

THAMES VALLEY LOGBOOK SOURCES

The activities of Thames Valley Morris Men have been logged since the very beginning. This is the first paragraph of the first log book:

“Early in 1952 the Claygate Group of the English Folk Dance and Song Society received an invitation from the Claygate Flower Show organisers to organise open air dancing with, perhaps, demonstration dancing as part of the Show in July 1952.”

The Record of the First 25 Years of the Thames Valley Morris Men 1952-1977 and An Account of the Second 25 Years of the Thames Valley Morris Men, both typed by Cyril Smith, exist as typescript pages bound by Lester Bailey’s wife Alison. Cyril was around when the logbooks were bound and would have had the opportunity to make corrections at that stage, but they are fundamentally based on his recollections and, perhaps to a greater extent on those of Jim Brooks. Note that “The Second 25 years” was a speculative title – the last entry was in 1988!

Jim’s notes also exist as hand-written notes in **Nine Woolworth’s spiral bound Student’s Notebooks**, which read as if they were made soon after the events he was writing about. It’s not entirely clear which events Cyril and Jim attended in person, and it’s obvious that Cyril often took Jim’s notes for the logbook and filled in with his own and others’ recollections. Jim’s first notebook starts with the first appearance in 1952 of what was to become Thames Valley Morris Men in 1953. The last ends in December 1993.

Digital versions

John Elkins undertook to scan Cyril’s log books into Word files which are the basis for the PDF files stored on the Thames Valley website. This was often a difficult procedure because the typescripts were often on thin paper with misprints and hand written corrections, and Cyril’s eyesight was obviously failing towards the end of his typing marathon. This made it necessary to proof read closely the results of the scanning procedure, and guesswork was sometimes needed. Cyril’s spelling was respected as much as possible, but gross errors were corrected both in spelling and in the facts, where they could be checked.

Thames Valley Morris Men – News Sheets, Newsletters, Morris News 1974-1987

Hand-written and typed newsletter were produced by various members, including Dave Dearsley, Andy Melville, Bill Ellis, Tim Cawdron, and Mark Jones and were photocopied for circulation during the Cyril era and afterwards. These are the main source for subsequent events until the advent of email. Roughly from 1988 onwards copies of the **Bagman’s computer records, including newsletters and correspondence** exist, as well as lever arch folders thick with paper. Most of these were produced and stored by John Elkins except for the period when Dick Keen was Bagman, from 2005 to 2010.

The new log books John Elkins has started to produce log books to extend and if possible complete the series started by Cyril and Jim, using the material mentioned above supplemented by other members’ recollections. It should be emphasised that he started this process after 2010, about 20 years after the first 50 years, which means that if the written records leave gaps it is often impossible to fill them from memory.

So far volumes for 1987 to 1997 have been produced and loaded on the website and include some photographs supplied by John Walsh from the TVMM collection which he maintains. Volumes for 1998 to 2002 will be available soon.

In addition the two Johns co-operated to write new logbooks from scratch when they were Squire and Bagman in the late 2010s. Lavishly illustrated volumes for 2016-2018 and 2019 are on the website.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON ACCURACY AND MEMORY

If you've got this far please note that all the log books ultimately depend on people's memories and their preferences about what is worth recording. If you read any of the logbooks and think of something that has been left out and should be put in, or if anything is just plain wrong, please tell John Elkins who will be happy to include your favourite stories.

John Elkins

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