



The Brackley Morris Men

A Traditional Northamptonshire morris side

January 2018



Tasters. Our winter practice sessions are always open to anyone wishing to come along and have a go. We always welcome new dancers, especially younger ones, so please invite any friends who you think may like to try it.

Boxing Day. The photos below are from Boxing Day. More from this outing and all the others over the last couple of months appear on the following pages.



Photo by Ruth Martin



Photos by Jackie Ferneyhough

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BMM Ale 18th November.

Another lively evening. We did lots of dancing, a mix of show dances such as by Royal Oak (below left), and some dances for all (below right)



While some danced.....



Others rested.....



Or posed for the camera.....



Or played music.....



We also drank beer.....



And served food.....



Buckingham Christmas Parade 9th Dec

The day began in the Kings Head where we met for tea/coffee/beer and bacon butties.



Then we headed for the high street where we were scheduled to dance for 25 minutes before the passing of the parade. The Road was closed, a large crowd was gathering, and we were given the use of the microphone for our music and announcements.

It was the first outing for Chris and a very fine job he did! There he is on the left, centre stage, with his hanky correctly positioned in the air and his right foot leading!



The yellow cones were carefully positioned by John to keep our Steeple Claydon lines straight (below left).

And finally we 'Bonny Green'd' off up the High Street to escape the fast-approaching parade.



58th anniversary of the reformation of the BMM

We met, as we usually do on the 16th December, to celebrate the anniversary of the side's reformation in 1959. The day was cold and wet, so no dancing, just a celebratory evening meal at the Red Lion, Litchborough. The meal was preceded by some dancing in the narrow corridor, which gave us an opportunity to demonstrate our ability to convert 'rounds' to 'ovals' and to perfect some particularly tight turns.



From the archives

In 1959, Roger Nicholls started a boys' side at Magdalen College School in Brackley. He held the post of resident master with responsibility for the boarders during their evenings and weekends. The words below are copied from his diary, and describe how it all started.

With the leaving of Mr Fairbairn at the end of the summer term, the Scottish dancing for the boarders on Saturday evenings came to a close. In its place some Morris dancing was tried, which was felt to be very appropriate, since Brackley once had its own side of dancers, and its own particular dances, collected by Cecil Sharp and others, are well known and popular. The old Brackley side last performed around 1920, and only two men are now still alive – Archie Kendall, musician, and Harold Rawlings.'

'At the first practice in 'Upper', 18 boys arrived – a formidable number! We tried 'Bean Setting' from Headington, and managed a number of figures. The sticks were still rather green, and the floor was littered with fragments of bark when we finished.'



1963 with Harold Rawlings centre and John Weaver kneeling 2nd right

'Bruised fingers and general apathy caused a considerable falling off in numbers, and we soon got down to a hard core of seven boys: Fisher W, Hartwell, Stewart, Wells, Bull, Richards S, Rogers.'

'The repertoire was extended to include some of the Adderbury dances, and also the shortened popular version of the Brackley 'Jockey to the Fair'.

The first public performance 'took place on December 16th at the Christmas party organised by the VI form dancing class. It was held in the Driver Hall, and during the interval we performed 'Jockey', 'Beaux of London City' (Adderbury), and 'Bean Setting' (Headington). No "war paint" had been assembled by this time, and the boys hurriedly obtained white trousers to convey some of the right atmosphere. The performance had been well received and the ice had been broken'.

Boxing Day

At 11am we met at the home of Len and Shirley in College House. John provided beer from the back of his car and Shirley distributed mince pies. We danced beside the conservatory to a small crowd of residents sheltering huddled inside away from the cold morning air.



Today was Martin's first outing with us in kit (left). After leaving College House, we headed down to the Town Hall for our annual midday appearance on the Market Place. A quick drink in the Red Lion, then outside to perform for the gathering throngs, perhaps encouraged by the piece in the Brackley Advertiser (right) and a whole variety of Facebook postings.

Whilst taking photos Jackie came across a man sketching us as we danced, so she got a snap of him in action, and also one of his drawings!

Boxing Day date with Morris Men

The Brackley Morris Men will be out and about on Boxing Day for their traditional dances, which date back to the 1600s. The morris men will be in Brackley Market Place at noon, before moving on to The Stratton Arms in Turweston at 1pm for dancing, followed by music and song in the bar.



Brackley Morris Men



After Bonny Green for all, we headed off to the Stratton Arms in Turweston (below) for more dancing followed by sandwiches (courtesy of the landlord Phil), and then music and song in the bar.



Somerton Wassail, 13th Jan

We enjoyed the usual hospitality at The Manor with sausages, cider and cakes. We did a bit of dancing in the conservatory where, amongst the audience were Baron Boswell of Aynho, former MP and father of Victoria. And then we sang some wassail songs, danced around the apple tree and watched Sebastian shoot at it with a gun. Then fireworks to finish. Another fun outing! Photos provided by Chris Shaw and Jackie Ferneyhough.



BMM in York

If you click on the link below, or copy and paste it into your browser, you'll see a U-tube video of the BMM dancing Queens Delight in York some years ago. Colin R, Steve D, John W, Michael R, Paul B, Robin S and Stephen F (musician). I'm not sure, but guessing that it's around 7-8 years ago.

<https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/video/tv-show/england-bath-and-york>

The two photos below, taken in 2012, were of the same dance but taken on a different occasion



BMM window

The illustration on the right is one of twenty-six stained glass windows to appear in the refurbished Brackley Town Hall. It was designed by John Weaver and created by artist Rachel Aldridge. The windows are now in place and will soon be visible as the next layer of Scaffold comes down.

