



**NEWSLETTER**

*Autumn*

*1995*

# *Important Information*

## **TO ALL BAG(WOMEN), SECRETARIES AND SUCHLIKE**

One of the common complaints we get from the average morris dancer in the street is that they know nothing about the Federation and what it is doing. Some don't even know if their side belongs. This usually turns out to be because the person in their club who received the MF communication doesn't pass any of it on.

**PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE** don't be guilty of this. There is no excuse now that we have included a **SUMMARY SHEET**. You can photocopy this and distribute it to all your members. This can save you the time and hassle of verbally telling everyone what is in the Newsletter. However it is not a substitute for handing the Newsletter around or making it available during practice.

Remember **DON'T KEEP THE INFORMATION TO YOURSELF.**

## **MEMBERS' MANUAL**

All members of the Federation should have a copy of the MF Members' Manual. This contains a lot of material that members may need to refer to from time to time. If you have misplaced the free copy sent to you when you joined, a replacement (or additional copies) can be purchased from the MF Secretary at the cost of £3.50 (+ 50p p&p) each.

Cheques payable to The Morris Federation, please.

## **ADVERTIZING**

The Morris Federation will distribute enclosures with the Newsletter or other circulars and items of advertizing relevant to commercial products. A fee is charged to the advertizer for this service. However, this should not be taken to mean that The Morris Federation necessarily endorses the product.

Enquiries concerning any form of advertizing through the Morris Federation should be addresses to the MF Publicity Officer.



# CONTENTS

PRESIDENT'S PROLOGUE	2
EDITORIAL	3
NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT	4
EVENTS	5
TECHNICAL	6
DIARY	7
NEWS AND VIEWS	8
MORRIS FROM SCRATCH	11
FINANCE	12
GENERAL	13

## ENCLOSURES

Summary Sheet  
MF Directory Amendments  
AGM Revised agenda  
Diary Fixtures Form  
Workshop Booking Forms  
Injury survey questionnaire  
Members Manual - New edition and amendments

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# Prologue

Sally Wearing

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter, the penultimate one that I will be writing, as I'm not intending to stand again as President. I usually have a few ideas of what I am going to write before I sit down at the word processor, and then I proceed to write too much.

Could you do better? Have you considered standing for President? It isn't a difficult job (it can't be - I've done it for 12 years), it just needs someone who is dedicated to morris and is willing to give a fair amount of time, effort and sanity. All nominations to Beth or at the AGM, please.

As President, lots of different issues have come my way. Recently, I heard from a morris team who are under threat of being kicked out of the scout hut where they have practiced for the last ten years. Apparently the neighbours are complaining about the noise, especially from the playgroup who also use the hut. Anyone else had similar problems? if you have, let us know - did you win?

Another problem I've heard of was a team (Penny Royal Garland Dancers) who found that they were advertised as dancing at a festival even though the organisers hadn't contacted them. If they had been asked, they would have said no, because they danced there last year and were badly treated. The festival was at Ashby, 16th - 18th June. Where you there? Where all the other teams which were on the adverts there? If you danced there what was it like?

Penny Royal complained to the organiser about being advertised, but were treated with contempt. Has this happened to you? are there any other events that teams should be wary about?

To finish with, the continuing saga of the fanatical chauvinist morris man. The latest *Morris Ring Circular* includes a letter from Chris Clarke, who had a letter published in this Newsletter recently. He is seeking like-minded men who believe that the morris should "remain male". He obviously doesn't know much about what the majority of the morris world is like now, or he wouldn't talk about remaining male. He must have missed the last 20 years.

But the real question is - when he's gathered a few other nostalgic men around him - what are they going to do? Politely ask all the women to stop dancing and playing, and to go away? Or might they start the first morris terrorist organisation?

The one thing I can agree with him on. He wants to expose the issue to "reasoned debate". In my many years of "discussions" on this subject (which I thought were well and truly over), I've never met debate which I could have said was reasoned or logical. I honestly don't think I'm ever going to.

# Editorial

This appears to be the edition for mishaps with disks and printouts. I have received disks with the wrong files; disks with no files; disks with files in incompatible formats and printouts with no disks. REMEMBER - if you have a computer please send you copy on disk as well as a printout. I can convert most DOS based WP formats to what I need. This means I can devote more time to actually editing and laying out the Newsletter rather than copy typing.

STOP PRESS - we have a nomination for President. Please read Janet Dowling's contribution in this Newsletter. copies of this will be available at the AGM. Remember you can stand for this or any other post until just before the AGM starts, you just need to be nominated and seconded. An election for any of the posts would be fun - we can use the highly democratic but mind-blowing electoral system we have adopted.

No one has taken any notice of my comments about the quality of music for morris and how it affects the quality of the dance. So, is there anyone out there reading this? what do you think? Does boring, dull, timid music make dull dancing- write to me with views, comments etc.

As usual Sidmouth was fun; and the new venues for the Marquees was a great improvement on last year. As usual many morris sides in evidence. There appears to be a growing trend for sides to dance once or twice during the week, for example at the Market Square and then enjoy the rest of the festival as a 'punter'. This means that if you are there for the week you can see a wide range of styles and standards as well as meeting old friends and making new ones. The

dance competition was disappointing with only five sides entering and none of them were outstanding. Were you there? do you feel your side could do as well or better? if you do why not consider entering next year and making this a real showcase, and remember this is a ten minute performance, not a ten minute pub spot.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a copy of a questionnaire for the second *Morris Injuries survey*. Please complete this, whether you have had injuries or not. It is important that we know how and why you are being injured and the type of treatment you are receiving.

Also enclosed are the *Briefing notes* from the Home Office about street collections. There was a report in the Publicity section last quarter about the meeting the three morris organisations had with the Home Office. The basic message is: if you are not collecting for charity you do not need a licence, if you are collecting for a charity - whether that cause is a registered charity or not, you do need a licence.

The new edition of the main section of the MF manual is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please throw away all your existing white pages and insert these instead. DO NOT throw away any of the appendices (these are up-to-date).

Copy date for the Winter Newsletter is 1st November. I am on holiday until the 5th of that month. Therefore I will accept copy received up to 6th November. Any copy received after that date (or unusable eg. no file on disk etc.) will not be accepted.

## JANET DOWLING

### NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE MORRIS FEDERATION

Janet is being nominated by New Esperance Morris and Gift Rapper

#### MORRIS BACKGROUND

I first started dancing in 1975 when I persuaded a member of Keele Rapper to run a series of weekly rapper workshops for women.

I subsequently attended morris and rapper workshops at festivals until returning to London on graduation, where I initially joined Manor Morris in Newham, moving to New Esperance Morris (a Cotswold Morris Team) in January 1977.

I have been with New Esperance on and off since then. During the time that I have been "on" I have been the bag woman, have contributed to the development of our own dance tradition and revival of the local May Day Milkmaids Garland custom.

There have been two reasons for the "off" periods.

Firstly when dancing Morris Jigs with a fellow Social Worker Esp on the picket line of the Social Work Strike of 1978, I capered up, landed awkwardly on cobblestones and jarred my hip. Three weeks flat on my back helped at the time, but I have continued to have intermittent "problems" when I do not dance but contribute to the dance in other ways for example Fooling, being the MC.

The second reason for the "off" periods from New Esperance is that I left to set up and run two other teams - Black Horse and Standard North West Morris in Walthamstow in 1981, and Mary Neal Rapper in Leytonstone in 1988. I left Black Horse in 1983 because the stepping was not good for my back, and the team still continues. Mary Neal Rapper folded in 1993 because of low numbers which was not helped by my occasional inability to dance because of my back.

However my back problems do not stop me teaching. With Mary Neal Rapper I taught the first Rapper Workshop run by the Federation in 1992, and more recently I have run a series of workshops in London and Oxford. The latter has led to a new womens rapper team being set up and they hope to debut in Nov 1995.

I enjoy the Morris, and I enjoy Dancing , and when I can not, I do what I can!

## RELATED INTERESTS

I have been involved in the revival of the tradition of Dancing Giants in this country. I am a member of the London based Graund Order of Guisers, and have been responsible for the dressing of both the 29 foot tall giant GogMagog, and the 12 foot tall headless Green Knight both of which have travelled around Europe as well as in this country. I am currently working on the clothes for the third giant.

## OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Having originally trained as a social worker (so I am good at listening) and a family therapist (and thus good at working with dysfunctional groups !), I have now moved into management where most of my skills are in business planning, strategy development and implementation, chairing meetings and project groups, negotiation, joint agency working and project management.

## REASONS FOR NOMINATION

I have experience of dancing in Cotswold, Rapper and North West teams and have some sense of the issues which are important to them. I have a passionate interest in the Morris and care deeply about the past, present and future, whilst at the same time I would bring my professional skills to look objectively at how the development could be supported and moved forward. Most of all - I want to do it and I do not get hangovers!

# *Events*

*Steve Cunio*

## WORKSHOPS

We have Federation workshops planned for the period up to Christmas. The first is a Border Morris weekend, in Towcester, on 6th to 8th October. The main part of the weekend will be led by the experienced border dancer, Gail Duff. You should already have received a booking form for this event, as it was enclosed with the AGM information. If you did not and would like to come to this event, please get in touch with me immediately.

We also have a one day workshop, on the Pipe and Tabor, hosted by Stony Stratford Morris,

in Milton Keynes. This day will be part master-class and part session. At the time of writing, Mary-Jo Searle has agreed to lead one of the sessions. Full details can be found on the booking form which is enclosed with this newsletter.

Plans for after Christmas are well under way. We hope to be running workshops on Border, North-West and Cotswold, and there is the possibility of a Stave dance day. Full details of these will appear in the next newsletter. If you are desperate for further details before then, please get in touch.

## FESTIVALS

Did your team dance at any folk festivals this Summer? If you did, do not forget that we, along with the Morris Ring and Open Morris, are looking for comments that will help us to give advice to the Festival Organisers Conference. So please send me any comments you have, both good and bad, about your treatment this Summer.

## DIARY

A couple of years ago, we had a supplement to the Winter issue diary page in the form of list of "traditional" events, such as the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance. These were listed with the actual dates they would occur that year. I would like to repeat this in the next newsletter. If there are any events that you would like to see included, or any that you take part in, please add the information to this issues diary form.

# Technical Services

Jane Shaw

As usual the Summer is being fairly quiet for me: there have been very few enquiries for notation, or any other information. This means that I can make a start on the housekeeping side of things: making new files, putting everything in its place and so on.

The Archive, on the other hand has been expanding. We now have more than a thousand items in it. There are a few I would like to mention:

- a. *The imagined village* by Georgina Boyles. This is a history of the revival in folk music during this century, very well written, and all together a good read.
- b. *Off with his head* by Ngaio Marsh. It may sound like a strange item to include in the archive, but in fact it's about the murder of a sword dancer! The view expresses is the typical opinion of a few years back that morris is a fertility rite, mystical experience etc. etc. but it's not a bad whodunit.

- c. Wendy Crouch of Ursa Major has put into the archive notation two of the stave dances she has written. If anyone would like copies, they are available from me at the usual rate of 15p per sheet plus postage.

I don't think we've reminded people recently that we also have a video collection, and if anyone wants to donate to that, we would be happy to hear from you.

## SUPPLIERS LIST

At the Tracey Rose workshop on designing kit held at Sidmouth it was suggested that the Federation hold a list of suppliers of difficult to obtain items. eg. people who dye short runs of fabric, ribbon suppliers, those who know about clog irons etc.

If anyone has any information to contribute to such a listing, I would be very pleased to hear from you. I shall in due course contact the Ring and Open Morris to see if they want to run a joint venture.

# Diary

## OCTOBER

- 6 - 8 MORRIS FEDERATION WORKSHOP - Border Morris - Towcester, Northamptonshire
- 7 Magog & St Clement's Clogs - Tenterden Folk Day
- 8 Three Shires - Matlock Bath Illuminations, Derbyshire - 6:30 & 7:30
- 13 - 15 Roy Dommett's weekend workshop - Wantage, Oxfordshire - Joint MORRIS FEDERATION and Open Morris event
- 21 St Clement's Clogs - Brogdale Farm Apple Day, Faversham, 1:30

## NOVEMBER

- 11 MORRIS FEDERATION WORKSHOP - Pipe and Tabor - Milton Keynes
- 11 - 13 Magog - "Maypoles to Mistletoe", The Hawth, Crawley
- 18 Owlswick Morris - Fund raising dance, Bledlow Ridge Village Hall
- 20 Magog - "Maypoles to Mistletoe", Tunbridge Wells, Kent
- 25 St Clement's Clogs - Blackheath Christmas Lights, Blackheath

## DECEMBER

- 3 St Clement's Clogs - Dickens Christmas, Rochester

## BOXING DAY

Three Shires - "The Bluebell" and "The Beehive", Harthill, Sheffield, with Harthill Morris

Taeppa's Tump - "The Oak and Saw", Taplow

# News and Views

We have received a letter from Keith Leech of Mad Jacks Morris and Hastings Jack in the Green about the problems he has had with fundamentalist Christians. Has anyone else had a similar experience.? Roy Dommett's response to Chris Clarke in pertinent to this question.

\*\*\*\*\*

Twice this year I have come across problems between the morris and fundamentalist christians. For Jack in the Green this year we had a church service, very good it was too, with a jig, some tunes and some stirring English hymns. However the rector received some mail from some groups condemning him, why? Because Morris dancing is "Pagan".

The second occurrence was when I was teaching the morris at a local school. A girl came to explain that she couldn't participate because it was against her religion. "Oh, really" said I "and what is that?" Her reply was that she was a Christian. "I'm sorry" said I "but so an I. What is the problem?" She said that her father, a Baptist minister, said it was to do with vegetarian cults and was "Pagan".

This worries me. We have seen the rise of militant Christianity in the States, and there is certainly a growth of such Christianity in this country. That is up to the people concerned, and not the point. What is important is that we could find the morris banned, or run across other problems. If fundamentalist Christianity grows it could be a powerful lobby group.

So how have they come to such conclusions? Well, we need to blame Fraser's *Golden Bough* and the movement at that time that was looking for 'Pagan' connections in everything. Cecil Sharp in *The Morris Book* puts forward theories about the bells frightening away spirits and possible pre-Christian origins.

Georgina Boyles in the excellent book *The imagined village* dismisses these ideas as pure romanticism with no historical basis. Anybody who is serious about folklore will agree, we, ourselves are also at fault. In our banter with the public, to try and spice up the tale, have invented numerous jokes and innuendo about fertility rites. "The woman who wears a morris man's hat will be pregnant at Christmas" etc. All innocent fun. The trouble is we now have a growing group who take it seriously. They don't see the joke. Perhaps it is time we invented some new banter, and also perhaps the morris organisations should put out some new publicity which tells the rather boring truth.

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Below is a reply from Roy Dommett to the letter from Chris Clarke in the Summer Newsletter. Chris has also been having a long and protracted correspondence with Sally Wearing, our President.

Mr Clarke is entitled to any views, unless used against others to motivate actions that can be widely seen by them as unjust. We do not know if his arguments are historical, emotional, rational or social. Having mentioned "the past", if contrary to accepted facts in the public domain, he must offer verifiable evidence or supportable interpretation if he is to be taken seriously. *The Annals of Early Morris* cover the 800 known usages from 1458 to 1750, even if they refer to less than 0.5% of the postulated performances. I do not find in them any direct reference to ritual or masculinity. There is nothing there about any special observances or status customarily involved when such activities have been associated with ritual in other cultures. Therefore contrary interpretations concerning that period will need to be supported by a comparable quality of evidence. But first we need a careful and agreed definition of ritual and of masculinity if there is to be any meaningful debate. It can be hypothesised that the elements thought to be missing actually existed but went unrecorded, or that they were called something else, but this is a discredited approach. In the last hundred years we have even had consensus on such postulated views, but they have not survived research.

Statements made by participants or observers in the nineteenth century about purpose and origins cannot be accepted as valid on their own for extrapolation back into a more distant era. Just because they are now old, they are not necessarily accurate. Case histories exist showing that folk activities can have rather limited pasts. There is no early history of our Molly, Border or North West Morris comparable to Keith Chandler's [of Cotswold morris], so there is no evidence that they were there in anything like the modern form in the eighteenth century, thus there is no provable continuity with earlier times.

It is important to be accurate when bandying words to avoid unhelpful criticism. Victoria's reign started in 1837 and those things now labelled Victorian followed the decline and demise of most of the Cotswold Morris, and preceded what we know of the social background of the other traditions. If the evidence is endless how come that we have missed it? Nineteenth century social behaviour is well documented, although not necessarily widely appreciated, and such simplified summaries as are offered do not touch the complexities of the reality. Similar evidence for earlier periods is far less available and usually too generalised to indicate behaviour motivations of individuals. What is obvious is that the attitudes and behaviour involved, as far as they can be perceived at all, are those of the ordinary people of their time as appear in all other areas of their life. Incidentally a third of those early references that mention the sex of the performers say that they were mixed. Did the morris grow out of some identifiable ritual behaviour or did it just adopt the format, in the manner that it took over everything else? The experience of masculinity must be expected to be consistent with the period, why would the morris preserve something no longer understood?

Many people, without having to be a confirmed feminist, associate masculinity with overtones of a vested interest in dominance, exclusiveness, privilege and interference. The attitudes and behaviours normally implied can be blamed for most of the world's current ills. It is difficult to the proud of the past, as shown for example in the BBC2 series *Ruling Passions* [a programme about sex and the Empire]. Imposing an imagined model on history to justify present actions had led to some of the great twentieth century abuses of people, and of the environment. No one denies that more than one hundred years ago the seasonal dance traditions were maintained largely by men and that there was prejudice against and a lack of opportunity for performance by women, but how is this acceptable today? It is not the same world, and our perceptions of that time are too fragmentary to grasp fully what the differences meant. The dancers then would not even understand what we are talking about.

We have a different sense of identity and of values and are firmly rooted in our time.

The world is trying to grasp the modern implications of gender, and the morris will only grow, which it has to survive, if it fits within the developing wider perceptions in our community. We are probably too few to change society's views on our own and too dependent to ignore them. A male view of maleness in only one quarter of the human interactions. Looking and reaching backwards may give personal satisfaction, but it is of little long term value to those concerned with morris today and for the future. Why, we are now on the verge of celebrating the centenary of the discovery of Cecil Sharp by the morris. What has happened to the twentieth century in morris people's thinking? The proper identification and preservation of still relevant positive elements of the separate past male and female working class cultures by their heirs is one of our society's pressing problem, but we must limit these to what actually existed and not try and confuse them with what we think that we would like to have in the future. Just how many of today's performers are using the morris in working class contexts, even if they wanted to!

How we use and not abuse our heritage is important. The past is full of images which can be tapped, and the taking of roles and adopting persona for differing circumstances is a healthy part of our normal social experience. As was obvious from the Queen's recent visit to South Africa, it is wonderful to have access to two cultures, and our folk heritage is our second source. But what, if anything, we are preserving of the nineteenth century morris is unknowable. There is nothing left still exploitable of what we can know of the nineteenth century traditions to change or expand what we do in the future. The direction of development, as it has always been, will result from the various independent approaches and adjustments of the many groups involved and the survival of the fittest, and I expect that experts will be as wrong about the future as they have ever been. The proper concern of folk dancers is performance. The tenacity with which unsupported views on Pagan, Celtic or Saxon origins are held shows that there is a deep need that feels that the morris represents some fundamental social urge. I would not deny this "magic" of the morris, but I do not understand its devaluation to a relic. Are people afraid to claim that we have a modern role and meet a local need? Why there appears a desire by some to have a pseudo past to justify their actions should be the proper topic for academic research, not the construction of yet another false and probably counter productive image.

It is easy to be arrogant or irresponsible towards other teams from within the closed environment of an established club. The morris has a duty to the past, the present and the future, which should be a commitment. Divisive or ill-founded attitudes give the media, and hence the public, opportunity to promote a poor image for the morris, quickly undoing the good work by individual sides at the local level. By invoking historical evidence, rather than staying with performance related issues, the topics raised have to become academically respectable and hence amenable to peer review. The pioneering work led by the likes of Theresa Buckland, Michael Heaney, Roy Judge and Keith Chandler must not be demeaned by arm waving and by confusing inaccurate views of the past with true history, which is always more complex and confusing than one might expect.

The truth is that we are trying to create something new. The myth is that there was a golden age of slowly changing tradition. Creativity goes with being young, stability with contented age, as when a tradition is in decline.

# *Morris from scratch*

*Vicki Shakehaft and Sue Goodchild*

In May 1994 Stony Stratford Festival 350 was staged over a period of 17 days to celebrate the fact that 350 years ago, one of the final skirmishes of the English Civil War was fought in the High Street in Stony Stratford. A committee of local people was formed to organise the festival, including Vicki Shakehaft, Sue Goodchild and Dave Tompsett, whose brief it was to involve as many morris sides and local people as possible in a dance weekend. Morris teams from all over the country were therefore invited to join our local teams and the Stony Stratford Mummers who adapted their winter play to a May Play for the event. The weekend was also to include a scratch morris competition.

In the early planning stages of Festival 350 the idea was conceived that a challenge should be issued to the townsfolk of Stony Stratford inviting them to participate in a "Morris from Scratch" event. Teams were to be formed by those who had never danced the morris and a competition held for a trophy. The teams were to have minimal instruction from Vicki (Old Mother Redcaps), Sue (Windsor Morris) and some team members from Stony Stratford Morris. From this they were to develop their dance and devise their costume. So the challenge had been set.

The Saturday dawned grey and murky with an intermittent drizzle. Undeterred, the Mummers and visiting teams (Sgt. Musgraves Dance, Berkshire Bedlams, Old Palace Clog, Bucknell, Windsor Morris, Hot Taps, Stony Stratford, Liddington Hall and the Lads of Richmond Hill) all met to process down the High Street and to the Market Square. A welcome speech was given by Lady Rima Scott, chair of Bucks Regional Dance Council, the Mummers performed their play and the Declaration of Sports was read out. This document, published about 1644, entreated all citizens to take part in various sports and Morris Dancing, to ensure that the populace was fit; should war arise they were needed to fight for King and country. The weekend was under way!

Meanwhile the intermittent drizzle turned into steady rain and after an hour of dancing in the rain the valiant teams retired to the Festival Marquee for the rest of the day with the Lads from the Royal Ballet School (a.k.a Richmond Hill) having a splashing time as the water even covered the matting in the marquee! The day culminated on the same party note with a ceilidh in the evening given by the Kitchen Girls. Dances were called by Bob Adams who also ably assisted us throughout the weekend.

Fingers and toes were doubly crossed for good weather on the Sunday, as this was the turn of the townsfolk to perform. The High Street was to be the venue, to allow as many people as possible to see these original performances. However, once again the skies opened! Another quick dash to the marquee for a welcome from Rima to open the Sundays festivities. After displays from the remaining visiting teams, workshops were held and the Morris sides and the audience all joined in to learn different styles of dance.

Then came the highlight, the Morris from Scratch teams. What a response! There were 8 teams and all had really entered in to the spirit of the day. The costumes were superb and the energy and sheer enthusiasm was amazing. The local Childrens Centre dressed as fish and calling themselves, "The

Rhythmically Challenged Campanological and Wood Clattering Movement Troupe" danced to a version of Yellow Submarine. (particularly apt as we were dancing in an inch of water by this time!) There were performances from The Pewry Tans (Puritan costume), the Russlers (masked Border dancers) from Russell First School, whose pupils also formed a team,. There were two other school teams, a Milton Keynes Borough Council group aptly named, "The Concrete Cows" who were the winning team and "Strictly Morris" (reference to Strictly Ballroom), the final team who performed an Adderbury Stick dance to the tune of Lads a Bunchum.

The competition was a great success. The team "Strictly Morris" were so enthused by the dance that they have formed a team and are continuing to practise regularly, Their numbers are expanding and their ambition is to dance Ilmington in public this summer (1995) They have already been invited to dance with local teams - and most of the team are under 30! The morris competition also gained new recruits for other local sides and raised the profile of morris within the community. What a positive spin-off for such a fun event.

# *Financial Services*

*Rachel Pinkey*

Sorry I've not put pen to paper before but I've been too engrossed getting to grips with the system.

thanks to everyone who returned the insurance questionnaire. Sue has done a grand job of collating the information and below are a few items you might find interesting.

## **INSURANCE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Overall the average size of sides was 21.2 members but only an average of 13 out on each occasion.

The number of times they danced out in kit was 5890 - averaging 19.4 per team. This split into: 9.2 times organised by your team (total 2778); 3.3 times organised by another MF team; 7.1 organised by someone else.

There were 21 events where more than 10 sides were dancing.

## **GPA INSURANCE COVER**

We have been asked why team members aged over 65 years are not eligible for GPA insurance. This is because part of the cover is for loss of earnings and it is assumed one has retired by then.

## **SHOP**

the shop now has *Adderbury* tapes to complement the *Adderbury Book*, priced at £5.00 plus postage and packing. We also have copies of *Morris, the good, the bad and the ugly* from the 1994 Morris conference priced at £6.00 plus postage and packing.

finally thanks to Sue for easing me into the job by keeping the shop for the first six months.!

# General

*Beth Neill*

The most important bit must be to urge/ cajole/ remind all of you to book for the AGM if you haven't done so already. Steve will probably say the same thing in his Events Officer prose! You should have all received AGM notices and minutes of last year's AGM. If not, get in touch. As I write this - just before Sidmouth - we still don't have any candidates for Presidency. One would be reassuring - more than one would mean an election - and liven up the AGM no end? Please don't be put off by the wonderful precedent (synonym of President as I just realised) of our President - I had to follow Val's years in office and the others are reasonably forgiving!

So, having had one particularly bad week as far as irritating queries go - I thought I would let you all in on a week in the life of the MF secretary (Val did a year - I go to the other end of the scale) - a query for the phone number of a Ring team who had been suggested by the local MF team, who should have had their number anyway! I managed to find it for the enquirer anyway..

- two lots of junk mail for luxurious conference facilities (you know the sort of

thing we all want at morris events - en suite facilities, room bar, video and TV in all rooms etc - at a price way beyond our means);  
- someone writing a magazine for foreign students with the laudable aim of letting them know what was going on in the UK if they wanted to watch morris, but the less commendable deadline of a week from when he rang me wanting slides and dates! Sally and Steve were both contacted for help in those fields.

- producers from the Big Breakfast Show wanting "a morris team" to appear on the show the following morning ( I jest not!)

- a letter from a youngster wanting details about morris dancing and pictures for her school project - fine, except the letter had gone firstly to Val (I've now been in post almost three years) and the girl's parents apparently both dance with a current MF team!

What else? I take this opportunity to point out that if you don't know me, I am not six feet tall, as one gentleman I recently spoke to had thought from the pictures at the end of the newsletter - it's just that the others aren't all that tall!

# THE MORRIS FEDERATION 1995



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