

# A CANADIAN EXPERIENCE OF THE ENGLISH MORRIS

(or How Moose Dancing Came of Age)

*A report on the 1990 England tour*

*Authors: Graham Baldwin (with various comments by Steve Cleary)*

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After eight years of existence, the Vancouver Morris Men made the ultimate Morris pilgrimage to England, to not only visit those Cotswold and Border villages we all know so well and dance with a number of excellent sides, but also to experience first-hand the Whitsun morris at Bampton-in-the-Bush and Headington Quarry, and to "dance in" to the Morris Ring at the annual Thaxted Ring meeting.

The tour had been planned for nearly two years, the idea initially being put forward by our pipe-and-tabourer, Norman Stanfield. Our Squire, Graham Baldwin, had recently returned from a summer vacation in England which had included a weekend with the Silurian Border Morris Men at the Trigg Ring Meeting in Bodmin (1988), so he was immediately game for a tour to "Blighty". The rest of the side came round to the idea more slowly, the cost of and commitment to such a trip being the biggest concern. However, we soon decided that we would open an "England" account, into which we would deposit all "Bag" takings from then on. The account soon grew, thanks largely to Norman's contacts (he is a "professional" street entertainer) and his knack for getting us high-paying gigs around town. Gray Gledhill, one of our true Canucks (born and bred in Canada) also managed to raise over \$1,000 virtually by himself, organizing a rock-and-roll dance. Based on Foreman Steve Cleary's masterly cash flow projections (using Lotus 1-2-3 of course), by October, 1989, we were able to see that we could raise approximately \$10,000 by June, 1990. As we had eight committed participants (each of whom had paid a non-returnable deposit of \$200 into the "England" account), the decision was made to "go for it".

We had decided earlier that, if we were to go, we would really like to attend the annual Thaxted Ring Meeting, and our tour was planned around this event. Even though we had a number of ex-Brits in the side who had a pretty good idea of what to see and where to go, we contacted the Ring Bagman, Keith Francis, who had been in ongoing communication with Graham Baldwin concerning Border morris and its origins. In his capacity as Ring Bagman, Keith was able to give us some additional ideas as to where to go and what to do - in fact, his advice turned out to be invaluable. We decided that we wanted to see some Morris that we

hadn't seen before - that is, sides doing Cotswold traditions of which we had no exposure, and "Other Morris": Border, Molly or whatever.

So the tour was planned.....

## WHITSUN MORRIS ACTIVITIES

The first arrivals in England were the enthusiastic leaders, Graham Baldwin and Steve Cleary, who had decided to take in the pleasures of Whitsun morris at Bampton-in-the-Bush and Headington Quarry prior to the start of Vancouver M.M.'s own tour. Graham and Steve had arranged to meet up with longtime dancer Michael Blandford (now of East Suffolk M.M., who had, by virtue of his globe-trotting job, managed to dance out on more than one occasion with Vancouver M.M.) in Bampton on the Whit-Sunday. They met in the "Elephant & Castle", where some of Shergold's Bampton men just happened to be having an informal jam session, accompanied by Martin Carthy. Who should Michael have in tow with him but longtime American morris man, the self-proclaimed "Ancient Man" of the morris, Roger Cartwright. Roger seems to have contacts in just about every team on both sides of the Atlantic - he was responsible for teaching Vancouver M.M. his 1925 E.F.D.S.S. style Bampton while teaching summer school in Vancouver in 1985.

Well, of course, the jam session was a great introduction to the Whitsun celebrations. On the Whit-Monday, under the guidance of Michael (who has been going to Bampton for 30 years or so, he claims) we arrived at 8:30 a.m. to catch the start of the dancing. Most of the day was spent with Francis Shergold's side, with the superb melodeon playing of Rod Stradling and Jamie Wheeler, and long-time Bampton fiddler, Reg Hall. We also saw Arnold Woodley and his side, and the "third" Bampton side. Michael Blandford made no secret of which side he preferred: something about not wanting to watch rubbish! It was a great day wandering from garden to pub to garden, experiencing the ritual. By midday, there were hundreds of people wandering around the village, following one side or another. At the last stop of the day, Shergold's side invited Martin Carthy to play while they danced "Old Tom of Oxford". At 6:00 p.m. sharp, other (non- Bampton) sides started dancing, and we saw Manley M.M. start up their spectacular North West dancing. However, we decided to charge off down the road to Headington, where the dancing had started at 6:00 p.m.

Apparently, Headington Quarry regularly invite Westminster M.M. to dance out with them at Whitsun. With our Vancouver M.M. tour shirts on, the Reverend Kenneth Loveless picked us out immediately and, between dances, came over for a chat, showing us William Kimber's concertina which Kenneth now plays. A great evening of dancing followed, and it was about 10:00 p.m. before we decided to return to Bampton to continue partying there.

# THAXTED

The remainder of the Vancouver M.M. finally met up with Steve and Graham at Cecil Sharp House on the following Friday, June 1, for the start of the "real" tour. After loading up the rented minibus (reputed to be a 15-seater - 15 school children, maybe!) and fixing a Canadian flag in the back window, all twelve of us were finally on our way to the Thaxted Ring Meeting. Of course, we soon got lost in North London, or at least, it seemed as though we were lost, as we kept passing Primrose Hill, time and time and time again....Eventually, however, our navigator got his act together (his excuse was something about driving on the wrong side of the road!) and we managed to get out of London and on the road to Thaxted.

After sorting out our accommodation (sharing the Youth Club with Helier M.M., another new Ring side, who turned out to be great singers and neighbours), we set off for the pubs and found that the whole village was taken over by morris men! In every pub there was great music, singing and joviality, as old friends met up again. We all felt right at home, and soon joined in the partying. In the early hours, we ended up dancing with Helier M.M. outside the Youth Club until everyone collapsed into their sleeping bags. In the morning, we awoke to discover the outside dance area more closely resembled a building site: the Abbot bitter probably saved us all from serious injury!

For the tour on the Saturday, we were with Dolphin M.M., Richmondshire Street House M.M. and Standon M.M. - all Cotswold sides. The Vancouver M.M. were joined by John Dibdin of Martlett Morris & Sword - John had danced with Vancouver M.M. in 1986 while on vacation in Canada. We all had a great time dancing around the picturesque Essex villages, culminating in a set outside the Guildhall in Thaxted itself. We were all impressed with the dancing of our colleagues, particularly Dolphin M.M.'s Sherborne, Standon M.M.'s Ducklington and Richmondshire Street House M.M.'s Bidford.

At 5:30 p.m., the massed display began in front of the Guildhall in Thaxted, and over 250 men danced the Winster Processional in to the centre of town from two opposite directions. This was an amazing sight! The centre of Thaxted was totally dominated by the morris men and their spectators, probably numbering around a thousand. The only side which did not participate in the Winster Processional was Silurian Border M.M., who, immediately afterwards, performed a unique Border processional dance from Much Wenlock. Thus, the team dances began, and continued for about one and a quarter hours - the duration of the "first set" of "show" dances. During this time, we performed our "show" dance - Old Tyler (Ducklington) - after processing on behind a large Canadian mapleleaf flag. This, of course, was a great occasion for us, and we all had butterflies in our stomachs, but we were warmly received by the crowd and fellow dancers alike.

At 7:00 p.m., the feast began, at which new sides were presented with their "Ring Membership Staff" and "sang for their supper". Mike Garland, the Squire of the Ring, gave a very interesting account of the reasons why overseas Morris sides were, for a while, restricted from becoming full members of the Ring, and the reasons why they had recently reversed that decision. In summary, Mike's account was that in the past, Pinewoods had been admitted to the Ring, followed shortly thereafter by New Cambridge. Apparently, rumours then started circulating in England that Pinewoods was not really a "team" but just a "scratch" side that danced together only occasionally. Whether or not this was true, very soon news of New Cambridge's demise filtered across the Atlantic to England. In essence, this string of (apparent) events resulted in the decision by the Ring to no longer admit overseas member clubs since they felt that it was too difficult to keep track of them. This decision has now been reversed, based on the recognition of the fact that sides "come" and "go" all the time, whether abroad or in England - the longevity of a side is no more secure in England than it is elsewhere. Thus, Vancouver M.M. had the honour of being the first of the potential "new intake" of overseas clubs. Vancouver M.M. sang "Hal and Tow" for their supper, and Graham Baldwin was formally presented with the Ring Membership Staff.

At 9:30 p.m., the "second set" of "show" dances commenced outside the Guildhall. This continued until 10:15 p.m. when everyone fell into a dead hush awaiting the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance, performed annually by Thaxted M.M. This was a macabre experience, with the familiar haunting melody played on a solitary fiddle, interspersed only by the occasional, but regular, "ding" of the triangle. The dance lasted about 15 minutes, Thaxted M.M. slowly appearing and disappearing from a narrow alleyway leading to the church, where the horns are stored year-round. This was undoubtedly the climax of the evening, after which, everyone, dancers and spectators, began to disperse into the pubs for ongoing fun and frivolity, which again continued on into the early hours.

Events on the Sunday began at 9:40 a.m., after breakfast, with a mass Winster Processional from the Guildhall up the hill to the church for the special Morris Service. This turned out to be quite a lengthy, high-church service, complete with the "man with the smoking handbag" previously reported by other visiting North American sides. However, Vancouver M.M. had the honour of being the side asked to perform the offertory dance as part of the service. Obviously weakened by drinking the night before, our Foreman's arm nearly flew out of the door during our performance of Jockie to the Fair (Ducklington). (Actually, he dislocated it during the last hey, and had to have it yanked back into place by Mike Garland at the rear of the church!)

After the church service, informal morris dancing commenced outside in the churchyard. During this time, Vancouver M.M. performed Queens Delight (Bucknell) with King's M.M. (from Kings Lynn), another new Ring side. This was a special event for both sides, as Captain

George Vancouver, the "founder" of Vancouver, B.C., originally came from Kings Lynn. When the dust had settled, the contest was declared a tie; maybe!

Eventually (of course!), everyone ended up in the various pubs singing and playing loud English country music. Your reporter just happened to end up in the "Swan" (with about 200 others!) where the jamming went on well into the afternoon. It was about 3:00 p.m. when we finally dragged ourselves away to set off for Burford, Oxfordshire, deep in the heart of the Cotswolds, with an unexpected guest dancer amongst us - Roger Cartwright (he appears everywhere!).

## THE TOUR

Burford was selected quite by accident, really. The objective was to find a place in the Cotswolds where we could rest and get cleaned up after the Thaxted Ring Meeting. Two of our members, Steve Cleary and Bill Mercer, had checked out a number of Cotswold villages while they were back in England on family visits during the previous year. Burford just seemed to fit the bill - picturesque, central and, above all, cheap! Hence, we had previously booked ourselves into the Priory Tea Rooms and the Andrews Hotel, both situated about 100 yards from each other on the main street. Showers, baths, laundry and an early night in bed were the main objectives, and we all arose on the Monday morning fully recovered from a fabulous weekend at Thaxted.

### Monday, June 4:

We spent the morning taking in the sights and scenery of Burford, taking in the church and numerous antique shops, before finally setting off on our loosely planned "tour of the all those Cotswold villages of which we have heard so much". Since Bampton was only just down the road, and Graham and Steve were eager to show the rest of the side what had been experienced on the Whit- Monday, this was the first stop. Graham and Steve retraced many of the steps taken the week before with the Bampton men, pointing out key dancing landmarks (eg. Dr. Bullens, the Grange and, of course, the various pubs). We ended up at the "Eagle" at opening time (lunch). The "Eagle" has a wall full of Bampton M.M. photographs, and before long we were in deep conversation with the landlord, who very kindly gave us [an old photograph of the Bampton men](#). He suggested inviting Francis Shergold down for a pint, and, before long, Francis appeared. Needless to say, we had a great time chatting with Francis, quizzing him on the Bampton morris. It must have been close to 3:00 p.m. before Francis had to leave, but not before presenting us with an autographed copy of the Bampton M.M. audio tape "Greeny Up". We finally set off to continue our Cotswold tour, which now had to be trimmed since we hadn't planned on spending so much time in Bampton. But then, what an experience - to be sitting there talking for so long with the leader of probably the most

famous traditional Cotswold morris side!

The rest of the afternoon was spent quickly gliding through a number of Cotswold villages - Ducklington, Leafield (a.k.a. Fieldtown), Bledington and Longborough - before heading off to the Malvern Hills to meet up with the Silurian Border M.M. En route, we were able to pass through a number of "Border Morris" towns - Evesham, Pershore and Upton-on-Severn.

After dumping our belongings at our respective hosts homes, we all set off for Upton-on-Severn again (about 15 minutes down the road) to dance.

So what better dance is there to start with at Upton-on-Severn than the famous Upton-on-Severn stick dance? And Silurian do a grand job of it, complete with loud (and large) band including a suzaphone, banjo, fiddle, varieties of percussion and various bellows instruments. The vitality and uniqueness of their dancing is amazing! On the banks of the River Severn we traded dances for a while, in between supping pints of great ale. Then we moved on to "The Three Kings" at Hanley Castle, a few miles away on the way back to Malvern, where we passed away the evening trading dances. We were exposed to a range of the unusual Border morris dances, having decided ourselves to stick to Cotswold dances for the duration of our tour. However, Silurian challenged us to perform a local dance (knowing full well that Vancouver M.M.'s squire had collected a whole pile of Border dances from Silurian during his last visit in 1988), so we performed the Upton-on-Severn Handkerchief Dance. We all felt so good doing the dance that it ended up becoming a tour "standard". Generally, though, the evenings dances exhibited the bold contrast between the Border and Cotswold traditions. When dusk finally arrived, we all danced into the pub, to experience a scrumptious buffet laid on by our black-faced hosts. This was followed hotly by spontaneous singing and music-making, which continued until closing time. Certainly, the highlight of the tour for your correspondent was playing in a band with so much brass and percussion - it was exhilarating! Then there was the much-touted "meeting of the minds" between Mick the Mouth (Silurian) and Norman "Iconoclast" Stanfield (Vancouver) concerning the origins of Border Morris and blackface, but we'll have to leave that for another article!

## **Tuesday, June 5:**

Three of the Silurian men housed us all, and in the morning we all eventually met up by early afternoon, some having laundry to do, others touring the city, others marooned in pubs (what an excuse!), and still others trying to fix a suspected brake problem with our minibus. Anyway, we didn't miss much, as the weather was decidedly bleak - typical English drizzle. However, by the time we set off the skies had cleared, and we decided to climb to the top of the Malvern Hills, taking in a visit to Elgar's grave on the way. (For those peasants amongst you, Elgar is a famous English classical music composer.) It's a great view from the top of the

Malverns, and the wind was really blowing. Someone even made the comment that it was blowing so hard you could probably p\_\_\_\_\_ on Birmingham (the Squire's birthplace, about 35 miles to the northeast). He was probably right as well!

After descending from the Malverns, we headed west, through Ledbury, out into the beautiful Herefordshire countryside to Putley Mill, home of Dave Jones, one-time founder of Silurian Border M.M. and Border Morris researcher, specializing now in dances from Pershore. Together with Keith Francis (of Silurian), Dave did most of the research into traditional Border morris, and has published a booklet entitled "The Roots of Welsh Border Morris". Our Squire (and chief dance researcher), Graham Baldwin, had seen many of Dave's notes in 1988, both in the Silurian archives and in the Morris Ring archives (at that time maintained by Ivor Alsop). Hence, there was a strong desire to meet up with the man himself and learn directly of his findings. Dave and his family are in the process of refurbishing an old mill, and we were probably the first recent occupants. After depositing our belongings and spreading out our sleeping bags, we were soon on our way to "The Butcher's Arms" at Woolhope, to dance with Dave's current side, Old Wonder Not For Joes.

"The Butcher's Arms" is a pub apparently out in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by rolling countryside. The ale was great ("Old Hookie"), the food spectacular (rabbit and bacon pie) and the dancing unique. After being treated to set of mostly Pershore dances by Old Wonder N.F.J.'s, interspersed with Vancouver M.M.'s Cotswold dances ("Black Joke" 1, Brian Chisholm O), we all settled down for a very pleasant, intimate set of singing and merrymaking in the pub, during which we began to understand the full meaning of "family entertainment", with Dave's wife and daughter clogging, playing and singing along with the rest of us. I don't know what time we finally left, but it was well after the official closing time (Ah! the advantages of country life!). We all stumbled back into the minibus and rolled back to the mill to clamber into our sleeping bags - another memorable day having ended.

## **Wednesday, June 6:**

Once on the road, we headed west to Hereford, and on to Hay-on-Wye, the second-hand bookstore capital of Britain (and the World?), right on the English/Welsh border. After acquiring all sorts of strange and unusual literature, we headed south into Wales along narrow country lanes to climb over the Black Mountains via Llanthony Pass. At the crest of the pass, we all clambered out of the minibus to experience the howling wind and the remarkable resilience of local animal life. Someone was heard to say "There are sheep blowing around out there!" On the way down from the pass, we discovered the "hidden power" of our newly acquired Ring Membership Staff - it was used to great effect to persuade oncoming vehicles to yield right-of-way to us! After a lunch stop at the pub adjacent to the ruins of Llanthony Priory and the singing of a newly-acquired, tasteless song "Green Hill" (courtesy of Silurian

M.M.), we continued south through Monmouth to stop at Tintern Abbey and Chepstow castle. After dowsing ourselves in lots of Welsh history and culture, we finally arrived back in England by way of the Severn Bridge.

We met up with Bristol M.M. at "The Boars Head" at Aust, immediately east of the Severn Bridge. After a scrumptious pub meal, we started dancing, albeit rather sluggishly. Many of the Bristol men were late showing up, but when they did, they made up for it with a spectacular display of Eynesham, Oddington and Ascot dances. We soon moved on to "The Pump House" in the Avon docks area of Bristol, where dancing (and drinking) continued until 11:00 p.m. outside under the pub lights by the side of the docks. We are all agreed that Bristol M.M.'s squire has the loudest voice we have ever heard, together with a wit and turn-of-phrase ("I shall fondle your silken flanks until you contribute money to the Morris") that tickled many a girls' fancy that night, both figuratively and in reality! Both sides just about exhausted their repertoires, having danced virtually nonstop from 7:30 to 11:00 p.m. The entire Vancouver M.M. party was very ably bedded by one stalwart Bristol man, Nigel Cook, and his ever-suffering family. They even laid on a marvellous English breakfast for us all! What hospitality!

## Thursday, June 7:

Once on the road, the first objective was to shut Norman up by finding him a Yew tree in a graveyard. (Don't ask us what for - he kept muttering something about tradition!) This was followed by a trip through Cheddar Gorge and a stop at the Chewton Mendip Cheese Factory (to sample the wares) before descending on Bath for an afternoon of laundering (non too soon for a lot of us!) and Roman cultural and architectural enlightenment. (No doubt you can tell that the Vancouver M.M. have somewhat diversified interests!)

Ever since the tour had began, many of us had been looking for a real English fish-and-chip shop, where the goods are served in old copies of the "News of the World". However, after a fruitless search around Bath, some of us finally had to make do with a Pizza Hut serving Mexican pizza and "Moosehead" beer - how ironic!

We met up with Bathampton M.M. at "The White Horse" pub at Biddestone, a small village not far from Chippenham. After a few introductory dances and beers, we moved on to "The White Hart" pub at Castle Combe - a really pretty little village - where we all dominated the centre of the village for over an hour, with a variety of Cotswold dances. Bathampton M.M. treated us to a fine selection of their dances, including many from Fieldtown and Litchfield. When dusk finally settled in, we then went on to dominate the pub with a variety of traditional (and not so traditional) songs, tunes and (somewhat cluttered!) dances. Good fun was had by all! After closing time, three of the Bathampton men stayed with us in Castle Combe Village Hall,



about 100 yards stumbling distance from the pub. Here, the singing went on into the early hours until we all fell asleep, exhausted after another great day, but not before a late night snack of scrumpy and Chewton Mendip cheese - did we really do that to our bodies?!

## **Friday, June 8:**

Following a delicious breakfast cooked for us by the Bathampton men who stayed overnight with us, we set off on our way again, this time heading south-east towards Salisbury Plain. Our first stop was Avebury, where we explored the strange stones, then it was on to West Kennet Long Barrow (an ancient burial ground), Silbury Hill and, eventually, Stonehenge. (You can probably tell we are interested in other "old" things apart from dance!) After a brief stop, we moved on the Salisbury, where we took a tour of the cathedral and all got drenched in a torrential downpour of rain. (Roger Cartwright had disappeared with the minibus keys and was nearly made to sit on the roof for the rest of the tour!) Finally, we continued south to Southampton, specifically the small village of Old Bursledon, and the "Jolly Sailor" pub on the banks of the River Hamble, recommended to us by King John's M.M., for supper. After supper, we moved a few hundred yards up the road to "The Vine", where we met up with King John's M.M.

King John's proved to be a quite remarkable side - they appear to do everything: Cotswold, Border, Rapper, Mumming - and very well too! It is no wonder they were chosen to represent the Morris Ring in a trip to the Middle East a year or two back. The dancing blocked the small lane on which "The Vine" is located, until eventually we were driven inside for a few dances by the inclement weather. However, this did not dampen the enthusiasm of either King John's or Vancouver M.M., as we proceeded to dance away the evening. King John's exhibited their very broad repertoire with Cotswold dances from, amongst others, Stanton Harcourt and Badby, and went on to perform Border and Rapper dances as well. Later in the evening, the numerous musicians and singers had their chance to shine as "The Vine" erupted in a cacophony of music and song, interrupted only by the frequent guzzling of pints of ale. It's quite amazing how, in the pitch black outside at about 11:30 p.m., we were all able to find our sleeping bags and toothbrushes in the back and on the roof of the minibus, and disperse to various homes to sleep, courtesy of King John's M.M.

## **Saturday, June 9:**

After finally finding each other in the morning and saying our fond farewells to our hosts, off we set again in the minibus for the longest day trip of the tour - we had to get to Canterbury to meet up with Hartley M.M. by 1:00 p.m. We had originally planned to take the coast road through Chichester to the small village of Rottingdean, just east of Brighton, home of famous Sussex folk singers - the Copper family. However, time was against us, and we had to take the

fast motorway route, the M3, M25 and M2, in order to meet our schedule.

We arrived at Canterbury, parked the minibus, and headed for the "The City Arms" pub at the Longmarket where we met up with the Hartley men. After a pint or two, we were outside in the shopping precinct, dancing. As it was Saturday lunchtime, a large crowd gathered in no time to see the strange antics of a bunch of white clad men with bells on. We only performed a few dances there, before the Hartley men said it was time to move on to "The Gate" at Marshside, a small village on the way to Broadstairs - we had to get there by 3:00 p.m. otherwise the landlord would apparently pack up and go home!

Well, we made it on time, and settled in to "The Gate" to enjoy the local brew. It was then that we discovered Hartley's secret weapon - their singing! Now the Vancouver M.M. enjoy a good song, but if we started at 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon we'd have nothing left to sing by evening! But not Hartley! Their songs at "The Gate" centred predominantly around the hardships of mining in the old days, and their harmonies were quite spectacular. We all sat in awe at how easily the tunes rolled off their lips! Eventually, however, several pints later, someone said we'd better dance, and we wandered down the road to a large garden where some kind of village fete was taking place. It was here that Hartley produced another memorable event - they followed Badby Shooting (complete with the shooting of the Animal at the end) with a mini-Mummers play to "resurrect" the Animal. Many of us had seen this type of performance before, but never with such utterly appropriate language and gestures! We are very glad we were able to capture it on video.

After a full set, we moved on again, this time to Broadstairs and Hartley's regular pub, "Neptunes Hall". We were to spend the night at "Neptunes Hall", in two of the upstairs rooms, so after unloading our sleeping bags we wandered down to the bar for a few pints and ran into Michael Blandford (who had threatened to meet up with us somewhere on our tour). Soon after, we strolled down to the seafront promenade to dance - it was about 6:00 p.m. We hadn't performed more than a few dances when a wedding party at a nearby hotel spotted us (or maybe it was us that spotted them!). Anyway, we ended up doing the obligatory Glorishears (Bledington) so we could all kiss the bride.....and a good time was had by all. Having outsung us all afternoon, Hartley M.M. now began to outdance us by demonstrating their broad repertoire of Sherborne, Fieldtown, Eynesham and Stanton Harcourt. We then strolled down to the pier and continued dancing there until the dusk set in, Vancouver M.M. closing off the evenings dancing, and the tours dancing, with Queens Delight (Bucknell). All the lads pulled all the stops out for this one - no holds barred! After all, it didn't matter now if you pulled a muscle or sprained an ankle - this was IT! - this was the last dance of the tour! It was certainly a great way to end the dancing, and, as the darkness closed in, we ambled (make that hobbled) back up the hill to a local fish-and-chip shop (at last!) and "Neptunes Hall".

Of course, the night was young, and Hartley had merely been warming up their vocal chords all afternoon. It was not long before the bar was full of singing, as the ale ran freely. Eventually (i.e. after official closing time), we had to move upstairs, where the partying continued well into the early hours, the participants being well lubricated by a barrel of ale and a bottle (or two, or three!) of Blackthorn sloe gin. When we all finally conked out, pity the last one asleep in a room full of semi-inebriated Morris men! - Hartley were as vocal asleep as they were awake - even snoring in harmony!

## **Sunday, June 9:**

As our tour was at an end, we all went our separate ways on the Sunday morning - some heading across the Channel to Belgium, some visiting relatives in England, some off touring England on their bikes, but the majority heading for Heathrow, to catch the afternoon Pan Am flight back to North America. We all managed to make it to the flight, even though we had to drop off the minibus in London.

## **REFLECTIONS**

The tour was a great success. Although we crammed a lot in and drove over 1,000 miles, everyone managed to stay the course and have a wonderful time. We all met some fabulous people who not only advanced our knowledge of the Morris, but also opened their homes to us in a tremendous gesture of friendship. We all savour different memories of the trip, but some of the most mentioned are.....

- the hospitality and kindness of all the sides
- the variation in style and presentation, as well as content, of the dancing that we saw
- the power, mysticism and theatre of the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance
- the pageantry and colour of the processional into Thaxted
- the enjoyment of the Thaxted crowd on the Saturday night
- the abundance of singing and playing in the pubs, and the variation of song lyrics from one side the next
- the surprising sanity of Silurian Border M.M. after their nurtured reputation
- "Is this Primrose Hill?", whenever we appeared to be lost
- the incredible map-reading skills of our main navigator, Ian Lyn, who also regularly demonstrated the amazing feat of being a "human suitcase" - he wore ALL his clothes at once for the whole tour - ordinary clothes, on top of Morris kit, on top of pyjamas!
- a new definition of "Bumpers" (courtesy of Hartley M.M.)

## **TOUR PARTICIPANTS**

Graham Baldwin (Squire, melodeon player, dancer, co-driver), Steve Cleary (Foreman, dancer, co-driver), Gray Gledhill (dancer), Norman Stanfield (pipe-and-tabourer, dancer), Ray Cole (dancer), Colin Ridgewell (dancer), Innis Pencarrick (dancer), Bill Mercer (fiddler, dancer), Brian Chisholm (penny whistler, dancer), Ian Lyn (dancer, percussionist, map-reader extraordinaire), John Carver (dancer).

with guests:

Roger Cartwright (dancer with just about everybody!), Michael Blandford (dancer, accordionist with East Suffolk M.M. - at Broadstairs), John Dibdin (dancer with Martlett Morris & Sword - at Thaxted), Brenda Gledhill (wife of Gray, probably the only woman in the world who could put up with 12 Morris men in a minibus for 9 days solid! - and on her honeymoon!)

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