

**Transcript of an interview with Sarah Henry of Half Moon Sword,
Sidmouth 1998**

MM

If you can start with a bit of background because I don't know how many of our readers will know of Half Moon.

SH

HM was founded at some time we have lost track of, lost in the mists of time we think it was around 1980 and it was started as a Longsword team. Deirdre Bialo-Padin was approached by another country dancer in New York who came up to her and said "We are going to have a Longsword team and you are going to teach it." Deirdre said "OK" and that was the beginning. I think the first dance they did was Ampleforth and then they learned Papa Stour at Pinewoods camp from Jim Morrison, who taught it there one summer.

In the fall of 1983 I moved back to New York. I had gone to college, which you call university, I had lived in New York and came back. In college I had been a member of a mixed Morris and Sword team called Newhaven Morris and Sword and learned Rapper and Longsword as well as Cotswold.

When I came back to New York I joined Half Moon and said that I would teach them Rapper. Some of them didn't know what Rapper was, some were a little hesitant because they had had a bad experience. They had been intimidated about doing Rapper by taking a Rapper class at Pinewoods with an Englishman who I will not name. But they consented so that is when we started to do Rapper. Since the Fall of 1983 we have been a Rapper as well as a Longsword team.

MM

So how did you learn the Rapper to be able to teach them?

SH

I learned from Newhaven Morris and Sword which was a mixed team of longstanding, quite a good team. But, I didn't want to bring them the same Rapper as we had done in Newhaven but I had learned bits and pieces of other things. Newhaven had experimented a lot. So, I tried to change some of the structure of the dance, you know, the basic vocabulary, the way we got into figures, the way we did the Nut. So it varied a little bit and I tried to choose different figures.

Over the years the Rapper has evolved by people learning figures in various places, at camps, every time we've come to England we have learned figures, written them down and incorporated some of them, and we have made up quite a few of our own. So our dance looks nothing like the Newhaven dance. Newhaven is also quite an innovative team and they have evolved in a completely different direction. When we started we all did bits and pieces from the recorded Rapper dances, we borrowed a little bit from North ??(Skelton) we borrowed a little bit from New Biggin and put them together and now its all gone.

MM

In the team you are a Cotswold dancer, are there any others?

SH

There are four of us who have danced with Ring o Bells. Deirdre was with Ring o Bells for a very long time. Yonina is still, I was and since I have two children I had to give up one team. Jan was in Ring o Bells briefly and there used to be more overlap between the teams. There's been a lot of turnover over the years so we have a back-members list that is quite lengthy and there used to be quite a lot of overlap. We have eleven officially on the roster now and four are or have been Cotswold dancers but the others came in other ways. When we do a procession sometimes they tell us we have to do Bonny Green Garters most of the team looks around and asks "What's that dance?"

MM

Just an incidental question for the background, have you got a Trophy cupboard?

SH

A Trophy cupboard?

MM

Well I know you won the Ritual Dance competition at Sidmouth.

SH

Yea, in '91 but that's the only kind of competition, we don't have any competitions in the US. Its rather a foreign idea to us.

MM

You've not come over to any here?

SH

No although they tried to twist our arms last year to submit a video entry to DERT but we declined. We had that Sidmouth cup for a year and we somehow sent it back. We were hesitant even about entering that because we don't quite get this competition thing. We were glad we did it and of course it was nice to win it. We were just glad we danced well and that they liked it. We worried about the reception of our dancing here though we have gotten over that by now.

MM

I suppose you weren't around when the kit was designed?

SH

No that was all set.

MM

And the Fooling, you used to have a different Fool when I first saw you.

SH

Susan and Jan have been our Fools for years and years. When we came in '91 Jan had just had a baby and she didn't come so Andy, who doesn't dance with the team any more stepped in for her. I don't know if that's who you are thinking of. Susan Evino years and years ago, she was very funny, she was a professional Fool actually, she used to have a company called If Every Fool. She teaches Nursery school also. She and Jan used to

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Fool then Susan Evino left and Susan Wallach came and they have been our Fools for a long time. But now Susan Wallach is married to an Englishman, Charlie (Mr Jorrocks)

MM

What about the hierarchy in the team?

SH

We always had no hierarchy officially, we are a creative anarchy but we finally decided we needed to have a Squire because we needed to have somebody who was the contact person and we needed to have someone who would make sure that everybody heard about everything. We always ran as kind of a collective and then we would show up at a tour and realise that somebody wasn't there because everybody thought someone else had called her. So we decided that we needed someone in charge so we made Susan Squire for life.

As far as practice goes, in effect the most forceful personalities prevail a lot of the time but we really run by concensus.

MM

I think that's the thing about Rapper really, you have to.

SH

We discuss a lot, too much, we don't have a Foreman or dance leader who says "This is what we are doing." We decide together. We have three or four of us who are quite opinionated. We get along really well, we never have a falling out about things but we tend to persuade the others. It really is a matter of persuasion.

MM

I tend to think this is the way women's groups tend to work.

SH

Yes, we all have to be OK about it "Is everyone OK about it?" Are we all alright about that?" "Can we all agree?" "Is everyone happy with the decision?"

I was living outside of New York City last year and the team went along just fine without me. They managed to carry on and dance well and all the rest.

MM

How many dancers do you have in the team?

SH

We have eleven on the roster officially. Nine are with us here. One didn't come because she just doesn't like to travel and the other didn't feel like she was really up to dancing in this venue yet. She is planning to come back when we get back.

MM

Not even the off-Arena places?

SH

Well it was her decision for various reasons and it was alright.

MM

So do you have two for each position, is that how it works?

SH

We have two Longsword dances and three Rappers and we roughly have two per position. We have three people who do no 4 and we have some people who float. I primarily dance no 1 but I do 5 in the dance with the Fools and I can fill in at the other places. Yonina also is very versatile. She is 3 primarily but she sometimes does 5 and she started out as a no2 so she can move around. Other people when pressed can switch positions in the Rapper. I think it is a good idea to learn more than one position, to have a primary position but to be familiar with the dance from other places.

MM

How long has it take you to develop five dances?

SH

I guess in a way it has taken us all this time. The history is that we had Papa Stour for a long time then we did North Skelton for a long time, that was our second Longsword dance. When we came in '91 we saw Carlisle do the Cumberland dance and we really liked it and we asked them could we do it. So we dropped North Skelton and picked up Cumberland in '91, that's seven years ago.

MM

They saw it the other day didn't they?

SH

They saw it two years ago in Scarborough.

The Rapper, we had one Rapper dance until '89 when we came to England. Then we learned a lot of figures so we made up a new one based on the English figures and we started calling it The English Dance and then we thought that wasn't quite right as it was all supposed to be English so we started calling it the New Rapper. So that was written basically in '89/90. We have kept that pretty much the same so we have the Old Rapper and the New Rapper but the New is nearly ten years old now.

The Foolish Dance we change regularly. We don't change the choreography so much as the roles that they play but we have actually changed the dance quite a lot also recently. We try to innovate on that. We try to make that now so that the dancers have an equal footing with the Fools. Susan and Jan are so funny they draw the audience away and we did any old figures, the dance wasn't that interesting. We have tried to pep up the dance so that we had a chance against them.

MM

Is that the only one that they fool in?

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SH

Yea, we call it The Foolish Dance but the Foolish Dance changes, we have had many generations of it. Every time we've come to England we've had a different dance. We change it once every two years, it takes about two years for it to really work then we change it. Now that Susan's going to be living in England we are going to have to figure out something else.

MM

Do you have any practice tips you can pass on, like how do you teach the stepping? Do you use videos or whatever?

SH

We did a bit of videoing this year, I think it is useful to see yourself on video but the practicality of it is so overwhelming. You think "this is a great idea" then you do it twice.

We have a lot (of tips) but I don't know where to start on that one. We spend a lot of time on stepping. We work on it very, very slowly at the beginning of practice and speed it up gradually. Just as a rule of thumb we try to work on two dances an evening, for two and a half hours. We will run everything but then we will focus in on one or two figures, we just work intensely on those two things for the whole period, for the whole hour and then we will run the whole thing through. What makes sword good is figuring out how to do it well not just working out where to go. We try to do that in our workshops too, to teach how to dance not just how the dance goes.

I think women have a challenge in any of this dance, particularly to figure out how to make it exciting, because the men have the virtue of being bigger and have more mass, they just throw themselves through and all they need is the weight. Also they have more upper body strength so they can get away with doing it just reckless and just carry off the excitement by the sheer physical force. We aspire to have that much energy but we can't get it from the same source.

We have to constantly battle against just concentrating on the polish because that is not the easy bit but it is the part that we understand, how to polish it to get it just right. We have to have the polish plus the drive but watching the guys today I see that we are finding substitutes for their shear momentum, by figuring out how to turn our bodies to make it quick, , the way a real dancer does, you know, using your head to make the turns quick, to define everything so you get the snap in it.

We work a lot on how we walk in the circle for example. Its not just the stepping but how we get from here to there. We work a lot on a really assertive heel toe walk, not to trudge, not to do flat footed or walk on the ball of your foot. Sometimes its hard for our Cotswold dancers because they are used to springing off the balls of their feet but in Sword I think you really need to have an aggressive heel step so that you drive. We call it driving the circle. We work on how to drive round, how in the circling to make the hilt point ring. I'm just talking about Rapper now, how to lean in, where to put your arm and work on how to put your shoulder in and your feet out so that it can spin fast.

One of the problems of Rapper, which is probably accentuated for women who are politer in the set is that you have to figure out how to move forward when there is somebody right in front of you. So you tend to take these little steps. You have to work out where to put your feet and we solve that somewhat by leaning our shoulders in and keeping our feet out so our feet are actually making a wider circle than our bodies. If you keep your feet directly under you it slows down to a little mincing, trudging thing. So if you lean your feet out and are off balance, you can't do it standing still, (*MM: you have to do it with four other people as well*) then your feet can almost run and you can get that really aggressive step.

We have started now with warm-ups, we do a lot of warm-ups and we get the Rapper music going and we run around the room with really aggressive movement and we kind of growl at each other, we warm up our attitude. We just kind of snarl at each other and get into Rapper mode. Longsword is a whole different thing, we have an attitude there too but its a subtler attitude.

An interesting thing in Sword dancing is that you always discover that there is more and more in it. Ever time we bring a new member on she asks a question that none of us know the answer to, even though we have been doing it for fifteen years. Its like an onion, you keep peeling it the layers away.

MM

What do you do about getting new members?

SH

We have auditions.

MM

Do you have a waiting list of people that want to join?

SH

We're not that popular. We do it every two years or so. We feel that after you have new members you need to be just the team for a while for the new members to coalesce. We do auditions as a workshop that are open to the general female community so that anyone can come and they don't have to feel that they are coming to audition but are coming to take a three week workshop. At the end of the workshop we invite however many people we want to join and its never been more than three.

MM

You must be limited really.

SH

We like to have a team of around twelve but if you get below ten its a waste because you can't have two sides up at practice. If you have twelve you usually have two teams up and you can all dance. We also have a height requirement, you have to be between 5'2" 5'6". We have actually squigged that down a bit for a couple of people. Then we look for people who seem like they will be able to dance well and that we will also get along with because you really have to in a sword team. Its different in a Cotswold team, its good in a Cotswold team but you're not attached to them so you can still do your dance. But if

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you're mad at someone who is holding your sword or who you don't like dancing with, you are so close to them, connected, that you have to have a feeling of team. We are a really good group right now, everyone really plugs nicely.

MM

Where do you dance when you are at home and how often?

SH

Venues? We practice every week from October through May on Thursday nights. For years we rented dance studios but now we have two members who are on the faculty at a school and Margaret is one of the dance instructors there so we use the dance studio at the school for free. Our biggest event of the year is our Sword Ale. We have a three day weekend in February, President's Day weekend. So we spend the whole Fall and Winter preparing for that. We have it from Friday night to Sunday afternoon and we have about twelve groups come. They often travel quite a way, we had one from California this year, from Texas. Minnesota has one. We've had two English groups come, East Saxon and Snark and Sallyport are coming this year.

We try to dance out on Thursday evenings in September and June though it doesn't always happen. Just dance on the streets. There's a Promenade like the Esplanade here (in Sidmouth) in Brooklyn, we like to dance there. July and August is too hot. Very few teams dance in July and August at all. Even June is too hot a lot of the time. We do some staged things, we're doing Christmas Revels this year which is a Folk production. We get invited sometimes to the Marlborough Ale.

We go to a festival outside of Boston in April NEFFA (New England Folk Festival). Before we started the Sword Ale that was the major place that you would see Sword dancing. Actually the thing that prompted us to start it was that we didn't actually know the other Sword dancers, you would just go and see their show at NEFFA, it was always in the cafeteria which had a horrible slippery floor and when the Sword dance was on everyone would come and see it and you would know that there were there these other people out there who were doing it and that they would be watching you. It was very high pressure and really uncomfortable and sort of miserable.

Susan Evino (who used to be our Fool) said why is it like that, why can't we meet these people and do something co-operative with them, because it became almost like a competition, we would all come out and see what the other teams were doing. It did seem uncomfortable, very nerve-racking. So it was her idea that then blossomed into the Sword Ale.

Originally we started with the idea of inviting teams to come and do dancing together and do workshops where we teach each other then it evolved into just partying and performing so there were no workshops. That has made NEFFA a much different experience because we all know each other and everybody's friends and can support each other.

MM

So you kind of invented the idea that you could be co-operative? I think the Rapper world here, although its competitive, is also very friendly and helpful.

SH

Well, you also have these events, even a competition can be that way because you actually came together for something. In NEFFA we didn't come together, it was a huge festival and we all just happened to be invited separately and there was no occasion for us to dance together. We didn't have a show with Sword one after another. Someone would have 15 minutes at 6.00 and you would have 15 minutes at noon

MM

You didn't get to do a pub tour first?

SH

No because there was no relationship between the teams so I think even a competition could do that because you all come together, then you have a party then you drink together. You just have something. The Sword Ale has called a lot of teams into existence, a lot of groups have formed to come to that so its really made a big difference to Sword dancing in the US. Although it seems to me that its in somewhat of an ebbing situation right now. A certain number of teams have dissolved and some are forming.

MM

Is that generally or is that specifically the Sword?

SH

Mainly sword I think. I think its on its way up again because new groups are forming but if we look at whose been there over the last thirteen years and a lot of good groups aren't dancing any more. Or they're not travelling or I don't know what.

MM

How many Sword teams do you reckon there are in the States?

SH

It depends on whether you count those that just do Sword, that's all they do or if its a Cotswold team that does Sword because a lot of Cotswold teams have done Sword dancing. We have about 12 come but there are about 25 or 30 groups that only do Sword. You could count it up because we have a listing. Then if you count Cotswold teams that have an occasional Longsword or Rapper side, it doubles it I guess. Its a big country so we don't know most of the people that do it.

MM

You don't have a country-wide organisation that people can belong to do you?

SH

People get listed by the Country Song and Dance Society , who have an annual listing of Folk dance groups, some of whom are affiliated . We are affiliated members of CDSS which means that we get the tax coverage and insurance. We pay a membership and get listed in their directory as a CDSS group. There is no organisation for Morris and Sword.

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MM

There are probably as many in the States as there are here then.

SH

I think there are more here.

MM

There can't be many more

SH

I might be exaggerating also! When I think about it, of the twelve that we invite, several of them are Cotswold sides also. I sort of double counted.

MM

What about the gender mix in terms of teams doing Sword?

SH

They are almost all mixed teams.

MM

So you are quite unusual being single sex?

SH

It didn't used to be that way but now its definitely gone in that direction. awomen's teams, there's us, Toronto, (I'm going to leave someone important out I'm sure) Charles River Rapper. Swift River, Mystic Garland. If you counted all the Sword dancers you would find more women than men. The mixed teams are predominantly women. There are very few all men's . There are more all men's Cotswold. People by necessity seem to make mixed teams because that's whose there.

Orion from Boston were at Scarborough, they are fantastic, they are a mixed team. You've never seen anything like their Longsword. Its a lot more women than men, there may be three men.

MM

You will have to send them over here.

SH

They would like to come. They were angling for an invitation this year but we were ahead of them. They are really good, you have never seen Longsword like they do it. It is astounding. Marlborough women do brilliant Longsword also but they only do it seasonally.

MM

What about the differences between the US Rapper and the UK Rapper? Do you see a stylistic difference?

SH

I don't know. There was an article in The Nut about this, that US and UK Rapper was different. I know our dances are different, but they are different from other US dances. We have gone a whole different direction with our Fooling. Partly its because we are a women's team. You are doing the same sort of thing. You have to invent something different because the traditional Tommy and Betty don't make any sense.

MM

It doesn't make any sense anyway but they are traditional.

SH

There is also something inherently funny in men cross-dressing. Its a cultural something that you understand. It doesn't work the other way round.

MM

Do you get Tommy and Betty in the States?

SH

Some, not Tommy but you see Bettys. There may be some Tommys. The Newhaven tem has a woman cross-dressing as a Tommy. She is very good and has an under-stated wry humour rather than belly-laughing. Susan and Jan do something different. They came out of theatre, all the people who have Fooled for us so they came in with a different approach, they didn't come from the Folk tradition. They took it in a different way that I never would have dreamed of. They didn't want to be there as hangers-on.

MM

I like the idea of a story running through it. One does wonder where the story came from though because it doesn't seem tie up with Rapper.

SH

Sure, I can tell you where the story came from. The pig we saw one day when we were on a tour. It was on a sidewalk in front of a toy store and we said "This would be a great prop", we just could see Susan with it. The original Pig Dance was Jan had the pig and Susan stole it, she was just a mischief maker. We wanted to make it a chase so that became the narrative.

The dance we came to England with last time was hysterically funny to American audiences and English audiences didn't think it was funny, we didn't get any laughs. It was much more tied into the dance. Susan and Jan were both musicians and Jan was a conductor and Susan was a real flighty character who became enthralled with the idea of entering the dance and Jan kept having to retrieve her. They used the instruments as props. In the middle of our trip we changed it, we kept the same story we just exaggerated it 20 times. We had them come on as a marching band, we had 4 musicians including the two fools. They did this huge raucous display, just overplaying it. It became a chase again, this time Jan was chasing Susan.

The reason we got the Butcher thing in was that we had the pig and we wanted to use it. When we got rid of the pig to do the musician dance all of our fans in the US said, "We

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want the pig". They kept calling for the pig so we thought we had to do a pig dance but we couldn't have the same story.

MM

What about the reaction that you have had from the UK teams?

SH

I think its changed over the years. Its almost 10 years since we came the first time. Its really shifted. For one thing, now women are doing Sword here. Thats a big difference. When we came in '89 all the men swore that there were no women's Sword teams. Women didn't do Rapper. But we had heard already that there were so we knew that not to be true. But they couldn't accept it. They figured they knew. Now they've all seen it so its different. When we came the first time we got a very cold reaction from some of the men who were really very hostile.

MM

Less than 10 years ago

SH

In '91, this is hearsay, I got it from someone else, when we taught the Rapper workshop here in '91 in this yard (Balfour Arms garden) We were told by sources that may or aay not be reliable that the usual Rapper crowd wasn't comming because it was women teaching. We didn't have any swords to teach them with because the people who usually came brought the swords and they weren't going to come so we used PVC strips. We were dancing here and somebody did come and sit a t a table with his back half to us with a notebook. We were given to understand that we were being boycotted but I don't know whether that is true or not. It was a wonderfull crowd, thay were terrific.

MM

You probably brought Rapper to a whole new set of people

SH

We had some wonderful booster though among the mey, who have been really supportive and thought what we were doing was great. It just divides. The first time we came the Captain of Hansworth said he loved our dancing. There have benn others who just didn't want to have anything to do with it. Now we may be in a different crowd because we are In the south.

MM

You're not in the heart of Rapper here.

SH

So I just haven't felt any of that antagonism this time.

MM

We feel we've been very supported.

SH

When we went up to Scarborough in 96 there were a couple of women's teams, now people are helping them. It does help being good.

MM

We ought to talk a bit more about the technical side. The Longsword, Papa Stour, how did that evolve?

Sh

We were taught by im Morrison at Pinewoods. There are several different schools of Papa Stour now, the way that it has been taught has changed over the years.

MM

Do Pinewoods run a Sword week?

SH

Pinewoods have an English week and an English/American week and either of those will often have Sword. So, we learned it from Jim Morrison as did a couple of other teams then we went in our own direction. We changed the opening of the dance recently. Usually you have a speech, each person comes out and does a little jig. If you do thwn in New York city one at a time, it takes 10 minutes to intriduce everybody, the audience is totally gone. You can't hold them.

MM

Most places would be the same

SH

So we had to shorten it so that we have the leader come on and do it then we do it two at a time. It has nothing to do with the way it is supposed to be done. We had to keep it snappy, moving on. Other than that we have'nt really changed anything except to work really intensely and find our way to do things. We've set some things like the directions of the tunnels and formalised some things that weren't and filled in gaps where there was room for interpretation but I don't think we deliberately changed anything.

MM

The surreal bit is where the sword gets put on the ground

SH

I like that. Its part of the dance, the dropped sword tunnel. Its the only Sword dance where we intensionally drop the sword. If we are in New York somebody is going to shout out "Hey, you dropped the sword". h are some decisions to be made like whether you step on it or not. I'm for stepping on it because it shows that its supposed to be there. I'm usually disrespecting the sword, nailing it into the ground but other people don't think it really suits our style and that we should just step up to it then dance away from it.

What else have we worked on? There are some things that are just a constant Nemesis for us. There is one little bit, it probably only lasts for three-quarters of a second, where you do the jump. The first time you all do it together and the second time you do it one at a time. Afterwards you are all twisted up and you have to untwist. The untwist I don't

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think even takes a second, well probably three seconds, to get that all together, we may die and still not have been able to get that all together.

MM

There is a look of fear on people's faces.

SH

I don't think anyone notices its not together but we would like it to be utterly synchronised. We've gotten it better. Its so three-dimensional, there are so many ways to go wrong in it. We work a lot on the jumps.

MM

And the walks?

SH

There are several different walks. You come on with a very quiet one. We work very hard in all our dances on presentaion. To present to the audience, eye contact, we don't smile in Papa Stour as we do in the Rapper. We work a lot on posture, hold the shoulders back and walk with a slight sway so that you are strutting, so that it becomes a real threat and it grips the audience. Even a kind of jeering audience hushes up because it says "Something important is going to happen here". We come on with a lot of confidence. Here comes Half Moon Sword. Then the walk changes when the music starts because its sort of a a driving walk, then when the tunnel starts its another walk, its a stamping. We try to get the walking, that s the basic thing you are doing in Sword dancing anyhow. There's stepping in Rapper but its not like Cotswold, you're not jumpinh, your not hopping you're just walking around.

MM

You've got to get the attention of the audience haven't you, while you are doing it.

SH

We try to do a lot of eye contact in the set also and eye contact in the audience. I found that really helpful in pubs here. We don't dance in pubs because we don't have them. We have bars and that's not the same. But sometimes you ahve a bit of a hostile audience in a pub hrer, rowdy and un-receptive. You can nail them with your eyes and pick them out one at a time they shut up one at a time because they've been singled out. So they've been invited in, in a way, and you kind of get them, in the Longsword or the Rapper.

MM

You talked about the stepping. With dancing there is always this great question about shoes. What do you do about shoes?

SH

We use Polish Navy shoes. Men's Polish Navy shoes. They are very hard to get and I don't know if we're going to be able to get them any more in small sizes. They have a steel shank up the middle, they're heavy. I think you have to wear men's shoes, but I feel the same way about Cotswold. I think its harder to do the moves well if you are wearing girls shoes. We do have a store in New Your that sells them in small sizes. It isn't a

proble for me but for the other women on the team who have small feet its harder to get shoes.

MM

I suppose we ought to ask about musicians as well. You have two fiddlea and a concertina.

SH

Micheal, my husband is our main musician and he's been with the team since '83. Jodie's been a substitute. Paul played for the team before '83 before we started doing Rapper. He was the original Pappa Stour musician. He also dance with Greenwich Morris Men and he'd been on and off as a musician. When I joined Michael came along steadily and then one the occasions when Michael couldn't make it for some reason we had invited Jodie who plays concertina. Then when we came two years ago, Jodie wanted to come and that was nice. Michael and Jodie play in several performing groups together, they are in a band together and they have a little duo, so they play a lot.

SH

Then, when we moved away last year we invited Paul to be the musician, so he was the musician while we were away. Then we moved back so now we have three. But it is very rare that we would come anywhere with three. Its usually one and maybe two. Since this is a big trip we've brought three and actually it turned out to be a good thing for some of these outdoor things to have a bit more volume. Its tricky to have two or three people playing for Sword, driving the speed, the tunes the whole thing. They have to watch and speed up and slow down. The concertina adds a whole lot of excitement to the dance that its hard to get from just the fiddle, like the Foolish Dance when it gets really raucous and rowdy. Jodie also plays washboard and kazoo.

MM

What are your impressions of Sidmouth? You've been before haven't you?

SH

Yea. This is the second time. Its so much fun and we're having a great time. The sun's shining today and we've even been having a good time dancing in the Arena stage which is something that's not really a Rapper or a Longsword venue and its very hard to follow all those big national groups with their costume changes and musicians, covering the stage. Dancing on a stage is never our favourite thing but I've been having fun there. So that's nice.

The informal dancing, that's what we really like. The point is to mix with the other groups. We were lucky. Because we were booked they treated us and gave us housing so we didn't have to bring tents from the States. We've been housed with the international teams and that's fun because we've made friends there. We've been leading this dual life, sometimes we're with the English Cotswold and Sword sides and sometimes we're in Eastern Europe. Its been very nice for us. We're aware that we're here instead of a UK side. But I guess this year they have Kestevan so they have two Sword sides. Its less pressure for us this time round because we feel much less that we are these American female interlopers.