



Newsletter Summer 2007

I Didn't Know Women Danced Morris – Part 1

Ten Questions with Fee Lock

Rochester Sweeps – The Views on the Street

Greenwich Chair Lift at Easter



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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

To all Secretaries, Squires, Bag people, etc.

NEWSLETTER

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

MEMBERS' MANUAL

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

ADVERTISING

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.

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EDITORIAL

The letter in this issue from Martyn Harvey set me thinking. "Is the look more important than the performance?" One of the most impressive performances of the Morris when I started out was by Mr. Jorrocks. I seem to recall only one or maybe two events where I caught them in performance. But the vision of Cotswold dances performed by what was by then a minimalist side was stunning. The dance was high energy and hypnotic to watch; the kit if I recall was all white with no baldricks or rosettes to be seen.

Move forward now to the present day. The Border/Molly axis of the dance world has in many cases moved to ever more elaborate use of costume and make up to dramatise the performance. Is this a plus or a minus? On the plus side I suppose the elaborate face painting defuses the Guardian readers horror of white folk blacking up. But on the minus side I personally find the elaboration of costume and makeup deflect attention from the dance. But maybe that's the point!

All I can say for sure is that my own opinion of a dance is based on the energy and accuracy of the footwork and the way the dancers interact with each other and with their audience. All too often today I find that the high expectation created by costume and make up often falls rapidly when the actual dance begins.

Doug

Printing
Next Issue
Front Cover Photograph

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Carrie Davies of Incognito at Oxford Folk Festival 2007.
Photo :Contributed by your very humble Editor

President's Prologue

Do you know who your MP or MEP or even your AM is?

Well if your MP is on the list below, you should in theory be happy... this is the membership list of the Parliamentary All Party Group on Folk Arts. A group whose remit is to "discuss issues and wherever possible, support Folk Arts in the UK".

Please note Folk Arts not Folk Dance or Morris Dance, but Folk Arts.

Well we do practise a folk art form don't we?

Maybe if one of the named people is your MP etc it would be worth a visit to their next Constituents Surgery to ask what they are doing to support the Traditions of this small group of Islands, in particular its Dance Traditions.....

Chairperson: The Rt Hon. John Battle MP

Vice Chair: Peter Wishart MP

Sect'y Helen Southworth MP

Treasurer: Alan Keen MP

Members: David Blunkett MP, Kevin Brennan MP, Bridget Prentice MP, Betty Williams MP, Andrew Miller MP, Anne McGuire MP, Paul Flynn MP, Michael Angram MP, Alistair Burt MP, John Bercow MP, Henry Bellingham MP, James Duddridge MP, Charles Henry MP, Paul Holmes MP, Greg Mullholland MP, John Barrett MP.

Be polite, make friends with them and maybe even invite them to your next dance out, especially if you can get the local press there too! This would be particularly good in support of attempts to raise the Dance profile in the crawl up to the Olympics.

I say Crawl as it is like dancing in treacle trying to get definitive responses from the Cultural side of the Olympics organisation. The Fed along with the Ring and Open sent representatives to a meeting in London recently where we did manage to get names and an HQ address to use but it is mightily slow progress!

The AGM would normally fall onto the Events Officer Jean but I have been making some enquiries at a family friendly venue in the Midlands to see if we can make use of a conference room there for the Sunday Business meeting. We have had the offer of a fall back alternative via New Esperance, in London, which they say is easily accessible to all and can offer a great deal as it would be mostly free (free deals are always great!). We will let you know as soon as we have something firm and are aiming to have sorted it before you all go off on summer hols.

The Joint Morris Event in Birmingham went off well with cracking sunshine and every one having fun even to the extent of there being two mass stands at the end of the day, one Cotswold and one predominantly North West. Birmingham treated us all well and we hope to obtain a DVD of the performances as a record of the Event. Thanks to all the Fed sides that made the effort to get there and dance their little cotton (or whatever) socks off!

Mayday with its Jacks and Sweeps has now come and gone, and we are well into the Festival Season now. Hopefully you will all have good experiences to report of treatment by festival organisers... spread the word about those Festivals who treated you with reasonableness and respect and lets give them our support, unless you are happy to pay for performing that is!

Trefor

COMMITTEE NEWS

FINANCE – Jenny

From the number of enquiries that I am getting, it is becoming increasingly obvious that Royal Mail has lost a substantial number of Federation membership confirmation letters. Please check that you have received your membership confirmation and insurance certificate in good time before you may be required to produce it.

EVENTS- Jean

Two workshops took place during the winter and feedback has been positive for both the rapper workshop hosted by Pengwyn and taught by Sallyport and the North West workshop hosted by Ripley Green Garters and taught by Wakefield Morris. If anyone has any requests or inspiration for future workshops it would be lovely to hear from you. So far there are no plans for the autumn so now is the time to think about any dances or styles you would really like to learn.

Some of you may be aware that the Ring have an 18-30 group which promotes dancing at the younger end of the membership age range and it has been suggested that the Morris Federation could do likewise. If anyone is interested in belonging to such a group or helping to arrange workshops, dance outs or just getting to know other interested dancers and musicians in this age range you could register your interest by dropping me an email at events@morrisfed.org.uk.

Finally I would be very interested to hear from any side that has joined CIOFF as an associate member through the Morris Federation. It is important that we monitor such involvement as associate membership depends on the Federation continuing to be a full member of CIOFF. We review annually the way the Federation is linked to other organisations

and in this case we would be grateful for your feedback.

We have had a fine Spring and many sides have already been out dancing several times either for St. George's Day or May celebrations or perhaps an early festival. Perhaps it is a good time to remind members that the PEL exemption states clearly that music should not be amplified.

NEWSLETTER – Doug

As you will see later on the newsletter has now entered the world of t'Internet. Hopefully this will widen the readership and prompt more reaction to the vital issues of the day, such as what is happening with the 2007 AGM and why didn't my article appear in the last issue? The answer to the first question is still in the air. A partial answer to the second came when Kevin our web guru found some large files addressed to the newsletter stuck in a spam trap. My apologies to the Rhayader Festival in Wales whose promotional item got lost there, and to any others who lost material. Moral – nag me for a reply if it's important.

Moving right along the two stalwarts of the contributions world Janet Dowling and Paul White continue to supply me with copy on a regular basis. But I feel there may be a bit of a North / South divide thing happening here. Any one North of the Trent fancy taking on a roving reporter role? Our Events officer Jean submits regular reports but she has to – or suffer my incessant nagging. What we need here is a volunteer.

In a similar vein Janet is looking at a joint interview approach featuring families where an interest in the Morris crosses the generations. The "Ten Questions" slot will continue and coming up will be the Salmon family of Suffolk and Terry Dix of the Witchmen. Who's next? Is there a character you know who would make a good subject? suggestions to the editor please.



IF YOU'RE BORED of LIFE...

Like many sides Crook Morris features in a number of the local publications which give some exposure to various groups. The Local Societies Database, which in Cumbria is run under the library support section of Cumbria County Council, recently sent its current listing for Crook Morris for updating.

It was pleasing to find that all the contact information was spot on. However, we were amused, to say the least, by the description of the activity of our group. We are listed as a mixed Morris side which performs Cotswold Morris, Welsh Boredom and Rapper.

Well there are one or two sides we have seen who might just qualify for this description. Then perhaps this is a challenge for some of the new style Goth Border sides to be more gothic still and just stand around in sets looking fabulous in their goth clothing and not actually dance at all?

Over to your readers.

Martyn Harvey (Foreman, Crook Morris)

EDITOR LEADS DOUBLE LIFE - SHOCK HORROR

Dear Doug

1st: I would like to thank you (Doug), John and Chris for tutoring the workshop on 24th Feb. Teaching 3 dances Gisburn Processional, Portland Hill and Carr Lodge Polka to 5 sets of keen north west morris persons, well done, thank you.

2nd: Thank you to all of you federation members who attended the day at Swanwick. (dancers and musicians) I hope you got as much out of it as the three Wakefield chaps put in to it.

3rd: Thank you to my fellow 'Garters' who encouraged me to put into practice my idea of hosting a day. Without all their help it would not have been (in my mind) such a success.

Would other north west sides please consider adding at least Gisburn and Carr Lodge to their repertoire? Mainly for when teams are out together on days of dances, its quite a crowd pleaser to show massed dancers (my opinion again). I realise a lot of teams do already do them as a few from the 11 sides represented on Saturday mentioned they had done one or all three dances before.

Thank you to all involved, from Stella

Stella Roddis - Ripley Green Garters

*Editors Comment - To whet the appetite the main massed element of the Gisburn dance was done in a circular procession and it's **so** easy. Next time the "massed" stand comes up just murmur "ASDA" and if any one perks up and starts humming John of Paris you've got a set!*

COME ON YOU BLUES

Dear Editor,

The seventh annual Southsea Folk Roots and Blues Festival takes place over the late August Bank Holiday weekend, and, due to matters beyond our control, we do not have any dancers booked.



We are looking for dance sides to perform during the afternoons of any or all of: Saturday 25th August; Sunday 26th August and Monday 27th August.

The dancing will mainly take place on South Parade Pier. Southsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire.

For more details please contact our secretary on 0770 8095735.

Thank you

SCOUTING FOR MORRIS?

Hi there,

This may seem like a bizarre request - however.

I work on behalf of an event called the 21st World Scout Jamboree. I look after the sourcing and provision of external acts to the jamboree and its sites. I am currently assisting one of the teams called Gilwell Adventure - which is one of the day long activities we are running at Gilwell Park (the Head Quarters of The Scout Association). It is a day long event with activities taking places all over the site, however at two times throughout the day all of the participants (around 4000 to 8000) pass through the training field where we are trying to create an English Fete type atmosphere.

This is the reason for my email, I have got your contact details from your Website. I am hoping you can help me find enough morris dancers to put on a display for 9 days (wither one group doing all days or a few groups doing different days). The dates are 29th, 30th, 31st July, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th August. Gilwell park is in Chingford, Essex, and I do have a tiny budget that may be able to help cover expenses. We are looking very much for display rather than a participatory activity.

If you can help please let me know, if you know someone else that may be able to help please let me know, if you require further information please let me know, if you cannot help at all, please can you reply to the email as such so I know I need to try something else.

Many thanks

Carlton Gronow

The contact for this is carltongronow@aol.com

Rochester Sweeps- A Punter's Point of View.

Woke up on Saturday May 5th- time to go to Rochester for the Morris and the Sweeps!

Long suffering husband finds his camera. I've sold the day's outing to him as a photographic opportunity for a forthcoming competition- and we are off down the M25, M26, a little bit on the M20, and then squiggle off on the A228 to Rochester.

We have learned from experience to park in the (free) Civic Centre- which was a wise decision looking at the queues of traffic on the bridge leading into and out of Rochester. From the Civic Centre car park, looking across the Medway, you can get an excellent view of Rochester Castle, juxtapositioned against the funfair. An interesting anachronism for the day, and pause for a photo shoot.

As soon as we passed over the bridge we could hear the music and then see the Morris dancers. I danced Morris for 25 years, and had to stop for health reasons- but hearing the music, the chinking of the bells and the crack of the sticks- always gets me excited! I can watch Morris for hours (as Long Suffering will attest to!)

Somehow I've always associated Rochester with Molly and Border- and not so many Cotswold teams- but our first team out is a Cotswold- whites and baldricks!



Then to our first border team of the day- Pretty Grim from Ipswich - apparently because the boys are so pretty and the

girls are so grim! But they had nothing to be grim about when the Little Grimlets came on- the younger members of pretty Grim, aged 6-14, gave a fine display and will soon be upstaging their parents. The adult team has been going 5 years, and the Grimlets for 1 year.

But the day was cold, and not many visitors about. Where was everyone? It was not the "main" day- but it was Saturday. You could watch the dancers without your view being obscured, no hectic pushing through the crowds. Just a pleasant stroll along the High Street. Had Rochester Sweeps lost its allure? At one point there were so many blue and yellow jacketed people on the High Street, I thought they must be another Morris team in cold weather kit (perhaps Hammersmith Morris had sneaked over from Hastings?). But no- it was the helpful Medway Civic Team, with shiny leaflets and happy to give any information you wanted (like where are the loos?).

Further down the High Street bumped into old friends- Hands Around from Basildon. 30 years and going strong in their rag jackets- also dancing Cotswold.



Then Minden Rose from Alton in Hampshire with their Garlands weaving in an out in their version of Beau Knot. They have been going

for 25 years- I remember when they first started!

We gradually make our way down the High Street, stopping here to watch a team, or there listen to the various singers and bands both in and out of the pubs. And of course the photos! Then Long Suffering calls for a lunch break, and please can he have a HOT cup of coffee - his hands are soo cold. As we sit in the café, watching the dancing in the street it becomes obvious that despite the cold, the crowds are now coming out. When we re-emerge onto the High Street, refreshed and revitalised, the familiarity of

the crush descends upon us and we jostle and jockey for prime position to get the photos we want.

However I am not sure that Golden Star's display was quite the photo opportunity I had envisaged. The team from Norfolk did their version of "Hopping down in Kent" – using sticks of rhubarb! The hilarity of the team spread to the audience, particularly when half a stick of rhubarb went flying into the audience.



The streets were packed with people now. Who ever doubted that Rochester had lost its allure?

Arriving at a pub to see two of East Saxon in mufti coming out, it turned out that I had just missed a stomping pub turn by GreenGate Rapper. The majority of the team are (adult) sons and daughter of East Saxons, but they were emphatic that their style and delivery of dance was not derived from their fathers. (I did think maybe having watched their fathers dance rapper for 20 years first as children then as young adults, there might have been some influences.....but who am I to say?).



None the less- they set up again on the street and went into their dance again, just to accommodate me! And, yes, they are different, and the audience loved it.

And so ended my day in Rochester Sweeps festival. It was their 27th year, with Gordon Newton and Doug Hudson working with Medway Council to put on the weekend. There was the whole range of Morris to be seen (so much for my misconceptions!) Some of the Morris teams were stunning, some of them were like clockwork, some of them were a little loose on the co-ordination, some were oblivious to the audience, some engaged well with the audience. All of them different, all of them varied. All of them keeping a tradition alive, and providing evidence that the next generation are ready and waiting in the wings to keep it going. And Long Suffering got his photos for his next competition!

Dance long and prosper!.

Janet Dowling



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EAGLES - SIXTEEN YEARS AND COUNTING

Another year, another milestone..Sweet sixteen and never been missed...pissed..kissed..whatever..2007 promises to be a year of unbridled excess, as The Eagles take another unsteady step towards adulthood, experimenting with all the things they weren't allowed to do last year. So, having left home (with parents consent) got a moped licence, drank wine and beer in a restaurant, brought a lottery ticket and claimed social security we are relaxing for a while and considering the deep significance of number 16¹. Alternatively, we could sulk, slam doors, storm off, communicate by grunting and paint our room black.

MBTI *Myers Briggs Type Indicator* describes 16 different personality types, depending on whether you are introvert/extrovert, intuitive, perceiving and so on. Your type is described in 4 letters, e.g. ISTJ, INFP, ESFJ, ENTJ etc. Most Eagles came out as EPNS² which proves nothing.

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**THE SUFFOLK FOLK
FESTIVAL**

Mathematically. Sixteen is the fourth power of two, the square of four and the smallest number with five divisors. This is the sort of information that either keeps you awake at the wonder of it, or sends you comatose at the tedium of it. It's up to you. Just don't bother telling us.

Hay On Wye. When the massed ranks of the Eagles (that's eight of them) perform this dance, sixteen sticks are employed. The sticking is complex, complicated and some say beautiful when performed properly. Where or when it has been performed properly is any ones guess. Our method, involving dropped sticks, skinned knuckles, bleeding fingers conflicting instructions and bad language is still complex and complicated,. Beauty, as always is in the beholders eye³.

Popular Music. Any number of songs "Only Sixteen", "Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen", "Sweet Little Sixteen", "Sixteen Tons" and so on. Can you think of any more? If you can, keep it to yourself.

So Ends this years random exposition. Of course, although the Eagles are 16, individual members are usually a bit older. However, we like to think that the practise of Border Morris can attract the younger female. Sadly this is not the case. We hope it can attract women generally. This doesn't seem to be the case either. But we are frequently followed by howling dogs, and frankly, an audience is an audience.

¹ It always comes to this

² Electro plated nickel silver

³ As are bit of stick, on several occasions

Eds Note : For those wondering who the Eagles are this item is from the 2007 programme of the Hook Eagle Morris Men. Any confusion with the 70's MOR rock band of a similar name is unintentional. I include as it just hit my funny bone. More of the same www.hookeagle.org.uk

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Autumn Newsletter
Saturday 18th August 2007

RAPPER WORKSHOP

Bookings were slow at first and we were worried that there would not be enough takers to make the workshop feasible. However, the Rapper world being the organised well-planned body it is, the last two weeks saw numerous bookings confirmed and the workshop was going ahead.

The location in central Darlington was easily accessible by car and train so nobody had any problems with transport - well, nobody except for Sallyport!! The majority of the team managed to get themselves stuck in Northallerton waiting for a delayed train with only 15 minutes before the start of the workshop. Luckily Stuart began things single-handed and the rest of the team turned up within five minutes of the start, so all was well.



Sallyport competitive audition for the part of "Palace Guard No 1"?

There were seven sets, ranging from youngsters hoping to start a team locally through to a turnout of eight dancers from Triskele sharpening for DERT. Each side received individual coaching from one or more of Sallyport so the teaching could be geared to meet their differing needs.

Pengwyn ensured that everyone was sufficiently refreshed during the workshop as well as providing enough lunch to weigh us all down in the afternoon session. In between workshop sessions there were displays from both Sallyport and Pengwyn.

In the evening Sallyport and Pengwyn adjourned to the Greyhound (Pengwyn's practice venue) for some post event



"..and with a bit more practise you can do this."

discussion and beer. This preceded an enjoyable rapper crawl of Darlington.

Pengwyn would like to thank Sallyport for their hard work on the day as well as the Morris Fed for initiating and supporting this well-received event, and all the participants for coming along.

Jean Smith

Bells and Drums
Maker of "Gurt Mint" bodhrans

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New Address!

Easter Monday Lifting Greenwich

What links six sets of bells, an old leather chair covered in grass and flowers, and a great big white spiky slug?

Well the bells belong to BlackHeath Morris, who were out on Easter Monday in Greenwich. For the past twenty years they have revived the custom of Easter Lifting- hence the decorated chair. Said to be an old custom, common all over Britain until a hundred years ago when the Church discouraged it, feeling it to be a parody of Christ's rising.



The Gentleman's Magazine (1784) says:--"The men lift the women on Easter Monday and the women the men on Tuesday. One or more

take hold of each leg, and one or more of each arm near the body and lift the person up, in a horizontal position, three times. It is a rude, indecent, and dangerous diversion, practiced chiefly by the lower class of people."

BlackHeath Morris- Rude? Indecent? Dangerous? Lower class?

They have their own sources- their leaflet says that the custom is much older than Christianity being "the simple compliment of being elevated in Eostre's Throne of Flowers. Eostre was the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of Spring and fertility whose name still lingers in the word Easter- her holiday! Therefore to be lifted was to be voted a creature of great pulchritude and desirability and the lady lifted bestowed her thanks on each of those who lifted her, in the form of a kiss before her departure."

I can confirm that BlackHeath Morris were perfect gentlemen- no lewd behaviour, the chair was beautifully decorated, carefully lifted and lowered. Indeed there was no shortage of young ladies wanting to be lifted, and on one occasion two young ladies were vying to be the one lifted. BlackHeath, ever ready to rise to the occasion, lifted both in turn! And of course every young lady were more than happy to bestow a kiss on each man's cheek, until they recognised the same beards coming around a second and third time! However, they were compensated by being presented with a Pace egg, a brightly coloured boiled egg- kept safe in basket of swan feathers!

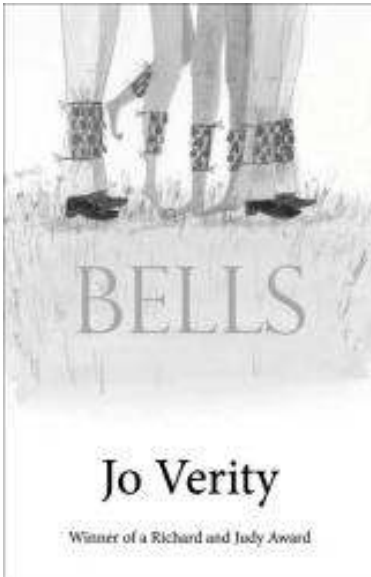


Alas, there is no local attempt for the ladies to do the lifting on Easter Tuesday. But what better way to spend the afternoon on Easter Monday.

And the great big white spiky slug? Ah! The Cutty Sark, normally a wonderful backdrop, was covered in a white spiky tarpaulin while it is being renovated!

Janet Dowling

BELLS by Jo Verity



Middle-aged Jack has fun away dancing from home – not with loose women, but as part of a Morris dancing team! When one of his summer weekend gigs is unexpectedly cancelled, he books himself into the "Welcome Stranger" in Llangwm, for a weekend that changes his life. Falling head over heels for the deliciously attractive and accommodating young woman behind the desk, he determines to launch himself into a world of unaccustomed subterfuge.

Meanwhile, his wife, Fay, disenchanted with her day-to-day life at the chalk-face, and missing her youngest son, who has gone AWOL in Australia, offers a home to one of his old bandmates. In a few days time, she will also be housing her frail but argumentative mother-in-law. To top it all, in a hitherto unparalleled state of emotional turmoil, she suddenly conceives a passion for the unsuitably young son of one of her closest friends.

Can Jack and Fay cast off the mundane chains of school and dentistry? Will their marriage survive the draw of new and exotic lovers? Can the chime of Morris bells turn women's heads in the days of the iPod and the mobile phone?

Published by Honno Welsh Women's Press. - 18TH May 2007

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Paul White

Stereotypes – Still Out There!

When my children were growing up, the Blur/Oasis battle was raging in the pop charts. I was always a Blur man myself, although you can't deny that Oasis do turn out a good tune.

One of Blur's songs, perhaps on their first album (nearly wrote L.P. there!) was all about stereotypes. And I was reminded of it when the morris side went out for its first gig of the season in April.

Stood at the bar ordering the beer and blackcurrant and soda¹, I proffered a friendly hello to the man sat on a barstool looking distinctly unimpressed with life. Glum. Surly. He was a picture of misery.

I chatted anyway, and wished I hadn't. I should learn. There are some people you meet who can't bring themselves to smile, aren't there? He was one.

Without so much as a how do you do, he berated us for not being morris dancers. Of course, I fell into the trap of asking him why.

You don't wear white. You haven't got bells and you have women dancing.

I mean, where do you begin other than pushing him off his stool?

But even if I'd done that I bet he would have hit the floor with that smug expression intact and beer unspilled. And that would have annoyed me even more!

Did he have anything against morris dancers in particular? I suspect his comments simply reflected his basically sour outlook on life. He's the sort of pub bore who has a superior stance on everything I shouldn't wonder. Yes, a stereotype. There's one in most pubs. Indeed, there are times I feel myself developing nicely into the role.

My overwhelming desire to take him aside and point out a few home truths was negated when one of our women dancers flourished her splendid kit at him, bells-a-jangle and went off to dance.

What a lovely put-down – and by a woman! He must still be frothing into his beer.

He had no response so we left him in his bitter world and went off to the courtyard to perform in the failing light.

Over the half-hour or so we were out there, the audience swelled from two to about a dozen, including a four-year-old who was utterly entranced and displayed a great sense of rhythm. Quick, sign him up! Not a bad audience score for that time of year.

Only three of the side we put out were of the male variety. It's a shame. We could do with more blokes – as could a lot of mixed sides. But I've got my knee, Graham's got his back and Phil has too many currently wonky bits to list. So it was down to Peter, Ashley and Mike to do the man thing.

It got me thinking about that bloke at the bar again. If he thinks morris dancing is the preserve of men, and he has an unprompted view on the subject, why doesn't he get up and do it himself?

One reason is that he and his kind haven't got the nerve. The 'cissy' take on

morris dancing is put about by those blokes who lack the energy, stamina, pride and simple confidence in life and in themselves needed to perform it and enjoy it.

We do need more men to step forward and take to the streets.

But there are attitudes that still persist even in the morris world that serve to put off both men and women from having a go.

Getting together with another side for an early St George's Day bash, there was much gossip to be absorbed and various friends to catch up with.

There was news of a new side being formed (all men – good luck if you can find them) and a long-standing side falling apart at the seams – “still a lot of old Ring attitudes around there,” it was said.

And this in a mixed side! So you womenfolk can dance with us but we don't like it really. Another stereotype. Still alive and kicking unfortunately but perhaps in decline.

Good grief! Anyone coming in to that side would likely be put off the very notion of morris for life, and who would blame them.

There's nothing wrong with single-gender sides. In fact I do believe that a side has more balance, more precision, more togetherness if it is all male or all female.

But mixed sides are great fun and I have never danced with anything else. The times we have had have been wonderful.

Yes. There must be more to life than stereotypes. Blur had it right.

Paul White

1 The beer was in one glass; the blackcurrant in another. Just in case you were worried. For the blackcurrant story, and if you fancy a dance in France, visit www.danseurs.hey42.co.uk.

AND THERE'S MORE

This was a snippet spotted by one of our readers in the Guardian TV reviews from the 24th of April.

“Looking for England (More4), a nice film in which people tell a camera what England means to them - the country, not the football team, though for some it does have three syllables and David Beckham's free kick against Greece does come into it. For others, it's about Saint George and chivalry, a sense of belonging. It's Sunday roast, Bamburgh castle, not knowing who's winning in the cricket. It's about Handel's Messiah, about language, and about a beautiful landscape that is still soaked in the blood of centuries of conflict. It's also about more dubious things like Morris-dancing and, more dubious still, strange rural festivals where ignorant country folk black up. Nothing racist about it, they say. Hmmm.

What do you think? Have your say at <http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/index.html> “

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10 Questions to Fee Lock

Or The Secretary's Secrets Unlocked!



Fee Locke is the foreman of Mad Jack's Morris in Hastings, a part-time member of Hannah's Cat, also in Hastings and a 'resting' member (no spare time, you know the drill) of Loose Women in Maidstone. She

says she is "The usual Morris tart!"

She is also the Secretary of the Morris Federation and the Secretary of Hastings Traditional Jack in the Green, a festival which runs over the first May Bank Holiday weekend.

1. What first got you interested in the Morris?

My brother started dancing with Headcorn Morris in Kent and two months later they started a ladies' side. I loathed school with a vengeance and thought it might be a distraction peopled by those who were more interested in what I had to say than the way I said it.

2. How long have you been dancing?

Since I was 14. (*Ed. We're just too discreet to ask how long ago that was.*)

3. Have you ever tried any other style or tradition?

I mess around with a bit of Border at Christmas and New Year and have staggered badly doing some Appalachian.

4. What has been the high spot of your dancing life?

Mostly, pretty much every time I get to dance.

5. And the low spot?

No comment!

6. What or where do you consider the strangest dance spot/dance out you ever took part in?

Ernie Warner of Headcorn Morris (see above) was a captain in the Territorial Army and wangled us a flight in a Hercules transport aircraft from RAF Manston in Kent (now Kent International Airport) to RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. After take-off we got a set up to dance immediately, in spite of our quartermaster escort rather amusingly insisting that we should remain within our webbing cages designed for soldiers in full combat gear and back pack. Capering as you go through an air pocket and discovering the floor six feet lower than where you left it re-defines strange ... I dined out a lot on that.

7. What advice would you give to a newly formed dance team?

How long have you got?! Probably ... compromise is for cissies

8. Is there one aspect of the morris world today you would gladly see consigned to the scrap heap?

The "Oh, it'll do" attitude, with the "It was this or keep fit" coming a close second.

9. Is there one aspect you would fight to keep above all others?

The right to insist that we do it, and do it properly.

10. What other interest do you have outside dancing – keep it legal decent and honest!

Calling ceilidhs (ruthless self-promotion: see the cheesy pictures at: www.FeeCallsCeilidhs.co.uk), swimming, cycling, politics, economics (yes, I really am that dull), traditional customs & practices.

And of course, heated debates at 3 am after the party the night before, discussing the minutiae of Morris ... always ending with, "Yes, but is it TRADITIONAL?!" the answer of course, being, "Have another gin ..."

Well mine's a malt whiskey - and may we all continue the grand debate! Many thanks Fee!

Janet Dowling

I Didn't Know Women Danced Morris?

Women and the Morris dance

Imagine a bright summers afternoon. A public house in the middle of the country, or even your local town or city centre. A glass of whatever you wish, to sate your thirst. Music starts up and you hear the jingling of bells. Someone calls out –“it's the Morris dancers.” You turn to find yourself watching six women, each with a heavy stick in her hand, dancing the Morris.

Now that's when you hear- “I didn't know women danced Morris!”

Sadly, even in the 21st century, the old chestnut of women not dancing Morris still comes back to haunt us. But women and Morris dancing have been entwined for 500 years from providing the earliest known evidence for the morris in old records, to accounts of women dancing Morris in Shakespeare's time, to the revival of the Morris at the early part of the 20th century, the research to establish its most likely origin, and then the explosion of women dancing in the 1970's onwards.

Women and the early evidence of Morris dancing

The earliest records of Morris dancing is from 1458 from the will of Alice Wetenhale, a widow from Bury St Edmunds where she says “*I leave to my daughter Catherine three silver cups, sculpted with a moreys dauns (sic), with one lid for them*” (Forrest 1999 p47). With no other description, it is obvious that she expected that the executor of her will would be sufficiently knowledgeable of a Morris dance to be able to recognise the cups, as well as evidence that “*the dance image was worthy of precious and lasting objects.*” (Forrest 1999 p48)

Other records of the period show that in 1477 the Drapers guild paid for a Morris dance as part of its contribution to the midsummer watch in London, and in 1494 the account books of Henry VII

showed that money was paid for “pleying (sic) of the mourice (sic) dance”.

Women dancing Morris in Shakespeare's time

Will Kemp, actor and stage clown with Shakespeare's company, was famous for his Nine Daies Wonder. He danced the Morris from London to Norwich in 1600, and wrote a book about it to raise money. During his journey he met not one but two women who joined with him in a Morris dance.

In Chelmsford he met “*a Mayde not passing 14 yeares of age... made request ... that she might dance the Morrice with me in a large great roome. ...I was soone wonne to fit her with bells... and to our jumps we fell. A whole houre she held out...*” (Forrest 1999 p239)

And then he met in Sudbury

“*a lusty country lass ...saying “If I had begun to dance, I would haue held out one myle though it had cost me my life. ... if the Dauncer will lend me a leash of his belles, ile venter to tread one mile with him my selfe. (sic)”* Kemp said of her “*she had a good ear, (and) daunst truely*” (Forrest 1999 p239)

Forrest states that this is evidence both for women dancing the Morris, as well as that Morris dancing was well known along the route Kemp took. Forrest also cites several examples in the 17th and 18th centuries where men and women were described in Morris dances.

Revival of Morris dance in early twentieth century

The Morris dance revival is generally dated to 1899, when Cecil Sharp first met Headington Quarry Morris dancers. He recorded the meeting in his notebooks, and took it no further as his interest was in folk song collecting. He had an article published on some songs he had collected in Somerset.

Mary Neal was a philanthropist who worked in East London where she set up

a club for working girls, and developed a tailoring establishment called Maison Esperance, offering good working conditions. She heard of the folk songs, and in 1905 approached Sharp asking if they would be appropriate for the girls in her club. Sharp was delighted with this, saying that "by a spiritual sixth sense, these working girls would reclaim their lost inheritance".

Mary Neal reported, "It was as if the club had gone mad, they were perfectly intoxicated with the music." Pleased with the effect, Mary Neal then asked Sharp if he knew of any dances to go with the songs. Referring to his notebooks, he was able to give her the address of the dancers he had seen six years previously. She took a train and a Hansom cab, met some of the dancers, and invited them to London to teach the dances to her girls. The girls performed them at the club Christmas party, and encouraged by their reception, presented a public performance of singing and dancing, with Sharp giving a lecture.

As a consequence, the Esperance girls were asked to put on demonstrations around the country and to teach the dances in schools and other places. The school boards took an interest, and Sharp collaborated with Herbert MacIlwaine (musical director of the Esperance club), to produce the first of the Morris Books, dedicated to the Esperance Morris. Sharp noted the music, while MacIlwaine notated the steps from one of the Esperance girls, Florrie Warren.

Having started on a common path, however, Mary Neal and Sharp's views diverged. Influenced by his experience in the folk song collecting, Sharp was keen to preserve the dances untainted, to keep them in the form that "was an expression of their enthusiasms, based on the incidents of a common life and common work." In 1907, the magazine *Punch* published a cartoon of three male morris dancers and three female morris dancers, led by Mr Punch. Mary Neal saw this as a positive step, advertising their plans to

set up a national movement for folk dances. However Sharp saw this as a threat, of the morris dance being sucked in to the ethos of "Merrie England" which presented a saccharine view of the past, and being changed beyond recognition.

In addition, Mary Neal was also developing a political interest. She was at the first meeting of the Women's Social and Political Union, taking the minutes of meeting. Although she was not active herself, the Esperance club danced at many of the Suffragette events. Sharp was unhappy with the suffrage movement (his sister Evelyn was also active and had been arrested on one occasion) and felt that it was not appropriate.

Attempts to set up a national movement failed, mainly because Sharp tried to put too many constraints on how it would operate. During this time Sharp began collecting the Morris dances on his own, and published the second volume without reference to the Esperance club. There began an acrimonious relationship between them, with Mary Neal having a more relaxed approach to the dance, to learn from the traditional dancers and pass on both the steps and the spirit of the dance, whereas Sharp felt it needed to be more disciplined, with people trained to teach the dance uniformly. At one point he declined to let the traditional dancers participate in the training of teachers because they were doing it "differently" from the way he had collected it.

Mary Neal did a lecture tour in the US, and when she returned to England she collected the material for the first of two Esperance Morris Books, published in 1911.

There followed a period where the argument and counter argument between Mary Neal and Sharp were carried out in the letter columns of *National Newspapers* and magazines, both trying to put their point of view, and becoming frustrated with the other. In time Sharp, with his social influence, academic standing and publications, established

the foundation of the English Folk Dance Society (which later became the English Dance and Song Society aka EFDSS).

With the coming of the war in 1914, Mary Neal turned her attention to other areas, and to all intents and purposes left the arena. Sharp died in 1924.

In 1937 Mary Neal was awarded the CBE for services in connection with the revival of folk songs and dances.

In her later years she fell under the influence of Rolf Gardiner, and in trying to understand why she had failed in the revival of the morris, she took on his beliefs that morris dancing was a masculine ceremonial rite, and that "by putting women on to this masculine rhythm I had quite innocently and ignorantly broken a law of cosmic ritual, and stirred up disharmony which became active as time went on... I believe now that this misuse of the morris dance was the reason for the bitter estrangement between my colleagues and myself, the cause of which was as unknown to them as it was to me." Gardiner was to influence many people in this belief and which perpetuates today. (Boyes 1993 160-7)

Mary Neal died in 1944.

The contribution she made to the revival of the morris dance, outside the existing traditional teams, was very significant. Without her input, organisational skill, enthusiasm and vigour, Sharp may never have been inspired or enabled to take an interest in the morris dance. Although they had a common aim to begin with, they diverged over they wanted to develop the dance. It is unfortunate that Mary Neal felt that she had fallen foul of some cosmic force by introducing women into the dances, rather than recognising some of the social pressures she was working against.

The saddest part is that the issue was not so much which one of them was right, but why one of them had to be wrong. In this day and age both points of view are needed and greatly valued.

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Janet Dowling



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EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION

Hello All,

A new education initiative is underway at the EFDSS and we are putting a call out for volunteers to assist in designing and producing teaching materials to be distributed via a new Education web site. The curriculum areas supported will include:

Music – Dance – Art – History – Geography – Mathematics - Social Studies

..... but might, with a measure of creative thinking, extend into any area of the curriculum.

If you feel that you have something that you would like to contribute we'd love to hear your ideas. We would especially welcome the involvement of people who would assist in practical ways by providing outline schemes, written materials, audio and/or video elements, etc., either as individuals or as part of a team.

For obvious reasons we would particularly like to hear from teachers about what resources would help them. We are also particularly keen to develop materials using the resources of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

If you would like to get involved and contribute to this most important initiative, please contact me for more information at

Johnny Adams EFDSS Web Services Director - j.adams@salford.ac.uk

A WORD IN YOUR WEB



Finally the Newsletter makes its appearance on the World-wide Web. Enter into your browser of choice www.mfnewsletter.info and you should find yourself on the home page. Select a year and your choice of the four editions for that year will be offered. Click on the cover and hey presto the edition rolls into view before your very eyes. That is of course assuming you have an Adobe Acrobat PDF reader on your PC. Since most users can turn up an average of four or five copies of Acrobat on any single disc, in my experience, this should not be a problem.

The site is currently operational but as yet untested by other than myself – probably. So go forth access and view and let me know of any hitches, glitches or glories you find, preferably in reverse order. Just one immediate comment owing to my having what I like to call “a life” the work of converting editions will be taken at a pace commensurate with fitting in that life. I shall also, as the Goons would have it “Walking Backwards” but not to Christmas only as far as the spring 2004 issue. Unless of course any of my predecessors can supply the data for further conversions!



Oh and whilst I'm on this subject requests for bells, whistles, movies, or any other of the myriad objects that clutter the web pages of the world will be met with a gentle smile and shake of the head – unless of course there's money involved. My fundamental design ethic is KISS, Keep It Short and Simple. Rather like the editor then.

CIOFF UK – Jean Smith – Events Officer

I attended the Cioff UK AGM recently and was interested to note some of the topics discussed..... trying to initiate a youth project and the general lack of recognition of folk tradition in the great Britain. I feel these are common themes for many organisations and are certainly things that come up regularly within the Federation.

CIOFF UK is a vehicle for all members of the Federation to find overseas festivals. A mere £10 membership fee will produce information about a wealth of opportunity. I have received several email requests over the last few weeks asking me specifically about dancing abroad so I know there is interest. Groups wishing to take part will need to provide a DVD or video of themselves plus a short history to send to the organisers.

Currently these are festivals looking for dancers in 2007.

April: China, Brazil

May: China

June: Poland

July: Turkey, Poland, China, Germany

August: Poland, Hungary, Brazil

Any teams who have a strong youth element may also like to consider involving themselves in the Youth Project. Delegates attend conferences around the world and it would be a fascinating way to widen horizons and meet other young people from different countries who share a similar interest in their folk traditions. If only I was younger!!

Our UK representatives are Joe and Olga Maloney and they can be reached on cioff@folkloredirectory.com or check their website www.cioff.org

Editors Comment – As you will notice most of the dates Jean mentions are probably past their “sell by dates”. This is because the copy for this item was lost in the ether for a while! However it fits with Jean’s plea for feedback on CIOFF in the autumn 2006 edition of the Newsletter. So if you are an associate member of CIOFF, have attended a festival via a CIOFF contact or might want to do either of the aforementioned contact Jean. We need to know if the Federation membership of CIOFF is worthwhile.

SOMEONE LOVES US!

Just when it seems the world is full of the old stale attitudes to traditional dance up comes a little ray of light. This was a request from the features editor of “The Publican” to our hardworking secretary:

“I’m putting together a feature on Morris dancing for our publican readers. It seems as popular as ever, perhaps more so considering the specific exemption in the licensing laws, but what I need is an official comment from the Morris dancers themselves to that effect.”

So there you have it “popular as ever”. Mind you I’m sure none of our readers needed telling that.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Please send any contributions for the Autumn Newsletter to the Newsletter editor by
Saturday 18th August 2007
newsletter@morrisfed.org

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St GEORGE RIDES AGAIN



Hexam Morris Men about to take out the photographer!

Dance teams from around the Newcastle area met again this year to celebrate St George's Day by dancing in front of the Baltic Art complex on the Gateshead quay side on Sunday 22nd April. This has become something of a tradition since the major Joint Organisations Day of Dance in 2005. The Ring,

the Morris Federation, Open Morris and EFDSS were all represented. With Hexam Morris Men, Hexhamshire Lasses, Short Circuit, Tyne Bridge and Addison Clog and Rapper turning out to perform

Addison brought along their children's team who danced some lovely choreographed North-East horn-pipe steps and we extremely effective in lowering the average age of the performers! The weather was kind, although not



Whilst Hexhamshire Lasses try the more subtle "edge in and lasso her"

sunny the temperature was acceptable for dancing outside and there was no rain to spoil the proceedings. Thanks to all who took part. It was generally agreed to be a very pleasant way to start the dancing season. See you again next year.

Jean Smith – Events Officer

Calendar

June

Sat 9th

The Gate to Southwell.

A traditional procession from Nottingham to Southwell. More information can be found on www.dolphin-morris.co.uk and click on the Gate to Southwell link.

Sat 16th

Ripley Green Garters 25th Birthday Carsington Reservoir

Fri 15th-Sun 17th

Maybe Morris Weekend of Dance

Based at Wisborough Green, West Sussex

There are still some places available at this biennial event so if anyone would like to come along they would be most welcome (teams or individuals). Contact May on

maybemorris@tiscali.co.uk

Sat 23rd

Locos in Motion Midsummer Morris Festival

July

Fri 6th - Sun 8th

Fylde Coast 20th Birthday. St. Annes carnival and Lytham

Sompting Village Morris "END OF THE PIER" Weekend of Dance.

Mon 9th

Harthill Well Dressing, Harthill, Sheffield. Three Shires at the opening ceremony

Fri 20th - Sun 22nd

The 2007 International Pipe and Tabor Festival , St Albans, Herts

October

Sat 20th

City Clickers Clog and Step Workshop Horfield North Bristol.

First and Last (Almost)



Incognito are from L to R
Val Southern - Carrie Davies - Barbara
Bentley and Paul Hudson

We started with a cover picture of one step dancer and now we finish with the whole team who also get a name check. Carrie who is featured on the front cover has now departed for China to take up a teaching job so if you were wondering where she was at Rochester there's your answer.

Apology - In the last edition the Web of Confusion article had an incorrect mail address it should have been:

sally.hamlyn@virgin.net

Work Has Gone to His Head



Whilst I'm name checking here's a photo of one of our regular advertisers Gerhard Kress taken at Sidmouth a couple of years ago. Apparently it was for a newspaper item, Gerhard doesn't routinely wear bell pads as earmuffs I'm sure. But then again maybe he's out to start a new branch in the tradition.

MORRIS FEDERATION SHOP

PUBLICATIONS:

Cotswold Glossary: An invaluable reference book including definitions of steps and figures found in two or more traditions; a cross-reference to all Cotswold traditions and types; terms used by different authors for the same movements; Morris musicianship and much more.

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Adderbury: Produced jointly by Tim Radford and The Morris Federation, this book contains the history of the tradition, copies of original notation from the Blunt manuscript and modern notation with easy-to-follow diagrams for 13 stick and 13 hanky dances. Includes photographs and music.

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Size/qty	25	50	100
1 1/4"	£14.50	£29.00	£56.00
1 1/8"	£10.00	£19.00	£37.00
1"	£8.50	£15.25	£30.50
7/8"	£7.25	£14.00	£25.50
3/4"	£6.75	£12.75	£24.75

NB: For bells all prices include 1st class postage
Orders for quantities of over 100 bells will carry a surcharge for additional postage costs.

PROMOTIONAL GOODS:

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) **SALE £7.50** No choice of colour (Was £12.50)

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

SALE £3.50 No choice of colour (Was £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

Most booklets and promotional goods include postage.
Prices are correct at time of printing.
Order form on the Federation web site or from the treasurer.