

The story of the Bradmore plaque



Saturday June 8th 1985 was the date of the unveiling of the Bradmore Plaque to commemorate the Bradmore Morris dancers of 1618. This is the story of how it came to be.

Bob Hine had been a Dolphin Morris Man almost but not quite since the formation of the team in January 1968. He had lodged with Ian Stewart and when the side was short Bob was persuaded to 'fill in' until a full side was mustered. This eventually led to Bob joining as a permanent arrangement. He continued as a member, always supportive and always there at the big occasions but working quietly and diligently in the background. It was in 1979 that Bob took over as Bagman of Dolphin Morris Men and it was also at that time that his profile within the side began to gain momentum.

Bob an academic decided that he would research Morris Dancing within Nottinghamshire and see what evidence he could find about our local dancing ancestors. What he found was to set the wheels in motion for several projects that would eventually come to fruition and for which Bob (and Dolphin Morris) can be justly proud.

The first concrete result of his labours was the production of his booklet, 'The Dolphin Guide to Local Villages & Dances'.

The second result was the discovery of information about a Southwell Procession dating back to 1109 and which would eventually lead to the re-creation of the Gate to Southwell.

The third result was the production of a plaque commemorating the Morris Dancers who, in 1618, had been fined for Morris Dancing on the Sabbath. This offence occurred at Bradmore and the names of the six dancers and two musicians were still there in the records of the church court.

Records about Morris Dancing in those early times are, in themselves, rare but to have the names of what looked like a complete and extant team was nothing short of remarkable.

The 1980 booklet carried a single sentence about the men of Bradmore, *'The church courts cracked down on morris dancing on Sundays, and a number of Nottinghamshire men were fined for this offence in 1618, including men from Wollaton, Lenton, Ruddington, Bradmore and Wysall'*.

In June 1983 Bob wrote a letter to Mrs Hooley of Bradmore Parish council. In his letter he indicates that the Dolphin Morris Men, *'are hoping to visit Bradmore again this year'*, and he goes on, *'Our visit is in fact quite imminent, since we plan to come next Thursday, 30th June, at 8 p.m.'* Bob asked if she could assist with some publicity for the planned visit.

The letter then goes on to say, *'Since last year, I have done a little research into the Bradmore Morris team of 1619(sic), mentioned in the church records. The parish registers go back 50 or so years earlier, and it was possible to trace the births, deaths, and marriages of the dance team and their families. My records are not complete, but they do give a reasonably clear picture, showing the ages, place of birth and in some cases occupations of the dancers ... there were no male descendants of the dancers still living in the village beyond 1700'*.

I think this information is of considerable interest to people involved in the history of folk dance in this country and may also be of some interest to people in the village'.

Bob goes on further, *'...and it occurred to me that it might be appropriate to have some commemoration of the team of dancers. It is very rare for any record to survive which names people who took part in folk dancing before the nineteenth century. I wonder if your Parish council would consider the possibility of erecting a commemorative plaque in honour of the morris dancers of 1619 (sic)'*.

Dolphin archives revealed that performances had been given on May 21st 1981 and again on May 6th 1982. These visits were obviously as a direct result of the discovery of information about the Bradmore dancers and were some of the preliminary steps to the eventual erection of a permanent plaque in the village.

The records that started the ball rolling make interesting reading and any modern day researcher, who is also a morris dancer, could be excused for being more than a little excited at the discovery.

In an item dated 21st October, 1618, in the **'Archdeaconry MSS. Presentment Bill. 295'** is the following:

"I the churchwarden of Bradmore doe p'sent Hugh Longley, Gervis Goldinge, John Butler, Hugh Ffoster for morris dauncers and Harold Maples, Richard Roberts and Antonie Truman of Ruddington and Ralph Lees of Wisall for p'paning the Sabaoth daye beinge and since Whitsundaye laste paste."
Thomas Bond, his marke.

In The Act Books from Hodgkinson's transcription were also found the following entries:

f.125d. 2th October 1618.

William Hartley "lay cooper" of Wolloughton.

Admitted "that upon a Sabaoth daye since the feaste of Pentecost laste paste he went to Trowell in companie of morris dauncers in tyme of divine service."

Richard Mee of Wolloughton.

Admitted "that he was absent from divine service upon a Sabaoth day and in companie with morris dauncers since Whitsun daye laste paste."

f.140, 7th November, 1618.

Hugh Longley of Bradmore 'for prophanyng the Sabaoth by morris dauncinge.' Pen. Reserved.

Gervase Goldinge of the same 'for the like'. His father Richard Gervase pleaded guilty for him.

John Butler of the same 'for the like'.

Pleaded guilty. Dismissed.

Register 27. f. 140d. 7th November, 1618.

Harold Maples of Bradmore 'for prophaning the Sabaoth'. v. et m.

Richard Roberdes of the same 'for the same'.

Pleaded guilty. Dismissed with a warning.

Anthony Trewman of Ruddington 'for pyping at the same'. Excommunicated

Ralph Lees of Wisaw 'for the same'.

To be cited afresh for that day fortnight.

f. 152d. 25th December, 1618.

Ralph Lees of Wisawe. Excommunicated.

Register 28. f.146d.

21st November, 1618.

Henry Oldershawe of Bradmore 'a morrise dauncer'. v. et m.

f.148d. 25th November, 161.

5th December, 1618.

Edward Creswell of Bradmore 'for a morris dauncer'.

'His wife is with child before marriage'. v. et m.

f.151d. 5th December, 1618.

Henry Oldershawe of Bradmore 'a morrise dauncer or a looker on'.

Excommunicated.

Edward Creswell of the same 'for the same'. Excommunicated.

Humphrey Garner of Bradmore, John Wighteman of Ruddington and Robert Windley of Lenton 'morrice dauncers'.

Bob began his research into the names that he had discovered and was fortunate in that the parish registers were still in existence and also that they went back 50 or so years earlier. Much research stops at this point simply because the records have been lost, wantonly destroyed, been damaged by fire or water ingress, or sometimes eaten by vermin. Bob researched the family trees' of the men at Bradmore:

Hugh Longley was born in 1597. Little is known of him but he was obviously connected with a family which possessed some land, and some of it at least freehold. Hugh's marriage is not recorded but in 1620 he had a son, William, and then two other children. At the time of the court case he would have been about 21 years old and probably still unmarried.

Gervase Goulding was born in 1590. He was unmarried at the time of the court case but married in 1619 to Jane Bond. He died in 1627 leaving four children. He would have been about 28 years old in 1618.

John Butler was the son of Jervace Butler of Boney [Bunny]. The Butlers appear to have moved to the parish at the end of the 16th century and four children are recorded as being christened in Bunny. John may have been born before the move to the parish. John married Joan Hutchinson in 1612 and would have had two children at the time of the court case, with a further three born subsequently. He was probably in his late 20's at the time of the court case.

Hugh Foster took out a marriage licence on December 8th 1604 (or 1609) and married Elizabeth Marshall the next day. At that time he came from Boney but in 1617 and 1620 a Hugh Foster was the manorial neatherd (in charge of the cows) for Bradmore. If this is the right Hugh, he would have had four children by the time of the court case. In 1620 he was noted as a tenant and member of the manorial jury at Bradmore. In 1634 a Hugh was presented at the manorial court of Boney as 'a common fisherman' and 'he caught fish in the water called Boney Brook against the rule and made dams and prevented the course of the water'. If this is the correct Hugh Foster he would have been in his 30's at the time of the court case.

Harrold Maples married Mary Warde of Bradmore in November 1615. The first record of a Maples in the Parish was in October 1618 when Herod Maples was presented to the manorial court of Bradmore for tethering three 'beass against orders'. So Harrold would have been in his 20's at the time of the court case.

Richard Roberts is described by Bob as very obscure and may not have been from Boney at all. He could have been an apprentice, domestic servant or living-in labourer. A very tentative family tree would suggest that a Richard Roberts was born in May 1579 which would then make him probably in his late 30's.

Bob states, *'The only thing I am certain about is that none of the morris dancers were at the time of the court case, major tenants, office holders in the parish or manor, or men of much consequence'*, and suggests that men such as those would have had too much to lose to risk offending authority.

Bob asks in another document, *'Who were the Bradmore morris dancers? Were they a proper village team, performing the morris at Whitsuntide in the traditional way, or were they a bunch of young tearaways getting into trouble with their elders? The evidence suggests that they were a genuine team. To begin with, there were six of them, and this is the standard number for an English morris team. According to the Parish registers at the time, the youngest was about 20 and the oldest about 40 and the team had an average age of about 31. This points to a well established group. Interestingly, they all had different surnames, though two of them were related by marriage (Harrold Mapples was married to Jarvis Goulding's sister). Most of the Bradmore dancers had*

surnames which had been around in the village for some time, and at least four of them were born in the village – they were locals not outsiders'.

Bob goes on to say, *'After 1618 there is no further record of morris dancing at Bradmore, nor indeed in Nottinghamshire as a whole'*.

In May of 1618 King James I had issued his 'Book of sports' in which were allowed, *'May Games, Whitsun-Ales, and Morris dances, and the setting up of Maypoles and other sports therewith used'*. The proviso was, *'So as the same to be had in due and convenient time, without impediment or neglect of divine service'*.

This was the outcome of pressure from puritan Magistrates and Church officials intent on reforming the Sabbath, and harassment by them of the sports of the ordinary people.

Bob discovered further entries in the **Archdeaconry MSS. Presentment Bills. 295.**
Prior to those of 1618:

Register 19, f.84d.

14th May 1613.

Gervase Whitehead of Ruddington 'for cominge to Clifton and alluring the people to prophane gods service by playinge upon a paire of bagpipes'.

Dismissed with a warning.

Register 22, f.35.

18th May 1616.

Henry Oldershaw of Wolloughton 'for ringing hoggs on the Sabaoth daye'.

Pleaded not guilty. To purge himself.

A letter dated 12th September 1983 from Mrs Hooley of Bradmore Parish Council suggested that there was some interest in Bob's idea for a commemorative plaque. They would need to know, the form it would take, the cost, and where it might be erected etc. It was suggested that bob attend the next meeting of the Parish Council to discuss his proposals

Handwritten notes show that Bob obtained some prices ranging from £50 in formica to £85 in anodised aluminium to £150 for stainless steel/bronze/ceramic. This would include 100 words and two figures.



In the meantime a Mr Daniell of Bradmore had come forward and was willing to make and donate the plaque. A few design features were to be sorted out and by November 1984 all seemed to be going smoothly. Mr Daniell would make the plaque, and the date for the official unveiling was set for June 8th 1985. Mrs Daniell was to officially unveil the plaque on the day.