



Thelwall Morris Men
1973 - 2011

Compiled and edited
by
A.J. White

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Foreword to 25th anniversary edition

David Pratt, Squire

So, Thelwall Morris Men are 25 years old then. Even though the Morris itself is an awful lot older than that, and some teams can trace their origins back to the point where even folk memory becomes hazy, this is still a special year for us. We are very proud to have got this far, particularly with some members of the original side still intact. Part of our year of celebration is this booklet. It is a brief history of Morris Dancing, and is in particular a record of Morris Dancing in and around Thelwall. It also captures some of the more uplifting and some of the dafter things we have done in our short history.

Morris dancing is unique in being a genuine living tradition. We dance it in a way that is as close as possible to the style in which it has always been done. Yet, in our short history, Thelwall's style and repertoire have considerably changed and evolved. As the [self-claimed] premier Cotswold Morris Team in the north-west, we have much to be proud of, and this booklet captures some of the enthusiasm we have for this venerable tradition.

If you know nothing about the Morris, except having seen the odd team outside Sainsbury's or a country pub, and you have wondered how anyone could do something so obviously embarrassing, then have a look at this booklet. It may give you some clue as to the depth of the Morris and why some people don't just do it: they live it, breath it - and drink it!



Easter Monday, 2011

Standing (l-r): Mike Amberry, David Pratt, Steve Guest, Andrew White, Derek Britch, Rob Pracy (hidden),
Kevin Farrell, Derek Bradburne, Peter "Jasper" Robinson, Geoff Bibby
Kneeling (l-r): Sam "Henry" Addison, Ruth Bibby (clog dancer), Alex Addison, Martin Zoefitig

Officers

	Squire	Bagman	Foreman
1973-74	Chris Maple	Jimmy Potter	Chris Maple
1974-75	Chris Maple	Ernie Whalley	Chris Maple
1975-76	Pete Jackson	Ernie Whalley	Chris Maple
1976-77	Ian Goodier	Jim Berry	Chris Maple
1977-78	Ian Goodier	Jim Berry	Geoff Bibby
1978-79	Chris Maple	Jim Berry	Geoff Bibby
1979-80	Chris Maple	Ernie Whalley	Rob Pracy
1980-81	Ernie Whalley	Jim Berry	Rob Pracy
1981-82	Geoff Bibby	Jim Berry	Steve Guest
1982-83	Geoff Bibby	Jim Berry	Steve Guest
1983-84	Steve Burgess	Cecil Parkinson/Jim Berry*	Rob Pracy
1984-85	Steve Guest	Cecil Parkinson/Jim Berry*	Rob Pracy
1985-86	Steve Burgess	Cecil Parkinson/Jim Berry*	Geoff Bibby
1986-87	Phil Pimentil	Cecil Parkinson/Jim Berry*	Geoff Bibby
1987-88	Geoff Bibby	Cecil Parkinson/Jim Berry*	Gordon Gilmore
1988-89	Geoff Bibby	Cecil Parkinson/Jim Berry*	Gordon Gilmore
1989-90	Mike Price	Jim Berry	Gordon Gilmore
1990-91	Kevin Farrell	Jim Berry	Steve Guest
1991-92	Kevin Farrell	Steve Guest	Co-operative**
1992-93	Geoff Bibby	Steve Guest	Co-operative**
1993-94	Derek Bradburne	Steve Guest	Co-operative**
1994-95	Derek Bradburne	Steve Guest	Andrew White
1995-96	Derek Bradburne	Jim Berry/Steve Guest***	Andrew White
1996-97	Derek Bradburne	Jim Berry/Steve Guest***	Geoff Bibby
1997-98	David Pratt	Jim Berry/Steve Guest***	Geoff Bibby
1998-99	David Pratt	Jim Berry/Steve Guest***	Geoff Bibby
1999-2000	David Pratt	Jim Berry/Andrew White***	Steve Guest
2000-01	David Pratt	Jim Berry/Andrew White***	Geoff Bibby
2001-02	Kevin Farrell	Jim Berry/Andrew White***	Geoff Bibby
2002-03	Kevin Farrell	Jim Berry/Steve Guest***	Geoff Bibby
2003-04	Geoff Bibby	Jim Berry/Steve Guest***	Andrew White
2004-05	Geoff Bibby	Steve Guest	Andrew White
2005-06	Geoff Bibby	Steve Guest	Andrew White
2006-07	Kevin Farrell	Steve Guest	Geoff Bibby
2007-08	Kevin Farrell	Steve Guest	Geoff Bibby
2008-09	Sam "Henry" Addison	Steve Guest	Rob Pracy
2009-10	Sam "Henry" Addison	Andrew White	Rob Pracy
2010-11	Sam "Henry" Addison	Andrew White	Rob Pracy

Notes

* Cecil Parkinson (yes, that one) accepted the role of Bagman. Jim Berry was acting bagman in his absence.

** In the absence of a single individual taking on the role of foreman, a co-operative was formed to teach the dances - Rob Pracy, Gordon Gilmore, Geoff Bibby and Steve Guest.

*** The post of Bagman was split to include "Treasurer". So far Thelwall have had two treasurers - Steve Guest (1995-1999, 2002-2004) and Andrew White (1999-2002).

The **Squire** is the leader of the side and he is responsible for general policy and presentation of the side.

The **Bagman** is the name given to the "Secretary" of the team and in many cases this role also includes that of Treasurer.

The **Foreman** is the person responsible for teaching the dances and selecting the programme for each performance - he is responsible for the quality of the dancing throughout his time as foreman.

Morris - Man, music and dance

Andrew J White

Morris dancing comes in many forms:

Cotswold Morris

This type of morris is from the area of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. Each village produced its own steps and dances and these have become the “traditions” such as Headington, Bledington, Bampton and Chipping Campden.

The dances are usually handkerchief dances, stick dances and hand clapping dances. They are usually performed by six men, though there are some eight-man dances.

The men will normally wear a white shirt, white trousers or black breeches and black shoes. Bells will be worn below the knees and the club kit will be a coloured baldrick or a waistcoat/tabard.

Variants of Cotswold Morris have been collected from the North Midlands from Lichfield and Winster. The stepping is often “double” stepping which is one two three hop.

North West Morris

The dances can be processional and are usually danced by six or eight men wearing clogs. The performers move around the set in complex patterns.

Costumes are in general more colourful and elaborate with the clogs accentuating the rhythmic stepping.

Teams around the North West include Manley, Manchester, Preston Royal and Horwich. The stepping is often a rant or polka step and sometimes a “skipping” single step is used to move around quickly.

Border Morris

The border in question is the Welsh/Shropshire/Herefordshire border. The dancers generally black their faces and wear rag jackets and dark trousers. The stepping and dances are very simple and vigorous. Most involve a great deal of stick clashing. The stepping is often just single stepping.

“Molly” dancing in Cambridgeshire is similar in many ways to the Border traditions, but tends to be less violent!

There is a saying that if you want to dance the Morris, start with Cotswold, if you can't do that, do North West, if you can't do that, do Border and if you can't do that, just bang a drum.

Other forms of dances coming under the general heading of Morris are the Sword dances:

Longsword

Longsword dances are performed mainly in Yorkshire by six or eight men carrying rigid swords. They perform intricate figures over and under the swords, which are woven into a star-shaped “Lock” at the end. The stepping for this is essentially fast walking, sometimes with emphasis on strong beats.

Rapper

Collected in Northumberland and Durham, rappers are very flexible swords with a handle at each end, with dances performed at high speed with the swords above the head - again usually ending in a star shaped “Lock”. The stepping is very fast walking during the moving bits and a shuffle when still.

There are some unusual forms of Morris Dancing which are now performed only by individual sides:

The Abbots Bromley Horn Dancers carry reindeer antlers which, incidentally, have been carbon dated to 1065, give or take 80 years.

The Britannia Coconut Dancers are the last remaining team to perform a processional dance, which involves clashing wooden discs strapped to the knees, waist and hands. They also perform garland dances carrying decorated hoops.

The most common question anyone asks a Morris dancer is "What does it all mean?" and unfortunately, there is always someone who decides to explain and off he goes.... blah blah .. ritual origins.. blah blah ..pagan fertility cults.. blah blah .. scaring evil spirits with bells and hankies.. blah blah .. fights between good and evil... blah blah .. weather control..!!!

At best these are simply conjecture.

Whether these were ritual dances or just dances to celebrate the coming of spring, Whitsun or summer has to remain a mystery - we just don't know.

One of the oldest known references to Morris Dancing is a 15 hundred and something stained glass window in a house at Betley, Staffordshire, which depicts dancing figures associated with the Morris.

In the written record, some form of dance called Morris can be documented in England as far back as the 15th century. The earliest known reference is in a will from 1458 which mentions a "silver cup sculpted with morris dance." There are other wills, which describe the disposition of similar cups. So at its earliest known point, Morris was already common enough to have spawned a tacky souvenir industry.

During the 16th century, the annual accounts for several churches contain expenditures for the purchase of Morris bells and costumes, and also income from the rental of the same to neighbouring parishes.

1509-10

Silver payper for the Mores-dawnsars

7d

For VI peyre of shones for ye Mors duncers

4 shillings

Morris dance was performed before the courts of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and the tradition was described as "ancient" by those courtiers even then.

Shakespeare's play Henry V would have us believe that Whitsun Morris dances were sufficiently common that French royalty knew of them - The Dauphin remarks "... with no more than if we heard that England were busied with a Whitsun Morris dance".

Also, Morris, performed by a team of men and a team of women, was the central theme of one scene in the play "The Two Noble Kinsmen" attributed to Fletcher and/or Shakespeare, which was viewed by Elizabeth I at her house on Drury Lane.

On the topic of Shakespeare, one of his actors, William Kemp, made a historic journey from London to Norwich, dancing all the way and keeping a diary, which he published in 1600, titled "The Nine Days Wonder".

The Morris has not been restricted to written works - there have been paintings showing dancers in action such as *Dixton Harvesters (1730-ish)* and *Lymm Rushbearing (1840-ish)*

And, of course, for the last 100 years or so we have had photographs of traditional Morris teams such as Headington and Bampton.



1840 Painting of Lymm Rushbearing

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 in Africa. Or it may simply refer to the dancers' practice of blackening their faces with burnt cork 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). Or it may be derived from the Latin moris, meaning custom or tradition.

Or maybe it has something to do with some guy named Maurice. We have no idea.

The Morris revival can be attributed to Cecil Sharp who on Boxing Day 1899 saw Headington Quarry dancing out of season to make some money. He collected those dances and travelled around the Cotswold villages collecting other dances and tunes, which he printed in five volumes between 1911 and 1924.

Though originally danced by men, it is believed that after the First World War, many villages or towns had no team of men to perform each year and many changes took place as a result. Young boys were taught, some of the places filled gaps with ladies and some taught the dances to young girls.

Many of the Cheshire dances were affected in these ways and the 'fluffy' carnival Morris seen in this area is one result of the traditions changing. Formal competitions between troupes also tended to mean that different regional styles changed because judges looked for standardised performances.

Any discussion from Thelwall Morris shouldn't leave out the dance local to Thelwall and that is the Statham Morris.

In 1938 Maud Karpeles documented, very sparsely, a dance from the Lymm area from information given by surviving dancers of the Oughtrington team. This was picked up by Geoff Bibby of Thelwall Morris Men. He found surviving members of a boys team who danced the Statham Morris in 1923, and pieced together the dance.



Statham Morris Team - 1986 Lymm Rushbearing

This brings us to the dances and the music.

Most dances in each tradition are named after the tune which is played for them and in some traditions the dancers sing words to the music before dancing. The reason for this can be manifold:

1. It's a song associated with the tune e.g. Postman's Knock ("Every morning as true as the clock...")
2. It's humorous (supposedly) e.g. Lads-a-bunchum ("Oh dear mother what a fool I've been six young men have come a courting me, five were blind and the other couldn't see, oh dear mother what a fool I be")
3. It's rude, so it's funny (so I'm told) e.g. Room for the Cuckold ("We do it all day we do it all night because it's our fertility rite")
4. It tells the musician(s) how fast (or slow) the dancer(s) would like the tune played (which the musician often ignores!)
5. The musician can't remember the tune without the words

It is known that many years ago (about 400) the common instruments used were the pipe and tabor. It is actually quite a skilful thing to be able to play a 3 or 4-holed pipe while banging a drum rhythmically. Instruments more commonly found in the Morris band now are fiddles, concertinas, melodeons and accordions - the more flourishing the Morris side, often the bigger the band.

Many Cotswold sides stick to the tradition of one or two musicians - big bands are only common in North West and Border.

Most dances are split up into figures and choruses and it is the chorus that distinguishes one dance from another (which is why it is sometimes referred to as the distinctive figure). For any particular tradition the stepping is usually the same throughout all dances - the one two three hops or whatever, and the figures are usually the same. Indeed, a dancer can often

identify the tradition by watching the stepping and figures (and will probably guess the name of the dance from the tune).

Figures may be foot up, half gypsy (forward and back), gypsy (cross to partner's position and continue back into place), back to back (country dance "dos-à-dos"), hands round, whole hey (figure eight) - also half heys and various other figures according to tradition.

You will usually hear someone calling out the figures - the figures are usually danced in the same order, but they are called just the same (and sometimes called in wrong order following some sudden brain storm, mental block or deliberate ploy to make sure the dancers are awake).

Different Morris teams will often adopt a style of their own, and this is not to say that they are doing it wrong, or even that this is the definitive way to do it. It is, in some cases, a matter of interpretation. Not every aspect of every Morris dance has been documented.

You will usually see the Morris danced as set dances, but from time to time the stepping and distinctive elements of a tradition are put together (plus a chorus) for a single dancer to perform a solo jig.

Finally, an account off the Internet - "what we really know about Morris dancing"

It is either 200 years old, 600 years old or 3,000 years old (or it's not)
It originally developed in England (unless it didn't)
It was a fertility rite danced in springtime (or a festive dance danced anytime)
It was danced exclusively by men (except when women danced, too)

Sources:

1. **The Morris Tradition.** The Morris Ring.
2. **The Morris Book. [Compilation of 5 volumes].** C.J. Sharp and H.C. Macilwaine. The Morris Ring. 1991.
3. **Comes the Morris Dancer in. A celebration of fifty years of The Morris Ring. 1934-1984.** D. Rowe. The Morris Ring. 1984.
4. **The Morris in Cheshire.** G. Bibby. The Morris Ring Circular, (5), Apr. 1984.
5. Numerous unremembered sources from the World Wide Web.
6. Geoff Bibby's notes.

The Lymm Dance or Statham Morris Dance

Throughout this booklet the text sometimes refers to the Lymm Dance and on other occasions to the Statham Morris – Why?

Statham is a "suburb" of Lymm and, essentially, it was the same dance that was danced in both Lymm and Statham. However, the dance was originally collected from past Statham dancers and included a figure called the "Double Cast" which, the former dancer reported, was a figure that was done only by the Statham team – Lymm didn't do that one".

A brief history of Thelwall Morris Men

Jim Berry

Thelwall Morris Men were formed in October 1973, the nucleus of the side being a group of regulars from the Thelwall Folk Club at the Pickering Arms, which was run by Maggie and Rod Goodall.

All of these men were absolute beginners. Some had seen Morris dancing at Keele University Folk Festival earlier in the year and fancied trying it. The only trouble was, how to get started?

The answer proved to be a small ad in Folk Review magazine, asking for someone to come and teach the dance.

Around this time, Chris Maple, who became the side's first squire and foreman, had arrived in the North West to take up a job in Liverpool. Chris proved well equal to the task of getting his raw recruits off on the right foot (or in our case, the left).

The side's first musician was Fred Horrobin (Maggie's dad) who busked on accordion for a couple of weeks until someone unearthed the exceptionally talented Steve Burgess from downtown Stockton Heath.

Under Chris's tuition, the side learned an assortment of Cotswold dances, mainly Bampton and Adderbury to begin with. The first public performance took place, without baldricks and badges, at the Pickering Arms in August 1974 before a sceptical audience of wives, girlfriends and members of the folk club.



1974 - First performance at the Pickering Arms

By 1975 the side had acquired its kit. Black breeches and shoes, white shirt and socks, with baldricks of pale blue and claret surmounted by a distinctive badge representing the wall of "Thells" or stakes from which Thelwall, England's smallest city, derived its name in Anglo-Saxon times.

The side's first invitation to a day of dance was from Southport Sword Dancers in May 1975, and the inexperienced side made a favourable impression.

The following year they attended their first Ring Meeting at Thaxted and have attended a Ring Meeting almost every year since then.

In 1977, the side visited Ireland for the Cobh festival, quickly followed, in 1979, by an invitation to Mallow, Ireland. The following year (1980) the side made their second visit to Cobh and, in 1993, Thelwall made their fourth trip to Ireland. Not many sides have danced inside the keep of Blarney Castle.

Thelwall took their staff at the Ledbury Ring Meeting in 1980, singing their way in with a rousing, yet disciplined version of Tarporley Hunt, a Cheshire song unearthed by Geoff Bibby. The song has become a sort of unofficial Thelwall anthem.



1980 - Chris Maple receives the staff of office from Ivor Allsop

The side's hobby is a lion (Brian), constructed by Geoff Bibby, and taken from the Pickering coat of arms.

The repertoire of dances has remained broadly Cotswold, though during Rob Pracy's period as foreman the side developed a strong feeling for the Lichfield tradition, which it retains to this day.

In addition, through the painstaking research of Geoff Bibby, the side dances the Statham dance (Statham is the next village to Thelwall). This dance was last performed by a young side in the 1920's.

An unusual aspect of the Thelwall side is that they were recruited from a very wide area, coming from as far away as the Manchester suburbs and the Wirral. One member, Jeremy, travelled from Sevenoaks, Kent on a regular basis, while Jasper often found time to travel from Brussels to Ring Meetings. Perhaps that's one of the reasons for the side's continuity - if you travel those sort of distances you have to be keen.

Over the last 25 years Thelwall have had three bases. The first was the Pickering Arms, where they started, for just over three years before moving to the Bull's Head in Warrington, where they stayed for about 15 years, and now home is the British Legion in Thelwall.

These days, however, most of the side live in the Warrington area, and only one man lives in Thelwall. Only two members of the original dancers (Jim Berry and Geoff Bibby) are still with the side at the present time. Geoff has held the positions of Squire and Foreman on several occasions over the years, and Jimmy has been bagman for 17 years.

The secret history of the early months

Chris Maple (first squire and foreman) speaks out

Maggie and Rod Goodall ran a Folk Club in the large black shed behind The Pickering Arms in Thelwall. It was a mixed singers and guests club. Maggie herself had a very good singing voice and frequently performed at the club. Rod did not have a good singing voice but being a rugby player performed well as 'bouncer' and money taker on the door - there was no trouble in this Folk Club! ! . But what set this club apart from most others was not what went on while the club was open but what went on when it was closed!

After 'last orders' and a final chorus song most people would drift away home but the *cognoscenti* stayed put and waited for the pub to empty. Then they made their way to the pub kitchen where amazing bowls of home-made soup would be served by Maggie's Mum and if you wanted a drink from the bar, well Maggie's Dad could oblige. Nobody sat on ceremony, in fact we all sat on the floor, and perhaps a few more songs would be sung. There were no special privileges for the guest singer, except to be invited to join this little gathering, and many well known folk singers will remember their evenings at Thelwall Folk Club.

It was in this heady atmosphere, well into the folk song revival of the 60s and 70s that the germ of an idea for a Morris Dancing side first arose. And it was to this that I joined in 1973 having 'come up north' the previous year to work in Liverpool. I had danced previously with Blackmore Morris Men and Chelmsford Morris Men, I knew that for a few years at least I would have 'The Morris' in my blood - so the small ad which I read in a folk magazine was just what I was looking for.

The initial practice meetings were not auspicious!

The dancing area in the big black shed was something less than 10 feet by 10 feet.

Our first musician, Fred Horrobin - he was the landlord and Maggie's Dad - knew many tunes on his accordion but most of them were either in 3/4 time or were music hall songs - as he 'played by ear' and could not read music this was not a happy arrangement.

The men did not believe that it would take over a year before they could dance well enough to be seen in public - but so it proved.

There were not enough men to form a dancing set but as several of them brought with them their wives or girlfriends these ladies were pressed into service as well - but only to make up the numbers.

And so we practised and practised and practised until one day... ..but the rest is history

Cobh, Ireland, 1993

"The Festival workshop in the Memorial Hall is cancelled due to inclement weather". When asked "Why an indoor event would be cancelled due to bad weather", the reply was "The fella who has the key will see the rain and not want to come out to open the Hall"

Lymm Historical Society, 1977

We didn't get a fee for this, but afterwards one old guy gave us £1.50 and said "Buy a drink for everybody"

Picture gallery



1979

Pete Jackson (Thelwall Fool) shares a drink with the Thelwall Hobby - a Lion named Brian.
(For information - Chris Whiting is inside the Lion)



1998

The three Thelwall Fools together at "The Maypole", Acton Bridge, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary Tour.



Dancing in Lymm 1983

(l-r): Jeff Dodwell, Rob Pracy, David Burgess, ? (hidden), Chris Maple, Steve Guest
Steve Burgess (musician)

The Thelwall Fools

Gordon Gilmore

(Fool: 1982 - 1996)



Less sympathetic members of the public have been known to express the view that all the Thelwall dancers are fools. But here, we're discussing the Fools with a capital 'F'. There have only ever been three – Pete Jackson (until his departure to Australia in 1981), Gordon Gilmore (1982-1996) and, from 1998, Kevin Farrell.

Fooling is not a job that anyone can, or wishes, to do. Fools tend to appear in the side and continue until they fall out with the side, or off the perch. Look around at the famous Fools and you will find that they have been with their side seemingly for ever. Some, like the late Trevor Hull, continue to Fool long after they have any noticeable affiliation to any particular team. Curiously, once a Fool becomes a Fool he's a Fool forever – a team can forbid him to dance or Fool with them, but they can't take his bladder away! (The side had to transport Pete Jackson to Australia to get rid of him!)

So what does, or should, a Fool do? What is the role in the side for the Fool, or indeed for Betty, Bessie, Tom, Hoss or Hobby? There have been suggestions that the Fool, along with the other supernumeraries, animals and hobbies, are relics of a time

when the Morris was but an interlude in some sort of a mystery play. The plays having become extinct, the dancing lived on. Modern pragmatists who assert that all Morris is merely recently invented street theatre would no doubt scoff at that idea.

The essential modern role of the Fool is to provide a bridge between the team and the public. Morris teams, in spite of their very public activity, are very introverted. Watch them. How many individuals interact with the crowd? Few. Watch what happens when the squire asks for somebody to take the hat round!

Let's make it clear at the outset that the Fool is not an idiot – it's much too sophisticated a job to entrust to an imbecile. So, what qualities does a Fool need to have? Firstly, the Fool must have an ego the size of planet to be able to go and strut around being, let's face it, very silly in public. He (or indeed she, be that an actual she or a drag-she) must have the self-confidence to play jokes on the public – adults and children – and be sensible enough to make sure that they don't offend or harm anyone. If the Fool is going to interact with the dance he must know the dance inside out. The team are happy for the Fool to dance through the set and to follow them across the corners but are easily roused to 'harsh words' if he collides with them or obstructs them. (A famous, and rare, misjudgement of Pete Jackson was to stand up straight just as someone was about to leapfrog over his back during a display dance).

The Fool should not forget that the dance has priority over his desire to entertain. For that reason, the Fool should keep a low profile when another team is dancing. There's nothing more irritating for a team than to find that they are dancing their socks off in their best display of the year, only to realise that the crowd is watching somebody else's Fool!

A final quality a Fool might find useful is a loud voice, particularly if, as has often been the case with Thelwall, the Fool is asked to introduce the dances. This is not the best use of the Fool – having to break off every two minutes or so disrupts the very serious business of creating a rapport with the crowd. It also has the undesirable side effect of giving the crowd the idea that the Fool is in charge of the team.

A good Fool will always be looking for new ideas. He will watch other Fools in action and learn from them. My own delight was to watch the late Morris Sunderland in action. He had a wonderful rapport with the crowd and had the most delightful chat-up line which would get little old ladies giggling and simpering like young girls. Morris was, of course, the Fool who rode through the centre of the Thelwall set at their first Thaxted attendance on a borrowed bicycle! There are limits, of course. Watching Dolphin's Fool years later never convinced me that learning to ride a unicycle was a 'must-have' skill. On the other hand, his flying rubber chicken accompanied by the cry of 'Pull!' in shooting dances found its way into the flying hand in Thelwall's Moulton stick dances.

An enthusiastic Fool might even sign up as a member of the United Fools Union (if that still persists after the death of its founder and organiser Trevor Hull - the one with the cock on his head). He might even attend the Morris Ring's instructionals for Fools and Animals to learn from his peers.

The Fool is the only member allowed to wear what he likes and his kit, rather like the faces of clowns, is his alone, not the team's. As it happens, both Pete and I (pictured left) chose to wear rag coats – ensuring that we were the only warm members of the team on cold days but suffered from overheating on hot summer days. Fools share with clowns the burden that on the bad days, the days when you don't really want to be bothered, it's still your job to go out there and sparkle for the crowd. I'm uncomfortably aware that sometimes I didn't make it.

Whilst I was an active Fool with Thelwall I carried a staff. This was made by Geoff Bibby and was tipped with the cap from a sergeant major's swagger stick. I regarded this as my authority from the team to Fool with them. Morris Sunderland once asked me about my staff and I told him just that. 'Hmmp', he said, 'Fools don't have any authority!' And he's right. A Fool fools by the consent of the side. (Those in the team with hernias will recall that consent was near to being withdrawn after they were trapped into lifting 'Big Dolores' from Ballyphehan outside the Ring O'Bells at the end of Bampton Banbury Bill the first evening of the 1995 Weekend of Dance. Instead I received the 'Dull Bugger' award!) .

A Fool isn't essential to the side but does add something to the whole display. On a good day when the weather is right, the side is dancing well, the Fool is on form and the audience receptive, the Fool can add that little bit extra entertainment and enjoyment to the crowd and team alike. For the Fool, that's very fulfoolling.

Note:

Kevin Farrell, the current Fool, continues the Thelwall Fool tradition of wearing a rag coat. Extras include a top hat and an inflated pig's bladder. The bladders proved difficult to obtain due to current EC regulations, but having eventually got half a dozen, they have been emptied of their contents (yes, that stuff), washed, suitably inflated (with an air-bed foot pump - he's not that much of a fool), tied with string and then left to dry well away from civilisation.

The Bagman's Awards

Steve Guest

When Thelwall Morris Men were spending a weekend away at Thaxted, Essex, some years ago, Jeff Dodwell dreamt that he had been sick. Jim Berry, sleeping next to Jeff, woke the next morning to find the bottom of his sleeping bag stained with something unspeakable. For his nocturnal discharges, Jeff was awarded the Slippery Gullet by the Bagman. The subsequent history of Jim's sleeping bag has gone unrecorded.

The Bagman's Awards were instigated by Ernie Whalley sometime in the mid 70s. They have been added to (and subtracted from) over the years and currently there are four main awards given out at the AGM by the Bagman, together with others awarded from time to time as and when the achievements of the members of the team merit them.

The Bagman's Medal

This is the only award which is made with a degree of seriousness. It is a medallion with ribbon in the team's colours and is awarded to a member of the team who is felt by the Bagman to have made a distinguished contribution to the team during the past year. It has been awarded for such things as organising a Day of Dance or for finding the team a new practice venue when we were evicted from our previous abode.

The Slippery Ferret

Comprising a handsomely framed sketch of a downtrodden little man being put upon by his domineering spouse and carrying the caption "And when you've finished that you can shampoo the ferret", this trophy is awarded for the most feeble excuse given for not turning out to dance. It was once awarded to someone who couldn't dance because he had to go shopping - an excuse felt to be lacking in substance somewhat as we were dancing outside Warrington Market. It was most unfairly awarded (but fairness has never been a criterion in making the awards) to one poor member of the side who failed to turn out on a single occasion one year. The fact that the recipient was working in Burton on Trent for the entire year was not thought to be a good enough reason.

The Silver Shoes

That this award has on numerous occasions been made to the Foreman on behalf of the whole side is perhaps a sad, but accurate, reflection on our mastery of the Terpsichorean arts; for this award is to mark a particularly poor piece of dancing by a member of the team who should know better. Falling over is always a good way to force yourself into contention for this but the Bagman often looks for something a little more distinctive, such as losing sticks or significant items of clothing during the dance. Our musician once received it for his acute amnesia on one particular occasion. This award started out as two of Ernie's shoes (both left feet) painted silver but is now a fine pottery model of two left shoes painted silver and created by Geoff Bibby.

The Dull Bugger

Another magnificent clay sculpture created by Geoff Bibby, forming the words "Dull Bugger", mounted on a wooden plinth, the recipient of this award is the envy of his peer group for the ensuing year. It's hard to define what this is awarded for except to say that it's for doing something particularly "dull". A recent recipient, for example, was awarded the trophy for going to play the guitar and earning £85 in preference to paying out £20 for a bus ride round Derbyshire and getting soaked dancing to no-one on a cold day in September.

Other awards made on an occasional basis include The Slippery Gullet (those of you who recall the first paragraph will no doubt have worked out how to qualify for this one - good taste precludes a more detailed exposition), which comprises a steel surgical dish of dubious origin. There is also The Mounted Swede, which is a swede mounted on a bit of wood, not awarded since John "Groper" Pickston left the side. The thought that this might be read by a mixed audience dictates a certain discretion over explaining this one. Suffice it to say that the award's name and the reason for it relate to John's sedulous pursuit of the pleasures of the flesh at an international folk dance festival.

The reader may feel that all this has somewhat tenuous links to the Morris and is the product of a group of men who have not progressed beyond schoolboy humour. If so, I can only commend the reader for his or her perspicacity. Whatever - I'm off to ponder tactics required to secure the re-award of the Mounted Swede.

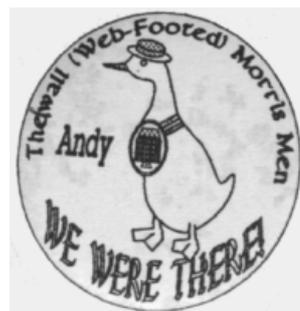
The Bagman's Medal Roll of Honour

1975 Steve Burgess	1987 Geoff Bibby	1999 Derek Bradburne
1976 Ian Goodier	1988 Jim Berry	2000 Andrew White
1977 John "Grog" Gregson	1989 Kevin Farrell	2001 Ned Bibby
1978 Gordon Gilmore	1990 Alan Poole	2002 Geoff Bibby
1979 Geoff Bibby	1991 Andrew White	2003 Steve Guest
1980 Rob Pracy	1992 Geoff Bibby	2004 Andrew White
1981 Chris Maple	1993 Kevin Farrell	2005 Dave Pratt
1982 Steve Burgess	1994 Derek Bradburne	2006 Rob Pracy
1983 Gordon Gilmore	1995 Kevin Farrell	2007 Andrew White
1984 Steve Guest	1996 Andrew White	2008 Del Britch
1985 Peter Robinson	1997 Geoff Bibby	2009 Sam "Henry" Addison
1986 Gordon Gilmore	1998 Andrew White	2010 Steve Guest

Thelwall Rose Queen, 1991

Thelwall Morris Men join the procession in traditional Thelwall kit, but concealed by heavy-duty cagoules as torrential rain pours down. The rain holds off, briefly, for the performance in the arena, only to pour down again during the final figure of the final dance.

To commemorate the "event" special individual badges were produced for the 8 members present - Thelwall Web-Footed Morris Men.



M6 hard shoulder en route to Sellafield in hired minibus, 1992

Steve still insists that when the fuel tank reads empty there are at least two gallons left.

Canal boat trip during 1996 Weekend of Dance

Thelwall show their adeptness at dancing without music by dancing, on the narrowboat, the "silent" version of Lichfield Ring O' Bells. The absence of musician was due to Derek busily "feeding the fishes", for which he was awarded the Slippery Gullet.

AGM 6th October 1999 – Nomination for Bagman's Medal

It was suggested (unkindly) that the medal should be awarded to the whole team, except Bibby's kids, for putting up with Bibby's kids.

Thelwall Honourable Members

In 1981 Ernie Whalley, who was the team's Squire at the time, announced that he wanted to give recognition to individual members of the side who had distinguished themselves by their efforts and enthusiasm. These men were to become Honourable Members and were each to receive a tankard from the side.

The first Honourable Members were Chris Maple and Jim Berry.

Subsequently, new Honourable Members were to be chosen by the existing holders of the title. Over the years the number of men receiving this award has grown to 11, of whom 7 are still members of the side.

The award was not met with universal acclaim and one man actually left the side because he didn't agree with the creation of what he saw as a separate class of member.

Current Honourable members are:

Chris Maple	Steve Guest
Jim Berry	Mick "Amos" Price
Geoff Bibby	Derek Bradburne
Rob Pracy	Andrew White
Gordon Gilmore	Kevin Farrell
Steve Burgess	Dave Pratt

One man's view on the trip to Sellafield, 1992

We had been invited to the Sellafield Visitor Centre and, suprisingly, we were able to make up a team; only two of our side had reservations. For one, his consumption of beer and cigarettes was a significant health risk already and the other was an accountant, so quite beyond hope.

A bad kit day at Bakewell dancing "Jockey to the Fair"

Dancers will often lose grip of a hankey while dancing and very occasionally a bell-pad will come loose and dangle dangerously around the ankle before being shaken off.

Ernie Whalley had developed a reputation for relying on such things as staples and glue, but on this day he excelled himself.

Jockey to the Fair is what is called a corner dance, which means that corner pairs of dancers repeat the movement of meeting in the middle of the set.

On Ernie's first visit to the centre he dropped a hankey. By the time of the second corner chorus he was already having difficulty with a loose bell-pad, and managed to shake it off and leave it on the ground in the middle of the set next to the hankey. Looking quite dishevelled by now with a wayward shirt tail gently flapping, his third visit saw his belt, which had somehow undone itself, come snaking down from his waist onto the growing pile of kit.

The other dancers in the set, and many of the audience, found it difficult to keep straight faces in anticipation of what clothing Ernie would discard next!

The Thelwall dances

Andrew J White

As if there aren't enough Morris dances in the world already, it is common for Morris teams to "invent" dances based on the style of existing dance traditions. Thelwall, in this respect, is no exception and the team has worked together to generate a suite of dances, which we believe to be interesting/impressive to watch and fun to dance.

The original Thelwall dance was "Welthall Chimes" – the tune being written by Steve Burgess and the dance is Lichfield Ring 'O Bells.

Further dances have been added to the Thelwall repertoire, which we tend to call our own. Most of them are direct extensions of existing dances, which have been developed by the side.

1. **Bean Setting:** This is the basic Headington dance with a modification in stick clashing during each of the 4 choruses, the last of which is particularly hazardous and requires a certain degree of concentration - hence the dance's nickname of Brain Testing
2. **Ducklington Dances (4-man):** Originating on a practice night when only four men and a musician turned up, the **Nutting Girl** jig was adapted to four men facing each other in a square set. Some modification of what happens in the chorus was required for extra bits of action, but the result is quite interesting to watch, especially the climax when all four dancers "cross" in the middle narrowly avoiding collision (mostly!). A similar treatment has been given to **Jockey to the Fair** and **Princess Royal**.
3. **Android's Folly:** Designed from scratch as a "stereotypical Morris dance", it is performed free-style, has lots of stick clashing in it and has figures loosely based on usual dance figures - cast, double gypsy, whole hey, Bruce's reel and "across, adjust, round and out".
4. **Pickering** - The 25th Anniversary Dance named after The Pickering Arms, birthplace of Thelwall Morris and danced to a tune, Welthall Chimes, written by a Thelwall musician – Steve Burgess. The dance is a play on words, "pick a ring", as the dance is made up of the "circular" figures from traditions danced by Thelwall over the 25 years, with a chorus also performed in a ring.
5. **Bidford Dances (4-man):** Again, in an effort to expand the repertoire for an ever-decreasing team **Morning Star** and **Abraham Brown** have been adapted to join the Thelwall 4-man dance repertoire.

There is, of course, another dance that is "exclusive" to Thelwall and that is the Lymm Dance (also known as the Statham Morris Dance). The style is very distinctive, the stepping, figures and kit deriving from North-West Morris, while soft shoes, as for Cotswold, are worn. It is danced with very large handkerchiefs. The dance is now performed by Thelwall Morris Men as often as possible; if dancers' availability permits it is danced at the annual Lymm Rushbearing Ceremony.

Cobh, Ireland, 1993 - Programme entry for Thelwall Morris Men

They hail from Cheshire, the heartland of Morris Dancing in England. There it comes second only to religion in the intensity of commitment on the part of its many participants.

Probably one of the most unique forms of dance to be found anywhere in Europe with its Squires and Bagmen, it leaves the viewer bemused as to whether it is to be taken seriously or just enjoyed.

Note: The Cobh festival Committee had lost the Thelwall MM version and therefore invented the above description.

Thelwall and Statham Walking Tour

Whilst the first traditional event of each dancing season for Thelwall Morris Men is the Easter Monday Tour of local pubs, ending up at the Pickering Arms, the traditional finish is the Walking Tour of Thelwall and Statham.

The tour was “invented”, in 1981, by Rob Pracy. On August Bank Holiday Monday we dance solely for the people of Thelwall and Statham, we don't collect, we dance for the hell of it. Also as part of the tradition we hand out a piece cake to anyone who will take the time to come and watch us.

Whenever possible the side performs the Statham Morris Dance during the afternoon session in Statham village, and it was during one of the early revival performances that an elderly lady passing by remarked “I remember seeing that dance when I was a girl”.



1988 Team Photo in Statham kit

The route is the same every year starting at 11.30am

1. Sharkey's, Thelwall New Road
2. Shops at Barley Road & Stanton Road
3. Junction of Dunmow Road & Barley Road
4. Parry Drive
5. Pickering Arms
6. Star, Statham (Lunch stop - depart about 2.30)
7. Statham Post Office
8. Whitesands Road
9. Shops at Albany Road

The walking tour route is rapidly becoming unidentifiable – Sharkey's Shop is now closed and Statham Post Office has been converted into a house.



Left to Right: Del Britch, Derek Bradburne, Geoff Bibby, Andrew White, Steve Guest, Rob Pracy and Jim Berry

The Last Walking Tour

Due to small numbers and lack of availability (aka interest) the last walking tour took place on August Bank Holiday Monday 2004, when five dancers (one in a plaster cast) walked the route and entertained as best they could, with the Thelwall 4-man dances and jigs.

Memories of a trip to Mallow, County Cork, 1979

A letter from Australia

Pete Jackson - Former Thelwall Fool

This was a nine day trip that, due to a severe bout of alcoholic poisoning, I can remember only the first two days of.

There were some good stories from that trip and most of them involved a leprechaun named Jimmy Bowen, who ran the dry cleaners shop in Mallow. Ernie Whalley and "Grog" (John Gregson), Groper and, I think, Jeremy were staying with Jimmy and Kit. By about Wednesday they were coming and going via the bedroom window because every time they saw Jimmy he got them plastered on Paddy Irish Whiskey and Poteen (the illicit Irish rocket fuel). I was pretty much in the same boat. The people I was staying with (Tommy and Nora Wolffe and their four children aged between 18 years and 18 months) kept me "less than sober" all the time. I would be served a half pint glass of poteen with every meal (breakfast included) and a half pint every time you left the house.

The Wolffe household was a wonderful place. It was the only house I've ever been in where the milkman delivered the milk directly to the fridge everyday and the breadman delivered to the bread bin and so on. Nora made the best cup of tea I've ever had (and served a mean glass of poteen with it).

The main events were held in the Central Hotel (the posh hotel in town) and we were booked to appear on the Tuesday evening at 10.00pm. The boys decided that we'd have an afternoon session in the bar (can't remember the name of the bar) but Steve "Owen" Burgess, Chris Parkinson (now of House Band fame) Johnny "guitar" Gregson and many others kept the locals entertained. As is customary in Ireland, the Guinness flowed freely.

By late afternoon/early evening the boys were well oiled, so it's home to get ready for the evening performance. Home for some meant going to the Bowen or the Wolffe households. For me and Jim Berry that meant a visit to both, as the Wolfes had planned to visit the Bowens on the way to the Central Hotel. So, I have my half pint of Poteen with my evening meal and another because we are leaving the house. When we arrive at the Bowens, Jimmy welcomes us with more Poteen (2 or 3 more) and Paddy Irish Whiskey. Jimmy's party trick is to jump a bar stool from a stationary position, quite a feat if you're 4ft nothing. Of course, there are Morris men who, full of drink, can do this - Groper was, to say the least, embarrassing.

So, after more Poteen (because you're leaving the house) we head for the Central Hotel. It's nearly 10 o'clock (official start time) but as everyone knows by now, you have a least two hours to get there before it starts (except Gordon).

According to the Bowens, to get to the Central Hotel you have to go past Fitzpatrick's bar. So after three or four pints in Fitzpatrick's we arrive at the Central Hotel, just as the Morris men have started.

For the following morning, Jimmy Bowen had organised a bus to take the side to Blarney Castle, about 25 miles away. I missed the bus due to another bout of alcoholic poisoning but the Wolfes being the wonderful people they are, and following a breakfast of bacon and eggs, tea and Poteen, they drove me to Blarney to meet up with the side. Upon arrival I was immediately set upon by most of the side but particularly Gordon Gilmore and Rob Pracy who, unusually, were full of praise for my fooling performance of the previous evening. I had

to ask what had particularly impressed them and what had I done because the truth of the matter is, I remember arriving and realising that we were late but from there the evening (and most of the rest of the time in Mallow) is a complete blank.

I'm told that a wonderful time was had by all.

The Mallow Shield

Anon

The local silver band in Mallow, for reasons best known to themselves, presented Thelwall Morris Men with a trophy - "for services to culture". The trophy was a foot high plinth bearing the figure of a footballer in action.

In order to put the trophy to good use, an "annual" competition took place, usually at Norton Priory on May Day, whereby the "Northern Bums" played the "Brummies and the Southern Poofers" at football - the Birmingham members not wishing to be associated with the "Southern Poofers". The division is made amongst those players available on the day based on birth place.

The trophy has since broken - the footballer parted company with his stand and became the man of the match award. So, in true "Irish" fashion, the Mallow Shield is not one award but two - neither of which is a shield!

Sadly, because of the ageing nature of the Thelwall side, the 1998 Mallow Shield was contested by a series of indoor games - dominoes, tiddly-winks and shove-ha'penny.

Pen-profiles of past and present players

Chris Maple

Plays in goal for the Southerners. Answers to "Dracula" (scared of crosses) or "Cinderella" (late for the ball).

Rob Pracy

Volunteered to act as coach - had his teeth taken out and a row of seats fitted.

Grog

The only person to be expelled by Weight Watchers. When we danced at Blackpool he was towed off the beach because the tide wanted to come in.

Ernie Whalley

He has slightly less ability than his dog. Makes Paddy Crerand look like Seb Coe.

Pete Jackson

Has a tendency to kick anything above grass level. His motto is "If it moves kick it, if it doesn't move, kick it 'til it does".

Dave Cotton

Quicker to climb over him than run round. A good solid defender who can also be used to roll the pitch.

Jeremy

Handicapped by playing in shoes that looked like surf boards. This tends to dictate his style of play.

Gordon Gilmore

Had trials at Liverpool and Chester. Found guilty both times. Plays exceptionally well for a pensioner.

More tales from the Guinness Tours

Cobh, 1977

The first trip to Cobh, being during term time, meant that one teacher in the side could not get leave (even unpaid) for anything other than a dire emergency. Desperate measures were called for and the only course open seemed to be sickness, and for this trip, that meant being signed off by a competent doctor!

At this time Ian Goodier had already suffered a severe slipped disc and was able to give coaching in the classic symptoms: what to complain of, what the doctor would say and do, and *exactly* how to react! The doctor played his part perfectly and the scene was acted out as predicted followed by two weeks off work with what the doctor described as “a classic slipped disc”. Of course our intrepid dancer had to limp out of the surgery and down the road just in case the doctor was watching.

Being a teacher in a Roman Catholic school, many of the families had relatives in Southern Ireland and were regularly sent Irish newspapers. These papers often reported on news with English connections. Consequently every team photo call resulted in our “invalid” running into the distance away from the camera.

The final “sticky moment” occurred on the ferry back to England, when the teacher met one of his pupils and vainly tried to convince him that he was really his own twin brother and not “Sir”.

Cobh, 1993

Kevin, Gordon and Dave’s first impressions:

Arriving late on the first night, there was still activity in the streets but the bars looked closed. With nothing but an address for our hosts, we decided to ask a passer-by to direct us to “Lower Road”. A lilting Irish voice replied “Well, you have to go back down this road for about 15 miles, then ask again”. We were mystified until it clicked - “No. It’s not Cork we want, it’s Lower Road here in Cobh!”. It was only 100 yards away!

On a more serious note...

Dave Pratt, Squire of Thelwall Morris Men writes...

The arrangements for the Cobh trip were proceeding well during the early part of 1993, when the bombing of Warrington occurred in March which killed Johnathan Ball and Tim Parry. Thelwall Morris Men debated at the next meeting whether it would be appropriate to continue with the tour, and would we still be welcome. We decided to go ahead with our plans. A few days later the Cobh Festival organisers sent a fax in which they said:

“It is very difficult for an Irishman to find adequate words to express the revulsion that we feel when some inhabitants of this island of ours do what they have done to communities such as yours and presume to do it in our name”

When we got to Ireland, we found that this view was widely shared. Even though many people had nationalistic sentiments, they appeared to be genuinely disconcerted by what had been done. As a result, we were made to feel doubly welcome.

The Traditional Carrington Moss Mummers' Play

As performed by the Thelwall Mummers

Gordon Gilmore

The 'Play', as we all know, has nothing at all to do with Thelwall Morris Men.

The fact that the Mummers are exclusively drawn from said Morris Men is purely statistical chance. Of course, if you believe that, you might even be persuaded that the play is indeed a traditional play. Traditional in style it may be, but the origins of the play are shrouded in the recent rather than far distant past.

The play was conceived one summer evening in the seventies (even though recent, the actual date is forgotten, as befits tradition) when Thelwall Morris Men were just finishing a spot at a favourite venue, the Bells of Peover. The landlord happened to ask Ernie Whalley if he knew anyone who would perform a Mummers Play for him at Christmas. In his usual self-effacing manner, Ernie, quick as a flash, said 'We will'. He then presented this to the side as a fait accompli and went off to bend his copywriting skills to creating a suitable play.

Although new, the play does follow the traditional lines but incorporates contemporary allusions as all the old plays presumably did. We look forward to the day when academics find themselves searching the archives for the origin of the Turkish Knight's words 'Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee'! . Ernie did a good job. The play holds together very well and stands unashamed alongside its much older brethren.

The play was duly performed at the 'Bells' the following Christmas and the evening was made an occasion by the landlord providing sandwiches and mince pies for the Mummers, as he did each succeeding year, and each time there was enough to feed the whole pub. The success of that evening prompted the Mummers to expand their activities the following year, performing it at several pubs in and around Warrington.

Although the play was performed at the Bells of Peover each Christmas for many years, when the landlord changed the atmosphere changed, too - the mince pies failed to appear and eventually the Mummers decided to drop the Knutsford evening from the programme.

After a couple of years Ernie introduced an extended version of the play which included a number of supernumerary characters, including the crippled beggar 'Fat and Fine'. This role was magnificently filled by Nick 'Spider Legs' Tamblin, who at the first dress rehearsal had the cast reeling about helpless with laughter – without uttering a word! The extended version never felt comfortable and after a couple of years the original version was reinstated but with the addition of Fat and Fine at the end with the other odd characters.

There is a wonderful freedom in performing the play and ad-libs, in addition to those allowed for in the script, are welcomed, as long as they work – and they usually do.

Memorable performances have included Grog who, eschewing the usual Beelzebub character, appeared as the punk rocker 'Rat Scabies' instead, complete with a giant safety pin through his head. One evening we had Ernie, as The Doctor, causing uproar by dropping a black pudding, supposedly excised from the Turkish Knight's trousers, into a young lady's lap. Jeremy, not noted for his technological wizardry, created a device which would allow the dragon to puff on a cigar without subjecting Jeremy himself to the smoke. There was the night the play was performed without the Doctor! It had become the tradition that the Doctor would dress in such a way that he could go and sit in the bar, unrecognised, before the Mummers arrived, so that, in answer to the Mummers requested for a Doctor, he could stride out from

among the onlookers, to their amazement, to go and cure the Turkish Knight. On the night in question the Doctor chose the wrong pub to sit in, a triumph of corporate ad-libbing followed.



2002 Thelwall Mummers

Standing (l-r): Doctor, Soldier Bold, King of Egypt, Turkish Knight, Dragon, St George, Phoebe
Kneeling (l-r): Fat n'Fine, Fool, Beelzebub

Other traditions grew up around the play, not all of them visible to the public. The supernumeraries who appear at the end of the play stay outside the pub awaiting their entrance, in order not to spoil the visual jokes they carry. So, the tradition of Jasper as a very red Beelzebub running round the street terrorising passers-by grew, as did that of Gordon (Johnny Jack) standing outside the door in the cold mumbling 'What on earth am I doing here.....'

Early on in the life of the play the side decided that collections by the Mummers should be entirely donated to local charities and should be kept separate from the Morris accounts. That practice has continued for twenty or so years.

Although it is not always apparent, all those involved with the play have a great affection for it. Over the years the Mummers have raised in excess of three and a half thousand pounds for local charities and had many a memorable evening along the way. There's nothing more satisfying than to leave a pub after the performance with the landlord shouting after you, 'See you next year!'

If the play isn't traditional, it ought to be, and in the minds of many of the public and the Mummers themselves, it already is.

A new tradition at Thelwall Parish Hall

After Dave Pratt managed to get himself locked inside the Parish Hall by being in the toilets (even after the lights had been switched off), every week a final check is made to confirm that he is not in the loo (even if he wasn't present during the practice – you never know...).

25 Years of the Carrington Moss Mummers Play 1976 – 2000

Christmas 2000 celebrated the 25th Annual outing of the famous Carrington Moss Mummers Play.



The general history of the play is described elsewhere in this publication but the play looks set to continue into the 21st Century. It seems to be well and truly Y2K compliant - for the anniversary performances almost all [potential] Thelwall Mummers played almost all of the characters. The picture above shows the team at Walton Hall Gardens.

You have to be tough to be Foreman

At our first Cobh International Dance Festival, having watched a dancer (who shall remain nameless) dancing while much the worse for drink, the decision to omit him from the side at the most important performance of the day was necessary.

In dances with one-hop, two-hop stepping, he was very noticeably and consistently dancing on the wrong beat. He was lifting when all other dancers were dropping, and vice versa!

I did not expect any protest - if anything, the dancer would be grateful to be left out. But - when I did suggest to him that I thought it best to leave him out, he immediately cursed me and punched me in the face with his quart pot, which thankfully was empty! For me this is only amusing in retrospect!

Silurian Ring Meeting in 1999

The Squire, Dave Pratt, left the Squire's Tankard for all to admire in the middle of the car park at a pub somewhere in the depths of Worcestershire. The tankard was particularly admired by the wheels of a passing vehicle (variously reported as a small car or a juggernaut). Onlooking members of the team placidly noted the tankard's destruction.

The Transfer of Arthur from Bedford Morris Men

Following the recruitment of Arthur who had moved to the area, Bedford MM (his previous team) requested a transfer fee. After much negotiation and exchange of letters Steve (Thelwall's Bagman) sent Bedford's Bagman a cheque for 2p. They even banked it!!

A brief history of Morris Dancing in the Lymm area

Geoff Bibby

Before the turn of the century there were two troupes of Morris Dancers in the area, one based in Lymm and one in Oughtrington. Only the Oughtrington Troupe survived into the 1900's.



The leader of both troupes of dancers dressed as a woman and carried a wooden ladle for collecting money. Lymm Morris dancers were led by Thomas "Dossey" Brooks who died in 1897. Tom Holt led the Oughtrington dancers before 1900, and John Robert Downward in the early 1900's.

Most of these early dancers were fustian cutters in local cottage industries, cutting lengths of velveteen into ribbon, and this abundant availability of ribbon is reflected in the kit they wore.



Fustian cutter



The last leader of the remaining troupe was Ned Rowles, captured in his "Old Fool" or "Maid Marian" guise in 1912.

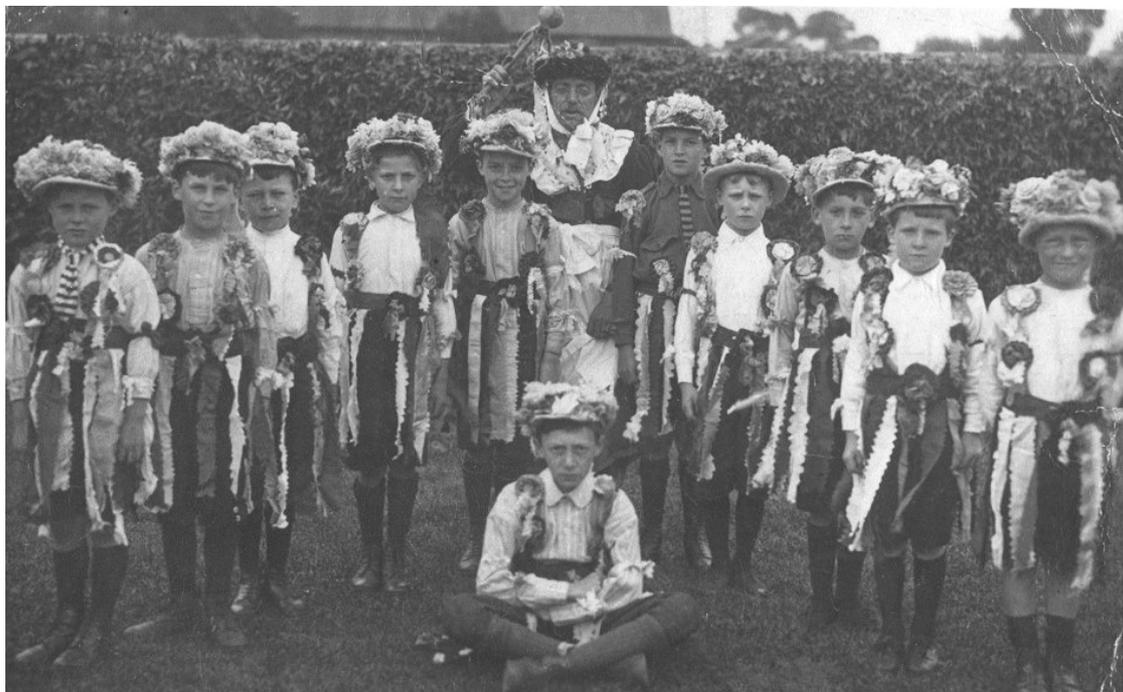
These early Morris troupes originally danced in the Rushbearing Processions which took place in Lymm and Statham in August, when carts fully laden with rushes were drawn by horses to the church and the rushes spread on the cold floors for winter insulation. The Lymm

rushcart was always drawn by "Lymm Greys" and the Statham cart by "Statham Blacks" - horses which were bred in the villages. This custom died out in the early 1880's.



c.1899 - Lymm Morris in Henry Street

Although Whitsuntide festivals were established in both Lymm and Statham in the early part of this century: - Fred Lockyer had established the Statham Whit Monday Festival in 1911, and Lymm had already established a Whit Thursday Festival - there is little evidence of Morris dancing on these occasions until Ned Rowles taught the "old dance" for the boys of Statham to perform at the 1920 Whit Monday revels.



Whit-Monday 1923 - Morris dancers of Statham with Ned Rowles
Star Inn bowling green

The old Morris dance was thence performed annually, but in 1928, the Morris dancers were no longer taught the old dance by Ned; the troupe was a mixed troupe of boys and girls trained in a modern style. In 1929 the Morris troupe was all-girl, which had rapidly become the fashion.

The maypole and garland dancers who performed in 1923 were: Annie Rushworth, May Manning, Dolly Struthers, Lizzie Wibberley, Margery Manning, Edith Hinton, Olive Clare, Eva Clare, Marion Finney, Gladys Drinkwater, Edith Thomason, May Field, Dora Watts, Amy Hartley, F. Owen, Mildred Manning, Mildred Riley, Edna Phillips, Celia Phillips, Lily Bell, Margery Hinton, Daisy Field, Dorothy Field, Mollie Stirton, Edith Gilbert, Beaty Burrows, and the Rose Queen was Mary Davies.

There were other Morris teams during the 1920's and 30's but information is difficult to come by.

After the Second World War Ted Edwards and his wife were mainly responsible for re-establishing the May Queen celebrations in Statham in 1946.



1948-49 - Broomedge Morris Dancers at Lymm May Queen

Alice Walker (née Higgins) and her brother Bill Higgins both danced in the Morris troupe in Statham from 1928 on, and they created and trained the Broomedge Morris Dancers who later became the Broomedge Blue Streamers entertaining troupe.

Pauline Doorbar (née Ratcliffe), Pamela Carter (née Beddows), Eilleen Pownall (née Poole), Shirley Bancroft (née Higgins), Margaret Mills (née Hankey) and Fran Hall (née Matulko) have all helped greatly in supplying information and photographs of Morris dancing since the Second World War, including Broomedge, The Lymmtonians and the Lymmtoniettes, Embassy, Lymmdale and The Sherenades.

Information and photographic records of The Heatley Boys Morris Troupe and The May Queen Acrobatic Dancers is still being sought.



1951 - Embassy Entertainers at Lymm May Queen



1954 - Pamela Stars Lymm May Queen



1972 - Lymmdale Entertainers



1982 - Sherenades at Blackpool

Some important dates in the history of the dancing in Lymm & District

- c1840 Lymm Morris Dancers in a painting which is now in York Museum.
- 1890 Lymm Morris Dancers led by Thomas "Dossey" Brooks (d 1897 aged 56)
Oughtrington Morris Dancers led by Thomas Holt.
- 1900 Only the Oughtrington Dancers exist, led by John Robert (Bob) Downward.
- 1912 Ned Rowles is the leader of the Morris Dancers.
The Morris Dancers did not reform after the First World War.
- 1920-1927 Statham Boys Morris Dancers taught the old dance by Ned Rowles.
- 1928 Statham became a mixed troupe and in 1929 all-girl.
- Late 1920's Heatley Boys Morris Dancers taught by a 'Mrs. Hankey'. May Queen Acrobatic Dancers taught by an 'Arthur Sutton'. 'Lymmettes' trained by a 'Mrs. Bradburn'.
- 1930 Jack Gilbert is overheard by his headmaster reciting some odd bits of rhyming dialogue and the Lymm Solecaking Play (Jack had learned it all from his Granddad!) is revived and performed by the school children.
- 1938 Maud Karpeles visits only the surviving members of the 1900 team: John "Downwood", his brother-in-law John Wilkinson the musician, Abraham Wilson and Charles Simpson, to note down the old dance.
- 1946 May Queen celebrations re-started in Statham and Lymm.
An invented revival of the old dance is performed using country dance figures. Edith Russell (nee Leather) was the 'Maid Marian'.
A garland dance was performed with decorated hooped garlands.
- 1946/7 Broomedge Morris Dancing Troupe formed and trained by Alice Walker (nee Higgins) and later run by her brother Bill Higgins.
The Lymmtonians and The Lymmtoniettes formed by Mrs. Higham. The Embassy Entertainers formed by Mrs. Shaw.
- 1950 The Pamela Stars formed by Pamela Carter's (nee Beddows) father.
- 1966 Lymmdale Entertainers formed by Fran Hall (nee Matulko).
- 1973 Thelwall Morris Men formed.
- 1978 Lymmdale ceased to be and The Sherenades formed by Pauline Doorbar.
- 1980 The Lymm/Statham dance revived and danced by Thelwall Morris Men.
- 1983 Black Bear Morris Dancers (ladies team) established in Latchford

John Downward died aged 84 in 1947; Charles Simpson died aged 78 in 1948; Ned Rowles died aged 73 also in 1948; Abraham Wilson died aged 76 in 1950



Thelwall dance the Statham Morris at the Church Green, Lymm, 1986

The demonstration lecture

Over the years, and usually during the winter months, members of Thelwall Morris Men go out into the community - by request and usually for a small fee, of course - to give a demonstration lecture on the history of Morris dancing, lavishly illustrated with dances.

Past victims include:

Lymm Historical Society (1977); Padgate and Fearnhead WI (1987); Newchurch WI (1988); National Farmers Union, Croft (1988); St Philips Warrington West Scout Troop (1989); Croft WI (1990); Winwick WI (1990); Oughtrington Community Centre (1993); Birchwood Townswomen Guild (1993); Daresbury Church Fellowship (1995); Hood Manor Methodist Ladies Fellowship (1997); Thomas Risley Wednesday Club (1997); Northwich Rotary Club (2000); Bold Methodist Church (2000); National Association of Women's Clubs (2001 & 2006); St Barnabas Womens Group (2001); Old Hall Women's Group (2002); Fearnhead WI (2004); Burtonwood WI (2005), Woolston WI (2005), St Michaels Men's Fellowship, Burtonwood (2006).

If you are interested in the "demonstration lecture" please contact the current Bagman for details. If suitable equipment can be borrowed the lecture takes the form of a multimedia presentation.

Thelwall outreach activities

Notes from Kevin Farrell

Following the success of the illustrated lectures, I was approached by my son's teacher who asked if I could teach some dances at school. Having collected all sorts of paraphernalia over the last 10 years, I cobbled together a half-hour talk using video and the Ring publication "The Morris Tradition". This was followed by a workshop, teaching the children "Lollipop Man" from the Ducklington tradition. Over coffee in the staff room, another teacher invited me back to the school.

The children were always very enthusiastic with lots of interesting questions and comments.

Other local schools were approached and expressed interest in similar workshops which resulted in visits to St Vincent's RC Primary School, Penketh (1995, 2000), St Winifred's C of E Primary School, Grappenhall (1997) and Thelwall County Junior School (1998, 2000, 2008)

Sir Arnold Bax (British composer)

You should try everything once, except incest and folk dancing.

Terry Pratchett (in "Reaper Man")

It [the morris] is danced innocently by raggedy-bearded young mathematicians to an inept accordion rendering of "Mrs Widgery's Lodger" and ruthlessly by such as the Ninja Morris Men of New Ankh, who can do strange and terrible things with a simple handkerchief and a bell.

George Bernard Shaw (New Statesman, 23 Mar 1962)

Dancing is a perpendicular expression of a horizontal desire.

Impressionable young lady

These dudes rock.

Chronology of Thelwall Morris Men

Events and milestones

1973

Aug Practise begins as Thelwall Morris Men “born” from the folk club at the Pickering Arms

1974

Aug First public performance at the Pickering Arms

1975

Mar 31 First “Bank Holiday Monday” performance (Thelwall Morris Men’s traditional first outing each year)

May 17 First invitation to Southport Sword Dancers’ Day of Dance

Jun 26 Thelwall Rose Queen

Warrington Market

1976

Jun 4-6 Attend first Ring Meeting at Thaxted

Jun 26 National Folk Day, Warrington

Aug 21 Saddleworth Longwood Thump

Sep 4 Mersey Ring Meeting

Oct 2 Crewe mini folk festival

Dec 16 Birth of “City of Thelwall Mummies” at Bells of Peover

1977

Moved to the Bulls Head, Warrington for practices during 1977

Apr 22 Lymm Historical Society

May 21 Southport Sword Dancers’ Day of Dance

May 28 Golborne May Queen

Jun 24 Thaxted Ring Meeting

Jul 2-10 First Irish trip - Cobh

Sep 24 Warrington Folk Festival

1978

Feb 8+11 Merseyside Beer Festival, Liverpool

May 1 Norton Priory Museum

May 20 Southport Sword Dancers’ Day of Dance

Jun 3 Lymm May Queen

Jun 24 Lord Conyer’s Day

Jul 1 Bawming the Thorn, Appleton

Jul 14 Lymm Rushbearing

Sep 2 First Thelwall Day of Dance organised with Southport Sword Dancers and Lord Conyers

Sep 16 Warrington Folk Festival

1979

- May 4-12 Second Irish trip - Mallow
- May 19 Southport Sword's Day
- Jun 23 Lord Conyers' Day
- Aug 10-12 Isle of Wight Ring Meeting
- Sep 8 Thelwall Day of Dance with Southport Swords, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Chester, and Chesterfield Morris Men
- Dec 22 Morris and Mumming play at the Parr Hall, Warrington

1980

- Apr 7 Statham Morris danced out - Baldricks, no bells
- May 5 Norton Priory Museum
- May 17 Hale Barns Festival
- Jun 3 Well Dressing with Chesterfield Morris Men
- Jul 5 Bawming the Thorn, Appleton
- Jul 11-13 Receive staff of office at Ledbury Ring Meeting
- Jul 14-20 Third Irish trip - Cobh
- Sep 13 Thelwall Day of Dance with Southport Sword Dancers, Chesterfield, Winster and Conway Morris Men

1981

- May 4 Norton Priory Museum and Risley Moss
- May 8-10 Thelwall hold dance workshops at Holmfirth Folk Festival
- May 16 Thelwall Morris Men feast
- Jul 3-5 West Somerset Ring Meeting
- Jul 11 Wirral Tour
- Aug 31 First Thelwall and Statham Bank Holiday Monday walking tour
- Sep 5 Thelwall Day of Dance with Chester City, Moulton and Winster Morris Men

1982

- May 3 Norton Priory Museum
- Jun 5 Lymm May Queen
- Jun 26 Bawming the Thorn, Appleton
- Aug 7 Chesterfield Morris Men Day of Dance
- Aug 30 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Sep 4 Uttoxeter Ring Meeting
- Sep 18 Thelwall Day of Dance with Cheshire Royal, Chesterfield, Furness, Garstang and Winster Morris Men

The Morris Ring

In 1934 the Cambridge Morris Men invited five other teams to join them in the formation of a national organisation - The Morris Ring. The object of the Morris Ring is to encourage the performance of the Morris, to maintain its traditions and to preserve its history; to bring into contact all the Men's Morris Clubs or Teams. Each year four or five clubs act as hosts for Meetings of the Morris Ring, giving the opportunity to show the traditional dances of England to audiences all over the country and, occasionally, abroad.

1983

Jan 15 Thelwall Morris Men perform Statham Dance at Dancing England
Apr 30 Thelwall Morris Men 10th Anniversary feast with Rev. Ken Loveless
May 21 Southport Sword Dancers' Day of Dance
Jun 3-5 Thaxted Ring Meeting
Jun 11 Rixton Carnival
Jun 18 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 2 Winster Morris Men Wakes Day
Jul 8-10 Greensleeves Morris Men weekend at Chipperfield
Aug 29 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Sep 10 Thelwall Day of Dance - no other teams present
Sep 17 Blackmore (Chelmsford) Day of Dance

1984

Jan 7 Moulton Gaudy
Mar 2 Instructional (Badby)
May 6 Birchwood Festival
May 12 Morris Ring Golden Jubilee Banquet
Jul 10 Wythenshawe Festival
Jun 16 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jun 22-24 Lord Conyers 10th Birthday celebrations
Jul 6-8 Ring Meeting at Cambridge
Jul 18 Dancing with Ringheye
Aug 27 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Sep 1 Thelwall Day of Dance with Chesterfield and Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris Men

1985

Mar 2 Mersey Morris Men 25th Anniversary feast
May 6 Sandbach Elizabethan Market - with Saxon Morris Men - subsequently appeared on TV on Saturday Superstore
Jun 7-9 Furness mini Ring Meeting at Coniston
Jun 15 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jun 28-30 Yateley Ring Meeting
Jul 5-7 Black Bear Morris Weekend of Dance
Aug 26 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Sep 14 Gorton Rushcart
Oct 11 Jasper organises [sic] Thelwall Ale in the old School Hall, Thelwall

Letter to the Warrington Guardian, 16 Sep 1983

The Thelwall Morris Men are an entertaining bunch. They were all so happy and jolly when they visited Statham, Lymm, on August Bank Holiday Monday. Just watching them for half an hour made one forget all the cares of the world. I am sure I speak for many spectators when I say "Well done guys" and don't be too long before you return to Lymm again. You will be most welcome.

1986

- Apr 12 Southport Sword Dancers' barge trip
First outing of "Thelwall" Bean Setting
- May 4 Leigh Cruising Club
- May 10 Manchester Morris Men's Jubilee Weekend of Dance
- May 17 Southport Swords Day of Dance
- May 23-25 Shakespeare Ring Meeting (centenary celebrations of the Bidford revival)
- May 31 Lymm May Queen
- Jun 7 Thelwall Day of Dance with Winster, Lord Conyers, Mersey and Chesterfield Morris Men
- Jun 21 Thelwall Rose Queen and St Lewis's School, Croft
- Jul 5 Lymm High School Summer Fair
- Aug 11 Lymm Rushbearing - Thelwall revive the Statham Morris Dance in the kit of Lymm Morris Men
- Aug 25 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Nov 14 Thelwall's Ale and Bibby's stag night

1987

- Mar 14 Bidford instructional with Shakespeare Morris Men
- May 4 Sandbach Elizabethan Market
- May 16 Southport Sword Dancers' Day of Dance
- May 31 Thelwall barge trip
- Jun 5-7 Thaxted Ring Meeting
- Jun 12-14 Forest of Dean Weekend
- Jun 20 Thelwall Rose Queen
- Jun 27 Thelwall Day of Dance with Southport Swords, Preston Guildsmen, Saxon and Kinnerton Morris Men
- Jul 4 Penketh Carnival
- Aug 31 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Nov Thelwall Ale
- Dec 13 Maypoles to Mistletoe with Martyn Wyndam Reed and Nick Dow at the Burnley Mechanics Hall

1988

- May 2 Norton Priory Museum
- Jun 11 Wirral tour organised by Chris Maple
- Jun 18 Penketh County Junior School
- Jun 24-26 Furness weekend at Coniston
- Jul 8-10 Greensleeves Morris Men weekend at Chipperfield
- Aug Entertain visitors from Hilden, Germany, at the Town Hall
- Aug 29 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Sep 3 Thelwall Day of Dance with Blackmore, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Preston Royal, Eskafeld and Shakespeare Morris Men
- Oct 22 Longsword instructional with Trevor Stone

1989

- Mar 3 Thelwall Ale
- May 1 Norton Priory Museum
- May 6 Birchwood Carnival
- May 19-21 Moulton village Festival
- Jun 17 25th Thelwall Rose Queen and Bradshaw Lane School
- Jun 23-25 Newcastle Morris Men's weekend
- Jul 7-9 Greensleeves weekend at Chipperfield
- Aug 28 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Sep 2 Thelwall Day of Dance with Furness, Uttoxeter and White Rose Morris Men, during which we are asked to leave Golden Square by the management.

1990

- Mar 23 Thelwall Ale
- May 7 Norton Priory Museum
- May 12 Birchwood Carnival
- Jun 8-10 Forest of Dean weekend
- Jun 16 Thelwall Rose Queen
- Jul 7 Croft Carnival
- Jul 13-15 White Horse Ring Meeting
- Aug 13 Lymm Rushbearing
- Aug 27 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Oct 10 End of an era when Chris Maple retires
- Dec Thelwall Mummers thrown out of The Adelphi seconds before the end

1991

- Mar 2 Thelwall Rose Queen selection dance
- May 6 Norton Priory Museum
- May 12 Walton Hall Gardens
- Jun 14-16 Thelwall Rose Queen - The year of the Web-footed Morris
- Jun 22 Kinnerton Morris Men Day of Dance in Chester
- Jul 6 Croft Carnival
- Jul 20 Bradshaw Lane School
- Jul 27 Horwich Morris Men Weekend of Dance
- Aug 26 Thelwall and Statham walking tour

Musicians Corner

“What is a Bodhran”?

A bodhran, pronounced "borrun", is described as “a taut pigskin being played by an un-taught pig”.

On accordion players...

A gentleman is someone who can play the piano accordion – but doesn't.

1992

	Moved to Grappenhall and Thelwall British Legion for practices during 1992
Jan 31	John O'Gaunt Ale, Lancaster
May 4	Norton Priory Museum
May 10	Sellafield Visitor Centre
May 17	Birchwood Carnival
Jun 14	Beamont Infant School
Jun 20	Thelwall Day of Dance arranged around Thelwall Rose Queen - joined by Eskafeld and Kinnerton Morris Men
Jul 4	Lymm High School PTA
Jul 17-19	Bedford Ring Meeting
Aug 10	Lymm Rushbearing
Aug 16	Walton Hall Gardens
Aug 31	Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Sep 26	Warrington Street Festival

1993

Apr 24	Thelwall Ale in Scout Hut, Thelwall
May 3	Norton Priory Museum
May 22	Southport Sword Dancers' 25th Anniversary Day of Dance
Jun 12	Lymm May Queen
Jun 19	Thelwall Rose Queen
Jun 26	John O'Gaunt Weekend of Dance
Jul 10-17	Cobh Festival, Ireland
Aug 8	Walton Hall Gardens
Aug 30	Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Dec 22	Thelwall Morris Men featured on Channel 4 TV programme "Travelog"

1994

Mar 12	Croft Primary School
May 2	Norton Priory Museum
May 7	Maypoles to Mistletoe at Bibby's Folk Club, Thelwall British Legion
Jun 18	Thelwall Rose Queen and Warrington Street Festival
Jul 2	Lymm High School PTA
Jul 16	Warrington Town Centre (am), Bradshaw Lane School (pm)
Jul 22-24	Silurian Ring Meeting First outing of 4-man Nutting Girl at White Lion, Wilton, Ross-on-Wye
Aug 15	Lymm Rushbearing
Aug 29	Thelwall and Statham walking tour

Morris Jokes

1. Why do Morris dancers wear bells? - So they can annoy the blind as well!
2. Why did God create Morris Dancing? - To give train spotters something to laugh about!
3. How many morris dancers does it take to change a light bulb? - A whole side. One to hold onto the bulb, and the rest to drink until the room spins.

1995

- Jan 17 Thelwall refused permission by Highways Agency to dance-in the new Thelwall viaduct
- May 8 VE celebrations at Grappenhall and Thelwall British Legion
- May 13 Maypoles to Mistletoe at Thelwall Parish Hall
- May 20 Southport Sword Dancers' Weekend of Dance
- Jun 17 Thelwall Rose Queen
- Jun 26 An evening with Chapel-en-le-Frith at Bridgemont
- Jun 30 Dolphin Ring Meeting, Sutton Bonnington
- Jul 14-16 Thelwall Morris Men 1st "International Weekend of Dance" with Ballyphehane step dancers, Eskafeld, Mersey and Moulton Morris Men
- Aug 28 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Sep 24 Crewe Heritage Trust Morris weekend, Crewe

1996

- Apr 27 Warrington town centre with Pole Position (Padgate students' event)
- May 6 Norton Priory Museum
- May 31-Jun 2 Thaxted Ring Meeting (Ian Hislop recording for TV programme)
- Jun 15 Thelwall Rose Queen
- Jul Thelwall Morris Men 2nd International Weekend of Dance with Dublin Morris dancers and Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris Men
- Jul 21 Woolston and District show
- Jul 24 First outing of "Androids Folly" at Red Lion, Preston Brook
- Aug 26 Thelwall and Statham walking tour

1997

- May 5 Norton Priory Museum
- May 16-18 Moulton village festival
- Jun 20-22 Stockton Ring Meeting
- Aug 11 Lymm Rushbearing
- Aug 25 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Sep 13 Chapel-en-le-Frith weekend of dance based in Youlegreave, Derbyshire

1998

- May 4 High Legh Garden Centre and Norton Priory Museum
- May 15-17 Richmond Ring Meeting
- Jun 20 Thelwall Rose Queen
- Jul 18 Thelwall Morris Men's 25th Anniversary Day of Dance and Ale with Southport Sword Dancers, Moulton Morris Men and Thelwall Morris Men former members
- Jul Thelwall Parish Church family service
- Aug 31 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
- Sep 12 Southport Sword Dancers' 30th Anniversary

1995 International Festival of Dance

A member of the Irish dancers fails to turn up on Saturday because the host family's car has broken down. It later transpires that in reality a late night drinking session had rendered the driver incapable.

1999

May 3 Norton Priory Museum
May 21-23 Moulton Village Festival
Jun 19 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jun 26 Goostrey Rose Queen
Jul 23-25 Silurian Ring Meeting
Aug 30 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Oct 6 26th AGM and first night at The Star, Statham

2000

May 11 Thelwall Millennium Celebrations
Jun 17 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 14-16 Greensleeves weekend at Chipperfield
Aug 2 First night at Thelwall Parish Hall for practices
Aug 28 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Sep 10 Thelwall Parish Church family service
Sep 17 Lymm Dam Discovery Day

2001

May 18-20 Moulton Village Festival
Jun 16 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 14 Day of Dance with Chapel, Manchester Morris Men, and Leyland Morris Men
Aug 13 Lymm Rushbearing
Aug 27 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Oct 10 Recruiting Evening - Open Night

2002

May 17-19 Moulton Village Festival
Jul 26-28 Bristol Ring Meeting
Aug 12 Lymm Rushbearing
Aug 26 Thelwall and Statham walking tour
Sep 21 Southport Swords Day of Dance

2003

Apr/May Workshops on The Lymm Dance, held in Lymm Parish Hall
May 17-19 Moulton Village Festival
Jun 7 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jun 13-15 Ripley Ring Meeting
Jul 12 Bus Tour of Warrington and environs
Aug 10 Lymm Rushbearing
Aug 25 Thelwall and Statham walking tour

AGM, 1985

Jasper awarded the prestigious Bagman's medal for organising the Ale. In reality, his organisation consisted of finding the room and writing a few letters.

2004

Mar 27 Northwich Dance Festival – Workshop
Jun 19 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 3 Croft Carnival
Jul 10 Earl of Stamford's Day of Dance
Aug 8 Lymm Rushbearing
Aug 30 Thelwall and Statham walking tour – The last one
Sep 13 Fearnhead Women's Institute

2005

Apr 11 Burtonwood Women's Institute
May 4 Instructional to Oakwood Brownies
Jun 17-19 Durham Rams Ring Meeting
Jun 23 Woolston W.I.
Aug 14 Lymm Rushbearing

2006

May 19-21 Moulton Village Festival
Jun 10 Dave Pratt and Dorothy's Wedding (now Mr and Mrs Devereau)
Jun 17 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 1 Croft Carnival
Jul 8 Warrington Culturefest
Aug 13 Lymm Rushbearing
Sep 10 Rainford Rural Craft Fayre
Oct 5 Bedford Day of Dance

Comment from a young American girl observing Thelwall in action, 2005

"All the rumours are wrong; Morris Dancing is the coolest thing in England!"

Moulton Village Festival, 2006

A drunk, mouthy youth in the village (late at night) was causing minimal trouble when Steve decided to intervene by telling him how stupid he was (though not as polite as that). The youth promptly turned on Steve who was prepared to "take him on". The other three of us tried to move on – and take Steve, who was still being threatened by the youth (and giving it back). Of the four of us – Steve was the least able bodied as he had his arm in a sling, and was mistaken in the belief he had the full support of his colleagues.

Moulton Village Festival, 1999

On our 1999 visit to Moulton, Steve, who avowedly dislikes spirits, managed to consume at least half the bottle of team whisky (donated by a grateful landlord from the Ferry Tavern). As a result, he spent the night on a collapsed camp bed and most of the next morning in the school toilet - A most worthy winner of the Slippery Gullet award.

2007

May 18-20 Moulton Village Festival (as the Lymm Morris)
Jun 16 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 7 Croft Carnival
Jul 8 Neston Cricket Club (for a TMM PB fee)
Jul 20-22 Stafford Ring Meeting
Jul 28 East Lancashire Railway 20th Anniversary of Restorations
Aug 12 Lymm Rushbearing
Dec 1 Instructional (Longsword) with Southport Swords

2008

May 3 Knutsford Royal May Day (as the Lymm Morris)
Jun 14 Lymm May Queen (as the Lymm Morris)
Jun 21 Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 5 Croft Carnival
Jul 11-13 Mersey Ring Meeting
Aug 10 Lymm Rushbearing
Oct 5 Apple Day at Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden

2009

May 2 Wedding of Kathryn and Jon (booked 2yrs ago)
May 23 Hawarden Farm Shop Food Real Fete
May 29- Thaxted Ring Meeting
Jun 13 Lymm May Queen (as the Lymm Morris)
Jun 20 Bawming the Thorn and Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 4 Croft Carnival
Aug 9 Lymm Rushbearing
Oct 4 Apple Day at Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden

2010

May 1 Southport with Southport Swords
May 21-3 Moulton Village Festival
Jun 12 Lymm May Queen (as the Lymm Morris)
Jun 20 Bawming the Thorn and Thelwall Rose Queen
Jul 9-11 Chipperfield Weekend
Aug 8 Lymm Rushbearing
Sep 26 Apple Day at Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden

Dancing from Warrington to Buckinghamshire Boundary, 2006

In October 2006, a small number of Thelwall Men processed non-stop from Warrington's boundary post to the boundary post of Buckinghamshire. This would be impressive were it not for the fact that this was Warrington in Buckinghamshire and the distance involved was a mere 50yds. So not so much "Kemp's Nine Days Wonder", but more like Thelwall's one minute wonder.

Thelwall's 10th Anniversary

1983



Thelwall Morris Men with invited guests



Thelwall Morris Men Badge

The "T" is the roadway of the Thelwall viaduct, the blue background is the blue water of the Manchester ship canal, the red pointed blocks are the rusting barges carrying their cargoes to the city. The yellow surround represents the sandy shores.

No - I don't believe it, either!

Songs to suit, 7 Jun 1998

Thelwall were invited to dance at an "afternoon tea party" at a sheltered housing community in Liverpool where all residents were probably in excess of 70 years of age (as they say). The "supporting act" was a musical sing-along with two young lads. One song, which they featured, was The Beatles' classic "When I'm 64" - somehow inappropriate.

Christmas comes early

Mrs Shepherd remembers one year when Thelwall had a function (an Ale) in the Old School Hall during late November, the keys were returned after midnight accompanied by ringing bells - "I though Santa had come early"

Lymm Rushbearing, August 1999

The alleged pagan origins of the Morris were thought to be true by the organising committee of the Rushbearing Ceremony as Thelwall fail to appear because half the team had gone off "sun-worshipping" at the Total Solar Eclipse.

Thelwall's 25th Anniversary 1998



Thelwall Morris Men with invited guests at 25th Anniversary Day of Dance

Philip Stubbes (Anatomie of Abuses, 1583)

“They strike up the Devil’s dance withall: then march this heathen company towards the church and churchyards, their pypers pyping, the drummers thundering, their stumpes dancing, their belles jynghing, their handkercheefes fluttering about their heads like madde men...”

Thelwall Morris Men – Recruiting Night, Oct 2001

One member’s expectations after we had spent a Saturday afternoon posting EVERY house in Thelwall with an invitation to an open evening to sample the morris:

“If we get one person down, then the night will have been a success. If that person happens to be a man then it will have been an outstanding success. If that man then joins the side it will have be an astronomical success”.

We got one lady – so it was a successful evening to one member of the side, anyway.

Security Inspection, 2006

“The day after being lumbered with the accessories after the demonstration lecture I had to visit a high security nuclear site in the northwest, which required a vehicle search. “What’s in the rucksack” - “My laptop” I replied. “What’s in that big bag” – “Oh, err, they’re the long sticks”. “Mmm, and that bag” – “Ah, yes, well, they’re the big hankies”.

Suspicious enough, so it was a good job I didn’t have the swords with me”.

Thelwall Morris Men

Dancers

(in approximate order of appearance)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Chris Maple (FM) | 20. Paul McHugh | 39. Andrew "Android" White |
| 2. Rod Goodall (FM) | 21. Nick Tamblin | 40. Geoff "Idris" Palmer |
| 3. Jimmy Potter (FM) | 22. Dave Hanvey | 41. Alan Poole |
| 4. Jim Berry (FM) | 23. Dave Cotton | 42. Andrew "Flint" Brown |
| 5. Pete Jackson (FM) | 24. Bill Pook | 43. Kevin Farrell |
| 6. Geoff Bibby (FM) | 25. Alan Rawlinson | 44. Steve "Bruce" Watkiss |
| 7. Mike Jenkinson | 26. Chris Parkinson | 45. Dave Pratt |
| 8. Rob Raikes | 27. Bob Roach | 46. Ged Walker |
| 9. Ernie Whalley | 28. Chris Whiting | 47. John "Bluey" Dover |
| 10. John "Gink/Groper"
Pickston | 29. Rob "Recruiting Sergeant"
Swindells | 48. Ned Bibby |
| 11. Ian Goodier | 30. Pete "Spud" Pascoe | 49. Paul Colbenson |
| 12. John "Grog" Gregson | 31. Mick "Amos" Price | 50. Joe Bibby |
| 13. Steve Burgess | 32. Peter Budden | 51. Sam "Henry" Addison |
| 14. Rob "Jeremy" Powell | 33. Alan "Chopper" Rabjohn | 52. Arthur Ronald |
| 15. Rob Pracy | 34. Jeff "Dogsbody" Dodwell | 53. Norman Partington |
| 16. Gordon Gilmore | 35. David Burgess | 54. Mike Amberry |
| 17. George Faux | 36. Peter "Jasper" Robinson | 55. Martin Zoefitis |
| 18. Steve Guest | 37. Phil "Hong Kong" Pimentil | |
| 19. Raymond Russell | 38. Derek Bradburne | |

FM = Founder member

Men who practised but haven't danced out in Thelwall kit*

(alphabetical order)

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. "The Otter Hound" (FM) | 15. Steve "Gazza" Forber | 29. Dave Parker |
| 2. "The Rodent"*** | 16. Tony Gleave | 30. Ian Porter |
| 3. Ian Barrow | 17. Ray Hargreaves | 31. Mike Powell |
| 4. Andrew Bostock | 18. Dave Henry | 32. Dave Pugh |
| 5. Richard Bulivant | 19. Fred Horrobin | 33. Chris "Wesley" Rogers |
| 6. Pete Carey | 20. Kevin Jenkin | 34. Richard Scratchard |
| 7. Peter Cartwright | 21. Paul Lever | 35. John "The Judge"
Simpson |
| 8. Gary Coulton | 22. Mark Liptrot | 36. Peter Smallwood |
| 9. George Cross | 23. Dave "Stan" Love | 37. Graham Sutton |
| 10. Dave (one practice only) | 24. John "Nutter" Madden | 38. John Walker |
| 11. Peter Diffey | 25. Bob Manifold | 39. Wally*** |
| 12. Andrew Doyle | 26. Ed Morgan | 40. Alan "Scott" Williams |
| 13. Alex Farrell | 27. Jim Morgan | 41. Ian Woods |
| 14. John Finnegan | 28. Dave Osbaldeston | |

* As at April 2011

** There is a founder member whose name nobody recalls. He kept otter hounds and so, for obvious reasons, he was nicknamed "The Otter Hound". Plus another member only remembered from his nickname.

***Not sure that anyone knows Wally's real name.

A note on the naming of Thelwall men

To avoid confusion, members of the side cannot be named the same as a previous member, so in the absence of a middle name, a nickname is adopted. This may result from a hobby ("Groper"), a physical feature ("Chopper"), a "you look like a..." ("Jasper", "Judge"), or be linked to where they have come from ("Hong Kong"). Some nicknames are even quite clever - Chris Rogers came from Chapel-en-le-Frith men and was therefore described as a Chapel lad and received the name "Wesley" after John Wesley!

The future....

Thelwall Morris Men are ageing and numbers are gradually reducing, having had very few new recruits in recent years to replace those retiring members.

If you are interested in learning to dance with Thelwall Morris Men, then contact the Bagman on 01925 601826.

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to current and past members of Thelwall Morris Men, without whom there would be no book to write.

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And finally....

Extract from the Squire's Report, 1989

Thelwall is an excellent side. The standard of dance is usually high, and the attitude is nearly always good.

What has made it an excellent side, apart from all the work put in by foremen over the years, is the continued habit of individuals and the side to recognise failings at least as much as successes - and to work at these failings.

Success doesn't go to our heads, and we are never in danger of being overbearing. Compared to many sides we are an unassuming bunch - and our lack of bumptious confidence is healthy - because our justification is always that we should dance well, and our confidence finds its expression in dancing well.

Thelwall Morris Men Website
<http://www.thelwallmorris.org.uk>