



The Story of the Brackley Morris Men

A Traditional Northamptonshire Morris Side

10. The August Summer Tour - 'A good pair of boots'

Pre 1914

According to Fred Hamer, writing in 1955, the Brackley side changed its annual outing (at some date in the late 1800s, unspecified) from Whitsuntide to the August bank holiday week. (15) The photo here was taken on August bank holiday, Monday 4th Aug 1913.



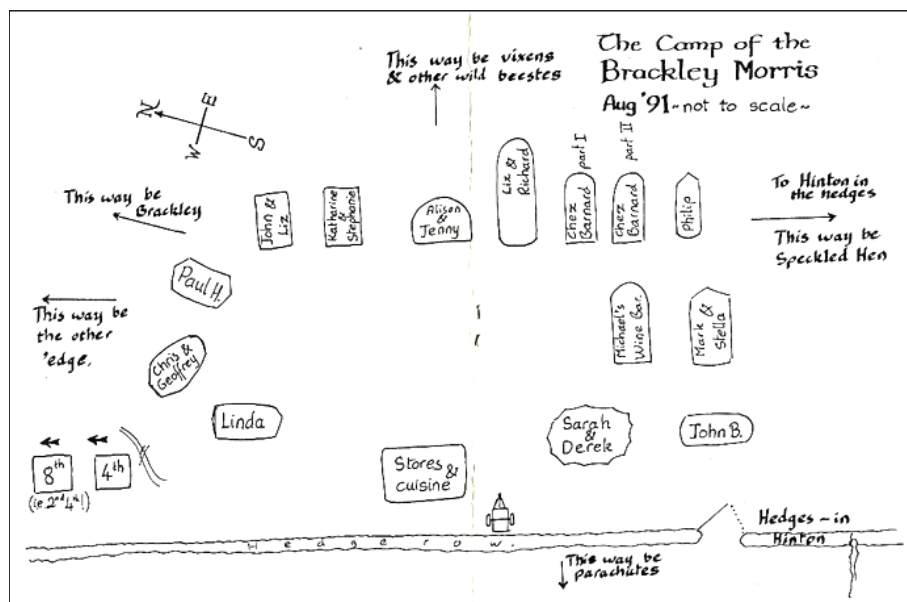
Keith Chandler, in his 1985 lecture quoted an article in the Banbury Guardian from 1950 contributed by Mr H Watkinson stating that: 'Until the outbreak of the first world war, the annual procedure of the troupe was to commence a tour of Brackley, Buckingham, Banbury, Towcester and all the intervening villages, on August bank holiday, and continue throughout the week. It was undoubtedly an enjoyable and profitable holiday and a pleasant spectacle for the people of the countryside. Their only transport a good pair of boots and a delight in walking...' (5).

The revival of the tours

With the establishment of the modern side in 1971, the tradition of summer tours was revived. This involved finding a field for camping, not too far from a pub. Prior to the tour, posters were printed in black and white, and coloured in by hand. The routine was soon established of arriving on Friday evening to set up camp, including stores tent and toilet tent, followed by a camp meal and then a session in the local pub. It was very much a family event. There followed three full days of dancing around the pubs and villages, and a farewell feast with music and song on the Monday evening.

It also became customary to keep a log of the weekend's activities. The earliest surviving log is from 1978 and was typed on a typewriter. Most of the tour logs of the 1980s and 1990s listed all the dance spots and recorded both the names of the participants and the dances performed. It was usual to have between five and seven dance spots per day. Each year there were around 35 participants (dancers, musicians, and accompanying families). They performed about 100 dances in total, including around 40 different ones, from as many as 13 traditions.

Most of the logs from this period also included a drawing of the camp site. This one is from 1991 at Hinton-in-the-Hedges.



Tour locations

- 1972 Water Stratford
- 1973 Great Horwood
- 1974 Castlethorpe
- 1975 Whittlebury
- 1976 Stoneleigh
- 1977 Priors Marston
- 1978 Barby
- 1979 Priors Marston
- 1980 Aynho
- 1981 Akeley
- 1982 Farthingstone
- 1983 Lower Boddington
- 1984 Eydon
- 1985 Hook Norton
- 1986 Priors Marston
- 1987 Chacombe
- 1989 Not recorded
- 1990 Not recorded
- 1991 Hinton-in-the-Hedges
- 1992 Stoke Doyle
- 1993 Not recorded
- 1994 Ashby St Ledgers
- 1995 Drayton
- 1996 Hook Norton
- 1997 Weston
- 1998 Brafield on the Green
- 1999 Hanslope
- 2000 Thorpe Mandeville
- 2001 Thorpe Mandeville
- 2002 Ashby St Ledgers
- 2003 Marston St Lawrence
- 2004 Ashby St Ledgers
- 2005 Sulgrave
- 2006 Not recorded
- 2007 Not recorded
- 2008 Thorpe Mandeville
- 2009 Marston St Lawrence
- 2010 Cropredy
- 2011 Evenley
- 2012 Sulgrave
- 2013 Thorpe Mandeville
- 2014 Thorpe Mandeville

It soon became apparent that if a pub with a field or large garden could be found, then a car journey to the pub in the evenings could be avoided. This also provided ready-made on-site toilet and washing facilities. By the late 1990s, this arrangement had largely become the norm.

The camp sites



Priors Marston, 1977



The Star, Sulgrave 2012



The Three Conies, Thorpe Mandeville, 2014

The modern tours. The decision was taken in 2012 to cut the tour to just two days, Sunday and Monday. This was to ease the dancing burden for the men, thereby ensuring that the tour remained enjoyable. The tour of 2014 based at the Three Conies in Thorpe Mandeville was well attended. There were 20 campers. 16 dancers & musicians took part at some stage over the weekend, and were joined from time to time by another 17 family members. A total of 24 attended the feast. In spite of the increasing age of the men, the Summer Tour continues to be a popular event, and is an important highlight for those unable to participate at other times of the year.



Dance locations. The logs contain details of the all the dance spots visited during each tour, far too many to list in detail here, but the following photos show just a few of them.



Fawsley, 1982



Culworth, 1982



Kings Sutton, 1990



1991, location unknown



2001, location unknown



2012, The Griffin, Chipping Warden



Nether Heyford, 2009



The Crewe Arms, Hinton, 2013



The Red Lion, Brackley, 2013

Everdon Fete. In the early 1980s, the side began to attend the Everdon Fete on the afternoon of Bank Holiday Monday, a paid event that continues to be part of the Summer Tour to this day.



1983



1984



1991



2007



2012

The Joy Mead Gardens, Farthingstone. This place deserves a special mention as it's regularly been a favourite tea spot 'sandwiched' between the exertions of Everdon and the final dance spots of the tour. A tranquil place where tea, cakes and music can all be enjoyed.



2004



2012

The Feast. Since the early days, it's been traditional to have a feast on the last night of the tour, occasionally in a village hall, but more usually in the pub close to the camp site.

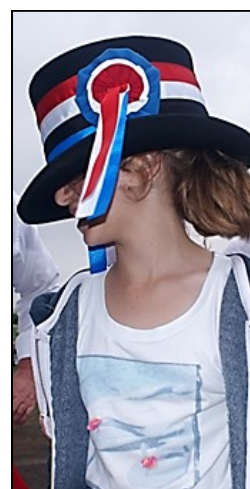


The Star, Sulgrave, 2012



The Three Conies, Thorpe Mandeville, 2014

Other tour 'moments'. As well as the dancing, there's always been time for fun and relaxation. Below is a small selection of photos from 2010 onwards to give a flavour of those behind-the-scenes moments.





Everdon, 1982



Somerton 2001



The Star, Sulgrave 2003



Canons Ashby House, 2006



Sulgrave Manor 2012



Gateridge Fam, Croughton, 2014