

THAMES VALLEY LOGBOOK SOURCES THE FIRST 25 YEARS

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 is a set of A4 pages typed by Cyril Smith, recording the activities of Thames Valley year by year, and bound by Lester Bailey’s wife Alison. The records are fundamentally based on Cyril’s recollections and on those of Jim Brooks.

Jim Brooks’ notebooks 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 scanned Cyril’s log books into Word files which are the basis for the PDF files stored on the Thames Valley website. This was not a straightforward 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 scanning results, 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. The opportunity was taken to make a few additions based on material discovered in the Thames Valley records. Copies of photographs from the Thames Valley collection have been inserted in some of the files by John Walsh, who looks after the photograph collection.

THAMES VALLEY LOGBOOK THE SECOND 25 YEARS (1978-1988)

The first thing to say is that Cyril never completed the Thames Valley Log for the second twenty-five years. He continued typing log entries for 1978 until 1985 when he wrote: “The LOG will be brief and badly typed till a new writer takes over from the old. CDS, writer for the first 34 years, has become partially blind”.

The series was continued by Chris Seager Thomas, with Cyril’s blessing, until 1988 and the typescripts were filed in a ring binder but never bound. The series then lapsed but has been recreated for later years from paper and digital records and is stored on the Thames Valley website.

For most of the period (1978-1985) the logs continue to be based on Cyril’s recollections backed up by Jim Brooks’ notebooks, which continued throughout this period, and increasingly by contributions from younger members.

An important source is a series of paper copies of hand-written and typed newsletters produced by various club members, including Dave Dearsley, Andy Melville, Bill Ellis, Tim Cawdron, and Mark Jones and photocopied for circulation until roughly 1988.

Digital version This file is a scanned version of the typescripts lightly edited by John Elkins. 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. It is hoped eventually to include photographs from the huge collection of Thames Valley photographs held and maintained by John Walsh.

THAMES VALLEY LOGBOOK 1987 to 1999

This is the first volume of TVMM Logbooks not to be based on Cyril's Smith's typed records, which he stopped producing in the late 1980s. Instead they were prepared retrospectively by John Elkins in the 2010s relying mainly on his computer records as Bagman, including newsletters and correspondence, as well as several lever arch folders thick with paper.

Jim Brooks continued to produce hand-written notebooks which contributed first-hand recollections until 1993, but he gradually attended fewer club events as his health worsened. Another major source of detail came from conversations with various club members. This volume of logbooks includes a number of photographs selected by John Walsh from the huge collection of Thames Valley photographs which he holds and maintains.

THAMES VALLEY LOGBOOK 2000 to 2009

This was a difficult period to reconstruct. Cyril's logs, Jim's notes and a series of independent newsletters had all finished. John Elkins was Bagman until 2005 and Dick Keen from 2005 to 2009. Both still had computer records but some were lost when, independently, they changed email accounts.

With the help of other TVMM members who found (some) incoming emails from the Bagmen and also dredged through their memories, plus more lever arch files with paper copies of all sorts of stuff, a sequence of events has been constructed. Often there is little more to say than we danced at X. Sometimes there are long articles about favourite events and memories, for instance the Cotswolds weekends, Krov, our 50th birthday celebrations and similar memorable events.

John Walsh has again scattered some photographs from the Thames Valley archives through the text. They often resolved disagreements about in which year x happened, who was there, whether this was the year when that happened and so on. We intend to add more in time.

THAMES VALLEY LOGBOOK 2010 to 2019

This logbook is a mixture of retrospective reconstruction, for the years from 2010 to 2015, and a revived series of logs written as events occurred in the years from 2016 to 2019 by John Elkins and John Walsh. But even though these were all comparatively recent years, and there were fewer gaps in the computer records, memories, when consulted over what happened ten years ago or even more recently, sometimes often conflicted. It seemed that the more members who were asked to remember a certain event the more different memories emerged. Photographs from the archive again helped to confirm details, although the closer to the present, the more photographs there are to sift through. John Walsh has added many photographs through the years from 2015. We intend to add more in time.

As is clear to me, the content of all the logbooks ultimately depends on whose memories and preferences about what was worth recording were consulted. The content of the first two logbooks was decided by Cyril. I take full responsibility for what is include in the logbooks covering the years from 1987 onwards, although there are plenty of articles written by others. 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
July 2020