



# ***Newsletter***

## ***Winter 2015***



The Joy of Morris  
Big Appalachian  
Paul White's Diary  
Morris Madness In The Asylum  
Beyond Our Shores: Cyprus Morris  
Black Dog Bolognese  
Passage To India  
Not The Day Job  
Northfields Morris: To Bath & Beyond

Roy Dommett Obituary  
Recruiting In The Cathedral  
Sompting Village Morris Ale  
And Scilly Roosters  
Staves In Bordeaux  
North To Alaska  
Halesworth Day of Dance  
CD Reviews  
The Bath Day of Dance

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## NEWSLETTER COPY DATES

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[newsletter@morrisfed.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@morrisfed.org.uk)

**[www.morrisfed.org.uk](http://www.morrisfed.org.uk)**



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#### NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter is the quarterly publication of the Morris Federation. The aim is to provide a platform for news, views and announcements relating to the world of traditional dance and associated activities. The Newsletter goes out to each member group and individual member of the Morris Federation. Additional copies can be ordered by group members at an additional cost per copy of £10 for one year's issues. To be a living publication the Newsletter must be read so PLEASE make sure that your copy gets circulated as widely as possible. The on-line version will be available shortly after the printed copies have been distributed.

#### MEMBERS' MANUAL

All members of the MF should have a copy of the Members' Manual. This contains a lot of material that members may need to refer to from time to time. If you have misplaced the free copy sent to you when you joined, a replacement (or additional copies) can be purchased from the MF Secretary at the cost of £6.50 (inc. p&p) each. Please make cheques payable to 'The Morris Federation'.

#### ADVERTISING

As the Newsletter moves to full colour a review of advertising rates is in progress. These will be made available shortly but in the meantime please contact the Editor with any enquiries.

## EDITORIAL - INCOMING

I'd like to thank Colin for all the work he's done on the Newsletter over the past six years, to which he brought his own style and quite literally a bit of colour. I'm pleased to see that in this edition, he finally gets to play with full colour throughout, something that will continue in the new year alongside a new look, which I am looking forward to sharing with you.

As for what the Newsletter continues to include, I am sure that memorable club events, foreign trips and key annual events will make up the majority of the content, however, articles from new sides, as well as more established sides, plus well-researched articles of special interest on any aspect of Morris or related folk traditions, even if controversial, are encouraged to add a different perspective.

Don't forget that you can also send a brief letter to the editor, whether in response to an earlier article, a well-publicised incident, or other point of interest. Amusing photos with a Morris theme are also welcome, as are suggestions and comments for improvement, so please drop me a line.

One item I do need your input on is a name for the Newsletter. Since its inception, the Newsletter has remained nameless, but I felt that as the Federation has now reached its 40-year milestone, it would be fitting to give the Newsletter a name alongside a revamp.

Therefore, I'm holding a competition to find a good one. Do you have any witty puns or ideas for a great title for the Morris Federation Newsletter? Send them my way, and if your idea is chosen, your team will feature on the front cover of the Newsletter in 2016. Further details about this competition can be found within the following pages.

Until next time, keep dancing!

*Sam*

## EDITORIAL - OUTGOING

Well, how the last six years have flown! As I put my computer to rest after compiling my last Newsletter, I would again like to thank everybody for their support. As you will see above, Sam has already got some great ideas for taking the Newsletter forward and I trust she will experience the same level of friendship and co-operation across the morris community that I have enjoyed.

*Colin*

Front cover photograph:

Minden Rose dancing at Bath Day of Dance

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# President's Prologue

## Melanie Barber

Hello,

I must start by expressing my sadness at the passing of Roy Dommett. As I'm from the North and mainly dance Lancashire Clog and North West Morris, I only really knew Roy by name. I did however have the pleasure of meeting him at our 40th anniversary in Bath, albeit for too short a time. One of the things he spoke to me about was the need for a Foreman/ Leaders Handbook, and this is something our AGM agreed that I take forward at the next Joint Morris Organisations' (JMO) meeting in March. I know Roy will be sorely missed and fondly remembered by the Morris world.

Thank you to Mr Wilkins' Shilling for all the hard work that went into hosting our 40th Anniversary Day of Dance and AGM. It was great to be able to fill the streets of Bath with so many teams dancing so many different traditions, including those that had been there from the start of The Women's Morris Federation, as well as those formed just last year. Some wonderful memories to be shared and cherished.

One of the AOB discussions at the AGM asked what we planned to use our reserve funds for. Obviously we have to keep a reserve, but we do have (limited) monies available for bursaries and grants, which in the past we have used to support events such as the More Morris Better Morris conference last November, and which are reported on through the Newsletter and our annual accounts. I know that we need to make this aspect of the Federation more open and transparent in what is available and how people apply, and I will be discussing this with the committee. Since the AGM we have had a couple of applications that we are currently considering.

I've just attended my first Association of Festival Organisers Conference, which I found really interesting. A lot of the talks and discussions veered towards the use of social media, and I realise that there's a lot more we could be doing to enhance awareness through this medium. It was good to meet new people, and put faces

to some names I've only known through email for years, to discuss the value of having morris teams at festivals.

For most teams we're now into the quieter winter months, when we can focus practices on teaching newer members more repertoire, and checking and re-confirming the finer details, that make a dance good, with experienced members. It's also a good time for a kit inspection to make sure everyone's kit is smart and uniform ahead of next year's dance season.

Our next big event is the JMO National Day of Dance, being hosted in York on Saturday 23rd April by Minster Strays, on behalf of The Morris Federation. Please, please, make sure that if you have booked a space, that you have a team and you turn up. I know that sounds a very basic, and logical request, but both last year's JMO and our AGM had teams having to cancel at short notice, which causes the organisers no end of last minute rework and heartache.

Looking further ahead, don't forget that our 2016 AGM is being hosted by Mortimers Morris of Nottingham on Saturday 24th September.

In the meantime, I hope you have a great festive season, and I look forward to meeting even more teams next year.

Happy Dancing!

*Melanie*



*Melanie with Chair of Open Morris, Phil Watson, and Morris Ring Squire, Adam Garland, Bath Assembly Rooms, 26th Sept.*



# The Joy of Morris

While struggling to find the right words to introduce myself, I was met with the sad news of the passing of Roy Dommett. I don't claim to have been a close friend, but as the tributes pour in the same words keep recurring; Roy was an inspiration.

I met Roy for the first time at what was affectionately known as a 'Dommett Weekend', held by Great Western Morris in October 2012. This was the first dance workshop I had attended since that fateful taster session with Priston Jubilee Morris that got me hooked back in 2007, and it was a weekend that would completely change the way I looked upon Morris dancing.

As well as being pretty much non-stop, and although I may not remember much of the finer points of the dances now, Roy opened my eyes to the breadth of Morris traditions, the differences between them, and the sheer number of ways you can turn, jump and generally cover space through such a small amount of steps.

In between the whirlwind of dances that Roy introduced while wheeling himself around the hall and tapping people on the back with his stick when it wasn't quite going as instructed, he gave several talks on his life and the Morris. In one presentation, Roy described how he felt the first time he danced, "It wasn't simply fun, it was joyful," he said, which struck a chord.

I left that weekend feeling incredibly tired, but with many new friends, and a desire for more Morris.

Over the next year I joined three additional sides, Dr Turberville's Morris, The Knights of King Ina, and Nonesuch Morris, with whom, along with my original team Priston Jubilee Morris, I have been able to broaden my traditional Cotswold Morris repertoire and to engage in the evolution of Morris through new and distinctive dances, as well as meet a lot of different people and teams!

I feel fortunate to have been able to attend two further 'Dommett weekends' since 2012, and although Roy's involvement reduced with each, his influence in championing the Morris was ever

present. Roy really was an inspirational man who touched the lives of anyone he met, and he was incredibly adept at changing the way you looked at the Morris; turning it from a seemingly simple and fun pastime into something more, something...joyful.

*Sam Ross*



*(Above) Sam with Dr Turberville's Morris*

*(Below) Sam with Priston Jubilee Morris*



## A celebration of Roy's life in the Morris

Because Roy did mean so much to so many, the Morris Federation would like to celebrate his life in the Spring Edition of the Newsletter with stories and memories from those who knew him, or met him.

Please send YOUR memories, stories, and pictures of Roy to :

newsletter@morrisfed.org.uk  
by Monday, 15th February, 2016

# Roy Dommett 1933 to 2015

Roy knew more about the traditional performance dances of England than anyone else. He achieved this by sifting through the fragmentary information left by the collectors. Roy went back to the original sources and made sense of the field notes and the collectors' jottings then added to the sum of knowledge by seeking out and talking to the few people who had contact with the pre-revival Morris dancers. With this additional information, he could piece together a broader picture of not only the dance but its context and relationship to the society it came from. Roy came from a relatively humble background, the son of a painter and decorator, and unlike the middle and upper-class collectors of the early 20th century, he could more easily relate to the people that the Morris had come from. The people he met and got to know during his researches at places such as Bampton became his friends, particularly at Abingdon where he and his sons danced as members of the team for many years.

Roy's other area of achievement was as an Aeronautical Engineer. As a member of the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, he became involved in the UK's rocket program. In an interview for a BBC documentary on the UK's rocket program he was introduced as a "real rocket scientist".

It was when the Blue Streak rocket project was cancelled, he had the opportunity and access to a microfiche reader to study the manuscripts Sharp had written. His next step was to track down and scour through the original field notes of Sharp and the other collectors. He then sought out the people that had seen the old dancers or had been related to members of the original teams or, in some cases, had been taught as boys in later revivals. This yielded new information that built on what was generally known, filled gaps in our knowledge and sometimes contradicted the text that Sharp published in the Morris Books. For example, from his research, Roy was adamant that the Morris had been danced with the stepping starting on the left foot as opposed to Sharp's notation which consistently showed the dancing starting with a right foot. It also became evident to him that the Morris had been performed with much more vigour than had become the norm in the revival and that the Morris had been danced

at a slower pace giving more time to gain lift off the ground between steps. The physics of the dance was obvious to this rocket scientist. These conclusions were taken up by many of the teams that formed during the early 1970s in contrast to teams that use the Morris Books as their main source of information.

The dissemination of Roy's knowledge was largely through workshops as well as the publication of articles, particularly in the pages of Morris Matters. He was also the major contributor to the 'black book' compiled by Lionel Bacon which vastly expanded the known repertoire and the information not included in Sharp's original Morris books. He was most active during the early 70s when for several years he led all of the morris workshops during Sidmouth Folk Festival week, weekends at Halsway Manor, workshops organised by Bath City and Cardiff Morris as well as the series of workshops at Wantage.

Each of Roy's workshops was a crash course in a tradition, which condensed pretty much all you needed to know into one session. He once said that you could cover a tradition in a one and a half hour workshop. They were very often exhausting to both mind and body. To break up each workshop, he would give a talk which gave the background story of who the dances were collected from, how they were collected and often the social and economic background. This would put the dancing in context, giving an understanding of the Morris far beyond the bare dance notes and real meaning to the dancing which had gone on in the past. His talks also illustrated that the Morris had not been a static never-changing ritual but an evolving and adaptable medium of expression which could



*Roy with Crookham Mummers, c. 1985*



and did change with time.

For these workshops, Roy would be assisted in the music by Tubby Reynolds and between them, they were something of a double act. They would also accompany dance teams with Roy dressed in a blue-and-white-striped Andy Pandy costume and a red neckerchief tied as a bandana on his head. During Sidmouth Festival week, they would act as fools on the Knowle Arena, coming on during the performances with brushes to sweep the performers off or run on with scorecards that they held up after each performance. Processions up to the Arena could become anarchic, with sit down protests for no particular reason and dancing around a hapless policeman standing by the edge of the road. There was definitely an air of mischief about Roy. He was also an observer, taking in his surroundings and analysing what and who he saw. It was his Engineer's ability to take in diverse information and make sense of it that underlines his achievement for the Morris by providing the knowledge and background upon which so many dance groups have built their own unique 'take' on the Morris.

Roy was always encouraging of innovation and the creation of new dances. This has partly led to the huge diversity of Morris performed today in contrast to the conformity of repertoire

and style that existed before he started to run workshops and publish his findings.

Together with Tubby and Betty Reynolds, Roy was very encouraging of women dancing the Morris and helped nurture the early women's teams by teaching and providing dances and inspiration with no discrimination against the burgeoning interest from women to dance Morris. His interest in the dance traditions of this nation also covered all forms of the Morris including clog, processional morris and sword dance traditions from the northern counties, the dances from the Welsh border area, Molly dances of East Anglia and related traditions such as stave dancing in the South West.

His work with the rocket program progressed to his involvement in the Polaris and later Trident projects where he became the project manager with a very prominent role in its development and delivery. This led him to make regular visits to the USA. During many of those visits, he was able to share his knowledge of the Morris with the teams on the other side of the Atlantic.

Apart from the Silver Medal awarded by the Royal Aeronautical Society and being appointed CBE, he was most proud of the Gold Badge he received from the EFDSS (which the Morris Federation nominated him for).

## Trefor Owen

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**We can now make Clogs with Vegetarian Uppers though the colour range is limited.**

***Sadly we don't make the Nails yet – but I am working on that!***

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of this Newsletter*

**BUT**

***it is also available  
on-line  
(in full colour)  
at [www.morrisfed.org.uk](http://www.morrisfed.org.uk)***

*Please let your  
members know  
so that everyone  
gets to read the  
Newsletter*



*Roy and Marguerite with Fleet Morris,  
Hartley Wintney 2010*

Roy had been seriously ill with kidney failure and on dialysis for over ten years. This had taken its toll and left him in a very fragile physical condition, contributing to his untimely death at the age of 82. However, his mind was still as sharp and active as ever. There was much more he wished to achieve. He leaves his wife Marguerite who he had known from school days and seven sons (more than enough for a morris set). Their only daughter died several years ago.

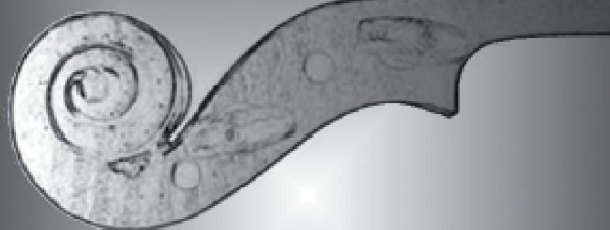
Most of the people involved in morris dancing

will not have met or be aware of Roy or the huge contribution he has made to our knowledge and understanding and the influence he has had throughout the morris fraternity. However, you can be sure that some part of the dances you perform and how you are performing them is a result of what he has said or written. His influence on The Morris Federation is more obvious, as it was his help and encouragement with Tubby, Betty and others that led to its existence. Despite his frailty, he made the effort to come to Bath in September to join the Federation for their 40th anniversary celebration.

Roy once commented that it was his Christian duty to introduce a little happiness into people's lives and he had chosen to do this through Morris dancing. He very much believed in the future and hoped to pass on his knowledge to be used and enjoyed by the generations to come. We must all thank Roy for all that he brought to the morris and be sure that we put it to good use in the future.

*Barry Honeysett*

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On Saturday there are four 1 1/2 hr workshops, with a session in the evening often with guest players.

Sunday follows the same pattern as Saturday. The course ending with a hot evening meal

Course material, (dots & MP3s) s are provided about a week before each course.

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See website has more details of courses, tutors, & diary dates, prices. Or just give us a ring.

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## CD Reviews

### And the ladies go dancing...

I'm rather partial to instrumental folk music, especially when it involves fiddles, boxes and pipe-work. Fortunately, this album features many such pieces, interspersed with the occasional song, which come together to celebrate traditions, the evolution of customs, and the passing of seasons.

It's a nicely balanced double CD, with most of its 43 tunes and songs taken from existing albums recorded by professional musicians and incredibly musically talented members of some very fortunate Morris teams. This gives it an active feel, as the songs move between rousing Morris tunes, some accompanied by the dancers and bells, and neatly recorded studio sets of beautiful harmonic melodies and voices.

It is especially pleasing to hear some incredibly good Rapper and Longsword calling-on songs and tune sets represented in more than just a passing way, as well as an excerpt from the Alderley Mummers.

There are so many good tunes, it would be hard to pick a favourite, but Pecsætan's 'Queen's Delight' coming to a close with an alternative verse to 'Bonny Green' brought a smile to my face. My only wish is that Pecsætan's cheeky sonnet could have been saved for or reprised at the very end of the second CD.

If you love Morris and a good dollop of Morris-folk, then get your hands on a copy. It's a fitting background to 40 years of the (Women's) Morris Federation.

Sam Ross

Available from the Morris Federation Treasurer

### All Mouth and Green Trousers, Sheffield City Morris

Sheffield City Morris, like The Morris Federation, celebrated their 40th anniversary in 2015. Sheffield City Morris started as a team that would be "young, fit and sexy". They may be down to just two out of three of these original aims but now they can add "talented and fun" to the team CV after putting together a CD as part of their birthday celebrations. And a very enjoyable album it is, too.

It starts, as you would expect if you've ever seen them perform, with Dave Eyre's Calling

On. The CD features a wide variety of songs and party pieces from a rousing rendition of a Sheffield carol to monologues and a French drinking song – always useful if you're dancing and drinking in France! There are also a couple of tune sets and a couple of tunes from their own Medup dance tradition. The final track is a stirring version of John Tams' Rolling Home, which they sing before heading home from a weekend away.



The CD package is enhanced by the added bonus of a Bill Tidy cartoon and their take on John Pasche's famous tongue and lips Rolling Stones

logo – all mouth and green trousers.

Sheffield City Morris would be delighted to sell you a copy of this cornucopia of delight: email them at [scmmshop@btinternet.com](mailto:scmmshop@btinternet.com).

Mike Everett

**Tired, worn-out, jaded, faded?**

If it's you, I can't help... but if it's your morris kit that needs a lift, contact Jenny for new

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Colin

I enjoyed reading the articles in the Autumn 2015 Newsletter, and thought I would write to let you know how Boughton Monchelsea Morris encourages audience participation.

If we are dancing on our own, without another Morris side, then in order to provide a breather, apart from allowing the Musicians to show their versatility by playing non-Morris tunes between dances (whilst the dancers recuperate), and splitting the side so that only half dance at a time (we have adapted our dances so that they can be performed by 4, 6 or 8), we then invite the audience to step closer.

The more timid, realising our ploy, will disappear at this point, but those remaining are encouraged to come forward and form lines. Our usual dance for those of all ages and abilities is Getting Upstairs, with hand clapping and simplified moves.

If after several more display Morris dances the audience remain, then we move on to Shepherds Hey. Looking at YouTube various other Morris sides use the same dances.

Our final joining in dance is normally used when we dance with another Morris side. As we are a Border side, we decided not to use Bonny Green Garters, but create one in our own style. This was several years in gestation, which finally happened after I heard our banjo & guitar player Mike Ballard playing a ragtime tune in the pub after practice.

As it was a nice upbeat tune, I asked him if he could adapt it for Melodeon. Once that was achieved the dancers then tried various moves, to see what fitted. My idea was for a dance that could be performed by Morris dancers as a display for an audience, yet could be shown to our guest side's dancers just once, and they would be able to join in. So the problem was keeping it simple enough to be taught quickly, yet complex enough to maintain enthusiasm to dance it.

So our dance Powder Rag was created. We

subsequently adapted it, changing the hey across the set into a circle left and right, for non Morris dancers. Full details of the moves and videos are shown on our website at [www.boughtonmorris.uwclub.net/page21.html](http://www.boughtonmorris.uwclub.net/page21.html)

Which raises a question for other sides, do they look to YouTube or other video sites for inspiration or ideas for new dances? As whilst when you are dancing out with other sides a move or dance might strike you, it's impossible to take down the notation and music, but easy to look it up afterwards.

Trevor Brooker

## Coming Events

### **Sarum Morris Annual Workshop.**

Three tutorial sessions in one day and a huge selection of homemade soups as well. **Sunday 21st Feb** in Coombe Bissett (5 miles south of Salisbury). Contact Richard Death for more details ([rndearth@hotmail.com](mailto:rndearth@hotmail.com))

### **2nd Halesworth Day of Dance**

Hosted by Oxblood Molly. **Saturday 12th March.** Applications by 14th Feb. to Zoe-Anne Wadey 32, The Avenue, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 8JB telephone: 01986 948532 email: [oxbloodmolly@gmail.com](mailto:oxbloodmolly@gmail.com) (Further details on p. 27)

### **J.M.O. Day of Dance, York**

**Saturday 23rd April** Hosted by Minster Strays Information has already gone out to all Federation sides.- see Fed website for details. Limited number of places so apply as soon as possible.

### **Letchworth Morris Men Day of Dance**

Open to members of the Ring, Federation and Open Morris. **Saturday 11th June 2016**, morning to early evening, starting and finishing in Letchworth Town Centre. Dancing in Letchworth in the morning as part of the Letchworth Festival. Lunch in a CAMRA award winning pub (included), coach tour of North Hertfordshire villages in the afternoon and return to Letchworth.

Cost - £20 per person, deposit of £10 per person. Limit - initially 50, but if there is demand a second coach trip will be arranged.

Please contact Andrew directly with expressions of interest. [harperandrew937@gmail.com](mailto:harperandrew937@gmail.com)



# Big Appalachian



Appalachian dance teams from around the north of England, along with their musicians, converged on Durham in late June for the first ever Big Appalachian

weekend, organised by local dance team Step this Way. We enjoyed a fantastic weekend, and really appreciated the warm hospitality of our hosts, in particular Janet Hutchinson and the rest of the Step this Way team.

The weekend started with a session of music and flat-footing at the rowing club, where the official campsite was. The main events kicked off at 10 a.m. Saturday morning on Durham's market square, with a packed 5-hour program of 15-minute slots. The participating teams were Clogging up the System from Berwick, the Bascom Kickers from Newcastle, the Bootleggers from Scunthorpe, Legs Levens from Levens (near Kendal), and Feet First from Chesterfield. Flat footers Dan, Jake and Zoë also gave



performances, and there was some great acapella singing and flat-footing from the Bascom Kickers.



In the evening, we reconvened at the rowing club for an energetic evening of dances. Expert caller and organiser Bert taught some contra dances and music was provided by a scratch band made up of musicians from the different teams.

On Sunday morning Julia Pollock of the Scunthorpe team the Bootleggers gave an excellent workshop in the John Duck pub, where the afternoon's performances also took place. Saturday's teams were joined by Fiddle 'n' Feet from Huddersfield.

All in all, it was a wonderful weekend. We all enjoyed the opportunity to meet other Appalachian dancers, to see other teams perform and be inspired by the range of styles and the different moves on show. We really appreciated the friendly, helpful attitude of Janet and the team, as well as all the hard work that must have been needed to put together such an excellent, well-organised program.



## MORRIS MATTERS



The journal of all things related to Morris - tunes, pictures, notation, historical stuff, views, reviews - published twice a year. Contributions always welcomed. Subscribe now to the address shown:

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## Recruiting in the Cathedral

Well almost ! Glory of the West were invited to join Exeter Morris Men in the Chapter House of Exeter Cathedral for a 'taster' session aimed at getting local people interested in morris.

Exeter MM's publicity officer, who came up with the idea, arranged extensive coverage in the local press and radio. To have a female side there as well made sense, since the advertising was not gender specific.

On the evening, about half a dozen 'new' people joined the twenty or so dancers & musicians from both sides. After an energetic evening most expressed an interest in following it up. One couple subsequently said they wished to dance together in the same team - but Glory & Exeter MM are single sex! They've been referred to a local mixed side.



## Paul White's Diary

Contact Paul at [pwhite420@btinternet.com](mailto:pwhite420@btinternet.com) and follow him on Twitter @morrisbells or Facebook

### Let's dance! 'Coz there's a lot of it about.

It happens when you go for a long walk, alone. Or when you enjoy a hot soak in the bath. Or – most likely in my case – when you sit in contemplative mood on the toilet for a fair spell. You come up with an idea. A great idea. Most times, your great idea comes to nought. But a recently-experienced YouTube moment brought back memories of one of my great ideas which has actually borne fruit.

Here's what happened. Something had been troubling me about a dance. But being new to morris I let it ride. Others knew best. Then, on a walk with Spencer - the would-be Rover – I mulled. As you do. And I came up with a solution to the thing that had been troubling me. Home I rushed and made a pot of tea, enough to provide a cup for all those members of our newly-formed morris side (Wreckers) who happened to be assembled in our cottage.

There was me and the foreman (Sally), the lead musician (Sally) and fellow founder member (Sally). Cuppa clasped, I outlined my problem: Evesham is an enjoyable dance but the staggered nature of two lines of dancers, sticking, leaves one on the end of each line flailing their stick in the air to no purpose. Hitting the ground is an option but it is an obvious compromise. It looks daft. How about we try curling the lines around to form two opposing circles? Result: everyone has someone to stick with.

Our foreman gave it some thought. And she thought it an idea with potential. The lead musician and fellow founder member agreed so, together, we worked on the moves. At the next Wreckers practice we gave the infant dance an airing, refined it a bit, and at the end of the session, Evesham Wheel was born. It turned out to be a great success because it's a dance with massive energy and which can involve as many dancers as you like. We were a big side so it was 'all up' and an impressive start to a set.

It's good to see that the dance is still in the Wreckers repertoire and they perform it with typical energy and enthusiasm.

But the point of this story is that the dance has travelled. Other sides now perform it. I was not aware of this until I was alerted to its presence on YouTube. Various performances, in fact, by Wreckers, Fox's Border and Styx of Stroud. Cat's Eye are in the mix, too.

And so a tradition is born. Many others can tell a similar tale – including the three individuals identified above whose dances now appear in the repertoire of many sides. Once these dances have passed from one side to another, and another, their origin is oft long forgotten; perhaps never known, understood or considered. There are dances I know to have been created by friends which have undergone a similar journey and about which a completely new, false, yet entertaining history has grown up.

It makes me think of times gone by. Of centuries past when a dancer might have suggested a subtle or dramatic change to a dance to make it easier, more vibrant or, perhaps, just different enough from the one danced in a neighbouring village to establish their own recognised version.

It demonstrates that morris is a living tradition. Innovation is happening all the time and all around. Border has thrown up all kinds of variants: steam punk and dark morris to name but two. Molly is gaining popularity and proving to be an impressive breeding ground for new, colourful and entertaining styles. North West boasts a number of sides that are thrilling to watch and are often the highlight of any gathering. Cotswold has been the breeding ground for many new sides with a youthful backbone which gives this grand tradition the verve and punch we know it can deliver. Other dance traditions such as rapper and long sword are enjoying an equally exciting period.

Perchance you are not an advocate of this new wave rolling through the morris and associated worlds. It has thrown up some very questionable dance styles and there are a lot of duff sides around, it has to be said. But what's to be done? The tradition lives. And long may it do so.

By the way. We have also created and performed a version of Evesham for three. Currently in the Turncoat repertoire, dubbed Threvesham. See it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqgoVY9MZ2g>



# Sompting Village Morris 2015 Ale

## hundreds of **MORRIS** ...by the Water

A celebration in colour and music of the traditional street dances of England.

**SHOREHAM TOWN**  
Saturday 18th July 10-4pm

**SHOREHAM AIRPORT**  
Sunday 19th July 11.30-1.00pm

Every 4 years SVM (West Sussex) host an Ale/party, and the location this time was Shoreham by Sea. This ancient seaside port proved a great venue for the 18 sides attending and we filled the town, with around 260 MORRIS.

As there was no suitable accommodation for these numbers, Adur & Worthing council assisted by funding a temporary campsite on the riverside recreation field with toilets, lighting and security. This was appreciated however the terms and conditions for authority involvement and funding were daunting. We in turn gave them one of the brightest most colourful festivals ever seen in the town. The various morris sides commented on how welcome they were made by the audience and what a brilliant dance location it was for a sunny weekend.

This year's Saturday night dress-up party theme, which is a longstanding Sompting Morris Ale tradition, was 'On the Water'. There was a special appearance by our local shanty team The Wellie Wailers, and 'spots' from many of the guests including

Boxhill Bedlam who even attempted a kayak jig in the river, which was interesting as the tide was quickly on the way out.

On Sunday we performed a mass display at the splendid Art Deco airport and the SVM 'dream team' of under 25s reminded most of us what we were like a few years ago. Each side was issued with a bucket with a challenge to collect the most for the Ale charity SAILABILITY, who offer sailing opportunities to the disabled. The final reckoning was a whopping £1326! These high profile events keep Morris in the public eye, and show what fun can be had when you strap on the bells. Hopefully it may even encourage new recruits. A big thanks to all the sides that supported us.

Going by the responses we have had from them, the council and the public, it was the best SVM Ale so far!

### MORE SVM STUFF

This year's events have included our spectacular Wassail and Summer Solstices, performances in Greece, attending four festivals, our 23 Wednesday night pub stands, as well as our Battle of the Conkers in October. Up and coming events in the SVM calendar still include Mummers over Xmas/New Year. Check out our website and facebook for loads more about SOMPTING VILLAGE MORRIS [www.somptingvillagemorris.org.uk](http://www.somptingvillagemorris.org.uk)



*Martin Frost 'Captain of Ale'*



# Morris Madness in the Asylum ...

Just over 21 years ago, in September 1994, a small group of men and women from Leyland in Lancashire met together to form the first Border Morris team in the north west of England. Stone the Crows Border Morris was born and the rest, they say, is history, with currently over 55 members, dancers and musicians. The name "Stone the Crows" gives rise to the distinctive bird-like costume, which, although unique, is still within the traditions of Morris from the Welsh borders. Some of the dances we perform are traditional, others are more contemporary and some written by members of the team, but still in the Border Morris style. Over the years we have danced at a variety of festivals, including Rebellion Punk Festival in Blackpool, appeared in short films and music videos, most recently starring in a Heavy Metal video for the band Ten Foot Wizard.



With our style of dancing and our team philosophy of inclusivity and to have a good time with as much energy and enthusiasm as we can muster, the team decided to approach our 21st birthday celebration planning in the same manner. A sub-committee was formed to discuss venue, dance spots, entertainment catering and any other ideas. "How about attempting to break a morris dancing world record?" was one of the suggestions put forward. Great idea, we thought. But how do we go about it? The Guinness Book of World Records was consulted, people contacted and the decision was made to attempt to break the world record for the largest number of morris dancers dancing the same dance in a defined, fenced off area. It had to be Tinnies Rabbit, the dance we usually teach to members of the public in our mass dance-out sessions. The

exact notation and steps were sent out to all participating teams to practise before the big day.

The plan was to hold a birthday weekend camp of dancing and partying between. The venue chosen was Whittingham social club and campsite, a few miles outside of Preston. The club and campsite are in the grounds of the recently demolished, former Whittingham 'asylum' hospital, which for years since its closure has been populated by hundreds of crows. A fitting venue indeed.

After months of planning, the weekend of the 5th to 7th September finally arrived. Many Crows were on hand on the Friday to welcome the teams who came to join us for the weekend. Briggate Morris, Clerical Error, Powderkegs and Wychwood all arrived enthusiastic and ready to party. Friday evening was mainly sorting out camping pitches and then a few drinks in the social club with the customary music session.

Saturday was the big day. Thankfully the weather was gloriously warm and sunny, as it was all weekend. Double decker buses were at the ready to take the teams into Preston centre, where we were joined by other local morris teams – Amounderness Ladies, Bollin Morris, Fylde Coast Cloggers, Leyland Morris Men, Mucky Mountains, Newburgh Morris, Rivington Morris, Royal Preston and Singleton Cloggers. Throughout the day all teams delighted the spectators with their different styles of dancing and performances.

As 4 o'clock approached, all teams made their way to Preston Flag Market, the large flagged



World record attempt



Clerical Error

area outside the Town Hall and Harris Art Gallery, where the area had been cordoned off by Preston council. No one





who wasn't dancing was allowed in or out of the space. Everything was carried out with military precision. The adjudicators from the Guinness Book of World Records arrived and took up their places, independent stewards were in place and the Lady Mayor of Preston, Councillor Margaret McManus came as the main independent verifier. Videographers were ready to record, including a recording being taken from above by a council member. The crowds gathered around the outskirts to watch and take photos. One by one, the morris dancers entered the area and took a numbered piece of purple ribbon that they pinned to their kits. We knew we had to beat 88 dancers, which was the number of dancers in the previously successful record attempt. So, you can imagine the cheer that went up from the teams when "89 ... 90 ... 91..." was announced over the PA system. Finally, the last dancer entered, a total of 144 morris dancers. All dancers formed into threes, with as many Crows as possible mixing in with the other dancers and everyone waited in silence, poised to start the dance. Following a countdown from the crowd, the music began. The dance had to be performed three times to last more than five minutes. All the sticking had to be in sync, all the dancing had to be precise. Some said later, it was the longest five minutes of their lives.

As soon as the final notes sounded a huge cheer and round of applause arose from the spectators and performers. We had done it. One by one the dancers left the arena, handing in their purple ribbons, which were counted by the Mayor and the principle representative from Guinness. All was verified as true and accurate. The attempt was complete.

The evening back at the campsite brought partying and frivolities with superb catering, including a Stone the Crows 21st Birthday cake and entertainment in the form of music and comedy from Biggles Wartime Band. Much fun was had by all.

Sunday brought more beautiful sunshine, with the teams performing at Leyland Vehicle Museum, then moving to Worden Park for a picnic lunch

and more dancing. Despite the heat of the afternoon sun, all teams kept up the excellent performances and enthusiasm throughout the weekend. The day was rounded off with Stone the Crows and friends, taking a ride around the park on the miniature railway. Who says Morris dancers don't live life in the fast lane?

Stone the Crows would like to thank all their friends from the other teams who came for the weekend or who came to help in the world record attempt. The video evidence has been submitted along with 29-page testimonies from each of the stewards. All we have to do now is wait for verification, which is due by the end of December. But despite what is decided, you are all record breakers. It was the best 21st birthday we could have wished for. Roll on our 50th.

## Lymington Carnival

Some photographs of the dancing kindly sent in by Hook Eagle (shown below in their Summer kit)



*Quayside Cloggies - dancing appropriately on the quay. Musicians all in same quay too !*



## ... and Scilly Roosters

Early September saw a flock of Rampant Roosters heading West with the ultimate destination of the Isles of Scilly.

Our trip was mainly to visit an ex-Rampant Rooster, Nancy Morton, who has now returned home to St Martin's. However, you cannot take a Morris side away on holiday without taking the opportunity – in fact every opportunity – to do some dancing. Particularly as there is no resident Morris side on any of the islands, so they are a very deprived part of the UK in Morris terms.

The first leg of our trip took us from Dorking to where we had arranged to dance with the Cornish Wreckers, Plymouth Morris Men and Plymouth Maids. All three sides made us extremely welcome at the Dolphin pub in the Barbican area of Plymouth where we enjoyed an excellent evening of stick breaking (musician's dodging flying wood at one point), hanky flicking and a cutlass wielding dance. The dancing was followed by a cracking music session in the pub, which was bursting at the seams with everyone enthusiastically joining in the singing and anyone with an instrument playing with great gusto.

After another overnight stop in Penzance we boarded Scillonian III early on Saturday morning. Under grey skies we sailed out on a choppy sea, past St. Michael's Mount and headed towards the open Atlantic.

Our Foreman, Sheila, never one to waste an opportunity, used the voyage to bring a few of our less regular dancers up to speed with one of our new dances – not an easy task on a moving deck!

By the time we docked at St. Martin's, having taken another smaller ferry from the main island of St. Mary's, the sun had come out, the sky was blue and the sea was the most amazing mix of blue, green and turquoise.

After a day travelling and a slightly choppy crossing we were glad we hadn't arranged to dance just then but used the time to settle in.

On Sunday we descended on the one and

only pub on St Martin's, The Seven Stones Inn, to dance for a large and very appreciative audience of local residents and holiday makers. After performing a selection of dances including Rooster's version of Highland Mary for 4, William and Nancy, Vandals and Young Collins, we persuaded some of the audience to join us to dance Upton Snodbury, taught by our Squire Niall Mitchell. They joined in and danced with great enthusiasm and some skill considering it was a first attempt for all of them.



In the evening we attended a ceilidh organised by the Morton family in the restaurant at Little Arthur Farm, where Roosters joined the talented Morton's and friends playing and singing until the wee small hours.

Monday was a non-dancing day to give everyone a chance to explore. Most of the group visited the island of Tresco and wandered around the beautiful gardens, home to native English Red Squirrels – which some of us were lucky enough to see. In the evening we had a barbecue on the beach, organised by two of our group who elected to stay and explore St. Martin's

By Tuesday, although the sun was still shining, the wind had freshened and we had an exhilarating boat ride across to St. Agnes where we danced at the Turks Head in front of another enthusiastic audience of holiday makers. They were slightly surprised to suddenly come across a group of loud, colourful morris dancers on an otherwise peaceful and serene island.

We thought we had lost one of our dancers, Jill, on this trip as she had walked across to an



adjacent island which is only accessible on foot at low tide. Unfortunately the tide was already coming in – fast – but she just made it back in time, without even getting her feet wet.

On Wednesday evening we had arranged to hold a Ceilidh dance for all comers in the local fish and chip shop. Yes, the fish and chip shop! They have a small hall at the side which they normally use as a restaurant but which doubles as a village hall for island events.

From the outset the audience of locals and holiday makers were keen to get on the floor and only needed a little encouragement from our caller, Niall, before they were enthusiastically leaping their way through some easy English and Scottish ceilidh dances. Music was supplied by our Morris musicians Stuart, Sheila and Jock, joined by a guest holiday maker on spoons and harmonica. The whole evening was like one big family party and is probably the best ceilidh dance we've ever been to. One lady in particular, on holiday from the Island of Lewis, was effusive in thanking us for bringing such unexpected fun and colour to her holiday.

We hadn't made any charge for the event but passed a bucket round at half time. The resulting collection totalled an impressive £175 which the Morton family topped up to £200 to be divided equally between the local Air Ambulance and Lifeboat – both essential services for the islanders.

On Thursday we split up during the day, some going across to St. Mary's to explore the island, particularly the charity shops! Others stayed on St. Martin's and enjoyed a walk followed by a particularly good cream tea before dancing again at the Seven Stones Inn in the evening.

Friday was our last day on the Islands and a last chance to take a walk around the spectacular coastline or along the beach. We spent the evening having a fantastic meal in the Little Arthur Cafe and Bistro at Little Arthur Farm.

On Saturday we said our goodbyes and boarded the little ferry to St. Mary's and then, once again, the Scillonian III to head back to the mainland. The voyage back was a little calmer than our journey out and we were accompanied for most

of the way by a large pod of common dolphins bow riding, skimming the waves and leaping right out of the water. As soon as the dolphins were spotted everyone on the boat turned into excited children – pointing out where they were surfacing and rushing from side to side of the boat to watch them.

It was a lovely end to a fantastic holiday. The Isles of Scilly are a beautiful part of the British Isles with wonderfully clear water, beaches that literally sparkle in the sunlight because the sand contains micre, and friendly people.

Roosters were very glad that we were able to bring "some extra colour, excitement, music and dance" to this outpost of the UK. We may have even inspired the local residents to form a Morris side of their own. Who knows we may soon have some Scilly Roosters!

## **MORRIS DATABASE UPDATE**

Over 18 months ago I first floated the idea of a morris dance database. In principle, the intention was to compile a fully searchable database of all dances performed under the broad heading of morris, particularly those devised since Bacon's 'Black Book', was published in the early 70s.

I knew what I wanted to do. I had given less thought to how the database might be used, and had only a sketchy idea of how such a database could be constructed and presented. I recognise my own limitations regarding computer technology!

Various people have offered suggestions and given advice on how one could move the whole thing forward from concept to reality. It could now be said to be in drawing-board stage - to set up a trial version with a small number of participating sides. There would be links to individual clubs' websites, the Fed, Ring & Open websites and other morris material on-line, where further information about a dance could be available.

I would be pleased to hear from any side interested in participating in the trial. In the first instance I would prefer sides performing their own dances in Cotswold or Border style. Please contact me at [bonnygreencolin@gmail.com](mailto:bonnygreencolin@gmail.com) - and thanks, in advance!

*Colin Andrews*

# Beyond Our Shores

*Four reports from UK sides that have travelled abroad, and an article from a side based in the Mediterranean*

## Cyprus Morris

came about largely by chance back in 2008.

A UK side came out here on a week's tour - organised by one of their former members who had moved over here to live - and on hearing about it I sort of invited myself to tag along as a musician. We'd fairly recently moved here ourselves, and the only bit of morris kit I had to hand was my melodeon, but off I went in civvies to do a bit of playing (I have to say I was made very welcome by the side in question). Now it happened that at one of the dance spots there was in the audience a couple who'd been involved in Morris in the UK; we got chatting, and it transpired they lived in a village very near to the one we'd settled in. Needless to say, by the end of the day the idea of forming a side in Cyprus had been floated, and later that year - November 10th, to be precise - the inaugural meeting was held in their garden.

It seemed there was enough interest to get a side up and running, and before too long we had found practice premises by courtesy of the village authorities and got started on a basic repertoire. By the nature of the ex-pat population in Cyprus we tend to be, as they say, "of a certain age", and initially there were only four of us with any prior experience of morris, but after only 7 or 8 months we did our first "spot" at a fund-raising event. In that time we'd gained a dozen or so recruits, designed and made kit (green, gold and white to reflect the colours of the Cyprus flag) and even got an illustrated article about us in one of Cyprus's national Sunday papers. Since then membership has remained



relatively stable at around 15, which we think is pretty good considering that we're recruiting from a very small proportion of a total national population of about half the size of Sheffield! In fact our dancers are spread over a fair distance, so we meet a little to the north of Limassol, which is fairly central, but even so some of them have an hour or more drive to get to practices (for those whose Cyprus geography is a little sketchy, it's about the size

of Devon and Cornwall put together). Members have come and gone, and we've been fortunate enough to attract regulars who've danced with other sides before moving to Cyprus as well as a few Cypriot members. We're constantly encouraged by the support and interest we get from the indigenous population, for whom traditional music and dance is such a prominent part of their culture; they, in turn, are constantly surprised that England has traditional music



and dance! In 2010 we played host to a visit by Jockey Men's Morris, from Birmingham, and this year we were pleased and proud to welcome Manchester Morris Men, who spent a week here as our guests as part of the celebration of their 85th anniversary year.

Cyprus Morris isn't quite like most other sides; when people ask us about repertoire the usual answer is "A bit of everything!". As we're the only side on the island we try to cover as wide a range of styles as we can. We do quite a bit of Cotswold, as that's what most people expect "morris" to be, but we also do a selection of Border and North-West dances as well as a bit of longsword. Also our season is different from the UK; it's simply too hot to dance in high summer,



so we take a complete break from both practice and performance during July and August. In fact two years ago we became probably the only morris side to be stopped from dancing by the British Army! We were appearing at the annual fête on Episkopi Garrison when the shade temperature hit 42° C and a "Code Red" order put an end to all physical activity. Our dance-outs are probably similar in some ways to those in the UK: fêtes, village festivals, charity events and so on. The concept of a "pub tour" is unknown here - largely owing to the lack of English village pubs! Many taverna owners, however, are happy for us to turn up for, say, Sunday lunch and entertain the customers - some of them even actually invite us! Rules in Cyprus on dancing out in public places are very strict - probably a hangover from its colonial past - though sometimes we'll be asked by a Municipality to dance; for instance we've become a regular sight in Ledra Street, Nicosia, dancing for Christmas Shoppers, and if we're (when I say "we" I mean our long-suffering Bagman, of course!) prepared to undertake a paperwork marathon we can on occasion get the all-clear to dance at one of Cyprus's many archaeological or historical sites. Having said that, we had wonderful co-operation from Limassol Municipality and the Department of Antiquities for MMM's visit, and an excellent time was had by all. We are also working on being involved in forthcoming events in Paphos, which is designated EU Capital of Culture for 2017.



Though Cyprus Morris is the only side currently active in Cyprus, there have been two others in the past. They were both forces-based, and when the interested parties were posted elsewhere the morris evaporated with them. We're the first

"civilian" side here, and the first of any kind for more than 30 years. We must be doing something right, as we have just passed our seventh birthday - hence the title of this article. If you're here on holiday you'll always be welcome to come and join us for a practice or a dance-out if there's one on the cards, and of course if you come to live here we'll be hunting you down. You can find out more about us at [www.cyprusmorris.net](http://www.cyprusmorris.net)

*Graham Spencer, Squire, Cyprus Morris*

## Staves in Bordeaux

Believe it or not, there was some sun this summer and extremely hot, but it was near Bordeaux, and that was where we from Somerset Morris took our toes and flew the flag for Angleterre and the Morris. Temperatures were in the high 30s when we performed at the Libourne Music Festival over Midsummer's weekend.

A panelled wooden stage had been laid over the cobbled main square for the benefit of the dancers, but every step, caper and hockle resounded around Place Able Surchamp like firecrackers. In spite of the belting sun in our faces, the distractions of ice cream stands, chocolate shops on every corner and flying ants determined to infiltrate our underwear, we danced with verve.

Following our performance, we took our places at the mayor's table for dinner and then joined the evening's disco, still in full kit. The locals loved it when two of our dancers took to the floor doing Belly Dancing to North African pop tunes. The side then got down to some serious boogieing, ribbons flying. However what really impressed the townsfolk the most was our innovation of fitting the steps of their traditional dances (bourrees and schottisches) to the beat of modern pop music. None of us were short of a dance partner for the entire evening.

The mayor and his office thanked us profusely for our enthusiastic participation in the entire weekend's events and expressed their wish to see us again when they were due to visit England in 2017. Our take on the entire trip? Magnifique. Du vin, du pain, du Kirtlingtin.

*Jane Amanda & Barbara Butler.  
Photograph by Kay Bush.*



# BLACK DOG BOLOGNESE

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Per info: Roberto 334 807 95 75, Ciro 333 25 13 259

Black Dog Molly were hosts, in October 2014, to a group from Bologna visiting Stoke on Trent for a weekend of dance and sightseeing, organised by music teacher and fluent Italian speaker, Lesley Hickman

Any language problems eased when the dancing began, on the morning of Friday 31st October at Blists Hill Victorian Village. In full kit we demonstrated our dances and the Italians showed us their lilting circle dances. We then joined in each other's dances before heading off to the pub or for fish and chips. Lesley hosted a party at her house in the evening.

On Saturday these visitors, actually from Faenza, famous for its porcelain, were interested to visit the historical Gladstone bottle-kiln factory at Longton, where they were joined by Domesday Morris for more dancing. Trentham Gardens provided an interesting venue in the afternoon. Everyone danced at a ceilidh on the Saturday evening and the following morning our guests began their journey back home.

The big surprise came when Black Dog Molly were invited to Italy for Easter weekend 2015. We didn't need to debate for long! Twelve of us decided to accept the invitation for a programme which promised trips, feasts and dances. For the flight from Manchester we wore our raggedy jackets; our masks and much be-badged waistcoats were confined to a suitcase in the hold. By 11 a.m. we were sporting our distinctive kit in the sunny squares of Bologna, where we had time to visit the cathedral and feast our eyes and bellies on local delicacies.

Faenza was our ultimate destination, where, thanks to Lesley's early help in sorting out accommodation, most of us were billeted in spacious farm houses. The area, near the foothills of the Apennines, is known for its fruit crops; all the fields are regimented with rows of peach, apricot, vines, persimmon and kiwi fruit trees - the largest kiwi fruit growing area in the world.

On Good Friday, in beautiful weather, we first visited La Cartiera, a small family pottery to

see a demonstration of the traditional Faenza porcelain in the making. After a delicious lunch and *il vino* in their restaurant, on we went to the town of Brisighella to see its ancient church and hill-top castle. The evening was for partying at Alberto & Monica's farm, with steaming hot pizzas baked in the brick oven and *il vino*! "I make the wine," said Lucio, one of our hosts. We played our music; Marina with Roberto Bucci played theirs, on violin and guitar - we all danced and sang right merrily.

Saturday was miserably wet for our visit to the market and shops of Faenza; we did our own thing. In the evening we were driven to the Grande Ballo where everyone danced, ate, drank *il vino* and laughed - three of our men were inveigled into taking part in a hilarious, sexily-naughty dance, recorded for posterity on YouTube. At the end of our 'Birds-a-Building' dance, our dancers laid Easter eggs which caused amusement.

We met up on Sunday for lunch at Monte Spada, in the hills, a centre for organic food. Dancing outside in the cold air from the mountains was no fun for the musicians but back inside there was dancing all afternoon with the amazing number of Italian friends that had turned up.



"You make bacon and eggs in England?" we had been asked, "We make your breakfast tomorrow!" That breakfast at Alberto & Monica's farm was something we'll probably never see the like of again; *il vino* at nine o'clock in the morning, smoking ribs, thick rashers of bacon, organic eggs scrambled with lardons, fresh salad, jellies, cake (a plain sponge which tasted very good dipped in *il vino*!). In the crisp air we walked to another farm where old farmyard implements were on display and ate more wine and cake in the sunshine. Our final performance was in Bologna where everyone applauded and we enjoyed being partnered by polite Italians for their popular folk dances.

Sadly, we had to say farewell to our untiring hosts by five-thirty on the Tuesday morning. We were fervent in our appreciation of their hospitality. We could not have been made more welcome and everyone was so pleasant. They admitted that, while their Pressapoco Band plays frequently, they don't have too many occasions when they all get together and enjoy themselves. We were grateful that they did it for us.

*Elizabeth Lister*



## Your contributions matter...

Please send written contributions in the following formats: .doc .docx .odt .pdf and images as: .jpg .tiff .gif .png .eps but make sure that your images are as high a resolution as possible and that they are sent as attachments, rather than embedded in text.

I cannot guarantee that everything will be printed, but everything will be read and acknowledged. Also remember, that as the Newsletter Editor, I have the right to edit, but I will consult with the originator of any submissions where changes are likely to be substantial. Just make sure that you own the right to publish any material that you send in.

*Sam*



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# North To Alaska

Reading through the exploits of Morris sides last summer in the last edition of Open Morris's 'Dancing On' made us realise that it would be worth sharing the AMAZING Morris escapade we were lucky enough to experience last year. We met Rant and Raven Morris, based in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1999 when they came to the UK and danced at Scarborough Fayre Morris Dance Festival hosted by Yorkshire Coast Morris. In 2013 they reciprocated by inviting Yorkshire Coast to their 20th anniversary celebrations in 2014. A group of dancers who were willing and able to go to the

event, assembled by John of Yorkshire Coast, morphed into a new Morris side - Ragged Robin Morris was born! Drawn from Locos in Motion, Yorkshire Coast, Mucky Mountains, and Minster Strays (with the addition of an extra musician) the side had two practice weekends focussing on Border dances and designed and made new kits before flying out on June 20th 2014 to the west coast of North America to join the festivities.

This however, was no run of the mill weekend of dance – oh no! We flew out

to either Seattle or Vancouver where we were met and wonderfully hosted by Vancouver Morris Men and Misty City Morris. We then travelled to Bellingham to embark on a ferry to travel for an amazing four and a half day voyage all the way up the Inside Passage of Alaska to Whittier. From Whittier we were met by a coach to take us through a tunnel under the mountains and along Turnagain Arm to Anchorage. At Anchorage all of the dancers from

the three visiting sides were hosted by Rant and Raven Morris and their friends and families for a wonderful weekend of dancing, singing, eating, drinking, sight-seeing and partying before tearful farewells were said at the end of the event on June 29th.

The scenery on the voyage and around Anchorage was unbelievable. It was mind-blowing to look

out from the boat to endless slopes of temperate rainforest, mountains, islands, glaciers, whales and dolphins and to know that there were almost no humans in the landscapes we passed. But it wasn't all horizon gazing and whale watching; an amazing programme of workshops, dancing, crafts, singing, talks and other activities were organised for us on the boat as well as some dance displays.



Meldenhall Glacier with Vancouver Morris

The dancing started on the quay at Bellingham and continued throughout the time we spent together. We docked at Ketchikan, Juneau and Yakutat on our way up to Whittier. At each of the ports we alighted and were transported to dance spots and to meet local people – all arranged in advance by Rant and Raven. At Yakutat we were joined by native Alaskan

Tinglit dancers. In Anchorage we danced in the city centre, at a huge Sunday market and also in Palmer.



We don't expect ever to do anything even similar to this amazing event. We made friends, learnt new songs and dances and took away something that was much more than the sum of the individual elements of the event. I still find it hard to believe that such a small group of people in Anchorage

managed to plan, organise and so successfully run the event. This is another chance to register our heartfelt thanks to them.



Ragged Robin Morris lives on. A number of us got together in September when Dawn and Chris Berg of Rant and Raven visited the UK, and we managed an evening's dancing in St Helens. We are dancing at Otley Folk Festival this year and are trying to plan a new adventure – but I think we all know

it will not have the big WOW that we were treated to in Alaska in 2014!

John Gorton (Yorkshire Coast Morris) and Sally Edmondson (Mucky Mountains Morris)

*This article first appeared in 'Dancing On' earlier in 2015*



# A Passage To India

*LUCKNOW: White costumes, ribbons running diagonally across the body's frame, rosettes adorning the sides, bells ringing enthusiastically to the feet's rhythm and a 12th-century dance that took Lucknow by surprise. More so, because 'Adderbury Morris Men', a nine-member dance group from United Kingdom, was performing for the first time for Lucknowites on Monday. This is how an article in The Times of India on 20th October 2015 introduces the Adderbury Morris Men tour of India In October 2015.*

What had started as a conversation over a few pints of Hooky in The Bell in Adderbury had become a reality. As guests of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations we performed at two auditoriums in Delhi and one in Lucknow. How were we received? Again an extract from the article in The Times of India makes that clear.

*Connecting with the audience, performers of the Morris dance used sticks cut out from willow trees, in steps similar to dandiya. Not just that, the way they swayed their handkerchiefs was reminiscent of our bhangra. Interestingly, they didn't include such steps to connect with*



*Indian audience; this is how this dance has been performed for centuries.*

Although we were only able to perform on the stage (for a variety of reasons dancing in the street would not have been a good idea) we tried to keep as true to a normal dance out as we could. We set the scene of a village in North Oxfordshire and performed a number of our dances, some tunes and some songs.

It was hot, dirty, and chaotic but everywhere we went we were greeted by curious and friendly locals who were keen to know where we were from, why we were there and welcoming us to India.

Would we go back? Of course!



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# Snippets

## Rumburgh Morris raises funds for Local Charity.

Every year Rumburgh Morris chooses a local charity to support and collect for during its dance-out season. For 2015 we chose the Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund, (HCNCF) which is raising funds for an Information & Support Centre, which will be built in Halesworth, Suffolk, and will be a drop-in centre for people who have been diagnosed with a life changing illness. They will be able to access help and support for themselves and their families.

To date HCNCF have ring-fenced £463,000



towards the new build, which is an amazing achievement for such a small charity, Rumburgh Morris are pleased and proud to have made our contribution of £1,100 to this worthy cause.

*Dave Pring, Deputy Squire, Rumburgh Morris*

## Eccleston Heritage Clog

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all teams, members and associates of the Morris Federation a Very Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for 2016. We hope to meet up with many of you during next year's festival season and are busy planning our performance calendar. On the back of our successful internal workshop held in January of this year at Moss Side Primary School, Leyland where our whole group enjoyed learning the Pat Tracey 'A' routine, now part of our repertoire, we are busy organising a second one aimed at the advanced dancers of our group, the Competition Hornpipe Steps led by Lynette Eldon on Sunday, 7th February 2016 at the school in Leyland. We are looking forward to this "one dance" workshop and are sure it will be; hard work, a challenge, we'll gain a 'sense of achievement', a chance to sit and socialise over lunch and mainly, fun too!

Anyone interested?

07895 670622 Lynda



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## Two new members for Maenads Morris

Congratulations to Anna and Christian Dunn and Jaqueline and Luke Anderson on the birth of Joshua and Faye during the summer.

Gift tankards were presented to Joshua and Faye welcoming them into our family

*Christine McAllen*



## Saffron Maids Ladies' North West Clog Morris Team 1993-2015

In 1993 a small group of ladies in Cornwall, were watching some North-west Morris dancers outside a local pub near Bodmin when one of them announced, "I'd like to do that." "Well let's do it," said the others and so they did. Three of those originals would still be dancing if it were not for the dwindling numbers. Sadly, membership

which has waxed and waned for 22 years has waned its last and the Saffron Maids have had to call it a day and put away their clogs.

We've had some good times and made permanent friendships. Mostly our dancing has been local - at fetes, festivals, parties, birthdays and once at a funeral - and of course some outside the pubs and on Cornish quaysides during the summer months. We've danced amongst castle ruins and



on top of St Michael's Mount, in residential homes and once in a library! We've all loved our dancing years. Our musician has stayed with us nearly all that time; her fiddle sometimes accompanied by other instruments, most notably a cellist in a Mexican poncho. We've tried to involve others, especially children, on our outings, with a few Cornish dances as well as the Morris. They were always keen but not many ended up joining us. So this is the end. Farewell and good dancing to you all.



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## What's in a name?

Can you help us give the Morris Federation's Newsletter a name?

Suggest the best and your team could be on the cover of the new-look newsletter coming in 2016.

Try looking for a name that reflects the content of the newsletter, but don't be afraid to get a little playful.

No good at puns? A straight-forward name idea would be just as welcome.

**Send your suggestions to:**  
[newsletter@morrisfed.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@morrisfed.org.uk)  
**by Friday 22 January 2016.**

And don't forget to tell us which team you dance with.





# Halesworth Day of Dance

Traditions have to start somewhere, and 2015 saw the first ever Halesworth day of Dance where 15 Morris, Molly and Rapper sides descended on the pretty Suffolk town of Halesworth in celebration of ten years (allegedly) of Oxblood Molly.

The day was well supported by the local community, the Scouts provided stewards and indoor camping, the local primary school, Edgar Sewter, provided parking on their playground and even the local community bus ran dancers between venues.

The day started with breakfast at Tilly's 1920 cafe, followed by four mass dances in the market square. The Cotswolds teams danced Vandals of Hammerwich, Northwest clog: Carr Lodge polka, Border sides provided White Ladies Aston and the host side, Oxblood opened with their signature broom dance.



Danegeld with Hoxon at the White Swan, photo by Alan Turner

The dance programme was expertly put together by Jan Robinson which made sure that all sides got a chance to dance with all sides, and all sides danced at all five venues, the local pubs, some of which provided BBQ and refreshments for the dancers.

All sides who remained at the end of the afternoon had a last chance individually to perform one last dance.

The event was slowly cooled down to a relaxing evening event at the rifle hall where each side provided some form of entertainment. There was ceilidh dancing, folk singing and even a sand dance which somehow included a camel!

Initially the event was to be a one off, but local businesses were so pleased that the town council has decided to support this as an annual event. The second Halesworth day of Dance will be on



Oxblood receive award for best Christmas Window Display March 12th 2016. It will include more central venues and will begin with a procession.

What our visitors said:

*What a fantastic day, thanks for all your efforts in making this happen, looking forward to next year?*

*That was a great event for the town.! Let's do it again next year.*

*Your Day of Dance in Halesworth yesterday was great fun and I trust you enjoyed it as much as Annie's Fantasies did!*

Due to popular demand, we shall be holding the second "Halesworth Day of Dance" on the 12th March 2016. Next year we are adding more centralised dance spots, and a procession.

The dancing will be from approximately 10 am until 4 pm, starting with a mass dance in the market square, followed by a parade through the thoroughfare which will drop off sides at their starting venues. There will also be an event in the evening, which we hope some of you will be able to stay for. The scout hut will be available for indoor camping, and also has room for some tents outside.

Please respond with contact details for your side at latest by 14th Feb. See p.10 for address etc.

*Zoe-Anne Wadey*



Border mass dance at Market Square, photo by Helen Fisher

## Literary Corner: Not The Day Job (short story)

It's 3.45, it's Friday and I'm coasting towards the weekend. I even risk a walk to the coffee machine, knowing with absolute certainty, that none of my team of financial advisers will stop me, for fear of jeopardising that most sacred routine of an early Friday finish. Sure enough, as I pass through the outer office, I observe a Mexican wave of ducking heads before me. Smiling to myself, and with a steaming cup of coffee in hand, I survey my workspace. Everything is filed neatly away, all outstanding documents have been submitted on time and I have a spotlessly clean and orderly desk. It's just the way I like it to be and the absolute polar opposite of me at the weekend. Peering out at my junior colleagues I wonder, not for the first time, what on earth they would think of me if they knew my secret. But, of course, it will never be revealed by me, I like to completely separate these two aspects of my life.

It's Saturday morning, my wife has taken our daughter out for their weekly shopping ritual and it's time to begin my preparations. First of all, I lay my outfit on the bed and check it over. It makes me smile when I see it; I've always been drawn to bright colours, the bolder the better-and this latest ensemble of mine doesn't disappoint. An excellent magazine article, I read recently, said that lime green is flattering for most complexions and hair colours but it's when it comes to the accessories that I really enjoy myself. Whoever said that 'less is more' really had no idea at all. I check myself over in our full-length mirror, making sure to hitch everything up into place and then I carefully retrieve my make-up box, which is tucked away at the back of the wardrobe. I'm always meticulous about my face. It's definitely worth taking that little bit more time to ensure my look stays in place all day. After all, it's important for my disguise and it just wouldn't do for it to slip.

A quick check of the clock in the hallway and I find, as usual, I'm running a little late. I like knowing that I can be late if I want, in fact, it's almost expected of me. My weekend activities don't follow the strict schedule that I have during the week and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Time at last to leave the house. I've been a resident on, the not very aptly named, Woodfield Close for twelve years now. It's a fairly ordinary cul-de-sac with, of course, no trees or pasture within a ten mile radius, but what appeals to me is the fact that my neighbours are a pretty broad minded and modern thinking bunch of people. They don't bat an eyelid now when I slip out of the front door in my weekend attire.

I drive speedily into town, my own car being of the utmost necessity. I did try the bus once and I have to say 'no way, never again!', I'm really not that brave. Thankfully though, these days there are lots more like me and we're gradually becoming more socially acceptable.

I park the car and make my way to the very centre of town. The cobbled market square is packed full of shoppers and quite a lot of them are wide eyed and staring but it doesn't bother me at all. I enjoy the long slow walk in amongst the crowd because here, no one knows me, and quite frankly, no one would recognise me anyway. I wander around and take a moment to absorb the full spectacle of eye catching colours, see the patterned faces, hear the absurd whooping, clapping and laughing and experience the absolute joy of being swept along with the infectious music.

I realise how very lucky I am to be part of this and how really very ordinary my life would be if I hadn't discovered the absolute pleasure of Molly dancing. It's my weekend escape to the other me.

*Angela Hind, Belfagan Women's Morris.*

*A story inspired by a dancer with Hornbeam Molly who were at our day of dance as part of the Georgian Fair in Cockermouth earlier this year.*



# NORTHFIELDS MORRIS - TO BATH AND BEYOND

It was only in September 2014 that the first members of Northfields Morris met in a community centre and despaired over ever learning the 'double step'.

Fortunately, our patient teacher Elsie persisted, and to our surprise within a few weeks we were foot-upping as if we had been doing it for years. And some of us were even coordinating our hands!

The inspiration for starting our Morris side came from Sophie D'Souza, following a conversation about how our family had seen sides dancing at the Kettlewell Morris Festival and how much we had enjoyed watching this continuation of an old English tradition.

The D'Souzas have been involved in folk for many years, so Sophie was able to offer us a teacher (her daughter Elsie, who dances with Sharp Morris and the Belles of London City), a fiddle player (her husband Nigel), two more members (her younger daughter and son) and someone to handle all the practical stuff – herself.

With all this family enthusiasm the idea was hard to resist and we were soon joined by other members, young and old(er).

Our first challenge was to find somewhere to rehearse that was inexpensive and available at a time to suit us all. In London. Fortunately, after much searching Sophie found that there was a local community centre that fitted the bill, and we were ready for our first rehearsal.

None of the participants had ever danced Morris before and apart from the D'Souzas, had no involvement in the folk world, so we were all pleased, and surprised, with our relative progress over the first few months.

Elsie then announced that she thought we were ready for our first Dance Out, which was

scheduled to take place in March 2015. Apart from our understandable nervousness that we weren't ready for public consumption this also caused some consternation as suddenly we needed costumes.



With a deadline looming we had first to choose our colours, ensuring we did not duplicate those of another London side, and settled on purple and red. Then Sophie, Vicki and Elsie spent every spare minute of the remaining weeks sewing: producing

beautiful baldrics, complete with rosettes for 10, and ribbon armbands for our musicians. And also visiting a local hazel wood to harvest sticks and then working to ensure they were the right length, and splinter free.

Fortunately, one of the first things that Sophie had done just after we started was to join the Morris Federation. They provided us with tremendous help, both practical - such as the bell pads they made for us at a much cheaper price than the leather alternative - and most importantly with invaluable advice. Sophie said "Melanie Barber was always at the end of the phone..... There was and is so much I don't know about Morris etiquette!"

The day of the first Dance Out came. We danced. People watched. Lots of them. They applauded. And they told us that they enjoyed it. So we posted photographs on our new website to prove it!

Buoyed by our initial success we went on to dance at a May Festival at the bluebell filled hazel wood where we had obtained our sticks and at a local fundraising barn dance. And then came the big one - our first visit to the Morris Federation Annual Day of Dance in Bath.

This was the real test. Our previous audiences had known very little, if anything, about Morris dancing, but this was different. We would be dancing alongside professionals, people who had

been dancing Morris for years. If we turned the wrong way in the hey, they would notice. If we mis-stepped a common figure, they would notice. We wanted to bring our banner proclaiming Northfields Morris and have the reverse side stating "Only Dancing Since September 2014"

Of course, everyone could not have been nicer. People commented on our diverse age range (12 to 50+ years with 60% of our dancers 18 & under), complimented our baldrics and appeared oblivious to our small errors. And we really felt part of the Morris community when, at the end of our last set of the day, the fabulous Garston Gallopers asked if we would like to perform a dance with them.

In November we have the opportunity to be ambassadors for Morris Dancing to the French

when we perform at the cultural evening held by the twinning association of Ealing (a suburb of London) for the delegation from Marcq en Baroeul. We have learnt some new dances from the rich Cotswold heritage and hope they will be suitably impressed by the vibrancy of this English tradition.

What more is there to say? For our first Dance Out we decided the best way to minimise the danger of looking unprofessional was to keep smiling, even if something went very wrong. That turned out to be easy, because we realised that we were having a really good time. We love dancing Morris: the music, the footing, the figures and all the people we have met who have helped make this first year so much fun.

*Pauline Gilbert*

*The Morris Federation were pleased to sponsor the side*

## And lots more from the Bath Day of Dance ...

Over the lunch break during the Day of Dance, there was a reception held at the Assembly Rooms to which all Morris Federation committee members, past and present were invited, together with a number of notable friends of the Federation. It was with regret that Roy Dommett was only able to meet up with some officers later in the day.

*Current committee: Colin Andrews, Fee Lock, Melanie Barber, Mike Everett, Jerry West, Jenny Everett*

*Presidents (in date order) Sally Wearing, Janet Dowling, John Bacon, Barry Goodman, Melanie Barber, & Federation friend, Lord Redesdale*



For those who were able to stay in Bath for the evening, the Assembly Rooms was also the venue for a lively ceilidh with All Blacked Up band.

A big vote of thanks to the host side, Mr Wilkins' Shilling, for the tremendous amount of hard work they put into organising the event, both beforehand and on the day, to make it such a success.

*Photographs on inside back cover: (From left to right, top to bottom) Priston Jubilee musician, Persephone, Heage Windmillers, Beetlecrushers, Bell's Angels, 2Step, Somerset Morris, Full Moon, Winkleigh, Chinewdre, Garston Gallopers, Chippenham, Belfagan, Bedfordshire Lace, Mockbeggar, Hips & Haws, Trigger the horse, Redbornstoke. Photographs on outside back cover: (left to right, top to bottom) Northfields, Masons Apron, Sally Wearing, Windsor, Berkshire Bedlam, Pigsty, Strictly Clog, Kettle Bridge Clog, Red Cuthberts, Hammersmith, Widders, Mr Wilkins' Shilling (hosts for the day), Shrewsbury Lasses, Treacle Eater Clog.*

*Photographs by Lucy Grist and Sam Ross*

*Apologies to those sides attending not shown in photographs : Belle D'Vain, Malmsbury, England's Glory, Ragged & Old.*







