

# Newsletter Autumn 2003



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(or not) at folk festivals  
**BATHAMPTON MORRIS MEN** 70 years young

The Morris Federation



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# EDITORIAL

*The Summer seems to have flown past at an alarming rate and Autumn has certainly arrived, with the MF AGM coming around at the end of the month.*

*This issue sees a lot of 'Team Talk'...that is, news from member sides. It's great to have an article from Inverkeithing Stepdancers, a new member team from Scotland, and also an article from a new Cotswold team, Pecsaetan. It was thought that a 'regional news' section would be a useful addition to the newsletter, so if you know what's happening in your region...or know someone that does...let me know!*

*There are 2 workshops planned for the Autumn, and 1 for the Spring 2004. Booking forms are included with the newsletter, so*

*please let Jean have your forms ASAP if you wish to attend one. If you have any ideas for workshops that you would like the Federation to organise in the future, please let Jean know.*

*This will be the last time that John and Adrian will contribute to the newsletter in their committee roles of President and Archive Officer. I would like to say, on behalf of all the members of the Morris Federation, a huge thank you for all the hard work that they have both put into the Federation over the past few years. All of us on the committee will really miss working with them. I hope that they will keep in touch with the Federation in the future, and of course contribute to the newsletter, and that they will receive a grand 'send off' at the AGM at the end of September.*

*Nicola*

**Printing**

**Next Issue**

**Front Cover Photograph**

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Winter 2003 (copy date 1<sup>st</sup> November 2003)

Powder Kegs (photo by: N. Rushton)

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

*To all Secretaries, Squires, Bag people, etc.*

### NEWSLETTER

One of the common complaints we get from the average Morris dancer in the street is that they know nothing about the Federation and what it is doing. Some don't even know if their side belongs. This usually turns out to be because the person in their side who receives the MF information (ie. YOU!) doesn't pass any of it on. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE don't be guilty of this. DON'T KEEP THE INFORMATION TO YOURSELF! Pass it round at practice, make a rota for who has the newsletter next....

### 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 £4.00 (inc.p&p) each. Please make cheques payable to 'The Morris Federation'.

### ADVERTISING

The MF will distribute enclosures with the Newsletter, or other circulars, and items of advertising relevant to commercial products. A fee is charged to the advertiser for this service. However, this should not be taken to mean that The Morris Federation necessarily endorses the product. Enquiries concerning any form of advertising through the MF should be addressed to the Newsletter Editor.

# President's Prologue

The end of the dancing season is almost upon us for many of the Federation teams – but I am sure that there are some dates still to cover. Even though we are all now very tired we must not lose sight of the fact that we must keep up our standards. We are ambassadors for the Morris Federation, and Morris dancing in general and the public judge us all by what they see.

The Federation has been very active during this quarter, our biggest success being with the Licensing Act 2003. We have certainly received a tremendous boost with the passing of the Act. We ran a vigorous campaign in conjunction with The Morris Ring and Open Morris, representing some 15,000 performers and the result was that Morris dancing and similar dancing is now exempt from any licensing. It was feared that the new licensing regulations would cause the demise of traditional dance, music and song as, not only would many pubs that received Morris dancers perhaps only once a year not obtain an entertainment licence (because of expense), but also dancing in hitherto unregulated public spaces would have been subject to licensing. We are however very conscious that Mummings, and music sessions after a performance, are not strictly covered under the exemption but we made strenuous efforts to include them. I am also very aware that some teams using fiddles and similar softly sounding instruments need some amplification but I am sure that Local Authorities are likely to be sympathetic to the need of our performances but the wording makes it very clear and discretion may not be an option.

Thanks must go to the efforts of individual Federation teams who wrote and lobbied their MP's. We are also very grateful to those Peers and MP's who spoke on our behalf and introduced the following glorious clause to the Act, which comes into force in 2004:

*Schedule 1, Part 2, Clause 11 states: "The provision of entertainment or entertainment facilities is not to be regarded as the provision of regulated entertainment for the purpose of this Act to the extent that it consists of the provision of (a) a performance of Morris dancing or any dancing of a similar nature or the performance of unamplified, live music as an integral part of such a performance, or (b) facilities for enabling persons to take part in entertainment of a description falling within paragraph (a)"*

This may be the first time in the history of England that Morris dancing has been written into an Act of Parliament.

I hope that you all, received by broadcast, e-mail or snail mail my letter with details of the above during August and the proposals to hold a Day of Dance with the other two Morris organisations in Trafalgar Square on 2 November 2003. I have received a tremendous

response from teams who are interested in taking part, but because numbers are limited it is inevitable that some of you will be disappointed that you will not be able to dance in Trafalgar Square itself and for this I am truly sorry. It is hoped that the press and media will be there together with Lord Redesdale who was instrumental in getting the clause added.

The relationship and co-operation between the three Morris organisations during this campaign has been tremendous and I do feel that we are very much closer now and understand stand each other's position better. We must continue this co-operation and work together for the future of the three organisations.

John Bacon – President

## Flaming Morris Needs YOU!

Musicians and dancers  
come and join us  
at the Village Hall in Feniton,  
near Honiton, Devon  
at 8.0 pm on the second, third and  
fourth Wednesday of each month.

We are a friendly mixed side dancing  
mainly in the Cotswold tradition, plus  
some stave dances and take part in  
many local events during the  
summer, practising in the Village Hall  
during the winter.

No experience necessary, everybody  
welcome!

Contact: Colin Payne, 01404-850503

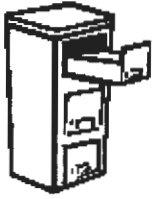
## WANTED!

### Dancers and musicians...

We enjoy dancing and entertaining  
whenever the opportunity arises, but  
unfortunately we are under great  
threat...if any of you out there are looking  
for a team to play for or dance with we  
really need YOU!

Contact: Lesley E 01909-770129  
Leslie R 01142-489503

Three Shires, Sheffield



# Archive Activity

## Internet Resources for Morris History

Apart from many sites dealing with contemporary aspects of the Morris, there are several of value to those with an interest in Morris history. This is not exhaustive, but a useful selection. The first suggestion is *An Introductory Bibliography on Morris Dancing*, which is an annotated bibliography based on the holdings of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library of the EFDSS by Mike Heaney. It is detailed and comprehensive and provides a good starting point for any study.

<http://www.efdss.org/library/morris.htm>

I have spent a fair bit of time looking at old photographs and films of Morris lately. I must acknowledge that most, if not all, such sites came to my notice through correspondents of the Morris Dance Discussion List (MDDL) at: <http://web.syr.edu/~hytelnet/mddl/>

Among the invaluable sources of information is Chris Brady, who provides many interesting items on his own web site at: <http://chrisbrady.itgo.com/>

It is an amazing eclectic mixture and includes: *English Clogging in Lancashire in the 1800/1900s*; *A Treatise on the THEORY and PRACTICE of DANCING*, Dublin (1810); *Morris Dancing & May-day Games*, Walford's Antiquarian, 1886; *The Pipe and Tabor* by Sir Francis Darwin, 1914 not to mention items on tall ships; broad gauge railways and Turkish baths, saunas & spas!

The main new collection of moving film comes from the Pathe News Archive. [www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com)

I have located 12 items including various types of Morris and Sword dancing going back to the 1920s. Clips on the site are low resolution, but can be bought (£10+vat per clip). I have ordered some on VHS tape, but have not yet received them, so cannot comment on the final quality. There are many other clips of folk dancing and customs from around the world.

Email me on [archive@morrisfed.org.uk](mailto:archive@morrisfed.org.uk) if you would like a list of items.

A great collection of still photographs is held by English Heritage at <http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/> and includes the work of Henry Taunt (1842-1922) an Oxford photographer whose work of Morris interest dates from about 1890. His collection of negatives, prints and other material was bought by Oxford City Library in 1924/5. Apart from many lovely photographs of towns, villages and the countryside, he took a set of photographs of the Chipping Campden Floral Festival around the turn of the century. This included photographs of D'arcy Ferris's Bidford Morris as well as (I assume) the local Chipping Campden Morris.

He also took a set at Headington Quarry including the quarry (so often ignored) as well as the Morris, of course. Take care when searching this site as the search engine does not seem to too clever. For example, Chipping Campden Floral Festival will return nothing, while Floral Festival, Chipping Campden returns 50 images. You need to search with a number of keywords to pick up all the Morris content, but certainly try *Headington*, *Chipping Campden*, apart from *Morris*. Maybe someone can make it work better and let me know how.

It is quite possible to print small copies straight from the web site as well as buying enlargements from English Heritage at £13 a shot for 10 x 8" reproductions. I am grateful to an old friend for pointing out that the pale fore-ground in many of these photos resulted from the nature of early photographic emulsions. These did not respond as well to grass-green as other colours and so made the ground appear pale. Later, panchromatic black and white emulsions overcame this.

Duncan Broomhead of Adlington Morris Men pointed out a more economical site that has recently been made available by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council at: <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/history/archive.php3> (mainly in and around Ashton-Under-Lyne). It includes some old pictures of North West (what else in that area) in the 1920s and 1930s as well as some Cotswold and sword (from the later in the century). The earlier photographs are mainly (allegedly) of Godley Hill Morris Dancers.

The most modern image is a colour picture postcard of Ashton that shows "*Park Bridge showing River*

*Medlock, Mossley Clog Dancers and remains of Cotton Mill*". Alas, this description is inaccurate, as are several, since the team sports a banner bearing the name *Milltown Cloggies!* Another amusing error reads: "*Morris Dancers performing the 'Rap a Sword' dance outside the old Ashton-under-Lyne, Swimming Baths in Chester Square. The fiddler (sic) on the right is Stan Riley*". One photo is of a fiddler and is credited to the ubiquitous Godley Hill Morris Dancers, but looks remarkably like Sam Bennett of Ilmington (a true Cotswold chap). Well, it is cheap and the photos are there for all to see. I have bought all for the Archive. They seemed to be a bargain.

The Corbis collection is really a commercial site at: <http://pro.corbis.com/>

It does have a quite a few Morris pictures, mostly contemporary. I imagine that some are American as well as British teams there (British skies are rarely so blue!). Some are really excellent photographs, but my attempt at costing one came out at £110 a copy! It is worth a look to see if you can spot yourself. Again, some prints of modest resolution can be downloaded, including an old picture of some Bampton dancers (I believe) in a procession in Hyde Park, London in about 1930 [CA005052 (RM) *Morris Dancers Participate in a Folk Dance Parade Through Hyde Park: Photographer: E.O. Hoppe*]. There is also an even older looking one of some Esperance dancers in London from the Hulton-Deutsch collection [HU001111 (RM)] entitled *Crowd Watch Morris Dancers, A crowd of people watch the Esperance Moris (sic) Dancers performing*. [Date Photographed: May 1909]. The search engine is rather better than the English Heritage one, but is capable of throwing up some surprises. Try: *Morris dance\** and enjoy the medley of images!

As is the way with so many sites, looking at these via a modem and landline is a slow, frustrating business. They are best viewed via broadband or those nice ultra-rapid network connections that some kind employers provide. Don't get caught in work time and then blame me, though! If you do find more interesting sites, please let me know.

*Adrian Williams, Archive Officer*



Photographs: Top to bottom and left to right: Godley Hill Morris (Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council), Sam Bennett (Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council), Chipping Campden Floral Festival (English Heritage), Esperance Dancers (Corbis), Bampton Morris (Corbis), Headington Quarry Morris (English Heritage).

## Bathampton Morris Men

are celebrating their 70th anniversary next year and they are attempting to contact all their former members so that they can take part in the festivities.

There are currently more than 50 former members that they have lost touch with completely. It's highly likely that some of these men went on to dance with other sides.

The list is printed below - if you have any information you can offer about any of the names, please contact the Bathampton Bagman, Idris Roker, at: 85 High Street, Weston, Bath BA1 4DD, U.K, tel. 01225 315660, email: bagman@bathampton-morris-men.org.uk or enter the details on their website at: <http://www.bathampton-morris-men.org.uk/7olink.html>.

Chris Allen, Arthur Ayre, Bi Bailey, Bill Bence, Dave Berryman, John Booker, Bob Bradley, Steven Burrows, Greg Cejer, Anthony (Pru) Comer, Tony Cook, Joe Coutts, Brian Coward, John Dolman, Roy Dolman, Vic Ebdon, Richard Epps, Tony Farragher, Philip Freeman-Sayer, Philip Goatcher, Mike Gould, Lionel Gray, Arthur Green, Reg Hall, Ken Hansford, Ken Harrison, Brian Heaton, Billy Hobbs, Justin Holt, Shaun Hughes, 'Phred' Irving, Tony Jackson, Stue Lee, Will Lestrangle, Keith Lyons, Ken MacLeay, Dudley Netherwood, Malcolm Oakey, Francis Percy, Jim Reynolds, Tony Reynolds, Mike Rolls, Hugh Rooms, Bill Ruther, Rupert Simon, Robin Smith, Peter Staker, Dave Tomlin, Roy Stretton, Keith Walker, Nick Ward, Don (Willy) Williams, Ray Wilson, Richard Woodgate, Bob Woodhead.

## TRADITION

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## GLORISHEARS OF BRUMMAGEM WOMEN'S MORRIS

*GLORISHEARS CEILIDH*  
*WITH 'HEKETY'*

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November  
7.30 – 11.30pm  
at

'Welcome to the Ballroom', Aldridge

Tickets £6.00 (£3.00), £6.50 on the door

Contact Val – 0121-358 2502



# COMMITTEE NEWS

## Events...

A good line-up of workshops has been organised...Playing for Music, Fieldtown and Rapper...so book now to avoid disappointment. If you don't USE these great workshop opportunities you will LOSE them.

*Jean Smith, Events Officer*

## Newsletter...

Newsletter contributions are always welcomed. Particularly if they are accompanied by a photograph or two!

We are concerned that not everyone in your team is getting to see and read the newsletter. **Please ensure that you pass the newsletter around amongst your dancers and musicians.** I have included a summary sheet of the

newsletter this time. Please at least put this on display at your next practice.


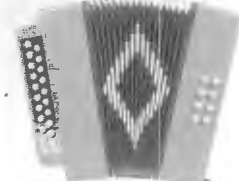
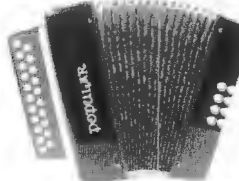
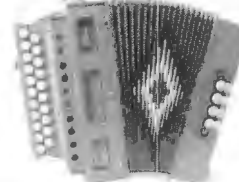
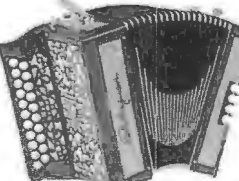
*Nicola Rushton, Newsletter Editor*

## Finance & Shop...

Reminder - Your registration forms for next year will be sent out mid-November, this enables members who wish their Public Liability Insurance to run consecutively to return the forms and subscription (£30 a team) to me by 1st January 2004. Any forms received later, insurance will commence on the date they are received by me.

I still have a good stock of goods in the shop.

*Rachel Pinkney, Treasurer*

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<p><b>www.hobgoblin.com</b>    <b>Post@hobgoblin.co.uk</b>  <b>MAIL ORDER - ☎0845 130 9500</b>    ☒P.O.Box 2522, Henfield, BN5 9SN</p> <p><b>BIRMINGHAM - 0121 772 7780</b>    <b>LONDON - 020 7323 9040</b>  The Custard Factory, B'ham, B9 4AA    24 Rathbone Place, London, W1T 1JA  <b>BRISTOL - 0117 929 0902</b>    <b>MANCHESTER - 0161 273 1000</b>  30 College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TB    123 Oxford Road, Manchester, M1 7DU  <b>CRAWLEY - 01293 515858</b>    <b>NOTTINGHAM - 0115 911 9440</b>  17 The Parade, Crawley, RH10 2DT    58 Derby Road, Nottingham, NG1 5FD  <b>LEEDS - 0113 245 3311</b>    <b>WADEBRIDGE - 01208 812230</b>  39 Call Lane, Leeds, LS1 7BT    Polmorla Walk, Wadebridge, PL27 7SF</p>	<h3>SERENELLINI</h3> <p>Serenellini make beautifully finished melodeons for us in Italy in a similar style to instruments sold by Saltarelle. A powerful sound and excellent value.</p> 
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# WORKSHOPS

## ***Fieldtown with Bert Cleaver***

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November and Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2003**

Ducklington Village Hall, Witney, Oxon

Bert, ex-Morris Ring squire, is well known for his expertise in this tradition.

The workshop will run from 10.30– 6.00 Saturday, 9.30 – 12.45 Sunday with an optional dance out in Leafield, the next village which is where the Fieldtown tradition has its roots.

Indoor camping is available at a small charge. Lunch is included on both days. The local pub will provide a good choice of evening meal at a reasonable price.

## ***Playing for Dancing***

***with Jerry West, John Watchman, Hook Eagles Band.***

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2003**

Venue to be confirmed – PLEASE NOTE – we are looking for a venue for this workshop...if you have one and are willing to host, please inform Jean ASAP.

A series of workshops to help improve the quality of the music. How to change a chord to lift the music, how to play with the dancing, how to add to the dancing. Come and find out how!

## ***Rapper Workshop***

***with Black Swan hosted by Whip the Cat Rapper, Nottingham.***

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2004**

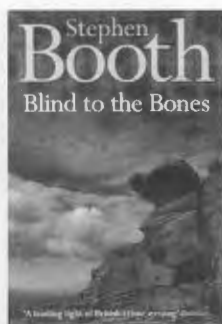
Hot off the success of their winning streak at DERT 2003 and performances at Sidmouth Festival the Morris Federation have booked this year's premier rapper team – Black Swan – to run a workshop early next year. If you haven't already seen them dance...then WHY NOT? They have stretched the boundaries of rapper to the extent of a DOUBLE FORWARD TUMBLE!!

Venue and further details to be confirmed.

*To secure a place on either workshop please complete and return enclosed booking form.*

*For more details email: [events@morrisfed.org.uk](mailto:events@morrisfed.org.uk)*

# Book Review



*Blind to the Bones* by  
Stephen Booth.

Harper Collins, £17.99 (Hardback - free if you ask nicely for a review copy), published 2003.

This is a murder mystery, set in and around Derbyshire, with much Morris content. I have never read this chap's work before, so I approached it without prejudice. I am glad (or should that be sad) to say that I did not identify any murderers early on. Plenty of red herrings lay about. It kept me busy during a fair few small of hours of insomnia.

What of the Morris and Folk content? It seems that *Black Pig Border* was the team from which much of the detail about Morris was derived. There are two ways of looking at it - from the eyes of the specialist and the non-specialist. The non-specialist should leave the book being pretty well educated about aspects of Morris, e.g. contrasts between Cotswold and Border. One snippet about

the parallel between Cotswold dancers and cricketers in whites echoed a comment on that subject that I heard Roy Dommett make a few years ago. In his case it was meant as a means of defusing criticisms apparently being made by some fundamentalist Christians about the allegedly pagan aspects of Morris. To the specialist (or me anyway), some parts rang hollow. The name of the main team was wrong, as it included the word *Border* and yet the team supposedly had continuity back to the C19<sup>th</sup>. The term was not around until the C20<sup>th</sup>! It is no more likely than a C19<sup>th</sup> team being called Windrush *Cotswold* Morris.

There was an interesting description of Well Dressing. It was a pity that it was set around the May Day Bank Holiday weekend and the display was supposed to include hydrangeas. It is hard to believe them growing in Derbyshire so early in the summer! Such features detract from that suspension of disbelief that is essential in good fiction.

These are, however, small negative points and overall Stephen Booth clearly has a sympathetic view of us in the Morris and those who maintain local customs. Should you buy it now? I'd wait for the paperback.

*Adrian Williams*

## MF AGM 2003 last minute REMINDER!

If you haven't received your booking form and information for the Morris Federation Day of Dance and AGM at the end of the month please contact the organisers, Iron Men and Severn Gilders: e-mail: fedagm@ironmenandseverngilders.org or phone: Chris on 01952 884269.

SANDRA

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

"Dear Ed..

I write in response to a number of items included in the Summer Newsletter, several of which are written by Trefor Owen. The theme returned to throughout the newsletter was that of the way we present ourselves as dancers and the image of Morris dancing more generally. In many ways, I accept the points made about the visible difference between sides who are meticulously presented and organised, and those who are less so. However, I feel moved to respond on a number of levels.

Firstly, on the issue of the public and press perception of Morris dancing, the fun poked at our tradition is something I have tended to view as simply a part of the package. Morris dancers are not the only group in society people like to have a laugh about without having any knowledge or understanding of it - I could name many others, but I'm sure readers will easily think of their own examples. I have never suffered malice because of this, although I admit to being cautious about at what point I disclose to people that I dance! Generally, once I do 'come out', I find people are slightly amused, intrigued, even a little in awe, especially because as a young woman, I do not fit the stereotyped idea people have of dancers. I take the jokes with a smile, talk with pride about what I do and try to encourage people to come along, to see or get involved in the tradition. I'm sure this is true of the majority of your readers. I was excited to read about the appearance of Dogrose Morris on television, but at the same time feel that if people can poke fun at Morris dancers when they can see sides such as this in action, perhaps they always will?

However, the main point I wish to raise is on the issue of our own responsibility in representing Morris dancing as a whole. Trefor mentioned the range of quality and style amongst the various sides. Where I would differ with Trefor is on the idea that this is a bad thing. I joined a Morris side after seeing them dance locally; they were loud, colourful and looked like they were enjoying themselves, the atmosphere was relaxed and jovial. I found this same atmosphere when I began to attend weekly practice and found that my young son and I were made welcome, despite having had no previous experience of the Morris world. I have gained an enormous amount from dancing, in terms of meeting lots of great people, extending my social life beyond anything I'd previously known (weekends away in beautiful parts of the world with great people and great entertainment, for little or no cost), as well as gaining a hobby I enjoy and take pride in. But this really is my point - it is a hobby, I do it (and many more like me) because I enjoy it. When I want to do something where maintaining standards and providing a quality service are paramount, I go to work!

I have respect for those sides who take attention to detail seriously, ensuring immaculate, matching kit and accurate, disciplined dancing. However, I do think there is room for all of us, including those sides who aren't so well organised (lateness or failure to attend I think is a different matter), don't have our kit starched, but do go out and give ourselves, and the public an enjoyable, even memorable experience. Perhaps not everyone admits it, but I can recall numerous occasions when I knew I had made mistakes, or felt we had not danced as well as we could have for some reason, only to be approached by members of the audience to

be complimented on what an entertaining show we put on, or to be invited back by the organisers who wish to make a regular feature of us. Many of the public audiences are looking less at military precision than at the spectacle of Morris dancers in their high street. And since I'm in a confessional mood, I'll admit as well that it was me who forgot her trousers at Scarborough and had to dance in stripy shorts all weekend. And maybe people did go off to write angry letters of complaint about it, but I can also say that I had many conversations with people who had seen us dance who wanted know more about what we doing, the origins of the tradition, of the kit, etc. None of them asked me why I was wearing shorts!

So, the point is taken. We all love to see those sides who are able to perform so fantastically well. I am sure they will continue to do this, despite the rest of us. (At this point, too, is it worth noting that these sides are often made up of young, very talented, enthusiastic performers - perhaps we need not worry just yet about the future of the tradition?) And I suppose it's fair to admit we can all name sides who are, shall we say, less well organised and presented. But I have to say that as I shamble on in my crumpled shirt and faded socks, I am proud to be part of keeping alive the folk tradition (and lets face, it many of those who have gone before us in ragged clothes and blackened faces probably didn't all have socks of matching shades), and am proud to share a platform with sides who take a different approach. Isn't there a danger that in trying to create an elite band of slick, professional Morris dancers, we actually limit, rather than broaden participation?

P.S. on the question of renaming the Morris Federation, my personal view is that it serves it's purpose well enough as it is. Plus of course, it takes Morris dancers years to adapt to a name change (e.g. 'The Spa' at Whitby, which I believe has actually been called 'The Pavilion' for years now!).

Stephanie Nesteruk, Ryknild Rabble"

\*\*\*\*\*

"Dear Ed..

Re your article about smart kit and in particular the question of where to get white trousers. I'd given up looking in charity shops and was just on the point of trying the women's section of the High St when desperation forced me to Google for "white trousers". Fortunately it came up trumps. I've just taken delivery of two pairs of painters' cotton drill trousers at £8.99 a pair plus a fiver postage and they're great. Totally white, loads of pockets (including velcroed mobile phone pocket), belt loops, zip fly, even a clip to hang your tankard on etc. White trousers don't come any more exciting than this! Check out [www.decoratingdirect.co.uk](http://www.decoratingdirect.co.uk). One tip though, be honest about your waist size, use a tape measure and order that size. In my case it turned out to be only one size above the size I admit to.

I don't believe I've just written a letter about white trousers but then I don't get out much as I dance with the Chanctonbury Ring cloggies! (New members please). I also play box for the darling Knots of May which is where the white trousers come in...Did I mention where I bought them?!...

Yours sadly, Kevin Lane"



# "Team Talk"

## Sompting Village Morris in Sunny Italy



Whilst Britain sweltered in a heat-wave, Sompting Village Morris dancers set off for their tour of Lake Garda in Italy. Twenty-five members of this West Sussex team, dancing in the Cotswold tradition, included a men's team, a ladies' team and a fine band of musicians. We had been invited by the British Consul and his wife, to appear at the local Arts Festival which takes place in different locations around the lake, during August.

On arriving at our destination, we discovered that our accommodation was in a religious training seminary in Maderna, within a few steps of the bathing beach and of a couple of welcoming bars. Our less than perfect grasp of the Italian language was soon increased by the addition of phrases such as 'bierra' for beer (the men) and 'gelato' for ice-cream (the ladies). The Italian hospitality was generous; the meals were delicious, and the priests and nuns at the seminary were fascinated by our display of traditional English dancing and by the bells, ribbons and bright colours of our costumes.

Our first performance was at the medieval hill town of Cecina, introduced by the British Consul, his wife and the festival organisers. This was where we knew we had to prove we were value for money; however the enthusiastic onlookers seemed delighted with our performance. Returning down the hillside we stopped for a glass of vino and an impromptu singsong at a trattoria, culminating in a performance of Houlican's Jig, which involved extensive participation from a young, sun-bronzed and attractive Italian audience. We all agreed that this seemed like an ideal way to promote Anglo-Italian relations.

Other dance-stands around Lake Garda included the ancient lemon-growing village of Limone, the moated castle town of Sirmione and the historical city of Brescia. Stages were set up and piazzas cleared for our performances, which were watched by audiences of holidaymakers from all over Europe. The only set-back occurred one evening when we discovered that the prepared stage was not as sturdy as had first appeared. At the first men's stick dance, cracks began to appear in the panelling, and when the ladies donned clogs for a North-West dance, chunks of the stage proceeded to give way beneath our feet. Luckily, repairs were soon effected, without any further damage to guests, property or dancers.

Our final performance, at Brescia was to a backdrop of ancient Roman ruins, something seen as an appropriate setting for many of our members after a week of sun, vino, beer and dancing. Tour leader, Don Terry, explained that the organisers of the festival, which had a World Arts theme, were delighted by the opportunity to present a display of old English cultural traditions. He thanked the Italian authorities for their generous welcome and hospitality, and he expressed the gratitude of the group for the privilege of being invited to dance at so many wonderful venues.

*Lyn Ford, Sompting Village Morris*

# "Team Talk"

## Maids of the Mill English Morris teams going Dutch

On September 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2003 the Maids of the Mill organise a weekend with spectacular Morris dance shows in and around Arnhem. Six English and two Dutch Morris sides will demonstrate English Morris dances accompanied by live music on harmonica, violin, flute and bass guitar. The dancers use sticks, handkerchiefs and rapper swords, dancing in different styles from traditional to gothic.

Ten enthusiastic and creative women team up as the Maids of the Mill from Utrecht, the only female Morris side on the continent. The weekend of September 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2003 the Maids of the Mill will make a tour along some tourist locations in the Dutch province Gelderland. Their guest teams are the men of the Utrecht Morris Team and the English Morris sides Hammersmith Morris Men (London), Kettlebridge Clogs (East Farleigh), Mad Jacks Morris (Hastings), Stone Monkey Sword (Nottingham) and Wolf's Head & Vixen Morris (Chatham).



along some tourist



Anyone interested in the age-old tradition of Morris dancing is very welcome to come and have a look. See for the programme [www.mwkwadraat.nl/mwmorris.html](http://www.mwkwadraat.nl/mwmorris.html) or call Era Copier (01348) 42 11 75 for more information.

*Renette Niekerk*, Maids of the Mill  
e-mail: [Renette.Niekerk@inter.NL.net](mailto:Renette.Niekerk@inter.NL.net)



# QUALITY CONTROLLED CAPERS?

Reading the recent comments from Rhiannon and Tefor Owen (*Spring Newsletter 2003*) on their attendance at the Festival Organisers Conference set me thinking about how we present Morris to the public. The festival organisers identified some problems with dancers, but can dancers identify problems with festivals?

First let's consider what festivals get from the dance elements of their package. Well if a link to EFDSS is part of the festival's justification then having dancers involved acknowledges what the "D" stands for. Then of course for many people in the festival's local area the dancers and their musicians are the most public perception of the festival's existence. The dance teams are the part of the festival that appears in the streets and so to most of the public that is the festival. So having dancers acts as publicity and can show sponsors that the area gets an attraction for visitors that justifies their sponsorship.

Just as an aside the "Living Tradition" magazine mentions an Arts Council report that calculates that 350 festivals in the UK generate spending of £77 million per year. A quick calculation based on the attendance figure quoted suggests that each festival attendee spends about £220. Or is that the tourists watching the dancers and spending money in the pubs, tea and gift shops? Two festivals are quoted as getting huge increases in funding as a result of their finders seeing the report. But it's not about money or is it?

Dance teams come cheap. Rarely any fee involved, no venue to pay for, no PA to hire. Maybe free tickets for the dancers but since they are out and about in the afternoon then they are not going to clog up afternoon events, and if they are doing ceilidh spots then that limits their attendance at evening events as

well. There may be some camping or accommodation costs but inviting local teams can keep this cost down. If a team does demand a better deal then that's not a problem since there are always other teams and some even volunteer to come and busk for free!

Dancers can also be a source of revenue. Since most dancers come with a partner or family then they will need tickets for the festival and even a discounted rate still generates income. Of course if the partner/family spend their time with the dancers then they will not get much use from the ticket – see above. Festivals can also generate income organising collections at the dance venues and if stewards are in short supply get the dancers to do it. Then why not get the team to do a workshop and add another event to the program? Might as well get your money's worth!

So what's the down side for the festival organiser? Well finding the teams can be a bit of problem. They don't have agents and quite often the last known contact name has left the team or is no longer the squire/bagman/secretary. Getting confirmation that they will turn up can be a headache. Even if they do say they will be appearing injuries and other assorted dramas can make this subject to last minute cancellations.

When they do turn up a carefully planned dance schedule can be quickly reduced to chaos. Teams decide the venues are wrong, or they don't want to dance with the other teams on their tour, or they enjoy the company of the teams they are with so much that they prefer to stay in the pub rather than actually get out and dance. All in all dancers can be a nightmare.

So what do the dancers get out of festivals? Well the opportunity to perform in front of bigger crowds at an event with decent publicity is one plus point. Getting to meet and see other teams in action is another. A free festival ticket and accommodation can be a plus point – if the dancer happens to be a "folkie".

What's the down side for dancers? Being handed a list of venues in a strange town and

left to find your own way around. Finding that the teams you are scheduled to perform with have pulled out or have decided to “do their own thing”. Finding the venue you are scheduled to perform at is occupied by a busking side or one of the “do your own thing” sides. Finding that the teams you are scheduled to perform dance the same tradition as your own side so the public will see an hour of unremitting North-West or a dozen variations of the Border stick dance. Finding the venues are the size of postage stamps, or have a 30% gradient or block a street or pavement and no one told the police/shopkeepers/delivery drivers. Finding the schedule assumes that dancers do not eat or drink and can tele-port between venues. The list could go on.

So is there an answer? The best festivals I have had dealings with show that there is. First the festival organisers. Get a dancer to organise the dance elements of the festival. Don't just ask the same sides every year. Look for variety and quality in the presentation. Support the dance teams with stewards who know what they are doing and are up to speed on locations and permits. Acknowledge the fact that dancers and their musicians put in hours of time and effort to produce their

performances and you will get the best out of their contribution to the festival.

And the dancers? Treat the festival as a professional engagement. The best organisers put in as much time and effort as you do and for little reward. Be as efficient as you can in dealing with the organisers. They need to get out publicity and plan events well in advance so don't keep them hanging round whilst you try to get a team together. Better to say “Not this year but maybe next” rather than say yes then drop out at the last moment.

When you get to the festival sort out the times and places and let the whole team know what's happening. When you get to a venue work with any other teams to give a varied and continuous display. Keep the crowd engaged and informed, remember they might assume the programme of events is fact rather than a loose basis for negotiation.

If things go wrong save the tantrums for later, arguments with organisers, stewards, other teams, your own team or even the public when held in public do not help the image. And if the image you want is of the historic “wild and riotous” variety remember that more often than

not these reported wild antics coincided with the banning of the festival or event in question.

Final point. The bottom line for performance is “Did the spectators enjoy it?” If they did then you must have – the reverse is not always true. Do I enjoy festivals? Of course I do. Who do I aim to please, my own side, the public, other teams or organisers? All of the above and probably in that order.

*Doug Bradshaw*

**THE BANG ON THE WALL BAND**



*Present*

***At Ceilidh Dance***  
*With caller Jim Reynolds*

**8pm Saturday 11th October**  
**The Linford, Newton Linford**  
(2 miles from M1 Jet 22)  
**Tickets £5 each**

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 Email : [phil@bangonthewall.com](mailto:phil@bangonthewall.com)  
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# "Team Talk"

## Slubbing Billy's



Slubbing Billy's have been wittering for a long time about "going abroad". I have only been dancing with them for 4 or 5 years, but have been roped into organising the transportation element of our famous weekends for at least three of those years, so it sort of naturally fell to me to have a go when the occasion presented itself.

Last year, we were invited by our good friends Wolf's Head and Vixen, to an event loosely based around trundling a trolley with a barrel of beer in, round a carpark, along with

sleeping in an old fort dug deep into the chalk hills of Chatham, drinking huge quantities of beer, dressing up for and watching the Rocky Horror Show, and of course, the odd bit of dancing. Also there, were the Maids of the Mill, a ladies Cotswold Side from Utrecht, Holland. We decided to invite ourselves for a weekend. Fortunately for us, the Maids were enthusiastic about the idea and volunteered to organise where to go and where to dance, if we sorted our transport, accommodation and food. A phone call to our other good friends, Poacher, got them interested and so the organising began.

I was amazed how easy it was. The internet gave us the addresses of Youth Hostels near Utrecht, our local travel agent booked the ferry (free coach and driver), and through the yellow pages of Newark (courtesy of my sister-in-law), we sorted a coach firm who picked up Poacher from Lincoln then us from Huddersfield and took us to Hull. The coach stayed with us for the weekend at our disposal, with our Dutch guides Arnold (from Utrecht Morris who rapidly was nicknamed Wallace which of course made our driver Grommit) and Joyce (from Maids of the Mill), directing us where to go, park, dance etc.

We sailed on the Friday and returned on the Wednesday morning back in Hull. Our hosts had arranged a full dancing programme for the Saturday (our first day after getting up at 6.15 Dutch time) which also included a brewery trip. Sunday was also action packed including, for those so minded, being able to climb the highest church tower in Holland (437 steps). Monday was a free day, taking advantage of the coach to go sight seeing. Saturday, we (Slubbing Billy's and Poacher) danced with the Maids of the Mill, and on only their second dance out, Cobwebs and Broomsticks; a young Border side, spawned from Slubbing Billy's, in the Gothic Border tradition.

On Sunday, we were joined by Utrecht Morris and the Maids, dancing round the old town of Utrecht. In the evening, Slubbing Billy's arranged for a large room (the dining room) at the hostel for some Dutch dancing and some Ceilidh dancing, not forgetting an unbelievable rendition of the Robin Hood Mumming play. Monday evening, after sight seeing, found us in a pancake restaurant in Utrecht with our hosts and friends. On Tuesday, our final day, Wallace and Joyce guided us to

three lovely towns including Gouda, to dance, until we had to make our way to Rotterdam and the ferry home.

Several things stand out in my memory from the weekend: The coach company Travel Wright, from Newark (check out their website). Not only were they much cheaper than anyone else I tried (£1850 Fri-Wed), but they sent a dancer as driver. Grommit (real name Alex) dances with a Cotswold side, but has also done some Border, and he is good. We made sure that by the time we finished, that he had also added North West to his repertoire. Obviously, a firm to recommend. I believe Wolf's Head and Vixen are making inquiries to use them for their trip to Holland in the Autumn. Accommodation was basic. Dormitory, and plain simple food. However, we used the packed lunch service (they leave extra bread, cheese, ham plus bags with drinks and fruit in) to avoid everyone rushing off at lunch times, thus avoiding dancing or drinking. The crowds. Everyone was enthusiastic and spoke very good English. Whenever we danced, within minutes, there were lots and lots of people watching. As said earlier, it was easy. Made so, of course, by the hard work that had been done by Wallace and Joyce in getting the permits sorted out and an itinerary and programme.

We all had a brilliant time, even managing to have a bit of a music session on the ferry on the way over (speak to the entertainment manager first). The cost, plus food on the boat and 2 evening meals plus lunch in Amsterdam, was £175 per person (hostel accommodation, breakfast, lunches, transport, ferry crossing inc cabins).

Since we arrived back in England, I believe that Poacher have now "poached" Alex (aka Grommit) from the Cotswold side to dance with them. Lastly, but not least, a big thank you to Joyce and Maids of the Mill and Arnold and Utrecht Morris. PS If any side would like any further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch (a.bywaters@virgin.net) .



## Alternative Front Cover Photo!

This wonderful photo of Patrick Luke (aged 12) leap-frogging Adrian Williams, narrowly missed out on being the front cover photo. It was taken at Bridgnorth Folk Festival over the Bank Holiday weekend. Choreographer, Ian Pedder, looks on as the world premiere of a 3-man Chalford Hill is performed. Photographer: Natalie Beswetherick.

*Please send any prospective front cover photographs to the Editor.*





## CAPTION COMPETITION

Can you think of a funny caption for this photo? The best one will receive the grand prize of being printed in the next Newsletter!

Some starters...

1/ The Morris Kit police find their first victim

2/Boris claims Police treatment unbearable as he was just doing what comes natural to a bear near young juicy children.

4/I didn't touch the porridge!

5/'But I was told everyone had to come bare!'

*Photograph: Trefor Owen*

### PRESS RELEASE September 2003

Due to public demand!

#### SOMPTING VILLAGE MORRIS DANCERS

(based in the Worthing area of West Sussex) would like to draw your attention to their

#### 2004 PIN - U P C A L E N D A R

Over 20 of our members bared-all for artistic and less-than-artistic poses on various locations around the area. No expense was spared as we created a Village Fete scene and transformed a local pub bar for a Christmas Carol Singalong. Seagulls were startled as we cavorted in the waves on Worthing beach. Ramblers were boggle-eyed at the processional dancing in the cornfields up on the Downs. Many local pubs and businesses have assisted with sponsorship, specially written ditties have been commissioned and the whole production has been tastefully designed with over 30 full colour photographs and printed in a whopping A3 format.

As far as we know this example of English Morris/Glamour/Fine Art is truly unique. What does one buy Great Aunt Maud for Christmas? It must be this!

£7000 has already been raised with the 2002 issue and we are hoping to top that up to £10,000 with this reprint. This will go to the Oaks Unit Stroke Department at Southlands Hospital, Shoreham in memory of our former squire Lyn Mathews, who we are sure would have ragged her fellow dancers, who have been persuaded to show more than they really ought!

For only £6 (plus £2 p&p) you too can have your own copy of this amazing work. Just send a cheque (made out to SOMPTING VILLAGE MORRIS CALENDAR with your name and address on the back) to: SVM CALENDAR 93 Congreve Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 8EN

[svmcalendar04@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:svmcalendar04@yahoo.co.uk)

# "Team Talk"

## Three Shires and Summer 2003



*Three Shires & Rattle Jag at Rufford Country Park, Notts.*

HELP!! us to increase our dance out dates – it is now almost the end of our dance out season and Three Shires are in danger of being in withdrawal, why? Well we have had very few 'dance outs' this season – why? Because we need a musician and some more dancers.

With the help of our shared musicians we have managed Argarmeles' weekend of dance – a good time had by all even though accommodation (not Argarmeles) was ????. We only just made Southport in one piece, travelling along the A1 North and M62

on Friday evening in torrential rain is not advisable. Many times we were sandwiched between great juganoughts and thought our time was up – fortunately we were spared!

We had opportunity to dance with our shared musician's side – Rattlejag. An experience not to be missed if any of you get the opportunity to dance with them – but be careful of the 'goat's toe nails'. Rattlejag dance mixed traditional dance from the North Notts area and use rattles and shakers to make as much commotion as possible. Goats toe nails made into a circular rattle on a ribbon do make a noise – try it – if you dare. The afternoon was good with lots of crowd and dancing and a great mass dance at the end, though I still wish I hadn't got to rattle goats toe nails.

Dancing in York with Ebor and many others was just about our last outing this year. Another good day – free lunch and a badge for dancing so well, presented by the Mayoress (complete with blackened nose – compliments of Flag Cracker).

Our last event is to be in Hull with Green Ginger Morris and others. So you see our plight. We have even entered the Village scarecrow competition (see picture) strategically placed on the edge of the village pleading for new members but to no avail. If anyone out there knows anyone in our area who can play or wants to learn to dance please ask them to contact us.



*Lesley 01909 770129*



# "Team Talk"

## The Diary of a New Team or 'Pecsuh-what???'

Pecsætan (pronounced 'peck-suh-tan') are a new women's Cotswold team from Sheffield. After a drunken night when the folk world was put to rights, those of us who remembered the conversation (and some who didn't) decided we wanted to form a morris team.

We all knew each other originally through Sheffield University Ceilidh Society, although the team is entirely independent of the Uni. Our experience of the world of morris ranged

from a vague awareness of its existence through to some experienced border dancers, though few of us had much experience of the Cotswold traditions. Undeterred, we were fortunate enough to co-opt Richard Arrowsmith to be our foreman. Richard's been dancing with Jockey Morris Men (Birmingham) since he could walk and strangely enough, the idea of spending two hours a week with a bunch of young women jumping up and down at his beck and call appealed to him!

So, an eager group of seven founder members first met for a couple of whole day workshops in the spring of 2001 to find out if it was a good idea after all. These were a success, so we decided to go for it and get properly organised.

Sorting out kit was (surprisingly) easy. We made a big list of all the things we wanted out of a kit, and a list of the things we didn't. And shockingly, we all agreed on the main points giving us a fairly plain base kit of a white (made-to-measure by lovely Joan the dressmaker) shirt and black trousers, with some simple decoration in gold, purple and burgundy ribbons. (Having chosen this colour combination, we discovered we had unwittingly created a replica of a team that was performing a generation ago in the Midlands called 'Holden's Goldens.' They must have had very good taste...)

Basking in the success of kit choosing, we tried to reproduce the same democratic process for the name. How naïve we were... After (what felt like) hundreds of suggestions, all loved by some and hated passionately by others, we reached an impasse. It was the week before our first dance out when our resident archaeologist Aisling O'Brien found the word 'Pecsætan': an Anglo-Saxon tribe local to the Sheffield area, literally meaning 'People of the Peak'. No-one hated it and so we



adopted it without question, though the most usual comment when we tell somebody the name for the first time is "Pexy-what? Say it again... sounds like a type of drug..."

Our first dance out (a year after the initial workshops) was at two local pubs - the Fat Cat and the Kelham Island Tavern (I'm sure any beer lovers who have been to Sheffield will know about them!) on 6<sup>th</sup> June last year. This was a fantastic success and we all felt that the hard work had been worth the effort. However, due to too many holidays and festivals we didn't dance out much last summer. Practices started again last autumn.

Having already learnt that our best meetings were based around lots of good food and wine, our first AGM was held after an excellent curry in September last year. The meeting was really useful to highlight the different things we each want out of the team, though it's important to all of us to dance to as high a standard as we can. Helena Reynolds is currently our Squire, Jess Arrowsmith our Bagman (bag lady??) and Jo Maher our Treasurer. Also James (another musician along with Richard) got to be our 'acting viscount' a long-held ambition come true! Shortly after this AGM we gained one new member, Jemma Gurney. Now there were eight!

In February 2003 we danced during the Saturday night ceilidh at IVFDF festival, this year held in Sheffield. We spent several weeks practicing a programme of Wheatley processional followed by Trunkles (Bledington), Room for The Cuckolds (Bucknell) & Queen's Delight (Bucknell). It went fantastically well (despite the fact that all of our members were also running the festival, playing in bands or teaching workshops as well as the usual not sleeping and maybe drinking a little). We were all walking around on cloud nine for a week afterwards! (Those of us who could still walk...). A few weeks later we danced at the Fabulous Fez Heads' Great Annual Fig & Date Fair and won the prize for best dancing team (luckily we didn't have to drink the prize, we'd been forewarned about the homemade fig & date wine!). More importantly, we won a round of the fig and spoon obstacle-relay race, and Jo showed off her date stone spitting talents. Following this we've danced at Holmfirth and Chippenham Festivals. The Holmfirth spot got a bit wet (sic.), but we determinedly kept on dancing, discovering that our shirts don't go see-through when wet (much to the disappointment of the many surprisingly keen observers). And we did our first 'proper' Morris festival, Scarborough Fair, which was very cool. I'm not sure we'll volunteer to get on the bus to Robin Hood's Bay again though...



So we're now looking back on our first two years and feel thoroughly established. We've lost one member, Ellie Downes, to a new life in Singapore (sniff!) and also gained three more bringing us up to the healthy number of ten. For the future? We've invited some new recruits to start this autumn, when we plan to add some Fieldtown dances to our current repertoire of Bledington and Bucknell. Maybe this year we'll get ourselves together enough to travel a bit more too... Finally, to any readers who find themselves embroiled in a drunken discussion about setting up a new team, we would say go for it, all the hard work is worth it! (But try to decide on a name first!).

To contact Pecsaetan: Jess Arrowsmith (0114 231 6779) or visit [www.pecsaetan.co.uk](http://www.pecsaetan.co.uk)

# £ FUNDRAISING FOR MORRIS £

The Morris Federation ~ The Morris Ring ~ The Open Morris  
Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2003, 9.30am - 5.00pm

This is a one-day interactive workshop showing you where the funds are and how you can best utilise your skills to obtain them for your particular club or project.

The venue is the Branston Golf & Country Club, Branston, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, DE14 3DP (A38 roundabout junction south of Burton and follow the Club's signs).

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be made available from 9.30am prior to commencement at 10.00am. The mid-day meal will take the form of buffet lunch from 12.30pm to 1.15pm. There will be a mid-afternoon tea/coffee break 3.15pm(ish). The day will end no later than 5.00pm.

The event is sponsored by the three organisations resulting in a total cost to the participant of only £10 for the full day (inc lunch & beverages). This event will be made available to the first 25 applicants on a first come first serve basis. If you want to be there, act now. Closing date for applicants was 25<sup>th</sup> August 2003, however we are taking late bookings - so please get in touch ASAP.

For further information, booking form and pre-course notes please contact Steve Adamson 01274-773830, or the Newsletter Editor.



## FOUR FOOLS FOLK FESTIVAL

### A weekend of dance, music and song in the heart of the North West

**Four Fools Folk Festival** has been running for fifteen successful years, with a regular programme of well known performers from across the folk scene. For the last three years **Newburgh Morris** has joined Four Fools to host a weekend of dance combining with the Festival. We are a women's North West side, who began in a traditional way twelve years ago to dance in our village Fair procession.

**This year the Festival Dance event included two days' dancing** at a variety of venues in the historic Lancashire market town of Chorley and at the site.

**When not dancing we offer free** admission to **Festival events** for dancers and musicians - concerts, singarounds, music and song workshops, Folk Club, as well as the

Saturday evening Ceilidh. All Festival events are on site.

**There is free** camping for performers on the patrolled Festival site with showers, real ale bar and hot and cold food. **Half price** admission and camping for non-performers.

Next year's Festival runs from 25 to 27 June 2004. We thought we'd take the opportunity to ask any teams to contact us at this stage if you think you might like to join us. We would be especially pleased to have one or two more Southern/Cotswold sides!

For an invitation ring Barbara Tel: 01257 463942 or e-mail Rebecca [rebecca@duttons50.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:rebecca@duttons50.freeserve.co.uk)

[www.four-fools.co.uk](http://www.four-fools.co.uk)

# "Team Talk"

## Inverkeithing Scottish Stepdancers Stepdancing in Scotland



Hard-shoe step dancing has enjoyed a revival in Scotland in recent years thanks to the help of Cape Bretoners returning to our shores to teach us the style of dance their forefathers took with them when they emigrated to Canada during the Highland Clearances in the 1800s.

It is a very different style of dance to what has evolved in Scotland since that time - so much so, that some people question whether or not it really did originate in Scotland. However, researchers have heard accounts from older generation Scots recalling their parents and grandparents using the same steps and style. Indeed research into traditional Scottish dance forms led by Tom & Joan Flett in the 1940s and 50s has revealed that up until the 19th century hard-shoe step-dancing was enjoyed all over Scotland. So why should such an exciting dance form have effectively died out?

Fashion changes were probably the cause of the demise of stepdancing in Scotland. Stepdancing is essentially a solo dance form although the steps can be used within sets such as the true traditional social dances of Scotland referred to as the Threesome or Foursome Reels (a dance for 3 or 4 people performed in a line and consisting of on the spot setting steps followed by a figure of eight pattern). During the 18th century longwise set dances and square formations were introduced to Scotland from Europe and England. Then as village halls began to be built in the 19th century, becoming the focal point for social gatherings and creating more room for the 'larger' dances, a greater emphasis was placed on the figures of the dance rather than on the stepping. These dances then became more "Scottish" through the use of Scottish tunes and steps.

The music used for dance also changed at this time as larger spaces required more sound. A fiddler or piper would have played for dancers in restricted spaces such as kitchens but the accordion provided more volume for larger halls and so became the popular accompaniment to social dance. In some remoter parts of Scotland more influenced by the church, fiddle and pipe music were frowned upon. In these areas song, known in Gaelic as 'puirt a beul' or 'mouth music' or in Lowland Scotland as 'deedling', was used for stepdancing.

The stepdancing that survived changed into a more open and balletic style of dance which we now see in modern Highland dancing. The 20th century then brought about the standardisation of



Scottish dance through the organisations of The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, The Scottish Highland Dancing Association and The Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing. Fortunately, Highland emigrants to Cape Breton kept alive the traditions of music, song and stepdance as it existed in Scotland over 200 years ago. The steps have been passed down through the generations with the emphasis being on individual style and improvisation.

In recent years stepdance classes have been incorporated into most traditional music festivals in Scotland providing an introduction to stepdancing to old and young alike. The Inverkeithing Scottish Stepdancers is one of only a very few informal groups to exist in Scotland to practise and promote this danceform. They formed in 1998 from a group of beginners attending a short introductory course and now meet on a weekly basis to exchange steps. Although there are only a dozen regular members, they are now recognised as a performance group who promote the danceform by running workshops, social dances and by participating in a variety of festivals and social gatherings. The true revival of Scottish stepdancing rests in the hands of future generations and the group are now encouraging children in the area to learn the danceform with regular classes in the small village of Aberdour attracting up to 20 children per week.

Although performance has demanded a certain amount of choreography to help presentation, the group strive to encourage improvisation and individual style and hope that stepdancing will continue to go from strength to strength in Scotland without the constraints of standardisation which is so prevalent in other forms of Scottish dance. The joy of dancing is to get lost in the music and with such a wealth of traditional music in Scotland the Inverkeithing Scottish Stepdancers are keen to encourage and participate in the new (but essentially ancient) fusion that exists between music and dance in Scotland.

*Morag Johnston, Inverkeithing Stepdancers*

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## Fiddlesticks Salute Joan of Arc.



The North West Clog morris side, Fiddlesticks from Norwich, took the road to Rouen recently to celebrate their twentieth anniversary. Well known in the city of Norwich for their fine presentation of the North West tradition, 12 dancers, 7 musicians and several family members decided to share their enthusiasm with Norwich's twin city, Rouen which has a rich Norman tradition of folk music and dance all of its own.

The highlight of the visit was a performance in the medieval market place in front of politicians and dignitaries who had come to mark the anniversary of Joan of Arc's death. Forty French Firemen played a brass band in her honour, a High Mass was celebrated in the church dedicated to her as the patron of France but the most intriguing salute came from the English morris women who stopped all the processions with a presentation of "Churchtown" which even brought the marching firemen to a standstill. The town saluted the side in return by inviting them and the firemen to wine and dine sumptuously at the Hotel de Ville later.

The Squire, Brenda McFadyen, had organised the tour and the dancers performed at other towns and villages in Normandy before moving to the historic port of Honfleur where Impressionism started. In fact Brenda's husband, Phillip captured an impression of the trip in pen and wash sketches which were published in the Eastern Daily press on the sides return to Norwich.

*John Dimascio*

## Who is Dancing on my Patch?

A little while ago, a team, who are known by their own village name, approached me and they were complaining that another side, in fact a number of sides were going to perform in their village – and they had not been told or approached. The teams in question were going to take part in a tour of local villages. You might say so what, this happens all the time.

Of course we do go and dance on other peoples patches, but I believe it is only courteous to let the local Morris side know that you will be passing through and would like to dance in the area. In the example that I raised it all turned out for the good as the lead team of the tour did eventually contact the team in question – but it raised a few heckles in the process.

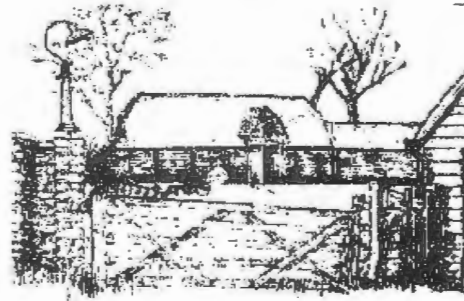
Please in the future can you let the local side know if you are going to perform in their area – it might even make a better day of it. Since then I have raised this question with both the Ring and Open and both agree in principle – that it is only polite and courteous to let the local team know.

*John Bacon - President*

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**And who knows what guest turns we may yet have.**

The cost? Well, some costs have risen since last time, but it should be about **£69**, including food and accommodation. Sad to say, the drink is extra, but more or less at cost. Reduced rates for those who prefer B&B are available. Please note that the hostel has some smaller rooms, which may encourage some to opt for it rather than go for B&B. I try to meet all needs!

We need at least 40 people to attend and stay at the Ridgeway Hostel to guarantee that we can have the place to ourselves. So, sign up now!

We do have to pay for the hostel in instalments, so that advance payment helps the cash flow considerably. Make cheques payable to "**Wantage Morris Workshop**" please.

Updates will be made and other information will be made available on the *trips-off-the-tongue-so-easily* web site at: <http://adrian-williams.members.beeb.net/www-2003.htm>

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