

Newsletter Summer 2004



CLARITY, CLIMATE, COMPETENCE Sydney Morris Men tell you how!

HERE COMES SUMMER Part 3 of our series of practice night articles

CHANGES AFOOT IN THE CLOG TRADE A list of UK clog-makers

CLOG DANCE WORKSHOP With City Clickers



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EDITORIAL

What a wonderful sight on the front cover...the Otley Maypole being danced around on May Day by Buttercross Belles. There's a review of the day by Short Circuit on page 19.

Once again I've been inundated with items for 'Team Talk'. These are reviews of events that member sides have organised or danced at. It's inspiring to read how far and wide we're willing to travel to keep the tradition alive!

You'll read later on that I'm standing down as Newsletter Editor at the AGM in September. It's been a big decision to make, and one that's not been made lightly. I do feel that there is still room for improvements on the newsletter, but unfortunately I just can't spare any time to make them. I hope someone out there can! There has been some interest in the post already...so if you're thinking about it let me know!

Trefor Owen has undertaken a piece of research to compile a list of all the full and part time clog-makers that are left in the UK. Sadly Sandra Turton's business closed in March and many of those listed will be greatly affected by the closure.

This issue see the last of our series of articles written by Doug Bradshaw on the running of practice nights. I know that these have been very well received with plenty of brilliant ideas...so a huge thank you to Doug for writing them.

I'd also like to thank all the other contributors to this edition. Contributions arrive in my inbox and I very rarely thank the sender...so I do apologise! and THANK YOU

Lastly, I've just got back from the International Sword Spectacular at Whitby – WOW – what a fantastic weekend – and brilliantly organised.

Happy dancing... *Nicola*

Printing

Next Issue

Front Cover Photograph

Outline Print Service Ltd.

Autumn 2004

Otley Maypole (Alice Metherell)

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

Cry St George for English Morris & Dance?

St George was according to most authorities a Turk. So how come the English got him as their Saint? No matter, what is important is that next year St George's Day is on a Saturday. This makes it rather convenient. Why? Well remember **Trafalgar Square** one rainy November? Loads of teams from all three Morris Organisations came danced in the rain and enjoyed!

So a repeat of the event is proposed by the Joint Morris Organisations Committee. When, well of course for **St George's Day in 2005**. Now to be fair to all concerned a different venue has been selected, just a little further North...

Newcastle upon Tyne. Negotiations are ongoing at present, but please mark in your diaries now if you and your team may be interested in attending. There will be a slightly different format but the plans are still being worked on, so more details next issue.

As an aside, EFDSS ran a competition this year with a prize of up to £250, to try to turn St George's Day into a National Event. I haven't heard who won, but maybe in '05 EFDSS would like to offer a prize to the "Best" team in Newcastle???

AGM's Weekends: Do we really need them?

It is becoming increasingly hard to find Host Teams for the Federation's AGM weekend. This year we go up to Westmorland Step and Garland and in '05 down to Mad Jacks in Hastings, but we don't yet have a volunteer side for '06.

Not to do the hard sell, but it does take a lot of effort and stress levels of the organisers must go through the roof during the build up to the event. We have to hold the meeting itself, as our constitution dictates we must have one, but do we necessarily have to have a dance day along side it?

Would it be simpler to arrange a hall somewhere central for a morning, to hold the

AGM proper, and leave teams to have their own days of dance on a smaller scale? Is there any point in the mass gathering of dancers to perform just a few bits of their repertoire to an already convinced audience?

It has been suggested that this would be a far cheaper event for attending team reps (just the fuel costs there and back) and a lot less hassle for any organisers. What do you feel??

Festivals

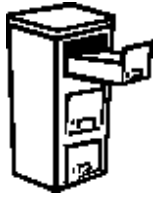
I was chatting to a Dancer at DERT (Dancing England Rapper Tournament) earlier this year about life in general and was asked about the New Policy on Festivals that the Federation was promulgating. Hmm, what policy is this then, I responded? Well the one by which all Federation Teams have to get tickets for dancers and partners or not attend...

Interesting, but the Federation **DOES NOT** have a defined policy on tickets for Festivals, though of course it would be great if Festivals did offer dancers and partners full season tickets. Some of the Festivals can probably not afford to do this. So when you get an invite to a Festival, it is up to you to negotiate the deal you your team and the Festival can amicably agree on.

Many Festivals do have limited budgets and while I would love to see teams treated reasonably when booked, if we want to be seen dancing we will have to work with the organisers of the event. The whole ticket issue is problematic with most Festivals now wanting 'partner' tickets to be paid for or at least a contribution made towards. Many of us feel teams are treated with an amount of lack of respect considering what we add to the event in the public's eyes, but we have to live in a real world where money does not grow on trees.

If even Sidmouth can be feeling the tightening of financial belts (a recent press release gave the possibility of Sidmouth not running in 2005 as the Local Council was not prepared to fund any shortfall), we have to be aware of the concept that if we price ourselves out of the market we will not have the Festivals to dance at anyway.

Trefor Owen



Archive Activity

Down in archive corner a start has been made on transferring the boxes and files full of information, at present held on paper, to an electronic format. A very slow start, maybe, but one of my tasks is to reduce the physical size of the archive without losing any data.

New items still keep coming in.

Jenny Howarth of Bedfordshire Lace has kept the archive up to date with a series of press cuttings and references to correspondence in the Daily Telegraph and her local paper, Bedfordshire On Sunday, following Bedfordshire Lace dancing at a travel show at Earls Court, and the place of women dancing Morris.

The Daily Telegraph was also the source of a wonderful story about the kidnapping of the world's highest Maypole from the summit of the Zugspitze in the Alps and its being held to ransom for rail passes, sandwiches and beer!

Adrian Williams risked going to the Fabulous Fezheads' Fig & Date Swindle and sent in a cutting from the front page of the Stroud News & Journal as well as a selection of photos from the event.

Another press cutting comes from the East Anglian Daily Times with an old photo of Thaxted Morris Men in Braintree in 1974.

Contributions to the archive come from the most unexpected sources. A copy of a Giles cartoon from an old calendar was given to me by Sally Munnings, a bell ringer at the village church. It shows a team of miserable Morris dancers at the end of May in the pouring rain, being watched by a lonely policeman and a dog, with one bright spark commenting, "The merry month of Maying ... With a fa, la, la, and a fa, la, la ... And in three weeks' time the nights start drawing in." There's always one in every side, isn't there?

Peter Luckin has sent in a copy of the booklet, Mr Hemmings' Morris Dancers: a team with a long history.

A wonderful resource that came online earlier this year is the Folk Archive Resource North East. This looks like being a great source of tunes from the original manuscripts as well as old photos and video clips. Apart from visiting the site yourselves at www.folknortheast.com, there is also an excellent article about FARNE by Peter Wood in the current edition of The Living Tradition (issue 56, May/June 2004).

At home, Jenny and I have been watching some of her old videos and cine film, mostly from the eighties, including some historic footage such as the first dance out by Treacle Eaters and shots of Sidmouth Festival from the days before J.K.L. Videos. I'll have to make copies to put into the MF archive. More details as and when this gets done. But perhaps you also have old videos or cine film of your team dancing that you haven't watched since they were filmed. Why not donate them or copy them for the archive?

Now is also the time to remind you to send your dance programmes (I only have them from Motley Morris and Bury Fair so far) and posters.

My thanks to all the contributors for their items and belated thanks to Leyland Morris for their video and book that I mentioned last time.

Mike Everett

MF WORKSHOP

Clog Stepping

City Clickers, Bristol
Saturday 23rd October

For the first time, Welsh clog steps will be taught as well as a beginners waltz and more advanced hornpipes to an unusual rhythm.



*See larger ad in newsletter
for more information.*

(clog picture by Sandra Turton)

COMMITTEE NEWS

FINANCE - Rachel

Michael Stimpson has notified me that all Insurance enquiries must be referred to him. His address is on your Insurance confirmation.

EVENTS - Jean Important Notice

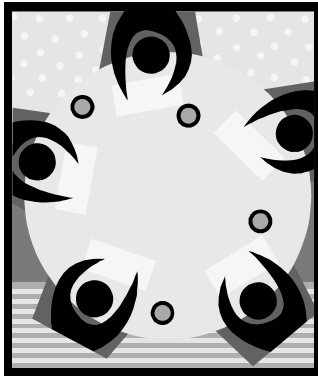
The AGM is definitely September 10th-12th 2004 in Kendal, as published in the Spring Newsletter. Please amend your booking forms, support the Federation and enjoy a weekend dancing in the beautiful Lake District.

Dates for your Diary

A clog stepping workshop is to be held in the Bristol area on Saturday 23rd October. For the first time, Welsh clog steps will be taught as well as a beginners waltz and more advanced hornpipes to an unusual rhythm. Put the date in your diary and watch for more information.

Another Important Notice!

We urgently require a host team for the AGM 2006. It may seem a long way off but it will be



here before you know it! Please consider if your side could help organise a weekend of dance and AGM, possibly in conjunction with another local group. Share the workload!

Please let me know if you are at all interested.

If anyone is eager to offer to teach or host a workshop I would like to hear from you. Ideas are always welcome.

NEWSLETTER – Nicola

You will see later in the Newsletter that I am standing down as Editor at the AGM in September. Therefore, we are urgently looking for a new Editor to carry on from me on January 1st 2005. There is great scope for improvement of the Newsletter, and if you think you've 'got what it takes' then I'd be really pleased to hear from you!

Please keep sending in articles, reviews, snippets and photos...it's YOUR newsletter after all!

INSURANCE: So do You think you are insured?

Many events dancers are involved in or attend are now beginning to ask for cover up to £10 million but the policy we and the other Morris Organisations have currently only covers to £5 million!

Should you find the need to, the policy can be extended to meet the higher requirement by arrangement with our Brokers. Please enquire directly to them as new financial services regulations mean no officer of the Federation can give advice or suggestions re insurance any more.

YOU ARE NOT COVERED if you are playing with FIRE!!!

There was a great report recently about a team doing a performance with flaming torches. Well Flaming Heck?? Our Insurance specifically **EXCLUDES** any performance including or involving FIRE. Be Warned or be it on your own heads (and not the audiences)!

Trefor Owen

Changes afoot in the Clog Trade: A List of Clog Makers as at 12th February 2004



Some Clog makers make their own parts and put them together, some buy in a pair of soles and put their own uppers onto them, others buy in uppers and soles and assemble them to produce a finished item. This list is probably not totally comprehensive but gives an overview of the Trade. Any one knowing any other producers who should be added to the list, please contact pres@morrisfed.org.uk.

1/ Jerry Atkinson (Kite Clogs)

44 Duke St, Kington, Herefordshire, 01544 231683

Does own hand-cut soles and hand-cut & stitched uppers. Does demonstrations at country fairs etc, has a website with prices/pictures. Has done other footwear as well.

2/ Greenwoods Clogs (Robin Longbottom)

80 Haworth Rd, Crossroads, Haworth, West Yks, BD22 7DF, 01535 642 086

Makes own shoe style uppers and rubbers but buys in Turton's boot uppers, uses mainly Turton's soles, some Walkleys, reshaped. See notes notes and 8 & 9 below.

3/ Walter Hurst

Work: 38/40 Hallgate, Wigan, Lancs, WN1 1LB, 07979 950470

Home: 29 Waverley Rd, Hindley, Wigan, WN2 3BN, 01942 521589, annehurst@hotmail.com

Assembles from bought in parts mainly Turtons but also Walkleys. See notes and 8 & 9 below.

4/ (Daniel) Nelson's Footwear

22, Duke St, Settle, Nth Yorks, 01729 823 523

Some own uppers onto mostly bought in soles from Walkleys or Turtons (see 8 & 9 below) but makes the "odd fitting/difficult feet" soles themselves! Has a small stock of ready-made uppers collected over the years from no longer existing upper suppliers. Mainly shoe makers rather than clogmakers, but has made up clogs for sale. Makes many "Re-enactment/ Historic" styles of footwear and walking boots.

5/ Trefor Owen

'Bryn Haul', 48 Mount Rd, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1YE, 01277 4523 107, clogs@globalnet.co.uk

Full time traditional hand maker of own uppers, soles, rubbers, toetins etc. Can do part machine/part hand made soles as well. Also in Cricieth, Gwynedd, Nth Wales occasionally.

6/ Godfrey Smith (Galloway Footwear)

The Clog and Shoe Workshop, Balmaclellan, SW Scotland, DG7 3QE, Tel 01644 420 465

Fax 01644 420 777, godfrey@clogandshoe.co.uk, www.clogandshoe.co.uk

Manufacturer of own machine made uppers onto bought in soles mainly from Walkleys, but has used Turtons (see 8 & 9 below). Mainly shoe and sandal makers doing some clogs along side main trade. Also makes various European style slip on clogs/galloches. Only maker in Scotland.

7/ Strong's

Caldbeck, Wigton, Cumbria, LA 7 8EU, 01697 478424

Buys in ready made tops and soles from any source available and then assembles (see 8 & 9 below), carries stock to sell.

8/ Sandra Turton

129 High St., Skelmersdale, Wigan, Lancs, Day 01695 731 678 (Workshop), Eve 01257 453424

Machine maker of own uppers, soles and rubbers, supplies ready made soles and uppers to many of the Trade.

Sandra went part time late '03 then closed down completely end March '04, see notes below as this will affect many others who buy in parts from her.

9/ Walkleys

Unit 10 Mount Pleasant Mills, Midgley Rd. Mytholmroyd, West Yorks, 01422 885757

Factory, mass machine producing soles using copy lathes, uppers & rubber shods using a machine press, irons, toetins, sells ready made clogs etc. Trade and Retail supplier. Also makes Slip ons. Largest company in UK, employing around 5 staff.

Notes (See Stop Press below)

All who bought in from Turtons will either have to buy in from Walkleys or learn to make parts themselves, as there are currently no other suppliers. Even though most classify themselves as "Full Time Handmakers", many use machinery and also many do other things, such as shoe making/repairing/demonstrating, to supplement their income and are not solely clogmakers.

There may be a semi-retired carpenter learning to make soles from Turtons.

This list does not include those makers who only make Slip on (i.e. non-UK/traditional) clogs

Part Time Clog makers, may possibly be others: - (Levels of production unknown)

1/John Peters

01254 887 213

Buys in parts from Turtons so will be affected by closure.

2/ Phil Howard

0161 494 0224

Originally a leather worker. Has bought soles in from Turtons in the past but makes own hand-stitched uppers and makes own machine cut (Bandsaws and Sanding machines) soles & rubbers etc. Shouldn't be affected by closure.

3/ Colne Valley Museum

Golcar, Huddersfield

Mainly demonstrations, but staff/workers at the Museum have the skills to manufacture own uppers and re-cut ready made soles.

4/ Shoe Repairer in Leigh area

Sorry nothing else known except that Turtons supplied a shoe repairer in or near Leigh who assembled a few pairs.

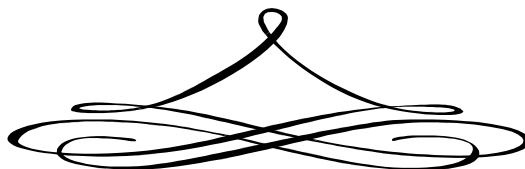
Stop Press: May '04.....It's not all bad news!

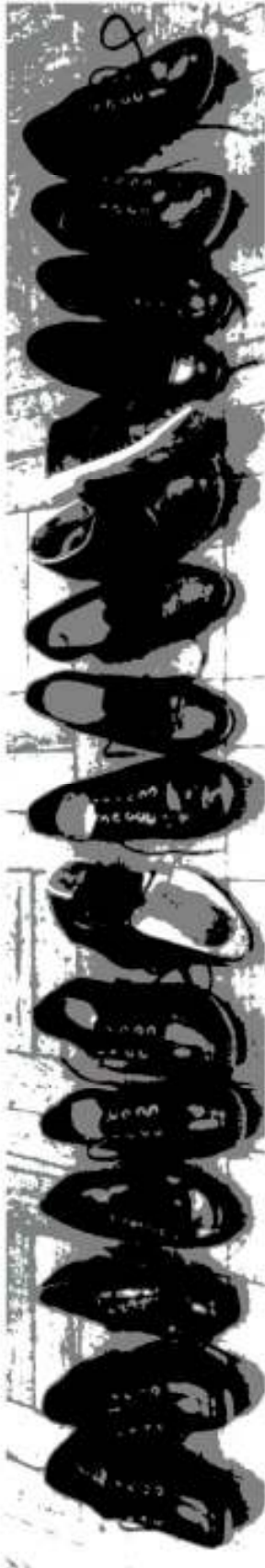
Following Sandra Turton's closure, as referred to in the **Notes** above; there *is* now someone learning the trade. **John Fox** of Harwood, Bolton (associated to Rumworth Morris and a fitter of kitchens etc) at 62, has been learning from Sandra and Yvonne (her Mum). He is able to do re-wooding, re-rubbing and re-ironing currently. He can produce clog soles using Sandra's methods (i.e. Bandsaws and a cobblers "finishing" machine) and is hoping to become a supplier of soles to the Trade as soon as possible. He is not yet able to manufacture Uppers but wants to be doing this within the next year, though firstly he has to acquire the correct industrial stitching machines and a clicking press to do this (anyone got spares??). He bought the "Franchise" (his words) to Sandra's business but unfortunately, some equipment had been dispersed before he finalised the arrangements. To contact John call:

Evenings: 01204 597377

Day: 07949 924684

Trefor Owen





City Clickers

in association with
The Morris Federation
present a day of

Clog Dance Workshops

where: Bristol
when: October 23rd 2004

We will offer three workshops:

For beginners – Waltz steps taught by Jane (Penny) Sheard.

– Welsh clog steps taught by Huw Williams (as recently featured on Radio 4).

For experienced dancers – A 3/2 hornpipe routine devised and taught by Alex Fisher.

Price: £15.00

For further information:

email: city_clickers@hotmail.com
write: send sae to City Clickers c/o 51 Bishop Road,
Bishopston BRISTOL BS7 8LS





Rochester Sweeps Festival

The 25th Sweeps Festival

1st – 3rd May 2004

The 25th Sweeps Festival coincided with May Day and began at 5.32 a.m. on Bluebell Hill with the local dance teams and residents augmented by many visiting dancers joining Motley Morris to awaken Jack-in-the-Green. I'm sure the sun rose somewhere but we didn't see it through the mist!

It didn't get a lot brighter during Saturday but the dull, damp weather didn't stop the dancing along the length of the High Street in Rochester. Sunday was a bright sunny day with a lot more dancing and I changed from Westrefelda Morris to Black Boy Rapper for the day. Poacher Morris made their first visit to the Sweeps Festival and, from talking to Martin and Sue Barter, really enjoyed the experience. Another team that really impressed me with their dancing were OBJ Border from Berkshire.

Monday began dull and then turned wet – very wet. After sheltering in the craft fayre for an hour or two, Westrefelda Morris decided we had to get ready for the procession. A quick trip to the Visitor Information Centre procured a set of colourless plastic ponchos to leave our kit visible and dry. (We think we heard all the jokes on the day about plastic bags and giant

condoms and practising safe Morris – but if you want to try to add to them, please don't send them to us).

On walking up to the Castle Gardens, the police told us that the festival procession was cancelled. However, that wasn't going to deter us and we met Bedfordshire Lace, with their matching pink brollies, setting off to do a procession on their own. As we joined them, Beltane Border Morris also turned up and Gordon Newton, the festival producer, told us that the procession would go ahead and on reaching the Castle we found a few Sweeps waiting. While the police and council were persuaded that a shorter procession could safely go ahead, a few more brave (or foolish) teams came and stood in the rain (Bishop Gundulf's, Loose Women, Motley and Wolfshead & Vixen).

After 24 years of dry Sweeps Processions, these seven teams made up a very enjoyable and successful procession in the rain, and were filmed by Meridian TV.



And, of course, there's plenty more to do at the festival with live acts and sessions through the days and ceilidhs and concerts in the evenings. This year we opted for the concerts with Coope, Boyes & Simpson, the Kate Rusby Trio and Steeleye Span.

But perhaps best of all is the chance to meet up with other teams, to renew old acquaintances and make new friends.

Mike Everett, Westrefelda Morris

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Please send any contributions for the Autumn Newsletter to the newsletter editor by

1st August 2004

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

Once again I have received letters in response to articles and letters regarding MORRIS STANDARDS. Please note that the following are extracts.



"Dear Editor,
In reply to Roger's article (Spring 2004, pg17)...and his comments about Motley Morris dancing at Sidmouth...he has a point, but he misses it completely.

If he was surprised that Motley Morris were dancing he was, probably, not as surprised as they were. I dance with Motley and know that, much to their astonishment, they were invited to dance at the spot...bolder souls gathered together, and, with trepidation honoured their invitation. And they were honoured to attend.

I asked them afterwards how it had gone and they were a bit drained out but hopeful that at least some people had enjoyed it...I started asking who had seen the performance...and what they thought of it. The first person I found who had gone was so struck by Motley he could hardly remember anyone else! ...A total non-dancer who was seeing Morris for the first-time. What he liked was the fact that all of the dancers did something different from each other in the dance. ...He was also impressed by the camaraderie and the way the dancers supported each other to make the dance hang together. He just loved it.

...Perhaps the guy will dance with Motley this year. Perhaps he will become a Morris dancer himself. Perhaps he will learn about Morris Standards later.

I know what Roger is trying to say and am generally supportive of him. However, Motley are a credit to the Morris and the cheerful shambles (an apt description) that was Motley on that occasion might lie closer to the heart of Morris than he thinks.

Best regards, Eddie Carter"

"Dear Editor,
As a dancer and Squire of a side for many years, that always endeavoured to perform well, entertain our audiences and ensure that we honoured all of the elements of our bookings, I was interested in the articles relating to Morris Standards in the Spring newsletter.

Both contributions have their own merit and I entirely agree with most of their content, but what are they asking sides to measure against? In our day jobs, most of us are faced with measurements against standards, performance indicators, ...expectations, etc. These are normally set by a funding body...

Unlike other past-times and pursuits the Morris has to be the only activity that does not have an element of competition ('*don't forget about rapper's annual competition, DERT - Ed.*'), which in many instances dictated standards and levels of performance that can be measured. ...we must not ignore the fact that the majority of those who are side members

do it for the companionship, the fun and release it provides...and therefore do not want to be measured.

I would suggest the three Morris organisations should agree what they are looking for; it could be different for the Ring and Open to that we the Federation have been looking for, for some time. I remember Sally Waring's quote 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' of eight to ten years ago.

As for festival organisers...they have some very simple choices, only book sides that are known to perform well and honour their contracts. ...In addition if festival organisers do not recognise the worth of a good side and reward them accordingly they will only get those sides that perform and behave badly. Sides can influence this by refusing to perform for those festivals that are not prepared to recognise our worth, they will soon get the message.

...we have to accept that not all sides have the desire to improve, others with small numbers quite often do not have any choice in the danger they may fold. The three Morris organisations should try and agree the standards they would like us to aspire to and publish them even if we end up with three completely different sets of standards. An element of competition... could be introduced in the form of festivals awarding trophies for the best performance and turned-out side.

If we don't give sides something to aim for this long running debate will continue forever, but do not make the assumption that you can lead the horse to water and make it drink.

Your sincerely, Dick Taylor"

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

Alive & Kicking Ladies Clog



We decided to have our Christmas meal in the New Year as we had a few new members started. We decided to dance on February 29th as it only happens every four years, then met up for the meal with family and around 30 attended.

It was a good start to a new season.

We are holding our usual picnic in July on the quay. Last year was a success with wonderful weather as well.

Caroline, Alive and Kicking Clog, Maldon

Black Dog Molly

Their Plough Monday Son and the Cubs Incident!



Our youngest child was born on Plough Monday in 1994 and probably for this reason, he is the only one of our brood not ashamed to admit his parents are Molly dancers! Being bounced around for a full nine months before birth and seeing parents in Molly gear complete with black faces from an early age, may also explain why he sees what we do as quite normal!!

However when he arrived home from cubs and announced to us "I've told Akela all about you and that you will go to cubs and teach us some dances so we can get our entertainer's badge" – it was all of a sudden a very different matter and we rather wished he had held the same views as the teenage

siblings! There was no way out... how could we disappoint all those darling boys and girls? How could we tell our Plough Monday son we couldn't do it?

"Surely we have been in more nerve wracking situations than this?" we said. "What about when we danced at the Morris Federation in Ripon for the first time with all those really good dancers, who dance far more complicated dances than us? What about the time we danced with all those really hard bikers?"

We were not convinced, somehow twenty five cubs filled us with dread! ("And you, a teacher?" said my husband. "That's precisely why." retorted !!) We plucked up the courage, made the decision to do it, (probably after a bottle of wine one night), press ganged one of our musicians, blacked our faces and Molly went in "to boldly go where no man has gone before." (Well, they never came out alive if they did!!).

Those cubs were great! We explained some of the history and our passion for keeping the traditions of the dancing alive and then we taught them to dance, even the ones with two left feet! Before they entertained one another and did their dance we had to "disguise" them, so they had a token black face! After a quick breather and a drink of juice they all wanted more – so we danced Bold Eel Catchers again and again! We gave them a badge and certificate, making them Honorary Black Dogs (or pups!)

The 69th Church Lawton Cubs Wolf Pack gave us a badge too – their very own Bleeding Wolf, based on a local legend. We knew they had all had a good time when they asked us to come back – next week! Let's hope we inspired them and gave them a chance to discover that keeping alive a tradition can be lots of fun!

Black Dog Molly

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Hook Eagle Morris Men

A great start to the season...



St George's Day; the second time we have kicked the season off early for this and another great evening. After a warm-up at the Wagon and Horses pub we entertained the members of Hartley Wintney Golf club at their St George's Day dinner.



May Day; As we have always done, we danced at Dawn, this time at a new venue, The Crooked Billet in Hook. Sadly no sign of the sun but we had a great time and the Landlords got up specially early to put together a great full English breakfast.

May 2; Our usual pilgrimage to Rochester Sweeps. A great kick-off to the season. Also celebrating it's 25th year. Picture of Hook at lunchtime "Border Bash".

*John Ellis
Bagman - Hook Eagle Morris Men*



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Summer

Here Comes Summer

Part 3 of a series of articles on the running of teaching/practice nights

by Doug Bradshaw



It's practice night again and I'm pretty sure I know where I'm going. I've checked the diary and I'm pretty sure I've got the right place. It's just the navigator keeps saying that they don't remember coming this way before. This is in between asking who is down for the session and what dances we'll be doing. My helpful answers of "Don't know" and "Not sure" are not I gather regarded as helpful or constructive. Still it's a fine June evening for the drive to the practice and for once there's not too much to think about. The weekend dance out has shown up a few things that need looking at and if I can just remember where the evening's practice is being held I'll be fine.

Hold on. What does he mean drive? And how come he's having trouble remembering where to go? Has he moved? Have they moved to a new practice hall? Or is it the early stages of mental decay? Well it's none of these – except maybe a little bit of the last one. Let me explain. Summer is a time when a hot stuffy hall is not the ideal place to be leaping about dancing. So come June and July we take to the great outdoors and hold our practice nights at local pubs. This also has the added benefit of saving us some money on the hall hire! Always remembering to let the hall committee know that we'll be back in the autumn of course.

The benefits of this are several and various. First of all getting out of the hall introduces the newer dancers to the idea of wobbly flagstones, odd shaped and sized dance areas, the hazards of flying debris and of course an audience. The flying debris factor is not that severe usually but I have a particular phobia about foil crisp packets that are better than an oil slick if you hit one mid stride!

The audience is usually a variable factor given that our practice night is a Monday when the world tends to stay indoors but changing the night would tilt the world on it's axis so we live with it. However if the team publicity machine is working we can usually guarantee a small but appreciative crowd and at the regular venues we almost know the crowd by name; and no that does not mean there's only one of them! If we are out in full rig then the session also lets the newer dancers find out which bits of the kit need pinning, pegging or nailing down; and which bits are most easily forgotten when rushing out of the house.

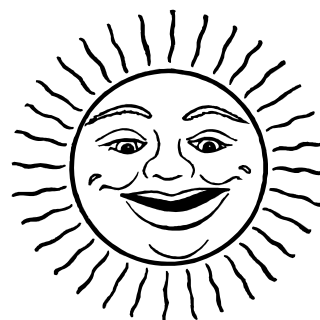
Given the relaxed atmosphere we can also take a few risks that we would usually avoid at a higher profile event. For example giving new dancers a chance to perform their most recently learnt dance or as a team including a new dance that's just been hovering at the edge of the performance repertoire. There is usually one dance every season that works well in the hall but is always "too new" to risk at a festival or a pukka display spot. So the pub night is a half way house where we can lay this particular ghost to rest.

Now this all sounds fine in theory but after a while we found that finding good venues for the whole summer was a bit testing. And then for some dancers being out in full rig for a weekend and a practice night was a bit of a hassle so we introduced the "casual" dance out. These are from the viewpoint of the dancers, pretty much standard practice nights they just happen to be held at one of our local pubs. It's always the same pub and happens to be the home of one of the local sessions. These casual nights alternate with the full rig nights.

There is also a bit of psychology in this. When we're out doing full displays people come up and show an interest in dancing. But they never get round to plucking up the courage to get down to the practice hall in the autumn. So our theory is that by appearing at the same place over a few weeks and in "casual" mode some of these folk might just drop by for a drink to see what it's all about. If they like what they see then we can grab them before they change their mind. If the idea does not appeal they can sup up and depart without any commitment.

Of course the down side to these events is that the weather can scrub out the whole evening; but it's only happened once so far. Light rain we deal with as a matter of course since that's a "real" event and we could never re-create that in the hall! The other main factor is failing light, which means we have to finish a bit earlier than usual. But this leaves more time for that other vital element of a practice night; the social interaction – or gossip. And it is really a vital element because the dancing is what we do; it's the interaction of the dancers with each other that makes us a team.

So as the light fades the team start to drift off. As August approaches much of the talk will be of holidays, exotic locations, folk festivals or just taking a break. So come August we'll wind down and spend most of our Mondays doing something other than dancing. Though there will be some time spent thinking about what dances need to be pulled back into the repertoire, maybe some research to find a traditional dance to add to the repertoire or even a new dance that the team can "own". Then come September we can start the cycle all over again! The same old pattern but always just a little bit different.



TV or not TV

"Hello we represent a company wanting to make a reality TV show about how a Morris Dancer can be seen not as a sad misfit but a complete and useful member of Society. We will take the dancer and in 1 month, yes only 1 month, we will turn the dancer into a real person, respected by all and not a target of inane ribaldry..."

"Hello we represent a TV company who are looking for a Northern Family which dances Morris for a "hobby". We would then like to swap them with a European family who have a real Culture and try to show up British Dance as a much more lowly form of activity...!"

Yes OK a bit too cynical even for me, but of late, there have been a large number of requests for Dancers to take part in TV shows. Not necessarily a bad thing, you would think. But these shows have been the " **I'm a Morris Dancer, get me a life**" type, over which the participants have no editorial control and are likely to be put up as a target for hilarity. After all, don't we laugh at the programmes that are *currently* broadcast? Would we want to see Traditional Dance treated the same way?

Be wary, very wary of involvement in what may appear to be a great piece of fun at first, but, who is the butt of the "fun" when the show goes out?

Trefor Owen



DERT 2004

26th –28th March, Bath.

A Review From a Bunch of First Timers
(and some not so first timers....)

As you may or may not know, Gaorsach Rapper and Step were spawned in the frozen wastelands of the far north. Think further than Newcastle. Past Glasgow. We're right up here, in Aberdeen.... The birth is almost legendary (or it will be if we have anything to do with it), involving a couple of Rapper missionaries spreading the word to the far north, Claire's Accessories and fluffy bobbles, and eventually taking a bunch of complete rapper novices, and setting about making a team. The starting point was end of November 2002. A few of us went to DERT 2003 in Glasgow, simply so everyone knew what rapper was meant to look like (or in some cases not!), and see which figures looked good, get the name of the team and the figure (if possible) and steal it in a blatant and outright fashion.

A new dance was duly written, and eventually called 'The Thief's Dance', owing to the fact that most of the figures had been nicked. In the traditional style of rapper teams everywhere, we didn't actually get around to learning the dance until 2 weeks before DERT... A frantic 2 practices later, we were wholly under-prepared for DERT, but just intended to go and have a good time, dance the new dance out, and sample the delights of a few of the local hostelries. Our kit (lovely red kilts) arrived from the kiltmaker about a week before DERT, and new shirts hastily bought. Before we knew it, DERT was upon us.

We headed down to DERT by a variety of routes, and methods, and just hoped that all the dancers, musicians and swords arrived in one piece, at the right time, and raring to go. The gods of the short bendy swords were

smiling on us, and we all arrived in Bath (sorry, Baaaarth) with the minimum of fuss or incident, in time for several beers, and a good blether.

The Friday provided good craic, with plenty of beer, good organisation (well done Martin, Estelle and rest of team!!), and of course much in the way of pressure to purchase merchandise... Those in the team who were already rapper old hands caught up with people, and the newbies in the team set about meeting people, and getting to know who was who! The rapper world seem generally a fairly friendly bunch (especially with a beer in hand) and we were made to feel very welcome, with folk interested in how the team was doing, what we'd been up to in our first year, and if we were enjoying things!

The Saturday morning dawned, with much in the way of hangovers, a craving for a cooked breakfast, and a certain amount of nerves. Our new kits were donned, and were met with general approval! Kilts may not be traditional, but it is our nod to being a Scottish based team, and they look smart (well, as smart as a rapper dancer can ever look anyway).

We headed out to our warm up spot, and the nerves began to increase throughout the team. We'd never danced the dance out before at all, let alone in front of other rapper

dancers!! We hung about nervously in the pub waiting for our turn, and then went on. As soon as the music started, we knew there was no going back. We all got through the dance in one piece (despite Aubrey and Phil's best heckling efforts...), and (dare we say it) even enjoyed it! We got a big round of applause, and people generally seemed to like the dance. Hurrah! One thing that was very noticeable throughout the weekend was the support of the other teams, and general feeling of good will. Everyone was very supportive of each other on our tour, and it really was very much appreciated. It made the whole experience very enjoyable, and much more relaxing than we thought it would be. Things learnt from our first dance out? 1) the kilts really do move nicely when dancing 2) unfortunately the kilts also move a lot when tumbling – much in the way of safety pants, thick tights, and big shorts required!!

After the warm up pub, we moved to the competition pubs. There were several minor disasters, falling over, hanging upside down on a tumble for an eternity, twisty ankles, bashed hands and the



Gaorsach Rapper

occasional look of pure terror, but overall it wasn't all that bad! We had an absolute blast, and achieved our main aim of a thoroughly enjoyable day of dance.

We headed back to the hall feeling the effects of the day, and also the effects of such a high adrenaline level being maintained all day! The final dance came and went, and despite the tired and aching bones, we danced to our limit again, and still enjoyed it!

The final scores came out, and we were placed a very credible 4th in the open with a final score of 70.6! We were unbelievable chuffed with this for our first DERT outing, with the only downside being that we will be expected to improve on this for next year now.

Thanks very much to this year's organisers (Martin etc.), it was a great event, with good pubs, a good bar at the hall, and an air of effortless organisation (although

we're sure it was frantic for months before!!). Thanks also to all the other teams for making it such a great event to go to, and for making it such fun.

Hope to see you all in 2005!

Love and spangles,

*Gaorsach Rapper and Step
gaorsach@yahoo.co.uk*

(Photos by Mike Everett)



DERT 2004 champs...Black Swan Rapper

You are invited to the MORRIS FEDERATION DAY OF DANCE & AGM 2004

Friday 10th – Sunday 12th September 2004

Kindly hosted by Westmorland Step and Garland D

FUTURE HOSTS:

2005 = Mad Jacks of Hastings

2006 = YOU?



For more details please contact Jean using the details at the front.

May Day

Mayday Celebrations in Otley



This year Short Circuit were invited to dance in Otley as part of a special celebration to commemorate the raising of a new maypole. There has been a maypole at Cross Green, an ancient entry to the medieval town, for centuries. Wayzgoose, our hosts, have been active for four years raising funds for a new maypole and paving for the surrounding area. It certainly was an impressive sight and perfect dance spot.

The day started early for some, Wayzgoose, Buttercross Belles and Briggate who trekked up the local hill, the Chevin to greet the dawn. A hearty breakfast in a local café completed the exercise in a warmer and less windy environment.

Dancing at the maypole started at 11am and finished at 1.30pm. Sides taking part represented the three Morris organisations and local school children. The weather was glorious and everyone enjoyed watching other sides and some were even tempted to take part in the maypole dancing.

The Town Crier and Mayor officiated at the handing out of silver sixpences to the children. These had been donated to the maypole restoration committee by citizens of Otley and were given as mementos of the occasion.

The afternoon was at an interesting pub called the Bowling Green, which basked in full sunshine and was a perfect arena for the dancing. It was almost too hot! Not possible in the NORTH do I hear you say??

By 5 o' clock we were all "danced out" considering the heat and the early start.

Those taking part were:

Wayzgoose, our hosts, from Otley, (Open Morris) Border
Buttercross Belles, from Otley (Federation) North West
Oakwood Village Morris Men, from Oakwood, West Yorkshire, (Ring) Cotswold
Leeds Morris Men, from Leeds! (Ring) Cotswold
Briggate Morris from Leeds, (Federation) North West
Short Circuit from Newcastle, (Federation) Rapper

Children from:

The Whartons Primary School, Otley
Westgate School, Otley
Buttercross Belles children.



More details about the maypole restoration can be found on the website www.otleymaypole.org.uk.

As Events officer with the Federation I would say it was an excellent example of co-operation and friendship. All sides present enjoyed watching the dancing and taking part.

Jean Smith (photos by Alice Metherell)

WANTED!

Morris Federation Newsletter Editor






At the AGM in September the current Editor will be standing down from the Committee. This means that there is an opportunity for a budding Editor out there to 'have a go' at editing and producing the 'voice' of the Morris Federation.

The newsletter is sent to around 400 addresses, the majority of which are Morris teams, so the potential readership is HUGE!

The newsletter is a very important part of the Federation because it keeps the members up to date with Morris related issues, and those that affect Morris. It is also a 'voice' for all the teams to talk about themselves and what they've been up to.

For the person interested in the role of Editor, computing skills and access to an email address would be a distinct advantage, as would forward thinking, organisational skills, time management, planning, initiative and a bit of artistic flair!

If you would like more details please contact Nicola using the details at the front.

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<p>Supporting the Campaign for Live Music</p>	<p>CASTAGNARI</p> <p>A universal favourite, the Castagnari range is ever expanding. Attention is paid to every detail, you simply can't buy a better melodeon at any price.</p> 

Fire at the Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Worcs. Friday 27th February 2004

By now, many of you will have heard of the dreadful events of Friday 27th February, when the inhabitants of Bretforton were dismayed to see a fire developing at their beloved historic Fleece Inn.

On that snowy February morning a fire took hold in the thatched part of the roof from a chimney fire, catching under the ancient Cotswold tiles and tracking along the whole length of the building. The remaining roof timbers are now just a charred reminder of the destruction of this lovely old Inn. The chimney collapsed onto the cellar and destroyed the toilet area, but all of this area can be rebuilt. The ground floor rooms are intact and will hopefully be restored sympathetically and once again contain the original furniture and fittings.

Mercifully no-one was injured but the landlord, Nigel Smith, lost all he had in the fire, his quarters were on the first floor and the fire damaged almost everything on that level. He has been heartened by the kindness of all his friends who have rallied round with help of all kinds, having lost his home as well as his livelihood on that sad day.

As everyone watched, seven fire tenders battled to save what they could. Nigel and his staff worked bravely to save the furniture and valuables from the ground floor. They were all distraught as this is an Inn at the heart of the whole community and to see the possibility of it being lost forever was something that was unbearable and left us all in complete shock.

The 14th Century Fleece had been in the hands of the Byrd family since the days of Chaucer as a farmhouse until it became an Inn in 1848 when a licence was obtained to brew beer and cider. The Inn had remained unchanged since the last owner Lola Taplin left the entire buildings and contents to the National Trust in the 1970s.

The interior was kept just as Lola instructed, with all the original furniture, pots and pans and equipment still in place as it had been since the 19th Century when last a working farmhouse.

The world famous Pewter Room, the Brewhouse and the Dugout were all damaged by smoke and water, but 99% of the furniture and artefacts, together with the collection of pewter dating back to



the Civil War has been removed from the site by the National Trust for safe-keeping until refurbishments are completed.

The main structure appears to be sound and plans are being made to restore and rebuild The Fleece. The National Trust has agreed to finance the restoration and despite the loss of the Inn for this year, it is hoped that restoration will be completed by February 2005.

Besides being a venue for the village flower show, craft fairs and other activities, most of it is close to the hearts of many of us who know and love The Fleece as a base for Morris and folk activities. It has been a practice venue for Pebworth Morris Men for 25 years, for Belle d'Vain North West Ladies Clog team for 15 years and more recently for Black Jack Border Morris for 4 years.

We all meet in the pub after practice, or gather there at other times to dance out for appreciative visitors who enjoy the unique atmosphere in the ancient Inn or soaking up the sun in the large, peaceful gardens. It is through these resident Morris sides that many other sides will have joined in days of dance or displays and had the privilege of visiting The Fleece and enjoying their time here.

Since that bleak Friday in February, the Folk Club has continued in the adjacent barn, which has served as a meeting place for friends and locals alike to follow up developments and stay in touch.

Singing in The Fleece had become the norm every Thursday night and we were lost when the Pewter room was no longer available, however Nigel opened up the Barn, we met on the Thursday following the fire and the music continued, to the extent that, thanks to Vaughan Hully, his new song

'Singing in The Fleece' raises the roof every Thursday evening without fail.

The Barn is now open five days a week with a temporary bar for the interim period, whilst building work continues, so if any of you Morris people are in the area, call in and give a few words of support to Nigel and his lovely staff, they will appreciate a few kind words, or contact Nigel at Nigel@thefleeceinn.co.uk.

Eventually The Fleece, at present shrouded in polythene and scaffolding, will rise again to its former glory, the community will return and all of us who know and love it will be together again in the Inn. When the day to re-open arrives it will be the biggest and best event held for many years, we will all be there, plus many friends and acquaintances to celebrate our lovely, historic, unique and dearly loved Fleece.

Everyone is 100% behind our Morris dancing landlord, Nigel, they don't come any better than him and we all wish him and his staff well.

*Rosie Stroud, Bagman, Black Jack Border Morris,
stroudrosies@aol.com*



Tredegar House Folk Festival

17 – 19th May 2004

The Story of The Key

Cast: Instep, a step and clog dance team from various parts of the country. Two lads. Several stewards. Lots of Heroes.

Scene: Tredegar House Folk Festival, South Wales, 17-19 May 2004.

Act 1. Scene 1. Friday evening.

A group of intrepid clog dancers from the North-East meet up at Leeming Bar services. Luggage is packed into an amazingly small space, cars are secured and left behind, and four individuals of doubtful sanity depart for South Wales. Standard discussions take place en route. "What shall we dance?" "Do you think we could perform such and such." You recognise the scene! The group stop at a Whetherspoons' pub in Tamworth for a meal and a pint on the way. Amazing. They do their best to blend into the background of mini skirts and tattoos without success. But surprisingly the beer is OK and the food cheap and cheerful.

Act 1. Scene 2. Saturday Morning.

Dampish. The programming of the night before pays off and the team, having been joined by dancers from Lancashire and musicians from Bristol and Newport perform to perfection. (All right – you have to allow a little bit of dramatic licence!)

Act 1. Scene 3. Saturday Afternoon.

The team are just having an extra run through of a new dance in one room of the stable block where they are staying when, like a refugee from an Agatha Christie novel, appears the classic folk festival steward (You know the type. Waterproofs and a beard. Spotted dancing in tabard and breeches

**SHREWSBURY MORRIS DANCERS
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SATURDAY JULY 17TH 2004

8.00-11.45 p.m.

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WHAPWEASEL
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**Tickets: Adults £6.00 in advance, £7.00
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EARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT.**

later in the day.) “has anyone lost a black bag, because two boys had been seen running away with it?” Shock! Horror! Bag, purse, plastic, and CAR KEYS are missing. Four of the team had driven down from Northumberland in the car. Spare key in the kitchen in the dinky village of Ovington, near Newcastle, about 300 miles away! How could they get themselves and all the clobber back?

The curtain falls and the team sneak away for a swift pint and a bit of introspective planning.

Act 2. Scene 1. Saturday Afternoon. Later.

Just like the Bill, but with a Welsh accent the Police arrive. Questions are asked and statements completed. But no suggestions for the car. Quick. The fourth emergency service. Phone the RAC. Well they could offer a tow to a garage to get the lock drilled out...on Monday. OK. We're in the 21st century here. Get the keys sent down by courier? Should be no problem. The motorways are covered with TNT and FedEx lorries.

Act 2. Scene 2. Newcastle. Even Later.

Alice, wife of team member Chris collects the key and works the phones and the internet. All those Yellow Pages “24 hour service” adverts turn out to be worthless. The offices are all closed on a Saturday afternoon. It would be Monday before they can even pick the key up! But. Small time local couriers can do the job. No problem. Well, not exactly no problem. It will cost £320! But all is not lost. National Coaches could perhaps take the key to Bristol the next day. Virgin Trains eat your heart out.

Act 2. Scene 3. Early Evening. Back in Wales.

Meanwhile back in Wales the team are dreaming up their own solutions. Jean is thinking of lots of schemes and getting through the battery charge on her mobile. Meanwhile the rest of the team box in the car, and were plying the victim of the crime, me, with tea and sympathy. It's now Saturday evening. Celidh time and the team have a great time, forgetting tomorrow with Juice and a caller who shouts more than John Motson. Still talking about the stunning display by the visiting Basque team, a steward catches them again. The fire alarm had been set off accidentally in the stable block and they would not be allowed in until the engineer had re-set it. It's just one of those crazy days! The team sit in the café with more helpful stewards and a bottle of port which mysteriously appears from someone's car! Bed about 2am. Zzzzzzzz.

Act 3. Scene 1. Newcastle. A few (actually a very few) hours later.

It's bloody 5.30 and the coach driver, whose name must be Fed Jobsworth won't take the key. Dash it! Jean's plan B swings into action. Alice drives down to Sheffield. Enter the next dancer Melanie. A member of Instep but not dancing that weekend due to injury. By 09.30 she has the key and is feeding Alice coffee and croissants in Sheffield before setting off for Tamworth. Meanwhile another Dancing Friend, Debbie, has set off from the festival camp site (having solved a “son-with-no-house-key” problem of her own) and is heading North. To Tamworth in fact! (You can tell this is a great play. The action always speeds up in Act 3!)

Act 3. Scene 2. South Wales.

Debbie arrives back with the key, when the team are just waiting to go on for their “final spot”. The key is checked. The button is pressed, and the car locks go “clunk”. The audience go wild with excitement.

Chorus.

The moral of this tale?

The folk dance world has many friends in it. When there is a problem, friends turn into Heroes.

Written by Chris Metherell and Hazel Hall, Instep.

Crook Morris Easter in Killarney



Twenty-four members and friends of Crook Morris spent a very enjoyable Easter week in the delightful town of Killarney in County Kerry, Southern Ireland. Having never been there myself I was surprised to find the scenery not unlike Western Scotland. We stayed in four houses in a complex just a short walk from town. Days were spent walking the hills and valleys, sight seeing and generally prodding about - lovely! Evenings saw us joining in with the locals, taking the odd glass and joining in with the many musicians found in their pubs. They were very welcoming and indeed eager to learn our tunes. One great innovation, we discovered, was that smoking has been forbidden anywhere where there are people working! That means everywhere!!!! What a joy to spend all night in a pub and not have to suffer the smokey atmosphere. Hurrah! I say.

What wonderful people. So open and friendly. On a deserted mountain road in the Berra peninsular my car was stopped by a local farmer who asked if we were on holiday. When I replied, somewhat hesitantly that we were, he stuck his head inside the car, displayed a single toothed grin, shook us all by the hand and said "welcome to Ireland and enjoy the rest of your trip." He then left, waving us off. Where else I ask myself.

Yes, we did dance a couple of times, once in the Pass of Dunloe with good weather and plenty of enthusiastic spectators and again inside a pub when the weather was diabolical to say the least. The mayor of Killarney, having been contacted by our foreman Martyn Harvey, visited us one evening for a general chat. Killarney is currently talking to our main town Kendal, with a view to becoming twinned so he was keen to meet with us. He assured us that we could dance in an area of town we had suggested but regrettably nothing came of it. It was a most enjoyable trip and one I can recommend to those of you who, like me, have never been to Ireland.

CROOK MORRIS

On 17th and 18th July 2004 Crook are again organising their now famous Crook Morris Weekend of Dance. This year it is based in the heart of South Lakeland's, in the town of Coniston. As in previous years there will be approximately 200 of us from nine invited sides helping us all to have a damn fine time. The Saturday's dancing programme will take our guests to Hawkshead, Grasmere, Ambleside and Bowness. One of the highlights of the weekend has, over the years, become a tradition. Once our Saturday dancing programme has ended, all 200 of us enjoy a relaxing sail on Lake Windermere back to the coaches for our return to Coniston. After a sumptuous dinner the decks are cleared for the evening Ceilidh. This year we have managed to book Hekety with Sheila Mainwaring calling.

Sunday will again follow tradition when all 200 of us invade the delightful market town of Kirkby Lonsdale. Starting at noon, we process through the town to the market square where continuous dancing takes place throughout the afternoon finishing with an en-masse finale at about 4pm. Many of you, I know, will have been to our weekend but if you have not and would like to be considered for a future invitation please let us know. Our web sight is www.crookmorrison.org.uk.

We look forward to hearing from you and meeting you all at the many Folk Festivals we attend.

Rique Llinares, Publicity Officer for Crook Morris

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Carlisle Sword, Morris & Clog

“there’s nowt so queer as folk dancing”

Here’s an account of another of those odd gigs (see Kesteven Morris in the Spring 2004 edition), this time from Carlisle Sword, Morris & Clog.

A few years ago we’d been touring the Lakes with Betty Lupton’s Ladle Laikers and Ripon City Morris, and finished the day in the village of Greystoke, near Penrith. We danced outside ‘The Boot’, and while dancing noticed a particularly animated member of the audience, a cheerful and cherubic lady who danced on the spot to every tune we played. At the end of the performance, she approached to ask if we’d be able to dance in the village hall on her birthday, a month later. She explained that she’d like to see our full programme again, she couldn’t pay us, but being the owner of the pub, she could provide us with free drink all evening, and we’d get a hearty meal, free of course. I noticed she spoke with a German accent, and it seemed she’d fallen in love with ‘The English Pub’, to the extent that she’d bought one, and having us dance outside it was as if she’d scored 100 points in her ‘I Spy in the English Village’ book (Morris dancing readers will remember these!!!!). To get back to the story, I asked around the team, but needn’t have bothered – free beer – free food - and it was our practise night anyway!

So on the appointed evening, we arrived, in a cloudburst as it happened, at the village hall. We were due to dance at 8pm, but sat in our cars until 7.55 waiting for the deluge to abate. We weren’t surprised to see no other comings and goings around the door. However, flooded yard or not, we made a dash for it, kit cases, instruments and all, and ran in as if the rain was molten lead. The hall was empty, no chairs, tables, or any sign of human activity – let alone birthday party.

‘You’ve cocked it up haven’t you Frank?’ taunted one of us, ‘Anyway I’m sure it was next week’.

‘No’, I replied, ‘It was this week, and it was this evening, and it was this village hall, and the door wasn’t locked was it? - look its not quite 8pm yet, maybe they’re all in the pub, waiting for the rain to stop. Anyway, we’ve got to wait until 8, whatever else happens’.

At 8 on the dot, in came the birthday lady, entirely alone, and sat in the centre of a form along the end wall.

‘Well’, she said, ‘Get on with it then’.

Funny how it feels just as uncomfortable when you’re a crowd, being asked to perform for one person, as it does when you’re just one person and you’re suddenly asked to perform in front of a large crowd. But we started with rapper, the cloggies followed whilst the rapper dancers changed into longsword kit in the toilet. We performed the Bampton Weavers’ Sword Dance whilst the cloggies changed their shoes, to perform their Hebridean Weavers’ dance while the sword dancers blacked-up for border morris, and this we did while the Cloggies changed back to clogs for some finishing hornpipes. There was appreciative, if singular sounding applause, and during all this the landlady was joined by her 5 year old son, who rode amongst us on his tricycle, to add a bit more interest to our spectacle.

But, changed again, we went back to the pub – and there it was - a magnificent banquet, and glasses filled with her best brew, which she took care to keep filled until we said ‘No more!’

Another job done!

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Frank Lee

Whitethorn Morris

May Day Virgins

The idea came to me out of the blue one day – it must have been last August or September. We had never done it before and next year was as good as any, particularly as it was a Saturday. You may wonder what I'm talking about, so let me plant a few clues. Stellar Morris team, wear blue dresses and red pinnies and clogs and like Bacardi breezers and cappuccinos and lattes and are almost always late for everything – you've got it, it's Whitethorn Morris!

I have been dancing for more years than I care to remember and the idea of dancing on May morning was, quite frankly, something that other teams did. It was SO early for one thing. Anyway, I thought it would be fun and slipped the thought into bagging one Thursday evening. To cut a long and boring story short, we decided we would do it, and enough dancers and musicians declared themselves ready for the challenge.

So at 5.01 am on Saturday 1st May 2004, we gathered in the gloom of the car park at The Red Lion, Coleshill, near Amersham, together with Grand Union, who had said 'yes' when I asked them if Whitethorn could join them on their annual dawn outing. Dawn was scheduled for 5.20, but given our reputation for tardiness, we decided to meet at 5 am, just in case! Anyway, almost all of us made it on time and the star prize for dedication has to go to Gill and Paul, who slept all night in their car, in kit!, just to be there at dawn!! However, I became immune to the comments that my name was mud at 3.30 am, as most of the team sprang from their beds.

Well, dawn turned out to be wonderful as loads of locals and other friends and well wishers were there with Grand Union and us. What a surprise! We danced and they danced and after loads of dancing, we adjourned to the pub for breakfast and beer/coffee served by Chris and John and their super staff. Probably the locals knew how good breakfast was – that's why they came.

Glastonbury Festival 2004

**from Macca to Mozza to
Morris dancing????!?!?!?**

Yggdrasil Border Morris will be performing and running dance workshops at the sold-out Pilton festival this June (25th - 27th).



Formed by women from Oyster Morris and Maenads, Yggdrasil Border Morris take their name from the Norse tree of life.

But all good things must come to an end and for both teams, the day was just beginning! Grand Union were heading up to London (by canal boat – don't ask!) and Whitethorn were bound for St. Albans and their Spring Day of Dance. So, we said farewell and thanks to Gary and Grand Union, with a tentative promise to do it all again next year.

Thus, Whitethorn are not May Day Virgins any more, but we had a wonderful time and can thoroughly recommend the experience. I'm sorry that I don't yet have the photos of this epic encounter, but I'm still waiting to join the digital world, and anyway, we may not have looked at our best at that hour of the day! But I'm sure we looked far worse come 5 pm!

*Janice Dent
Whitethorn Morris*

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Clarity – Climate - Competence

To all Squires
searching for new
methods to recruit and
retain members.

I had six trips home to England last year from Sydney, and have danced out with four sides. I think their complaints that 'we can't find new apprentices' and 'the side is getting old and withering' are common to many sides. It certainly was true in Sydney a year ago but that has changed now and I think that the Sydney Morris Men (SMM) have some lessons to pass on to other sides.

I am new to the Morris, I started dancing only five years ago, but despite that I was elected Squire of the SMM in November 2002. The side then struggled to produce enough men for foot ups and practise, and to be honest real enthusiasm and drive was waning. Many members had been in the side for 20 years plus and understandably the lack of new blood had an impact. While new to the Morris I am not new to leadership - my first Army career led me into starting a small international leadership consultancy, and I thought that I should practise what I preach to Chief Execs and the like, and modesty aside, I think that I have proved that you do not need to be the best dancer to be a reasonable Squire!

The responsibility of any leader is to create the three pre-conditions needed if the team are to be successful. This means creating: clarity, climate and developing competence.

Clarity - clarifying what are you trying to achieve, why, and how - who is going to do what in detail. I did this early on by talking through my ideas in the (attached) Squire's Agenda and posting it out to all. I frequently review this. Most of my squiring time is spent talking, writing and emailing to create constant clarity.

Climate - partly the necessary resources and infrastructure (bells and baldrics in good order, having a means of rapid communication etc), partly behaving as followers expect a leader to, partly making individuals feel wanted and tapping into their expertise, partly building the side's identity and partly creating more opportunities to enjoy life and have fun - more opportunities to get out, practise, learn more dances, evaluate/review and learn from errors in a 'supportive' climate.

Competence - Ensuring the foreman has a progressive training programme linked to foot ups (we dance out and practise all year, the weather here lets us!), and developing behaviour through effective feedback. The dance standard for new apprentices to get their baldric and then to reach badged status has been better defined and is motivating. We all endeavour to make new recruits feel wanted and valued (we have been guilty of 'elitism' in the past with new apprentices), as indeed I try to do when other, older members think it is time to hang up their bell pads - everyone has a contribution to make and a part to play and this needs to be tapped into. We have used videotaping and playback to look at ourselves and to produce a dvd for internal motivational consumption which I have to say, contains some pretty good dancing at a local fair. The next plan is to create an instructional dvd for new recruits covering the basic repertoire so they can practise at home.

What have we actually done and what has been the result?

- Practise is now better attended than at any point in the last few years.
- The PR campaign has got us coverage in several journals, it can only help build our profile. It certainly helps build the side's identity internally.
- We have provided our favourite pubs with a nicely framed montage of photos of the side at the pub (other sides do this but we added our name and contact details), that stays in perpetuity (we hope), and underneath it is another frame with both sides of a flyer - one page on the history of the Morris and one with the 'gig guide' calendar and contact details. We've just picked up a patron to the tune of \$1000 a year from that!
- Increased practise frequency and 'discipline', this has raised the standard of dancing. This, combined with a more aggressive calendar of tours and foot ups has resulted in a greater

sense of fun, pride and loyalty - men look better when they are out now, and therefore feel better. Getting out more, and the sense of cohesiveness we carry has in part attracted more recruits.

- Line ads in community sections of local newspapers again builds profile but has yet to provide a recruit
- Printing of two sided flyer and gig guide for handout while bagging on tour, we now have a small regular following
- Improving our web site, again profile and identity is increased.
- Morris workshops: we run an intro to the Morris workshop at folk festivals - this is good for finding likely lads (see next point below). The format is usually a few dances following the seasons or village traditions, followed by instruction in a simple dance for up to six or seven 'new sides' - five from the audience and a Sydney Man. We are lucky that we have sufficient musicians (a band with up to 6 or 7 instruments) to produce enough volume.
- Most importantly - proactive chatting up of likely men showing interest while we are out - seek them out, take their telephone number, call them, pick them up and take them to practise and take them for a beer afterwards, we make them feel wanted and needed. We don't let them go. This approach has netted all our new recruits.
- We have not lost one 'old hand' despite it looking likely at times, we have four new men and possibly another two about to join and have only lost one apprentice who had a good reason to go that was beyond our influence
- We usually have 3-4 musicians and at least 8 dancers when out
- We have, on a few occasions, achieved my aim of having two sets dancing simultaneously.

My message to all sides who complain of problems is to stop bleating about them and persist in doing something proactive and aggressive about it! ...And do it before we are all too old to attract young men.

Jeremy 'Salty' Tozer, Squire, SMM

FOXS Morris

Fox Trot Weekend Friday 9th - Sunday 11th July 2004

Sides are welcome to join us on our weekend of dance based in the Vale of Evesham, Worcestershire and North Cotswolds.

Lovely field for camping in the village of Bretforton, where, despite a serious fire at the Fleece Inn, we will be making merry. The Fleece is managed by a Morris dancer, (see last edition of Newsletter - Black Jack) so lets give him all the support we can!

Hi-lights this year include dancing at the opening of the Evesham Water Festival as well performing in some of the Cotswold's premier locations.

Contact Martin 01384 893800 for details

Bedfordshire Lace

Members of Bedfordshire Lace cement international relations with a Turkish dance group. Photo by May Ross.

Readers may remember that back in January an urgent call went out for Morris dancers to step in to save the honour of England at the Destinations 2004 Travel Show at Earls Court in London: various worldwide holiday destinations were being represented by traditional music and dance performances, but the tourist office that was meant to be supplying a Morris side hadn't delivered.

Bedfordshire Lace and Fleur de Lys both offered and performed on the 7th & 8th February respectively; considering that England was otherwise represented by a couple of lads from the Arsenal Youth team, the English Cheese Board and a town crier (who had to double as Scotland's envoy, playing the bagpipes), perhaps this was just as well.

It was good fun. We weren't on the 'World Music' stage, but in a little area set aside for performances in the UK area; we were at a cross-roads, though, and we were allowed to overflow, which we definitely needed to do. (There certainly wouldn't have been room for a NW side, and anyway, it was on carpet.) We rashly scorned the offer of microphones, but actually we could have done with them and our announcer was glad to have the loan of one. Unfortunately, we were timetabled to be on at the same time as the samba band, who actually processed past our spot (mercifully before we had actually started) and were still very definitely audible when they got to their stage on the other side of the hall; but we got good audiences anyway and they rearranged the timetable for our second spot.

There were a lot of other small dance teams about, all of them friendly and mostly completely unaware that England had any traditional dance form; it was a bit difficult explaining about the kit - they naturally assumed it was 'national' or 'regional' costume! It was a pity that there was no publicly posted programme that we found so it was a bit hit-and-miss who we got to see and we missed more than we hit. Some of them were inviting audience participation, so we had a go at hip-hop and Turkish dancing: you need good



joint for hip-hop (I think it would have helped to be 17 and, perhaps, not encumbered by a tattercoat) and a good head for the Turkish, because this lot at least were very generous with the wine. Free samples of cocktails, whisky, brandy and vodka were also on offer around the hall, so we were glad we'd gone by train.

Changing rooms were available, but they didn't have any hooks or hangers and only one mirror: Watching what the Icelandic fashion models were having done to their hair was practically an event in itself! It was jolly hot, so the water bottles and the deo-

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wipes all came in handy. There were a lot of exotic craft stalls too, and BL came away with a selection of beaded bags, 2 devore scarves and a bright pink genuine Panama hat.

For a commercial event, the money wasn't all that wonderful: we got armloads of complimentary tickets on top - but it turned out it was free to get in anyway and our fee didn't cover train fares for ten of us, so it was a good job we enjoyed it. It only occurred to us afterwards that maybe our local tourism office, or even one of our local Attractions, would have been willing to sponsor us to represent them. We'd definitely consider doing this again, though, and might try that another time.

There have been startling repercussions from this: more than a week later, on the 16th February, the Daily Telegraph, who sponsored the show, published a letter from Gordon Ridgwell (a name doubtless known to many) and yes, he was trotting out his tired old line about "a ceremonial dance for

men sworn to manhood, fiery ecstasy, ale, magic and fertility" and protesting the qualifications of 'a bevy of lady Morris dancers' to represent the national dance.

It was weird to see this old debate surface again after all this time, but it did get us a bit more attention, especially since Sophie Reid from Fleur de Lys got a rather good reply published. And 10 days after that we were contacted by our local paper for a comment and they gave us quite a splash: "Male ego bruised by Morris gals" (describing us as 'the county's famed female Morris dancers')!

Unfortunately, although we were at pains to make it clear that it was a non-issue that nowadays we only laughed at, they still claimed that it had 'prompted a furious reaction' - but they did print - prominently - my letter of protest and even an updated picture of our new kit so it gave us double exposure. How long ago that all seems!

JE Howard
Bedfordshire Lace



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Wreckers Morris

The largest gathering of Morris dancers in Cornwall



Now in their fourth season, Wreckers Morris have organised "A Wonderful Weekend of Dance" which will happen in SE Cornwall in July.

Nine other sides from Cornwall, Devon, Berkshire and Hertfordshire will be joining Wreckers on a tour which will have a decidedly watery theme. The 160-plus dancers will represent what is thought to be the largest ever gathering of Morris dancers in Cornwall. But if anyone knows different, please let us know!

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Since their formation Wreckers Morris - based at St. Dominic - has been invited to perform at festivals and dance weekends in many parts of the country. Now, says dance weekend organiser Andrew Seedhouse, Wreckers are repaying the compliments. The fun starts on the night of Friday July 23rd with a barbecue, fireworks, dancing, music and song. On the Saturday the sides will travel by coach to the seaside at Looe where they will be given a civic welcome. Then there will be a mass procession around the town and dance performances at several key points.

In the afternoon the Morris men and women will ride the Looe Valley Branch Line to St. Keyne where there will be a group dance at Paul Corrin's Magnificent Music Machines Museum. On Saturday evening the sides will visit Mt. Edgumbe Country Park and then take an evening cruise up the River Tamar to Calstock.

On Sunday the sides will process and dance through the seaside villages of Kingsand and Cawsand, with a mass swim in the sea as a grand finale. Jumping in to the sea has become something of a tradition with Wreckers, most of whom strip off and swim out to sea at the end of the annual Swanage festival.

Wreckers are certainly looking forward to welcoming the sides. One thing is certain - 160 Morris dancers are certainly going to get noticed! Skinners Brewery, of Truro, which supports Wreckers with large quantities of good beer, are helping out at the weekend with several barrels of beer and, perhaps, a souvenir bottle labelled specially for the occasion.

Wreckers draws its members from a wide area - from Ivybridge, Plymouth and Tavistock in the east to Lostwithiel and Falmouth in the west; from Millbrook in the south, north to Launceston. The other sides taking part in the July event are Winkeligh Morris, Bideford Phoenix Morris, Grimspound Border, Raddon Hill, Cogs & Wheels, Black Bess Border, Exeter Morris, OBJ and Phoenix Morris (Rickmansworth).

More details of the Wonderful Weekend of Dance can be found at the new Wreckers website, www.wreckers-morris.co.uk.

Paul White

Loose Women

A History of Coming of Age

The Loose Women were rediscovered by Gordon Newton in 1983 when he appealed, "Loose Women Required for A Respectable Pastime". Instead of being approached by the Maidstone vice squad & people of ill repute, surprisingly a number of seemingly sensible women expressed an interest.

The team was like a child. In the early years, she had to be taught, nurtured and loved. There were, of course some terrible tantrums, but that's to be expected. There were scuffed knees...oh, and black eyes...and broken fingers...and concussions...and dislocated joints – in fact, all the normal childhood mishaps.

She then entered her teenage years, and underwent a character change. Out went the sensible, studious child and in came the rebellious, wild anarchist. She flirted with boy Morris teams unashamedly, and upset a lot of girl Morris teams in the process. But at least she didn't throw out her brightly coloured clothes and decide to become a black-clad Gothic (a fate which befalls many a confused teenager!).

When she hit 18, she thought about moving away and leaving Kent behind, but friendship won through in the end. She didn't have lots of friends, but the ones she had were *good* ones, and remain so to this day.

Well, she's now approaching 21 and has bloomed into a mature (sometimes) and sensible (well, sort of) adult.

And thus ends the concise biography of the Loose Women.

The Loose Women dance their own 'loose' interpretation of Border Morris, which means lots of noise, lots of sticks and lots of movement. The only hankies you'll find in this team will be to blow their noses on.

The reputation of the Loose Women goes before them. This is of an unruly pack of beer swilling females, who enjoy nothing better than sitting in the sun, supping on a cool drink, Oh...and doing some dancing every now & again. They are laid back to the point of unconsciousness. The social aspect is very important to the side & sometimes the dancing bit may seem somewhat of a sideline. But when they do dance, they *really* dance.

The Loose Women are 21 this year, and are looking to get in contact with dancers and musicians who were once members of this legendary team. If you were, or know someone who was, a member of the team, we'd be very grateful if you could contact us.

Also, if you would like to become a part of 'living history', we always welcome new members – get in touch with us.

Elaine Newton on 02392 863188, Lanie@tesco.net, www.loosewomen.org.uk



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Merrydowners Morris

New Year's Day Parade in Hong Kong



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The Merrydowners were invited by the Mayor of Harrow to represent the Borough in the 2004 London New Year's Day Parade. In December Destination Events, the company organising that parade, was approached by the Hong Tourism Board had asked them to put together a party from the UK. Just before Christmas the Merrydowners were invited to be part of that party. There followed hasty booking of holiday from work and email correspondence with the organisers. At the same time the Morris Federation put us in touch with members of Hong Kong Morris who kindly offered to meet up with us if the schedule permitted.

We flew out on the morning of 19 January. At Heathrow we met our other three travelling companions – a public relations officer working for Destination Events and Sonny and Rainbow, the Clowns. The rest of the UK contingent travelled on other flights: a Pipe band from Edinburgh, a group of Cheerleaders formed by a church in the East End, the London Town Crier and two more people from Destination Events.

After a 13 hour flight that took us through a shortened night we arrived in Hong Kong. The Tourism Board provided the flight, accommodation, some meals and a guided tour. We were taken by coach to our 61-storey five star hotel on Hong Kong Island. In the afternoon we explored the city a little, including getting acquainted with the metro (MTR). By the end of the stay we were well versed in using that as well as buses, trams and ferries across the harbour. That night we had the first of many Chinese meals.

On the Wednesday we were taken to lunch, then had some rehearsals in the arena in Kowloon, where the VIPs would see the parade. The UK contingent were required to perform together to fill a 90 second live TV slot – something which we managed in spite of the diversity of the group. A Chinese dinner followed, then back to the hotel to change for a full dress rehearsal.

The New Year's Day Parade took place on Thursday evening (the first time the parade has taken place at night). The arena section involved the challenge of us and the cheer leaders dancing to the pipe band to allow all the UK performers to appear within the 90 second slot. Once out on the parade route we were able to spread ourselves out more and perform for the assembled crowds at interval as well as processing. We did have the hazard of the clowns ad libbing including encountering crowd control tape they stretched in our path at one point. The Tourism Board arranged for pictures to be sent back.

Friday morning was taken up with a guided tour of the Island, including a sampan trip round Aberdeen Harbour. This was followed by yet another lunch. In the afternoon we all entertained shoppers in a mall. That evening we watched the fireworks over the harbour from the height of our hotel, accompanied by some guests from Hong Kong Morris. The Hong Kong Morris side had invited us to a meal earlier in the week but our itinerary was changed when we arrived which made it impossible for us. We were able to spend a few hours chatting over a drink or two during and after the fireworks. Apparently they were also in the crowd lining the parade route the previous day.

The last day involved another shopping mall performance. We were pleased that members of Hong Kong Morris were able to come along and see us then (and subsequently emailed us some photos). We were always well received and the subject of many photographs from spectators. That evening we experienced the night market on Kowloon for more souvenirs. Sunday was a rest day until we left the hotel in the late evening for the night flight back to Heathrow.

We are grateful to Destination Events for inviting us and dealing with the arrangements, the Hong Tourism Board that provided the hospitality and accommodation (including all but one of those Chinese meals), the people of Hong Kong who made us so welcome and appreciated our performances, Hong Kong Morris for their friendly welcome too, and our fellow UK performers with whom we were able to work and socialise so well.

Ray Barber, Merrydowners Morris



Do you know who this team is?

Speculation exists that it is an EFDSS set at a teaching event in the 1930s...
but does anyone have any more info?

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We meet on Wednesday evenings.

Contact Kevin Wragg or Sara Thompson on — 01332-372639
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MORRIS FEDERATION PUBLICATIONS AND PROMOTIONAL

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+ £0.50 UK, £1.00 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Bells: Price is per bell – no reduction for 100s!

3/4" – 21p 7/8" – 23p
1" – 26p 1 1/8" – 30p 1 1/4" – 44p

Sweatshirts: Sizes – S. M. L. XL. Colours – black, navy, raspberry, yellow, jade, white, royal blue

Round Neck: £11.00

Button: (black and navy, small only) **£12.50**

T-Shirts: Sizes – S. M. L. XL. Colours – black, navy, red, yellow, green, white, royal blue

£5.50

Please give 2nd and 3rd colour choice for clothing.

Stickers: 4" diameter bearing MF name and logo – self-adhesive for music cases, files, etc.

£0.50

Leather Badges: 2" in diameter bearing MF name and logo

Black and colour on natural background or Gold on black background

£1.25

Leather Key Rings: 2" in diameter bearing MF name and logo on natural background

£1.25