Fool prominent and usually a "Lady" being, literally, the centre of the dance. Fighting mimed action is also described, which may be the origin of modern day stick dances, and circular movements beating time were pictured, and always including bells. Interestingly the Fool's Jig and Buffoon dances practiced today contain many of these features, although he no longer gets the lady (not that that was ever a bonus as it was often a man dressed up).

Mr Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes of the People of England" first appeared in 1801. Apart from writing about Morris Dancing - considered a sport at the time, he recalls:

*"The fool's dance, or a dance performed by persons equipped in the dresses appropriated to the fools, is very ancient, and originally, I apprehend, formed a part of the pageant belonging to the festival of fools. This festival was a religious mummerly, usually held at Christmas time; and consisted of various ceremonials and mockeries." I rest my case.*





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## Less Foolish Origins

If one is to rely on evidence alone, there is no record of rural Morris before 1494. As there is much written history of life in England before that, with no mention of Morris, the experts have to conclude it didn't exist. There appear to have been various types of dance known as Morris developing separately in municipal processions, May Games and maypole dances in London and elsewhere in the mid fifteenth century, and there is much evidence that it was danced in the English Royal Courts towards the end of the century. The churches sponsored fundraising events around this time featuring the Morris in Robin Hood Games and Church Ales, especially in Reading.

It can also safely be said that the Morris you see these days would not have looked like the Morris danced before 1850. During the 19th Century, all traditional folklore, folksong and associated customs were highly pasteurised and sterilised by the Victorians to fit in with their version of a pastoral and romantic England. (Pastoralised?) The abundance of folksong with the chorus lines of "Hey Nonny No" and other such nonsense was a result of the gentility censoring more earthy traditional words as they promoted their imagined golden age of Albion and England's Green and Pleasant Land.

## Which One's Morris?

Even the name Morris is a mystery. Some claim that it is a corruption of Moorish, indicating that the dances may have had their origins somewhere from North Africans and their occupation of parts of southern Europe, Spain in particular. Or it may simply refer to the dancers' practice of blackening their faces with burnt cork or soot as a simple disguise (as in much ritual dance, the dancers were considered to be someone other than their usual selves while they were dancing). Certainly King James IV of Scotland came to the throne in 1488 and took an English wife, Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry VII of England and many "blackamoors" were present at his court. Some worked as servants or (possibly) slaves, but others seem to have been invited guests or musicians.

King James Treasurer's accounts reveal:

*To celebrate Shrove Tuesday in 1505, several Africans including a 'taubronar' (drummer) and a choreographer were present in Edinburgh. Twelve dancers (including Italians) performed in specially made black-and-white costumes costing £13 2s 10d.*

So do the origins of this most English of traditions have beginnings in Moorish dancing, performed by Italians, Moroccans and Scottish courtiers, in Scotland? I prefer Foolish theories!

A problem with all research is the lack of written record, and whilst Moorish sounds like Morris, much history passed before Morris becomes a common term for the dance we know today. And the written records were often account books, where the numbers were more important than the words. Delving into historical hand-written manuscripts you can find Morris spelt in dozens of different ways: moruske, morres, moresdaunce, moreys, morisse, morisk, moresk, etc. – and that's when you can read their writing. Which one's Morris indeed!







The illustration “The Morris Dancers” is taken from Robert Chambers “The Book of Days” published in 1869 clearly showing the main characters: Maid Marian, Friar Tuck, the Hobby Horse, a musician playing pipe and tabor, six dancers and, of course, The Fool. Or does it? Despite the title, it is currently thought that this reconstruction from several other sources actually represents a May Game! You’ll have to finish this history to see the possible origin of this early cut and paste job.







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## Some Actual Facts

The earliest confirmation of a performance of Morris Dancing in England dates from London on 19th May 1448, when Moryssh daunsers (yes - another spelling) were paid 7 shillings for their services.

The reference occurs in the Wardens' Accounts and Court Minutes and is part of a set of payments made to entertainers, and for food and drink, by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths at their annual feast on St Dunstan's Day. They could afford it!

A tapestry makes another early reference to Morris in England on 31 October 1448, in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Henry VI. Inventories for Caistor Castle, Norfolk have records of a tapestry depicting a morris dance:

- (31st Oct) 1448: the morysk Daunce
- 1459: the morysch daunce
- 1462: the Morys daunce

Before these discoveries, the earliest reference was to Alice Wetenhale, a widow from Bury St Edmunds, in her will of 1458: "*I leave to my daughter Catherine ... 3 silver cups, sculpted with a moreys daunce, with one lid for them*".

There is no mention anywhere of any ritual significance in The Morris at this early or any later period, nor that it was in anyway associated with a survival of an older culture. What is apparent is that it was a recognisable description that any reader would understand, and possibly time-worn. However, Roy Dommett compellingly pointed out that these are probably exotic imports and not evidence of local dancers.

## The Royal Court

However persuasive, past suggestions that The Morris was first brought by notables, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, John of Gaunt or even Catherine of Aragon, are not supported by any evidence and the dates would be wrong. But Henry VII was exiled in France before gaining the crown and could have been exposed to a form of The Morris there; we know it was performed later at his court in England.

There are many accounts of several styles of Morris being danced in the time of Henry VII and the following Tudor dynasty, usually performed by professional troupes with frequent mention of the importance of The Fool. You can't have too much of a good thing. The styles included processions as part of elaborate costumed pageants (often incorporating tableaux borrowed from tournament spectacles popular in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries), combative dances competing for the favour of a Lady, and more amorous displays in circular formations leading to a prize giving. Did I mention the Fool was usually the star attraction?

Later this led to the appearance of Morris in Masques, or "disguising". This latter form, which possibly evolved from Mummers plays at court in the fourteenth century, involved complex mimes, masquerades and face-masks. The earliest is recorded in 1377 for Prince Richard which included







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separate dances by the Mummers and courtiers. Border Morris dancers often claim this as a reason for blacking-up their faces – I'll leave you to decide.

Other than possibly imitating the peasantry, these displays have no direct evidence of being part of a folk tradition or originating in rural dance. It started to fall out of fashion by the time Elizabeth I came to the throne. Although she was able to enjoy stage plays including Morris (including a couple by Will Shakespeare), the influence of the Puritans began to have an effect in courtly circles. This didn't stop the Earl of Leicester including a Bride-Ale with *"a lively moris dance, according to the ancient manner: six dancers, Maidmarian, and the Fool"* (him again) in his attempt to woo the good Queen Bess at his pageants at Kennilworth *"surpassing anything ever before seen in England"*.

## The Towns

The first documented mention of an actual dance in the streets is in the accounts of London's Midsummer Watch procession of 28<sup>th</sup> June 1477, sponsored by The Drapers Guild. The morris dancers received seven shillings for two night's work in this, the forerunner of The Lord Mayor's show. Not bad, when a craftsman would earn only sixpence a day. The dance is not described, only the payments, but given the context, it is likely to have been a martial style procession, not the "set" dances we now display in the South of England. The Watches were incorporated by Henry III in 1253 to counter night-time muggings. The trade guilds were charged with raising these and organised rather splendid and very popular processions to demonstrate their preparedness. The Morris described featured swords and even daggers and processions regularly included hobby-horses, very much a part of today's Morris (the hobby-horse, not the swords and daggers).

The dancers were hired for the occasion in teams of six or eight and provided with costumes and bells "in gorgeous fashion" – it was The Guild of Drapers! In the period 1521 – 1541 there were at least five companies of dancers active. It is very unlikely these were "plebeian" morris, but the middle classes and minor liverymen, honoured to accompany London's finest and richest, often escorting them from their town houses to join the processions. There are similar contemporary accounts of The Morris featuring in Midsummer and other processions in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in Chester, Salisbury, Wells, and Wolverhampton - even on occasion in Edinburgh.

May Games were a feature of London life in the late seventeenth century, and might be seen as a replacement to the watch processions that had by then been lost. The name applies to the appearance of the may-flower and might be held any time from April to June, and the records usually include morris dancing, not always complementarily:

*"April 1661. Under the new May pole in the Strand, 41 yards high, in the balconie that was made about on storie high, were wine, musick, and under it a knot of morris dancers, the worst that ever were."* (From The Diurnal of Thomas Rugg 1659 - 1671)

As a Fool, the Lord of Misrule processions and Feasts of Fools were a part of town life that I wish we hadn't lost, suppressed as they were by Victorian political correctness. These were important winter festivals in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and in contrast to the order of the





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Midsummer processions, they represented disorder, revelling in turning upside the normal hierarchies. A Fool became king for a day (often unfortunately to referred to as the vice - short for Vice-Lord of Misrule – but better than the dizzard – a dizzy person), choir boys were elected as mock bishops and mayors gave way to The Lord of Misrule – often accompanied by The Morris; a cunning way to allow the underclass to give vent to the inequalities of the era.

These activities were sanctioned, and indeed encouraged by the authorities, who would employ the players and dancers and provide costumes. The first Lord of Misrule to be recorded in England appears in the accounts of Henry VII for Christmas 1491 and was popular in court for another sixty years, as it was on the streets of the capital. It prevailed in many country estates and homes of the landed gentry for a lot longer, until being ousted by the Victorian sense of decorum.

## The Church

The Church was keen on the old customs and the Morris and records exist of many Church Ales with dancers or of equipping Morris Dancers with bells or ribbons. The fact the Church adopted the Morris has inevitably led to suggestion that The Dance had an earlier pre-Christian heritage and was adopted to tempt in the pagan peasantry; attractive - but again, unsupported by any evidence.

What is attractive to Kennet research is the wealth of evidence in our area. In documentary terms, the Morris centre of activity moved from London up the Thames Valley in the early sixteenth century with dozens of references stretching from Richmond to Reading. The earliest record in Reading is found in St Lawrence Churchwarden records for the year 1513. The details below are taken from Charles Kerry's History of St Lawrence, Reading's Municipal Church, written in 1883. Dedication day will have been 10 August – St Lawrence's feast day (or St Laurence as the church is now known).

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### Sports, Pastimes, Mysteries, &c.

#### Church Ale.

The ancient records of St. Lawrence abound with references to the sports and pastimes of our ancestors. The various games and exhibitions appear to have been under the special patronage of the Churchwardens as the chief parochial officers in those days, and were resorted to by them as a means of obtaining money for the discharge of their annual liabilities. The commonest of these sports was the Morris Dance, which seems to have accompanied all other diversions. It was frequently joined to processions and pageants, and especially figured in the festivities and gambols of May Day. The following extracts supply many graphic details of a performance which requires but little mental effort to reanimate:—

1513. "It. payed for a hope (hoop) for the joyaunt and for ale to the Moreys dawnc's on the dedication day ij<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. payed to the Mynstrells for iijij days xxvij<sup>d</sup>."
1509. "It. for bells for the Morece dauncers iij<sup>d</sup> vj<sup>d</sup>." ("These bells were attached to the elbows and points of the dress and specially to garters for the legs & ankles. . . . They were of unequal sizes and differently denominated, as the fore-bell, the second bell, the treble, the tenor, &c., and mention is also made of double bells."—Strutt, 224.)
- "It. for iij hatts for the Morece dauncers vj<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. for fyve ells of Canves for a cote for made Maryon at iij<sup>d</sup> ob. the ell, xvij<sup>d</sup> ob."
- "It. for iij yerds of bockerham for the morece dauncers xij<sup>d</sup>."
1530. "It. for a grosse of bells for the morece dauncers iij<sup>d</sup>."
- 1541-2. "Payd for lyverys & payntyng the mores cotes xj<sup>d</sup>."

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SPORTS, PASTIMES, MYSTERIES, ETC. 227

1553. Debts—"It. upon Jolin Saunders, th'appells of the mores dauncers. He saith he deluyed them to M<sup>r</sup> Buklond."

This relates to an inquiry made in Q. Mary's time regarding the alienation of church goods.

From the mention of Maid Marian it will at once appear that the Robin Hood play accompanied the Morris dance. The principal characters were Robin Hood, Little John, Will Stukeley, Maid Marian, Friar Tuck and Much, the Miller's son, who seems to have played the Fool. This performance was especially associated with the festivities of May Day.

- 1498-9. "It. rec. of the gaderyng of Robyn Hod xix<sup>d</sup>."
- 1501-2. "It. rec. of the May play callyd Roby Hod on the fayre day vj<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. payed to mynstrells at the chosyng of Robyn Hod vj<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. payd to Willm Stayner for ij<sup>d</sup> (200) lyuays viij<sup>d</sup>." (The liveries were badges, ribbons, or other tokens worn by the performers.)
- "It. payed for cc lyverys & c pynnyng ayenst maydaye vj<sup>d</sup>."
- 1501-2. "It. payed to Wylm Stayn<sup>r</sup> for makyng vp of the maydaye ban<sup>n</sup> cloth, viij<sup>d</sup>."
- 1503-4. "It. rec. of the gaderyng of Robyn Hod x bussells malt p<sup>r</sup> c v<sup>d</sup>." (for the brewing of the church ale).
- "It. rec. of the gaderyng of the same Robyn Hod i b3 of whete p<sup>r</sup> c, xij<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. rec. of the gaderyng of the scid Robyn Hod in money, xlix<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. payed to an harp on the church holy day, iij<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. payed for bred & ale to Robyn Hod & hys copany the 5 day, iijij<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. payed for a cote to Robyn Hod, v<sup>d</sup> iijij<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. payed to a Taberer on Philips Day & Jacob (May Day) for his wagis mete & drynk & bed, viij<sup>d</sup>."
- "It. for mete & drynk to Robyn Hod and his copany xvj<sup>d</sup>."

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The text, translated as best I can, reads:

*"The ancient records of St. Lawrence abound with references to the sports and pastimes of our ancestors. The various games and exhibitions appear to have been under the special patronage of the Churchwardens as the chief parochial officers in those days, and were resorted to by them as a means of obtaining money for the discharge of their annual liabilities. The commonest of these sports was the Morris Dance, which seems to have accompanied all other diversions. It was frequently joined to processions and pageants, and especially figured in the festivities and gambols of May Day. The following extracts supply many graphic details of a performance which requires but little mental effort to reanimate:*

1513. *Item paid for hoop for the giant and for ale to the Morris Dancers on the dedication day 3 pence"*  
*Item paid to the Minstrels for 4 days 12 pence*
1529. *Item for bells for the Morris Dancers 3 shillings and 6 pence.*  
*Item for 3 hats for the Morris Dancers 6 pence.*  
*Item for 5 ells (about 5.7m) of Canvas for a coat for Maid Marian at 3 pence per ell, 17 pence*  
*Item for 3 yards of buckram for the Morris Dancers 12 pence.*
1530. *Item for a gross (144) of bells for the Morris Dancers 3 shillings*
- 1541-2 *Paid for liveries & painting the morris coats eleven pence.*
1553. *Debts— Item upon John Saunders, the apparel of the Morris Dancers. He said he delivered them to M. Buklund.*

The text then gives the accounts for the expenditure for the Robin Hood Play, to which the Morris Dance appears to have attached itself in Reading and elsewhere. A few texts exist of the plays starring the figures of later ballads, Robin, Friar Tuck, Little John and of course, Maid Marian. The latter appears in the dance and will become a definitive figure of the rural dance until the 18 century – but was not always played by a woman! Friar Tuck often doubled as The Fool.

Accounts here and elsewhere confuse payments to the dancers and the players and it is very likely they were members of the same companies, or at least interchangeable. John Cutting argues that just because he's danced for the Townswomen's Guild, it doesn't make him a townswoman, but I doubt his side and the TG appeared regularly together with interchangeable characters. The churchwarden's accounts record payments to Robin Hood players from 1498, and Morris dancers from 1513, but the first connection between the two comes in 1529 when a coat for Maid Marian was part of the list of payments made to the Morris dancers, so it likely they were the same company – just that the dancers weren't paid in the early days!

In 1506 the Robin Hood Company travelled from Finchampstead, 10 miles south of Reading. We cannot be certain whether they were based there or it was a travelling troupe's previous venue, but if the former, they are the first morris side on record in our area – and they received a free supper.

St Lawrence Accounts for 1506:

*" It. payed to Thomas Taberer on the dedicacon day for his wagis mete and drynke, x<sup>d</sup>.*

*" It. payed for a supper to Robyn Hod & his company when he cam from ffynchamsted, xvijij".*





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One entry to bring a smile to a morris man's face is for 1503/ 4 for 10 bushells of malt for the Church Ale, sufficient to provide 200 gallons of good beer for The Robin Hood Play. Although dancers were not mentioned in these accounts, I'm sure they would not be far away from this temptation!

Those were the days!

Transcripts of the Reading's St Mary's Church Wardens' Accounts for 1556 - 1557 show "*It'm payed for the morrysdauncers*" – meat, drink, bells and coats. For the Whitsun and May Church Ales, and thought to be the earliest record of a hobby horse with the Morris – Dobbin's original ancestor?

Other paymentes.		It'm payed to the minstrelles and the hobby horse uppon Mayday ... ..	
		It'm payed for the morrysdauncers and the mynstrelles mete and Drinke at whitsontyde payed to them the Sondag after mayday ...	
pd' for v peir of Showes for the morrisdauncers...	... ..	iiij <sup>s</sup> .	
payed more at that tyme	... ..		viiij <sup>d</sup> .
pd' for iij bushells of wheat	... ..	ix <sup>s</sup> .	
pd' for a Lode of fflagottes	... ..	ij <sup>s</sup> .	viiij <sup>d</sup> .
paied to willson the minstrell...	... ..		xv <sup>d</sup> .
pd' for Spice	... ..		xij <sup>d</sup> .
pd' for iiij <sup>r</sup> dosen belles for the morrysdauncers...	... ..	ij <sup>s</sup> .	
pd' to Hayles the Coke	... ..		xiiij <sup>d</sup> .
pd' to one for Caryng of the Tables and Trescells into the Church	... ..		ij <sup>d</sup> .
pd' for the minstrilles bedd	... ..		iiij <sup>d</sup> .
pd' for veniger and salte	... ..		ij <sup>d</sup> .
pd' for meat at whitsontide	... ..	x <sup>s</sup> .	iiij <sup>d</sup> .
pd' for ij <sup>o</sup> Barrells of bere	... ..	vj <sup>s</sup> .	
pd' for Sowing of the morryse Cottes <sup>1</sup>	... ..		vij <sup>d</sup> .
pd' for ale	... ..		iiij <sup>d</sup> .

ij<sup>o</sup> = 2 barrels of beer!

Church Ales, as well as being a great occasion for all, were a massive fundraiser. Ingredients for the feast and the beer were usually donated or tithed, and then sold to the revellers. Entertainments would include Kings Games, May Games, Robin Hood plays, Summer Lords (another version of Lords of Misrule) and May Queens. As well as Whitsuntide, ales were held at Hocktide (post-Easter), Corpus-Christi (June), Saints' Days and Christmas – in fact for any excuse to replace falling income from tithes as land enclosure took its toll.

Churchwarden accounts also detail payments to Morris Dancers or for their costumes in Thatcham (1566), Wargrave (1570), Bray (1623) and Marlow (1612). The latter hired their morris coats and bells to Bisham. These were expensive and valuable items that were significant investments by the churches and could be a money earner in their own right.







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Church proscription of The Morris, and other forms of “frivolous” pastimes thought devious by the Elizabethan Puritans, began at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Various “visitations” had begun earlier sponsored by the Archbishop of York, Edmund Grindal, even though a relatively moderate church leader. Following Elizabeth’s excommunication he was appointed to eliminate any superstitions that might be considered popery, or a “profane activity interfering with the church’s Christian purpose”. Injunctions were placed on the Winchester Diocese in 1584 and again for good measure in 1597.

*“Item that the minister and churchwardes shall not suffer anye lords or sommer Lordes or ladyes or anye disguised persons or others in christmasse or at may gammes or anye minstels or morice dauncers or others at Ryshebearinges or at any other tymes to comevnreverently into anye churche or churchyard and ther daunce or playe any vnseemelye partes with scoffes ieastes wanton gestures or rybaulde talke namely in the tyme of divine service or of anye sermon”*

This would have directly affected the Reading churches and led to a massive decline in records of the dance until about 1660. Interestingly, in Banbury records show the edicts were able to be resisted given its “peculiar” church status and this was supported by the Sheriff of Oxfordshire. This may be one reason why in Reading we have no recorded traditional style, whilst in the Cotswolds the dance survived for the generations to come ... a Foolish theory?

Philip Stubbes, an Elizabethan Puritan, condemned the frivolities of Morris Dancing:

*“...its performer wear liveries of green, yellow or some other light wanton colour.....and as though not gawdy enough.....they bedecke them-selves with scarffes, ribbons, and laces. This done they tie about either leg 20 or 40 bells with rich handkerchiefs in their hands.....  
.....they strike up the Devils Dance withal, then march these heathen company towards the church and churchyard, their pipers piping, drummers thundering, their stumps dancing, their bells jingling, their handkerchiefs swinging about their heads like madmen.....”*  
(Philip Stubbes, Anatomie of Abuses, 1583)

So what we do know is that the Puritan leadership disapproved of us (they disapproved of most things) and tried to stamp out the Morris often labelling it as pagan and the work of devils incarnate (despite any real evidence of it being a pre-Christian ritual). As popery, the common enemy, was also held to be devilish superstition, The Morris was any easy target. It became a political football, especially after the fall from favour of Grindal and his replacement by the pro-traditional, anti-puritan, John Whitgift as Archbishop of York. In Elizabethan times The Morris could either be innocent fun or the road to Hell, lawful or unlawful, depending on the day, the time or the place. In the following Stuarts’ period of history it became even more complicated with Morris, Maypole and Ales being actively encouraged in a proclamation by James I in 1618, so long as it was “*in due and convenient time, without impediment or neglect of divine service*”. But at the same time Puritan Ministers were attacking these practices (and thus the state) such as William Prynne in 1633:

*“The way to heaven is too steepe, too narrow for men to dance in, and keep revel rout: No way is large or smooth enough for capering Roisters, for jumping, skipping, dancing Dames, but that broad*



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*beaten plawesant road that leads to Hell. The gates of Heaven is to strait, the way to blisse to narrow, for whole roundes, whole troopes od Dancers to march in together: Men never went as yet by multitudes, much less by Morrice-dancing troopes to Heaven: Alas there are but few who finde that narrow way; they scarce goe two together."*

This polemic led to his ears being cut off and imprisonment in the Tower – be warned before thinking of publicly criticising us!

## The Countryside

The loss of Church support not only left dancers without financial support for expensive costumes, bells and shoes, but also the popular churchyard venues and the well promoted festivities. Despite this the Thames Valley morris scene appears to have flourished, according to records from Reading, Bray, Marlow and Richmond, and tours of morris sides were common, as illustrated below. It has been suggested the dancers had travelled from Abingdon - or that they were the artist's imagination!



*Detail from the Thames at Richmond with the Old Royal Palace c.1620*

An analysis of this scene by the eminent Morris historian, John Forrest, suggests that even these simple costumes must have set each man back about 3 shillings at a time when a shilling a day was the most a labourer could hope to earn. From Marlow church records we can tell that the parish no longer purchased or retained costumes after 1621, in common with many churches and so this would be some investment which would have to be exploited. Some were fortunate enough to find sponsorship from wealthy landowners who gained some standing in the community by supporting this curious old custom. Others relied on the Fool's collecting ability. (John Cutting unkindly suggests that the spoon or ladle he uses in the picture above is *"to increase the distance between a smelly fool and his slightly less smelly donor."*)





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Elsewhere the Cotswold Games were first held in about 1600 above the town of Chipping Campden, on Dover's Hill. In 1611 the games were taken over by Robert Dover who moved to the area (some coincidence!) as a protest against the growing Puritanism of the day. These sports were referred to by writers in a book of 1636 as "Mr. Robert Dover's Olimpick Games upon Cotswold-Hills". The games were held on Thursday and Friday of Whit-Week, or the week of Whitsuntide. They continued for many years until about the time of Dover's death and featured dance competitions which would no doubt have been governed by rules. Was this the origin of "sides" and "teams" and, maybe, the introduction of sets of 6 dancers? Unfortunately no rule book can be found, so this is just another Foolish theory?

Morris was able to attach itself to secular gatherings such as bride ales, Whit ales and wakes, but records are sparse and not always reliable. Indeed, the lack of records of less public occasions is inevitable in these times and it doesn't necessarily follow that Morris was in decline. More likely that Morris Men and their followers were "literally-challenged". Given the laws about begging and disorderly conduct, discretion was often required - but not always observed - and so we do have records of prosecutions of dancers across the country, some in graphic, but possibly biased, detail.

*"... three hundred persons or there aboutes were assembled and gathered together in a Riotous and Routous Warlicke and very disorderly manner with Musketts pistols swords drawne and other unlawful weapons, who upon Munday the said 17<sup>th</sup> of May did march together to the pishe of Pewsey and there very disorderly daunced the Morrice daunce and committing severall other misdemeanours there as drinkeing and Tipling in the Inn and Alehouse till mano of them were drunke."* (Wiltshire Quarter Sessions of 1652 concerning events in Marlborough)

Teams were representing specific villages and were probably beginning to evolve their own styles of dance and dress. To avoid being classed as "sturdy beggars" as defined by the wonderfully named Elizabethan "Act for Punishing Rogues Vagabonds And Sturdy Beggars" it was important that the dance had to be skilful enough to be worthy of soliciting monies. There are frequent literary references to rural morris with the locals cheering "For our town", and we know of local competitions such as this local notice appearing in Epsom, Surrey around 1702:

*"At Epsom Old Wells ... on Whitson Tuesday will be Moris Dancing Set against set, for lac'd Hats, at 10 a Clock, with other diversions."*

And later in Gloucester in 1744:

*"NOTICE is hereby given That on Whitsun-Monday next, at the Sign of the Swan, In Cown-allins, near Fairford, Gloucestershire, will be given a HAT of a Guinea Price, to be play'd for at Backsword, by five or seven Men of a side and that Side that can break the most Heads shall be entitled to the Hat...*

*Likewise, on the Morrow, there will be six exceeding good KNOTS to be Morrice-danc'd for, Free Gift, and Six Pairs of Gloves to be Bowl'd for at Nine-Pins."* (Gloucester Journal 1<sup>st</sup> May 1744)





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Touring sides, by their nature, had to create their own spectacle in the absence of church organised ales. There is sufficient evidence in the form of play texts featuring rural morris of a typical show:

- They process into town with loud music, probably dancing in single file
- A comic speech would be given by The Fool (who else?)
- The dance would begin – for as long as there was a crowd to enjoy it
- The hat or the Fool's Ladle would be passed around
- The dancers would process away – quite possibly to the nearest Inn!

## The Pub

People ask why we are to be so often found dancing outside or resting after our exertions inside a pub: because it's traditional – no other reason. And anyway, you will recall, from the outset the Church was to blame for forcing ale upon us.

Perhaps the earliest evidence of this ancient association is from one Dorothy Gardiner in her Sandwich history (that's enough pub grub jokes) who tells of the evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1526:

*"... the rioters danced a morrice about the town, with swords and bucklers, and Henry Booll [the mayor who enjoyed defying the King's authority] gave them wine at a tavern."* The beer was probably off.

Another early reference is from N. Saynt, a dancer in 1589 whose side toured the Herne and Canterbury area of Kent. He, and others, had to give his testimony to the mayor of Canterbury for performing without a licence when dancing outside his house on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May, after a four day excursion. John Forrest believes that it is the first rural morris tour on record:

*"... being Friday they came to Bridge to the alehouse & there lay: & from thence came to Canterbury to the sign of the George".* They didn't complete the tour, which had been planned to continue on the Sunday.

Publicans were quite likely to use morris dancers in order to attract customers to their place of business. Prior to the annual hiring fair at Great Brington in September 1747, for example, it was announced:

*"for the Diversion of all Gentlemen, Ladies, and others, on the Statute Day will be the famous Blakesley Morrice in performance at The Black Swan."*

You will remember (did I mention the test paper to follow this history?) that at The Sign of the Swan in Coln St. Aldwyn *"six exceeding good KNOTS to be Morrice-danc'd for"*. Who could resist such an offer? Maybe the team from Kencot, who nearly a hundred years later regularly had an away fixture with their Langford rivals for a cake presented by the landlord of The Five Bells. Cake or Knots? Beer please.







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Even when not at the pub, ale or stronger, was a rarely refused form of patronage. Keith Chandler writes that alcohol was considered by certain dancers as a prerequisite for dancing. William 'Merry' Kimber at Headington Quarry observed that *'You were never a morris dancer unless you had plenty of beer, there was no time for food'*; and George Hathaway of Bledington believed that *'you couldn't dance unless you were three part'*.

There is a much maligned theory that you can sweat the alcohol out of your system by vigorous exercise. Kennet are carrying out extensive practical research on the subject and hope to have some preliminary results at some (distant) point in the future. As Henry Franklin said of the Leaffield men:

*"They capered as high off the ground as that table, always as high as they could. Then the sweat ran down their faces; then they'd drink again, and the sweat ran down again!"*

At Bampton the foreman of the dance set was well aware that it was *'the man with the fiddle we have to depend upon if any of us gets a bit the worse for beer. He can put us right by playing about two hard dances and make us sweat'*, advice Kennet's musicians follow to this day - at least that's their excuse.

The Bampton lads were also written about in the late 1800's when their annual Whit Monday tour

*"started very early at Weald Farm and by the time that they had worked their way past all the cider and home-made wine at the cottages...on Weald Lane to The Elephant and Castle ... the fiddler was the only non-dancer able to stay sober."* They had travelled about half a mile!

Writing of morris dance activity in Abingdon prior to 1868 (then proudly in Berkshire), one eye-witness Keith Chandler records commented that he had *'always seen drunkenness ensue in all concerned.'* In 1870 it was noted how the dancers had *'kept up we may say a continuous dance, their strength being sustained...by copious supplies of good English ale from the different public houses'*; ten years later, the occasion had featured *'several days Morris dancing in the streets and the imbibing of a considerable quantity of beer and other liquor.'*

These days, although the Abingdon Men still try their best to maintain this tradition, it has become much harder since so many of Abingdon's pubs, and its brewery, have closed.

One Abingdon man, Dave Spiers actually features on a morris pub sign – not in Abingdon, but in Strathbogie, Victoria, Australia. It is called the Morris Man and Dave's not only the star of the sign but there's a photo of him inside too. He met the landlord when he visited Abingdon in 1999 and a Morris friend of his danced there in 2010 and recognised the picture and sent this photo! I think there might be a pint waiting should Dave ever make this trip.





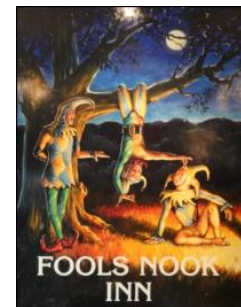
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Despite pub closures, there still are several pubs displaying their morris connections, the most famous in the morris world being the Morris Clown at Bampton, home to The Bampton Morris Men and a Grade II listed building. However, as this is a foolish but accurate history, I have to point out that it's only been called that since 1975 when it had been The New Inn for over 150 years (and before that The George). And as there are three Bampton sides, they each have their own home pub anyway.



Others hostleries include "The Morris Dancers" in Morris Green, Bolton and at Colne in Lancashire; singularly, "The Morris Dancer" near Ormskirk, Lancashire, at Tarporley, Cheshire and Romford, Essex and "The Morris Man" in Stafford. A pub of the same name in Northampton is sadly, some may say appropriately, now derelict.



But my personal favourite, being one of my youthful drinking haunts, was sadly closed Fools Nook Inn, near Macclesfield. It was such a wonderful place I named my house after it.

And three hostleries that I'm not certain of their traditional roots belong to ["The British Pub Morris"](#) chain, in Japan!

## The Hard Times of Old England

Rural Morris activities, or the record of them, saw a shift from the South East to the South Midlands during the period 1570 – 1630, perhaps driven away from Puritan strongholds to areas with more Royalist sympathies. There then is a real decline until a bit of a resurgence of rural morris in the Midlands, where wealthy landowners were a source of patronage in the first part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Agricultural change and the drift to the cities during the Industrial Revolution led to a further decline in morris dancing in rural areas and it was heading for extinction. By the end of the 19th century only a few village sides survived with an unbroken dancing history and even this was little known to the world at large. Dancers were now more likely to belong to families with a morris lineage or from the agricultural work place. The stereotype of "sons of toil" was no doubt popularised as the sons of merchants and farmers were unlikely to want to be identified with what some saw as thinly disguised begging.

But I will happily argue that these outposts of the tradition represented the survival of the fittest. Sides such as Abingdon (then in Berkshire), Adderbury, Bampton and Brackley, to name a few, had evolved a style of dance that though simple could at the same time be complex and varied, that may be wildly energetic or gently elegant, unique, but instantly recognisable as what we now call "The Cotswold Morris". Morris historian Keith Chandler reckons that "it was predominant in the South Midlands area from at least the early eighteenth century onwards. One hundred and fifty-two individual communities (towns, villages or hamlets) may be identified as having fielded a morris dance team." He's an ex-Kennet man so can also be trusted. However, in passing, Keith also refers to







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Alfred Williams who, in his copious writings on the nature of working-class culture in the Thames Valley, drew a distinction between that of the inhabitants north and south of the river. In 1923, for example, he wrote:

*"A notable difference between the inhabitants of the two sections of the valley is to be observed. Those of Wiltshire and Berkshire are rather more boisterous and spontaneous, more hearty, hardy, strong, blunt, and vigorous, and a little less musical; those of Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire are gentler, easier, softer in manner, but weaker, more pliable, and less sturdy than the others...This difference of character is very well illustrated by the diversity of pastimes in the two halves of the field: throughout Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire we had, as a general sport, morris-dancing; about Wiltshire and Berkshire the common amusements were back-swording and wrestling.*

*'I have no evidence,' he added, 'of morris-dancing in villages south of the Thames. Step-dancing was common, but not morris-dancing'.* I think he's trying to say *"Berkshire, born, Berkshire bred; strong in the arm and thick in the head."* As a Cheshire born Fool, I can't possibly comment.

Over the centuries the dancers had adopted and adapted the most entertaining of the urban processions, the courtly dances, country dance – no doubt some of them presented very tongue in cheek. In turn the other dancers would borrow from the Morris and courtly dances would often imitate, sometimes mockingly, these rustic displays. Tunes also moved back and forth between the different strands (musicians were often hired or travelled between teams) but became standardised in their construction, building up a repertoire of identifiable morris music from many sources. Competition between local sides would ensure standards were maintained, and no doubt encouraged innovation as those standards were raised. At Kirtlington twenty or more separate dance teams are known to have been present in order to compete for prizes of cakes and ribbons, while a similar number were at the final Ale held at Woodstock, in 1851. This is why, I'm sure you will agree, "Cotswold" remains far superior to any other form of Morris tradition.☺

## The Revival

Many of the village traditions would have been irretrievably lost if it had not been for the local responses to Queen Victoria's Jubilee and later national celebrations. Much of our knowledge is attributable to the Victorians' interest in folklore (even if they did try to sanitise it to fit their own ideals). Early in the 1800s there was much written by antiquarians, such as Strutt, Douce and Hone, often emphasising the quaintness and peculiarities of times past, especially those of the "primitive" rural classes. Unfortunately these mighty tomes were later seized upon as definitive references.

But this did encourage a number of folklore, folk music and folk dance academics and collectors to seek out and try to record and revive the country customs. This was the situation when Cecil Sharp "chanced upon"\* the Headington Quarry Morris Dancers on Boxing Day 1899 who apologised "for dancing out of season to make an honest penny". Up to that time Sharp had been a collector of "folk

*\*In fact Percy Manning had revived the Headington team who had arranged to dance at the cottage.*



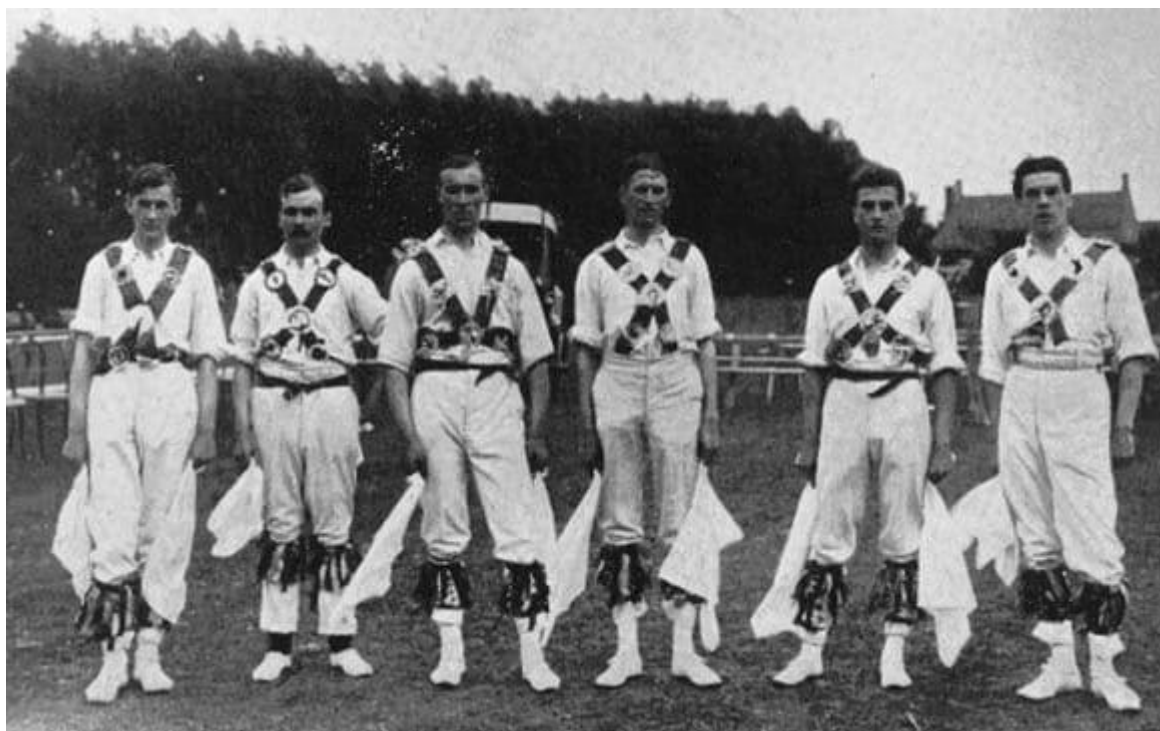


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song” but this single occasion eventually set him on a lifetime’s enthusiasm (some would say obsession) for all things Morris. He went on to form the English Folk Dance Society, now based in Cecil Sharp House. Now there’s another coincidence.

However there is much discussion about Sharp’s methods and motives – he was a Fabian, keen to extol the virtues of the peasant class for his middle-class audience. It does appear to have coloured his thinking about the evolution of the Morris – he much preferred the ancient, fixed ritual model. To this end he would perhaps seek out the views of “the true morris man” i.e. the oldest (and possibly, the most decrepit) dancer, and ignore the younger upstarts’ versions. He was perhaps overly concerned and highly defensive about the purity and Englishness of the tradition, attempting to prove that this ritual was central to our island life long before the foreign invasions of the past – including the Romans! But the volume and quality of his collections can only be admired (see David Sutcliffe’s biography for just how much – that I just might have [reviewed for the Morris Ring](#)).

Whatever the motives, the result was a significant revival of Cotswold Morris Dancing in England at the turn of the century, only to be savagely interrupted by the 1914/18 war. Many of the traditional and revival dancers lost their lives in this bloody conflict, including 4 members of Sharp’s display team, Percival Lucas, George Wilkinson, George Butterworth, and Reginald Tiddy.



Douglas Kennedy, George Butterworth, James Paterson, Perceval Lucas, Claud Wright and George Wilkinson.

Enthusiasm and interest was not quenched and interest spread again through society in the late 1920’s as England sought to become a land fit for heroes. This was helped in no small way by Mary Neal who taught the dance, originally with Sharp’s blessing, to her girls in The Espérance Society, a







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recreational association for young London seamstresses. Sharp himself revitalised the English Folk Dance Society and its many branches, travelling the country in post-great-war years lecturing and demonstrating dances and visiting Board of Education training colleges. This is not the place to discuss the rights and wrongs of women in Morris, or, as Roy Dommett would have it, that this was a reinvention for new circumstances, not a revival – I may be a Fool, but I'm not stupid!

A number of "Revival" (sorry Roy) Morris clubs came into being to support the few "Traditional" teams still dancing. These were generally made up of the middle-classes at play or sometimes academics living out history. Local evening classes run by the English Folk Dance Society would award certificates and medals, but were few and far between (the classes, not the medals). The EFDS held many classes in the Cotswolds and the Oxford branch provided many teachers to keep the classes going. Tours were again undertaken to take the Morris back to the streets by The Travelling Morrice. Their first six day tour (with tents and on bikes) ended in Adderbury on the 23 June 1924, tragically the day Cecil Sharp died. After this there were more informal gatherings held across the country, and in 1927 Thaxted in Essex was the chosen venue. It has remained an annual gathering place of Morris Men ever since, on the weekend following the Spring Bank Holiday.

In 1934 the Cambridge Morris Men invited five other revival teams to join them in the formation of a national organisation, the result was that Cambridge, Letchworth, Thaxted, East Surrey and Greensleeves met at Thaxted on the 11th May that year to institute The Morris Ring. The association was created very much in the image of Sharp's view of The Morris as a men's dance, to maintain its traditions and to preserve its history.

The proceedings of the Inaugural Meeting of the Morris Ring at Cecil Sharp House on 20th October 1934 were described by Walter Abson in the "First Log Book":

... to the tune of the Morris Call the men assembled in the Main Hall, one representative from each club occupying a seat in an inner ring of chairs, the dancers sitting in large rings outside. The following clubs were represented: Cambridge, Chelmsford, Clifton, Lads of Southwark, Letchworth, Liverpool, Greensleeves, Bovington, Oxford, St Albans, East Surrey, Thaxted and **Wargrave** (more of them in a moment), and Mr William Kimber of Headington was present as a guest of the Ring.

Other collectors and the Morris Ring have continued (and still are continuing) Sharp's work, and distinct variants of the Dance have been preserved from the Cotswolds, the Welsh borders, East Anglia, and the North West and North East of England.

The "Revival" teams ambled along, slowly gaining in popularity. The "Traditional" Teams carried on as they always had, because their fathers and grandfathers had done it and it was one of those things that had to be done. Their dancers were local farm workers, tradesmen and labourers, often members of the same family, with music sometimes being supplied by the occasional itinerant gypsy, while the "Revival" teams, mostly made up of academics and folklore enthusiasts continued to support and research the "Traditionals"





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## The Wargrave Morris Men – our forefathers

Late in 1933 a land-owner, Major Francis “Fanny” Fryer and “his man” Reginald Annetts, who had become interested in English folk-dancing while living near Newbury, moved to Wargrave Hall. Here they found neither country-dance movement nor Morris Club in existence, but regular (and separate) weekly practices for both kinds of dancing were soon begun by him to the sound of his pipe and tabor – making the pipes himself out of bamboo. Various local men and estate employees took part in the Morris practices, and visitors sometimes put in an appearance. Three local men proved to be stayers - John Gillet, Tom Jones, and Rae Jones, and later Fred Coxhead, who had done a good deal of dancing with Fryer and Reggie Annetts in the Newbury district, joined the Club.



"Fanny" Fryer  
Thaxted 1939  
(Abingdon Sash)



Wargrave Morris Men from Ray Annett's "rescued" collection

When the Morris Ring was formed in 1934, the Wargrave Morris Men were one of the Inaugural Members, and early in September 1936 the Ring met at Wargrave Hall, the Wargrave Morris Men being responsible for the local arrangements. All 38 attendees camped on the Major's (Major being a term he detested according to Roy Dommett) lawn which backed onto the Thames, Bill Kimber played for the instructional and Jinky Wells fooled on the tour. Henry and Percy Hemmings met them dancing in The Bury at Abingdon. The follow up party visited Tom Hemmings and also the Russells at Eynsham, and these contacts helped to spur their revivals in 1937. Fanny Fryer would continue his support as president of the Abingdon men for the rest of his days, but playing the new fangled melodeon, as he'd had to give up his piping for "lack of blow". (He was asthmatic and, according to his friend Lionel Bacon, may have been gassed in World War 1.)

With the aid of one, or sometimes two, guest dancers, the Club was able to dance in public on various occasions, for example at Brownlow Hill, Warfield, in October 1937, and at [Selborne](#) in July 1938 (as part of a pageant attended by 2000 spectators), and about this time the Club organized an evening's dancing tour of villages in the Lambourn valley. The same year the Wargrave men danced in Maidenhead and were met by a Wheatley Morris man who corrected their dances. Fryer's notes from this were passed to the revival of the Wheatley side. In July 1939, with one guest dancer, they







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performed the Boosbeck Sword-dance at the summer festival of the EFDS (Berkshire Branch). The music was provided by Fryer playing an accordion similar to that used by George Tremain, the musician of the traditional Boosbeck team. (*Ray Annetts has Francis's Hagstrom D/G Melodeon – a prized possession, Roy Dommett inherited another*) They attended Morris Ring Meetings at Oxford in 1951 during the week-end 14th-16th September and Salisbury 3rd - 5th September, 1954. They also danced in The Royal Albert Hall, Windsor E.F.D. & S.S. Festival May 26th 1951 and with South Berkshire Morris Men in Reading 26th March 1952. The Club did its best to resume the activities interrupted by the war, often jointly with Abingdon Morris Men and some of the men became members. The side eventually disbanded – the last recorded appearance was at Bradfield in April 1960. The remaining dancers became the nucleus of The Berkshire District Sword and Morris Club which begat Kennet. Francis Fryer died in January 1961 aged 73 after several years of poor health, but was still passionate about morris and Abington These are the known Wargrave Morris dancers:

First Name	Initials	Surname	Position	Year	Also	Year	Joined
Reg	R F	Annetts	Dancer	1933			Abingdon MM
John	J	Carter	Dancer				
Fred	F T	Coxhead	Dancer	1950			Kennet MM
Bryan	B	Coxhead	Dancer	1954			Kennet MM
John	J	Finch	Dancer	1951			Kennet MM
Michael	M	Finch	Dancer				Kennet MM
Francis	Major F E	Fryer	Musician	1933	Founder		Abingdon MM
John	J	Gillet	Dancer	1949	Bagman	1951	South Berkshire MM
Derek	D	Gowers	Dancer	1951			
Rae	R	Jones	Dancer	193?			
Tom	T	Jones	Dancer	193?			Abingdon MM
Bill	W H	Kent	Dancer	1951	Chauffeur	1951	Abingdon MM
Paddy	P W	O'Neill	Dancer				Kennet MM
Brian	B	West	Dancer	1952			Called Up

Paddy O'Neill set up a school morris club of school boys in Henley, The Ancalites. They were an excellent rapper side but adopted/revived the name Wargrave Morris when dancing Cotswold (encouraged by Ray Annetts). They attended EFDSS tours, and danced with Kennet 7th August 1972.

## South Berkshire Morris Men 1950 – 1966

Some mention should be made of this team, who were based in Newbury and during its life included several of the early Kennet men, including Bobby Burns and Paddy O'Neill, and on its demise several joined Kennet – Jack Pierce being one of them. The presence of this “forgotten” side was discovered during my research into the Wargrave team. They became members of the Morris Ring in 1950 at the Bedford Ring Meeting attended by Wargrave. They were regular Ring Meeting attendees during the 1950s and danced with Kennet and Wargrave at several Berkshire EFDSS Whitsun tours. It is no





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coincidence that Fanny Fryer had originally been a leading figure in Newbury folk circles before relocating to Wargrave Hall, and was president of the district EFDSS branch until his death.



South Berkshire MM dancing outside Hambleden St Mary's Church at the Midsummer Country Fair

And if you're thinking "Why South Berks if they're based in Newbury?", you have to remember the Boundaries Commission removed the 'leg' from the Berkshire boot in 1974 and with it annexed the Berkshire Downs, Wantage, Didcot, Faringdon, Wallingford, Abingdon and the Vale of the White Horse (which provided the county's emblem), allocating them into Oxfordshire. They have not been forgiven. For a full account see my Morris Ring Website article - [South Berkshire MM Uncovered](#).

## The Kennet Morris Men's Formation

In the 50's ex-members of Wargrave joined an Evening Class run by Daphne Green, an EFDSS (now The English Folk Dance and Song Society) instructor at the George Palmer School in Reading. Having tried names such as The Berkshire District Sword and Morris Club, The Men Of Kennet and The Kennet Valley Morris Men and they eventually formed The Kennet Morris Men in the autumn of 1957 under the Squireship of Bobby Burns (also known as Billy). An expert instructor, he held the office of club leader and teacher for 9 years. During this time the men very much danced for themselves and would only perform when invited to at "galas and feasts", the first of which was probably the Reading Festival at the Town Hall in March 1959. The side would perform at shows that could be carefully programmed and practiced with pre-selected dance teams – including at The







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN

Albert Hall. Some dancers had learned from teachers trained by Cecil Sharp or from EFDSS. A few had joined from other clubs, but were largely experienced men. The late John Finch, a Life Member and a Kennet fixture, recalled that those involved from the start were Fred Coxhead, Brian Coxhead, John Carter, Paddy O'Neill, himself and Michael Finch. Early additions were dancers Bill Franklin, Barry Pugh, Bob Steel, Julian Wilson, Francis Netley and Keith Francis, and musicians Ian Dunmur, Stan Vickers, Bobby Burns and Mike Quinn. Practices at Watlington House, Reading were generally to polish up or learn new dances, not to instruct novices.

Bobby was succeeded as Squire and Foreman, when he left to live in Abingdon, by Ian Dunmur who had joined the side in 1957. Ian remained foreman until 1983 and a stalwart of the side as dancer and musician until his retirement in 1993. He was elected a Life Member and, very memorably, last danced with us at our golden jubilee celebration in 2007, a year before his death in his beloved Lake District.

The folk revival and skiffle culture of the 1950's and 60's sparked an enthusiasm with the ordinary person for things "folksy" and the side attracted keen but inexperienced men to its ranks, and the emphasis turned to teaching and going out on informal tours. At the end of 1959 regular Monday night practices moved from Watlington House to a home in the back rooms of the now demolished Crown pub in London Street, where the members enjoyed beer at 1/7d a pint.



*Shinfield 1971*

*Left to right: Ray Annetts Ray Perry Bill Franklin Barry Goodey Jack Pearce Ian Dunmur Peter Crofts John Walford*







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



Our longest standing member, John Walford joined the side in January 1960, spending much of the time after 1979 inside Dobbin, the club's Hooden Horse. Now you know who it was!

We made him a Life Member in 2017, in recognition of his service and dedication. John – not Dobbin. John has also done sterling work researching the early days of Kennet, much of which is included in this chapter.



Dobbin proves useful at last on our 50th Anniversary 50 Pubs Bath to Reading Barge Holiday

We were elected to The Morris Ring and “danced in” at The Cheltenham Ring Meeting of 1962 where Paddy O’Neil received our Staff of Association. This was hosted by Gloucestershire Morris Men who had proposed our membership. Our kit was altered from white flannels to black breeches and in addition to brand new baldrics was a felt badge designed by Sylvia Pearce, of a brown stag with a green tree and a blue river on a white ground. This is still the basis for the current design and our logo. Before it was a simple red K! (See page 36).

Then came the major folk revival of the 1970’s which kicked off the formation of many Morris teams countrywide. It was during this time that many of the current Kennet side first donned baldrics. The increase in numbers led to the 1978 move to our current venue in St Mary’s Church Hall in Shinfield. Over 20 men joined in 1977 – 79 period! Another reason for the move, according to John Walford, was that ‘the frequent disappearances to obtain more liquid refreshment disrupted the practice’. By the way, a wonderful proposal in our 1979 AGM minutes demanded that we refuse to dance at any pub that charged more than 30 p per pint! Those were the days.

But we are still regarded as a team that knows how to maintain a wide repertoire of traditional dances, whilst not afraid to create new ones and to “improve in the Kennet Way” – good dancing and showing that we enjoy what we do.

Our Après Morris pub sessions of music and song have added to our reputation of a side that embraces the joy and fellowship of the morris world. We even have a song that describes us well ...







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



## KENNET LADS

(after Cornish Lads by Roger Bryant)

Cho: The Kennet lads are Morris Men  
And some of them are dancers too  
But when the knees and brain have gone  
What are the Kennet boys to do?

In Reading town we would perform  
Through rain and mist and lashing storm.  
Now damp and cold get to old fellas  
And we'll not dance without umbrellas.

We've tried Seven Seas cod oil compound  
And no sign of relief we've found.  
'Til a Loddon light ale is quickly downed  
And we soon find cure in a few more rounds.

The whingeing injured could play or sing,  
Then pass around the collecting tin.  
But if the crowds don't hear bells ring  
They'll not even give a farthing.

Now alcohol's reclaimed our minds  
And knees creak loudly – sometimes in time.  
Our younger men forsake Cotswold  
For the Border style – with girls I'm told.

Drumming and the tambourine  
Is the only sound we soon will hear,  
With painted face and ragged line...  
I think I'll have another beer.

But now we've new men to fill our shoes,  
Not yet affected by the booze  
And wherever Kennetshire is found  
The Kennet Men will fill with sound.

*Peter de Courcy*  
*July 2012*





# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



*End of Season Tour Salisbury 2018*

We had maintained a membership of about 30 men – a healthy, if aging number, until the blight of Covid, but unfortunately with lack of practice and fellowship, our number of active dancers is dwindling. We hope will keep the Morris alive in Reading for the foreseeable future – but new dancers and musicians are definitely a necessity. Although we retain the title of The Kennet Morris Men, all are welcome. Most people know us as just Kennet anyway.

If you want to keep our tradition going for another 500 years, there's only one way. Join the Morris – it doesn't have to be Kennet – but it would be great if you could!

One fact that is indisputable; if you believe dropping a coin in the Kennet's collecting bag will bring you the luck of the Morris, fertility for your crops and family, and that the sun will rise again tomorrow, they all may happen - if you repeat often enough. Forget all of this history – it's foolish ☺







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN

## The Reading 500 Day of Dance 2013

Kennet Morris Men felt St Lawrence's Churchwarden records for the year 1513 could not go unrecognised. The dedication day of 10th August – St Lawrence's feast day (or St Laurence's Church as it is now known) conveniently fell on a Saturday and we were able to celebrate the event exactly 500 years to the day. In preparation for the anniversary, a "Redding Moreys Dauncers" was formed by the Kennet Morris Men, dressed in authentic Tudor costume created for the occasion, performing dances reconstructed by Steve Rowley, an expert on dances of the period, and a past Kennet man.

We were joined by local sides Aldbrickham Clog, Borderline, Icknield Way, Garston Gallopers, Mayflower, OBJ, Shinfield Shambles and Yateley Morris Men.

The day began at 11:00am outside St Laurence's Church with a welcome by The Deputy Mayor of Reading Councillor Tony Jones followed by dancing by Kennet & Redding Moreys. St Laurence's Bell Ringers joined the celebrations with a peal or two. The medieval side repaired to The George (the only building of the era) where ale was ceremoniously purchased for 3 old pence!

Sides performed on the hour from noon until 3:00pm for about half an hour dancing at each of 4 spots – The Forbury Gardens, Broad Street (the performance area nearest to The Ale House), The Market Place and St Mary's Church precinct. The day concluded at 4:00 pm inside St Laurence's Church with a well attended Redding Moreys instructional passing down their ideas of medieval dance to wind up a thoroughly enjoyable, and sunny, day.







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN

## Roy Leonard Dommett CBE (25 June 1933 – 2 November 2015)

### A foolish memory

Roy Dommett was a longstanding friend of Kennet Morris Men and an honorary member. In the seventies he was much enamoured with his Sherborne research and decided the Kennet would become his demonstration side. We didn't have much say in it! From April '78, following a very full day's work shop, we fell in love with the tradition and the man. The big man's lightness and fleetness of foot still lives long in my memory. He was just the most beautiful dancer. Eventually we were able to perform to his standard – not an easy task – and Roy again decided that we would appear for the week in 1981 as a show side at Sidmouth. His only concession was that we could dance some other traditions, but we were there to dance his Sherborne.

**From Roy's autobiography ...**

Over a number of years Sherborne instructionals with the Kennett Morris raised them to the heights of an invite to Sidmouth and of course in my opinion the best Sherborne ever done!

As history would have it, that was my first season as Kennet's Fool and in the main arena at Sidmouth I first experienced Roy's other persona – Andy Pandy. We were gathered "back stage" ready for our first performance when the blue and white apparition appeared, informing us that he had decided to keep a close eye on us – in fact, he would join us on stage "if that was OK." You didn't question Roy.

We danced very well and I was fooling quite well too when Roy thought that two fools could have twice as much fun and a manic chase ensued around the stage. My youth kept me ahead of his pursuit, but I foolishly decided that perhaps he deserved a bladdering so I stopped to face him. Mistake. With a massive smile and one of his fantastic laughs he bowled me over and demonstrated his version of a belly flop – with me as his soft landing, perfectly synchronised with the end of the set. He pulled me up, somehow unhurt, we took our bows and enjoyed the applause and laughter. I always enjoyed his company ever since that day.

I'm still Kennet's Fool 40 odd years later – but none were as odd as that most wonderful year. And Sherborne's still my favourite tradition - and I always try to dance it as though the Big Man was still looking on.







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN

## A Fool for 40 Years

On the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1981 I first appeared as Fool for the Kennet Morris Men. 40 years later I'd forgotten but Kennet hadn't and had been planning to celebrate the anniversary for many months. I believe it was Peter Jones, a sharer of many, many car journeys, who had the idea of commissioning a green man (a slight obsession I have) likeness of me. He had persuaded Tony Winterbottom, an artist friend of our Squire Elect, cornered by Peter at Richard's wedding in September 2019, to take up the challenge despite his protests that he didn't even know what a green man was!! I am now the proud owner of that portrait – a Green Man with a very recognisable face. It was presented by the Four Horsemen of the Kennofficious at noon on the anniversary to your very surprised Fool (the proceedings of which would take too long to describe). What could top that? The Officers COVID compliant deputation did - with the most magnificent Green Man pottery plaque "likeness" lovingly crafted by William Martin, to whom I'll be forever grateful. Also to Peter Jones who (eventually) beat Bill into submission to produce the magnificent "pot". Apparently he really enjoyed the many challenges, despite having to gaze into my eyes for several months. I remain gobsmacked, humbled, but mainly very proud to belong to the Kennet Morris Men. And now, to cap it all they've only gone and elected me a Life Member, for services to Kennet and the morris world. What an honour and a privilege. *Thank you everyone*



*Covid Compliant Officer Deputation*







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



Date	Event
21/03/1959	First "official" performance as The Men of Kennet - the Town Hall for the Reading Festival
28/09/1959	Monday Night Practices moved from Watlington House to The Crown, London Street, Reading
04-06/09/1959	The Morris Ring Silver Jubilee Meeting - Headington
14/07/1962	Danced in - Cheltenham, Ring Meeting - Gloucestershire MM – Cuckoo's Nest, Ilmington
07-08/09/1963	Chichester Ring Meeting
11-13/09/1964	Winchester Ring Meeting
03-05/09/1965	100th Meeting of The Morris Ring – Oxford – display dance - Signposts
Spring 1965	Irish Tour of Dublin
06/05/1967	National Folk Week Grand Tour of Berkshire
07-09/07/1967	Brighton Ring Meeting
13-15/09/1968	Derby Ring Meeting
04/11/1968	First AGM, The Crown
27-29/06/1969	Stratford-upon-Avon Ring Meeting
August-1969	First Kennet Ale -The Lamb Inn, Theale
25/05/1970	First Yattendon May Bank Holiday display
10-12/07/1970	Exeter Ring Meeting
16-18/04/1971	Manchester Ring Meeting
03-05/09/1971	Ludlow Ring Meeting
02/06/1972	Thaxted Ring Meeting
07/07/1972	Tour with Wargrave Morris Men
22/09/1972	Sutton Coldfield Ring Meeting
08/06/1973	Beverley Quarter Century
25/01/1974	First Ladies' Night (or Club Dinner or Annual Dinner it had to be called) Wheel of Fortune , Theale
20/07/1974	Winchester Ring Meeting
06-08/09/1974	Headington Quarry Ring Meeting
13/09/1974	Handsworth (Sheffield) Ring Meeting
27/12/1974-07/01/1975	Reading Folk Syndicate Belgrade, Yugoslavia Week
07/05/1975	The Royal Albert Hall with Yugoslav National Dance Company
13/06/1975	Forest of Dean Ring Meeting
05/09/1975	Whitchurch MM Ring Meeting
03-05/10/1975	"Mouldiwarp" trip to Leverkusen, Germany
13/10/1975	John Finch elected Honorary Life Member
13/10/1975	Mick Bacchus presented Ring Staff Stand (made from wood from his Royal Oak, Ambleside
09/02/1976	Mike Cherry elected Honorary Member
09/02/1976	Mick Bacchus presented Silver Badge of Office to KMM Squire (Richard Wright)
20/08/1976	Cardiff MM Ring Meeting
11/09/1976	East Surrey MM Ring Meeting
02/01/1978	Practices moved from The Crown to St Mary's Church Hall, Shinfield.
April-1978	First Roy Dommett Sherborne Instructional, Arborfield
01/05/1978	First May Day Tour
14/07/1979	John Walford becomes keeper of The Horse
10/08/1979	Isle of Wight Ring Meeting







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



Date	Event
18 - 20/07/1980	First Kennet Weekend of Dance
20/10/1980	Roy Dommett made Honorary Member
Feb-1981	Kennet Ale revived
01/05/1981	Peter de Courcy's first appearance as The Fool, The Bottle & Glass, Binfield Heath
03/07/1981	West Somerset Ring Meeting, Minehead
24 - 26/07/1981	First Kennet Ring Meeting (191st), Shiplake
10 - 16/09/1981	Visit to Bagnols Sur Céze, France - La Respelido
08 - 16/07/1982	Return visit of Respelido to Readin
20/08/1982	Wessex Ring Meeting, Sherbourne, Dorset
12/08/1983	Isle of Wight Ring Meeting
22/07/1984	Preston Royal Ring Meeting, Rivington and meting Ripley MM for the first time on that coach!
17 - 19/08/1984	First Kennet Family Weekend
29/08-03/09 1984	Braunfels Newbury Twinning Jubilee visit to Germany
19/07/1985	Faithful City Ring Meeting, Worcester
30/05/1986	Thaxted Ring Meeting with Ripley, Lofty ... and his wife.
03/07/1987	Claro Ring Meeting, Knaresborough
08/07/1988	Trigg Ring Meeting, Bodmin
21-23/07/1989	Second Kennet Ring Meeting (231st), Douai Abbey
1 - 3/09/1989	Dartington Ring Meeting, Devon
6 - 8/07/1990	St Albans Ring Meeting
05/05/1992	Jim 'Il Fix It – Dorothy Whiteman made Honorary Member (broadcast 23 <sup>rd</sup> May)
4 - 6/09/1992	Hartley Ring Meeting
14 - 16/05/1993	Utrecht Ring Meeting, Holland
01/05/1994	Oxford May Morning Celebrations
22 -24/07/1994	Silurian Ring Meeting, Ledbury
2 - 4/06/1994	First Hartley Morris Men's Ale
9 - 11/06/1995	East Suffolk Ring Meeting
05/08/1995	The Great British Beer Festival, Olympia
10/08/1996	The Great British Beer Festival, Olympia
23 - 25/08/1996	First Saddleworth Rushcart Weekend
19/04/1997	40th Anniversary 40 Pub Tour of Reading
05/05/1997	First South Stoke May Queening
01/05/1998	May Day dawn celebration moves to Reading Abbey
24 - 26/07/1998	Exeter Ring Meeting
01/08/1999	First Sidmouth Family Weekend
01/01/2000	Shaun The Sheep's first appearance
29/04/2000	First Reading Beer Festival
01/05 - 22/09/2001	UK Foot & Mouth outbreak limits performances throughout the season
30 - 01/09/2002	Hartley Ring Meeting
05/11/2003	JMO Trafalgar Square Massed Display to celebrate licencing act exemption
01/05/2004	Oxford May Morning Celebrations
19 - 21/06/2004	3 Countries Tour & Fete de la Musique - Guests of Ferrette Morris Men, France





# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



Date	Event
30 - 31/07/2005	Sidmouth Folk Festival with guests Ferrette Morris Men
22/10/2005	Trafalgar 200 Tour of Portsmouth with Victory Morris Men
13-20/05/2007	50 Pubs Anniversary Canal Tour Week – Bath to Reading
28 - 30 /09/2007	50th Anniversary Weekend of Dance, Bracknell. Ian Dunmur awarded Life Membership
01/01/2002	First News Year's Day "hangover Cure" at the Calleva Arms, Silchester.
01/05/2008	Loddon Brewery becomes official programme sponsor
14 - 21/05/2008	Cyprus Tour
12 - 14/06/2009	Hartley Ring Meeting
28 -30/08/2009	Tour of The North East
18 - 22/06/2010	3 Countries Tour & Fete de las Musique - Guests of Ferrette Morris Men, France
12/07/2010	Matron's first outing – The Reading Walking Tour
10 - 12/09/2010	First Swanage Folk Festival
29/04/2011	BBC & ITV coverage of Royal Wedding, Chapel Row
28 – 30/10/2011	Hosts to The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beast Annual Unconvention
25 -27/05/2012	Chipping Campden Ring Meeting
10/08/2013	500 Years of Reading Morris Day of Dance
22 – 24/08/2014	Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting
03/01/2015	First Tutt's Clump Wassail
21 – 23/08/2015	Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting
19 – 21/08/2016	Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting
23/07/2016	Peter Halfpenney receives Honorary Membership (died 10/12/2016)
22/05/2017	Kennet 60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Birthday Party – John Walford awarded Life Membership
01/07/2017	Kennet 60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Day of Dance, Reading
4 - 06/08/2017	Sidmouth Folk Festival with guests Ferrette Morris Men
07/08/2017	The Dart Tour, Devon by open top bus, steam train and launch
25 – 27/08/2017	Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting
8 – 10/06/2018	Hartley Ring Meeting
20/07/2019	Special Guests on Icknield Way's 60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cotswold Tour
17/03/2020	Morris Off – all meetings cancelled COVID-19. The Great Embuggerance.
06/04/2020	First Kennet Zoom practice evening
01/05/2021	Peter de Courcy elected Life Member
25/05/2020	Clive Allen died and we lost the only Matron we'll ever have.
31/05/2021	Practices resume on School Green after the COVID layoffs
19 – 21/08/2022	Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting
22/09/2022	Carey Singleton (musician) becomes the first lady to become a full member
25 – 27/08/2023	Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting
21/10/2023	2 <sup>nd</sup> JMO 20th Anniversary Day of Dance Trafalgar Square







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN

## The Kennet Morris Men Post Holders

AGM - AGM	Squire	AGM - AGM	Foreman	Year	Fool
1957 - 1966	Bob Burns	1957 - 1966	Bob Burns	1973 - 1978	Ian Wheeler
1966 - 1970	Ian Dunmur	1966 - 1983	Ian Dunmur	1979 - 1980	Malcolm Allerton
1970 - 1972	John Walford	1983 - 1987	Andy Parker	1981 to date	Peter de Courcy
1972 - 1973	Ray Annetts	1987 - 1990	Dave Tindall	<b>Year</b>	<b>Beast Keeper</b>
1973(acting) - 1974	Richard Wright	1990 - 1992	Kevin Smith	1978 -2008	John Walford
1974 - 1976	Keith Woodward	1992 - 1999	Clive Blunt	2009	Elliott Brady
1976	Richard Wright	2000 - 2005	Clive Allen	2010 to date	Jack Smee
1976 - 1979	John Saunders	2006	Clive Blunt	<b>Year</b>	<b>Matron</b>
1979 - 1981	Tim Attree	2007 - 2008	Glenn Barrett	2010 - 2020	Clive Allen
1981 - 1983	Kevin Smith	2008 to 2012	Clive Blunt	<b>Year</b>	<b>Life Members</b>
1983 - 1985	Dave Tindall	2012 to 2017	Dave Tindall	1975	John Finch
1985 - 1987	Clive Blunt	2017 to 2022	Clive Blunt	1984	Bill Franklin
		2022to date	Edwin Trout		
1987 - 1989	Jon Holmes	<b>AGM - AGM</b>	<b>Bagman</b>	2000	John Cleveland
1989 - 1991	Edwin Trout	1957 - 1966	Paddy O'Neill	2007	Ian Dunmur
1991 - 1993	Clive Allen	1967 - 1970	Ray Perry	2017	John Walford
1993 - 1995	Pete de Courcy	1970 - 1971	Ian Lewis	2021	Peter de Courcy
1995 - 1997	Pete Gregory	1971 - 1973	Russ Meredith	<b>Year</b>	<b>Honorary Members</b>
1997 - 1999	Robin Love	1973 -1984	Bill Franklin	1976	Mike Cherry
1999 - 2001	John James	1984 - 1985	Martin Locke	1980	Roy Dommett
2001 - 2003	Pat Keeley	1986 - 1993	Pat Keeley	1992	Dorothy (Dot) Whiteman
					Peter Halfpenney
2003 - 2005	Chris Tunnicliffe	1993 to date	Jon Holmes	2016	
2005 - 2007	Bill Martin	<b>AGM - AGM</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	2020	Denise Allen
2007 - 2009	Peter Jones	1971	Keith Perry		
2009 - 2010	Dave Tindall	1986 - 1996	Derek Dunn		
2010 - 2012	Tom Gregory	1996 - 1998	John Austin		
2012 – 2014	Chris Newman	1998 to date	Tony Bartlett		
2014 - 2016	Brian Jones				
2016 to 2018	Neil Stevens				
May 2018	Matt Smee	<b>AGM</b>	<b>Squire Elect</b>		
2018 – 2022	Dave Bush				
2022 to 2023	Richard Gregory				
2023 – to date	Jason Yannacopoulos				







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



## Faces Old and New

### Back Row

left to right

Clive Allen  
Peter de Courcy  
Peter Gregory  
Chris Tunncliffe  
John James  
John Walford  
Dave Tindall



A few past Kennet Squires at our 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party

### Front Row

left to right

Clive Blunt  
Pat Keeley  
Ian Dunmur  
Bill Martin  
Jon Holmes  
Edwin Trout



*The Kennet at home –The Bell & Bottle Shinfield 2013*



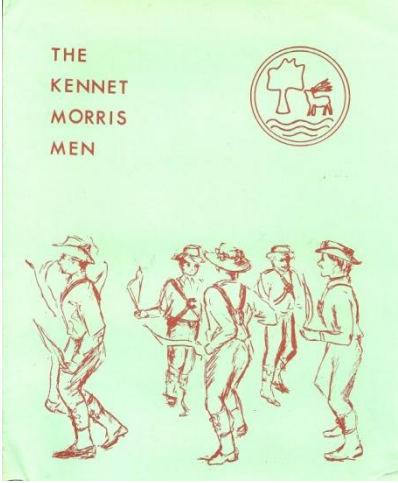


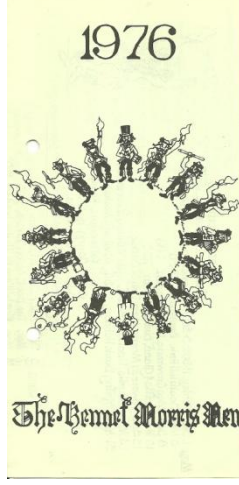
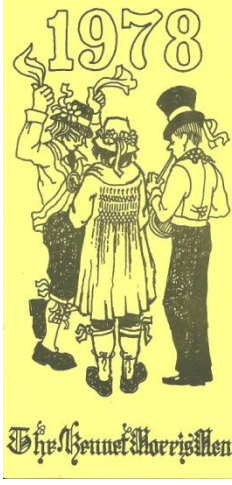
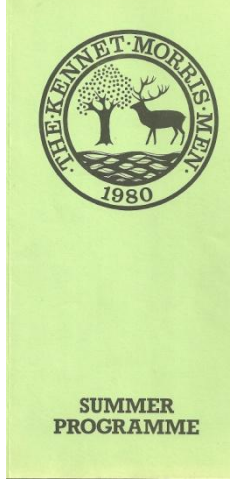


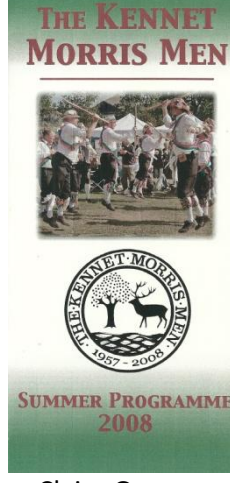




# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



## Kennet Programme Styles through the years

 <p>1969 – First Printed Programme Richard Wright</p>	 <p>Richard Wright</p>	 <p>Richard Wright</p>
 <p>Richard Wright</p>	 <p>Richard Wright</p>	 <p>Barbara Drew</p>
 <p>Barbara Drew</p>	 <p>Barbara Drew</p>	 <p>Claire Gregory</p>







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



## Kennet Badges and Logos through the years



Baldric 1957 - 1961



Felt Baldric badge 1962 – 1983  
Designed and made by Sylvia Pearce



Tapestry Baldric badge 1984 +  
Designed by Clive Blunt, made by Eileen Priest, then Anne James and Ann de Courcy



Button Badge  
Richard Wright



Button Badge  
Richard Wright



Button Badge  
Richard Wright



The Kennet Morris Men  
1969 – 1974  
Richard Wright Logo



Richard Wright Logo 1975



Barbara Drew's Logo 1980



Ring Meeting Logo 1981



Colour Logo 2001  
Peter de Courcy



Diamond Anniversary 2017  
Neil Stevens



I've been tossed badge  
Barbara Drew



Leather Badge 2001  
George Butterworth



Diamond 60 Leather Badge  
George Butterworth







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



I did mention a test paper would follow this history; well here it is – Foolishly including the answers  
... all open to challenge.



## THE KENNET 60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY KWIZ

1. A point for each wedding you can name where Kennet officially attended.

**Ian & Valerie Lewis 1973**

**Keith and Valerie Woodward 1973**

**Keith & June Chandler 1973**

**Brian and Judy Jones 1974**

**Ted and Sue Smale 1976**

**Malcolm & Caroline Allerton 1978**

**Dave and Pamela Priest 1980**

**Alan Chitty & Jo Clyde, 1989**

**Liz James & Colin Minker 1990**

**Edwin & Elizabeth Trout 1993**

**Clive & Denise Allen 1994**

**Dave & Hilary Tindall 2000**

**Geordie and Karen Austin 2006**

**Alastair and Sarah Hutchinson 2007**

**Danny & Kerry Giani 2010**

**Chris and Hoppy Tunnicliffe 2011**

**Prince William and Kate Middleton 2011 (Bucklebury)**

**Simon and Laura Bracegirdle 2016**

**Chris and Sylvia Westendorp 2017 (Jolly Angler)**

*I have been asked to point out that since this quiz was written, the weddings of Jason & Abbie-gayle Yannacopulos and Richard and Diane Gregory were both enjoyed by Kennet in 2019.*





# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



2. How many Life Members have we ever had? Bonus points if named

**Bill Franklin 29/10/1984**

**Ian Dunmur 29/09/2007**

**John Cleveland ?**

**John Finch 13/10/1975**

**John Walford 27/04/2017**

*For reasons best known to the Squire, the side elected to add me to this list on 8/11/2021*

3. How many Honorary Members have we ever had? Bonus points if named

**Mike Cherry 09/02/1976**

**Roy Dommett 20/10/1980**

**Dorothy Whiteman 23/05/1992**

**Peter Halfpenney 23/07/2016**

4. Who are the Kennet Committee members?

**The Club Committee shall consist of all members. AGM 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 1968 Club Rule 2**

5. Where's the furthest North, South East and West we've danced in the UK:

North **Shiremoor House Farm Pub, New York (North Shields!)**

South **Ventnor, Isle of Wight**

East **Laxfield, East Suffolk**

West **Bodmin, Cornwall**

6. Which countries have we performed in?

**Belgium, Cyprus, England, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Switzerland, Wales, Yugoslavia**

7. Name all the Jones members (past & present)

**Bob Jones**

**Brian Jones**

**Chris Jones**

**Glen Jones**

**Peter Jones**



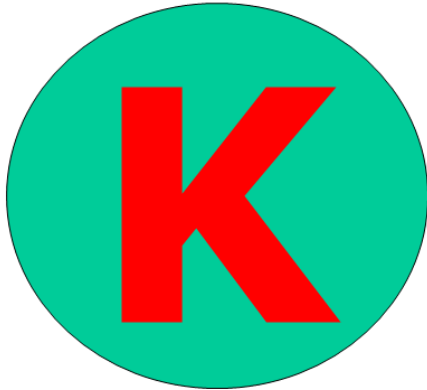




# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



8. Complete the design of the very first Kennet badge



9. The total number members of Kennet who have been dancers (past & present -be kind)? **165 (plus or minus 5) out of 180+ total**
10. Name any the current 140+ Ring Full Member sides we have never danced out with:  
*Mainly from memory and the current Ring Membership list. I'd love to be corrected!*
- Banchory-Ternan Morris Men**
  - Castleford Sword Dancers**
  - 1st Sedgley Morris Men**
  - Kinnerton Morris Men**
  - Malvern Swordsmen**
  - Pinewoods Morris Men**
  - Stockton Morris Men**
  - Vancouver Morris Men**





# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



Massive thanks to John Walford for his reminiscences of Kennet (and corrections), to Ray Annetts and Dave Spiers of Abingdon MM for their valuable contributions to the Wargrave and South Berkshire histories and to Bruce Tofield, a past member of South Berks and past squire of Oxford University Morris Men. And lastly, a big thank you to all those researchers and Morris Historians whose books fill my mini-library.

Yours foolishly,

**Peter de Courcy**

**The Fool to The Kennet Morris Men  
of The Royal County of Berkshire  
From 1<sup>st</sup> May 1981**



Keep up to date with all things Kennet on our web site <http://www.kennetmorrismen.co.uk> or by joining our Facebook Page <http://www.facebook.com/KennetMorrisMen>

If you enjoyed this you may also be amused, or even informed, by my other booklets :

- [U-Spy Kennet Morris Men](#)
- [U-Spy Kennet Morris Dances](#) and
- [U-Spy Kennetshire](#)

... and, if you're contemplating joining our merrie band, try [Your Welcome](#)



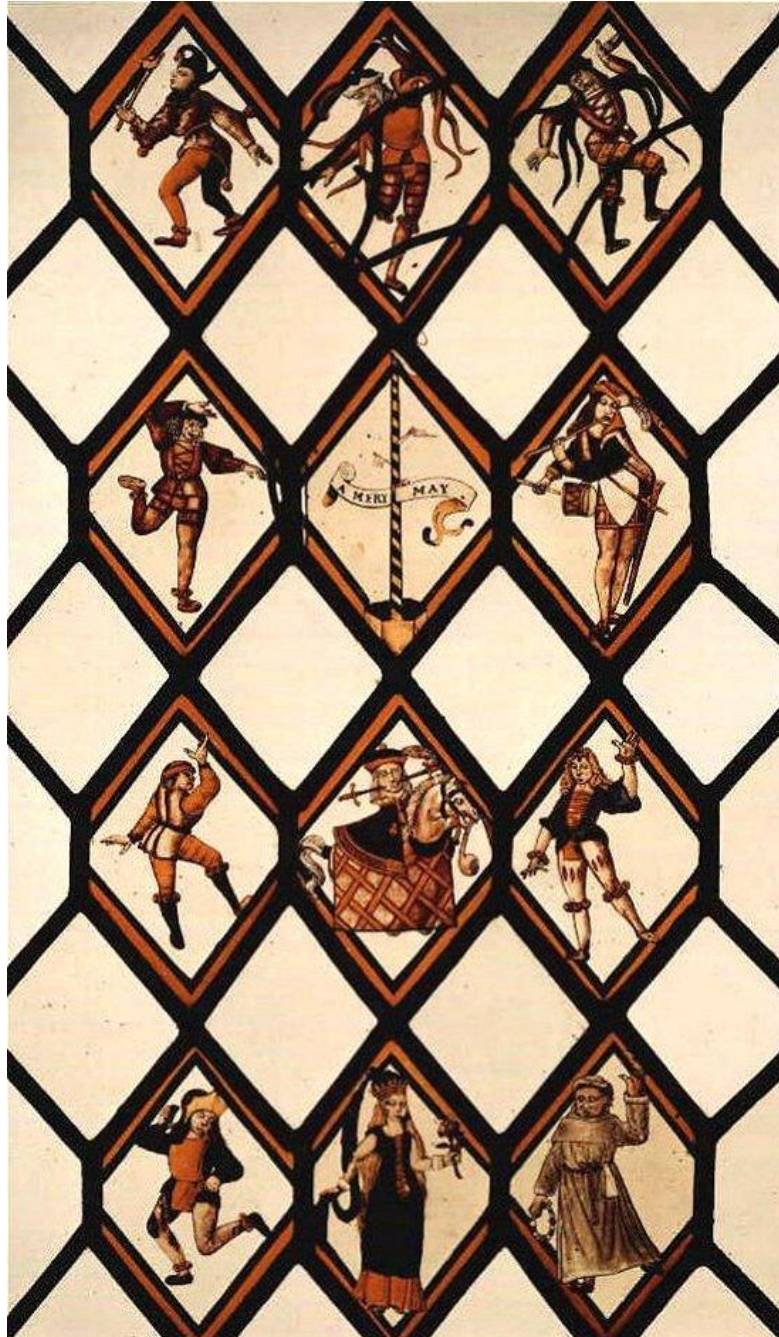




# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



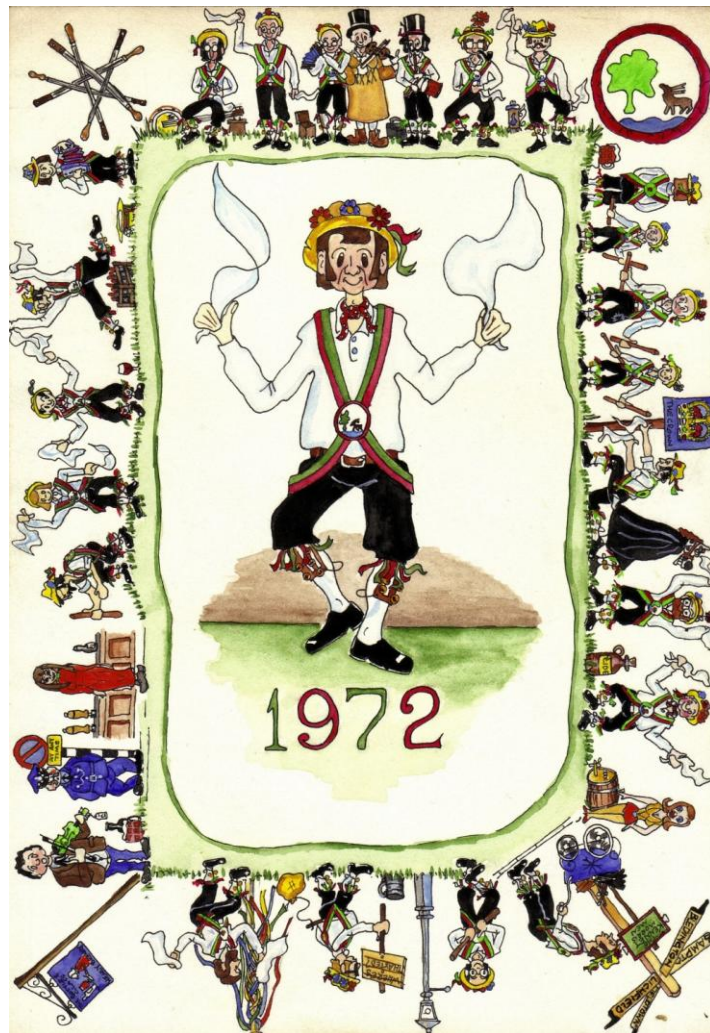
*The Betley Widow 16c Enamelled Glass*







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN



Richard Wright's cover for our 1972 scrapbook

... and finally, words published by Sir John Betjeman only 3 years after we started, no doubt inspired by our dancing, in his appropriately entitled autobiography *Summoned by Bells*

‘On his walks he fell in love with the subtle, gentle pleasures of the Kennet ...’

***“Glory was in me”***

The Observer 2011

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/dec/18/river-kennet-dry-john-betjeman>







# THE KENNET MORRIS MEN

**Dedicated to Kennet's Matron and one of my best friends, the late Clive Allen**



*Clive Allen – Kennet's one and only Matron from 17 July 2010 – 25 May 2020*

