



Newsletter Autumn 2008

**BLACKING UP – THAT OLD FAVOURITE TOPIC
ANGELA LEE – A REMEMBRANCE
CONCERN FOR STANDARDS IN DANCE
QUESTION TIME WITH VAL MARSDEN
NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION**



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NEWSLETTER COPY DATE

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newsletter@morrised.org.uk

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

I'm just back from a week in France where Fylde Coast Cloggers and Wakefield were dancing. The two sides enjoyed a wonderful, if sometimes wet, week taking in the atmosphere and culture of the west of France.

Fortunately the weather stayed dry for the dancing and as well as our own displays at tourist spots we were able to join in two local festivals and see how the French treat their traditions of dance. The contrast with the way the English treat their own traditions was an eye opener to say the least. The Bretons fielded teams of dancers in traditional dress where the styles of dress identified the region or even the town that the dress came from. Variations in embroidery or head-dress could identify the area or status of the wearer. More to the point the audience knew what these variations were and took an obvious pride in seeing the tradition being kept alive.

When the formal displays were over the music carried on and without any need for prompting the crowd formed circles or joined up in couples to carry on dancing. From the tiniest tots through parents and on to grandparents the whole crowd joined in the celebration of their culture. More amazingly even though drink was being taken there were no drunks in evidence. If one who had drunk well if not wisely looked like trying to join the throng a stern look from a matriarch soon saw them sheepishly retreating. To quote from the Steve Knightly song "Roots";
"What have they got right that we got wrong?"

Doug

Printing
Next Issue
Front Cover Photograph

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Beltane Border at Warwick Folk Festival 2008
Photo :Contributed by the Editor (yet again!)

President's Prologue

Scary things on the Horizon!

Below is a notification received from Folk Arts England (the Federation is a member of this body) regarding the new Independent Safeguarding Authority which I alluded to last issue of the newsletter.

"Added by the good work of Bev and Ray Langton, the AFO/FolkArts England has had for many years, a Safe Child Policy, recently updated. Now the Government has published an official response to the findings of it's consultation into an independent safeguarding authority. From October 12th 2009 anyone working with children and vulnerable adults, including those employed, or volunteering to work with arts organisations, must apply to be registered with the ISA. It will be a criminal offence to employ anyone in such a capacity, who is not registered. There will be a one off registration fee of £64, from which volunteers are exempt and which includes an enhanced CRB check.

The ISA can draw on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults list, the Protection of Children Act list and List 99, held by the Department of Children, Schools and Families in their assessment of the application. For more on this see www.isa.gov.org.uk and should members have any further queries, don't hesitate to contact us and we will assist."

Enquires are being made of the Home Office and bodies such as the Children's Commissioner to try to get clarification on how it will affect groups such as dance teams.

Will every member of a team need to be registered, will we be classed as

volunteers etc. We'll let you know as soon as we know!

Till then, please ensure you use a common sense approach and follow the Guidelines of our Safe Child and Child Safety Policies (copies can be obtained from Fee our Sect', and hopefully will be available off the website).

We don't want anyone to decide not to have 'Youth' as members, that would be a disaster for the future of the dancing after all...just be aware,

This new body is supposed to regularise the current CRB checking system and simplify it, not to make life more difficult!

Trying to keep up with this constant stream of legislation and Regulations takes its toll, and after six years in post, I'm going to stand down as President with effect from the 2009 AGM (unless anyone else is willing to stand this time round in '08).

During my presidency (and my predecessors) the Federation has become more recognised as a national body to be respected, and with a voice which has to be listened to and consulted. At major conferences /meetings we have succeeded in raising the profile of dance somewhat!

Okay the tabloids still poke fun and jibes at us, but where opinion matters, we have a say.

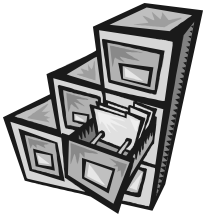
Our traditions are not things to be sidelined or ignored....

Hopefully this lengthy notice will give someone time to cogitate and maybe even chat with me about how they could take the Federation on the next steps into the future.....

The future is ours and it involves Traditional Dance!

Trefor

*Eds Note - TLA Time –
AFO - Association of Festival Organisers
(www.folkarts-england.org)*



ARCHIVE - Mike Everett Massed Dance Mystery solved!

My grateful thanks to two readers of the newsletter who have provided more information about the postcard picture of massed morris and maypole dancing. It was indeed at Bramall Lane and celebrated the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary in 1911.

Brian Hanson from Sidmouth provided a couple of extra photographs from the event that are from a booklet by Peter Harvey from 1980. Peter Harvey was a journalist who wrote a humorous, daily column for the Sheffield Morning Telegraph. Brian also provides information about the new cricket pavilion at Bramall Lane. Up until 1910 there was a single storey pavilion, then Archibald Leitch designed the two-tier stand with 5,600 seats and a further 3,000 standing on the terracing for spectators of both cricket and football. The pointed central globe, clock and copper ball were Leitch's distinctive features.

Fran Fermer, of Feet First and Cock & Magpie Morris, from Derbyshire sent some information from her father, David Clarebrough, who is the historian for Sheffield United Football Club. The event was part of the City of Sheffield Coronation Festivities from June 22 – 29, 1911 to mark the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary. Fran also sent a photocopy of the programme page for Saturday 24 June 1911 when the massed morris and maypole dancing took place.

The dancing was item 6 in the Order of Pageant programme for the day. There were about 1500 children from local schools involved. The schools are all listed in the programme, as are the dances. These were Processional Morris, Barber's Pole (Maypole), Brighton Camp (Morris), Spider's Webb (Maypole), Rigs O' Marlowe (Morris), Single Plait (Maypole), followed by combined Dancing

(Dargason) "in which all will join". Entry to the event cost between 6d (sixpence / 2½p) and 2s 6d (half a crown / 12½p), half price to children, with the proceeds going to charity.

My thanks once again to Brian and Fran for their information.

It's been done before, so we now have a programme to follow. All we need is a suitable event... what about the 2012 Olympics?

NEWSLETTER – Doug Bradshaw



This issue comes with the usual reminder that access to the on-line version of the newsletter (www.mfnewsletter.info) will give you access to the colour version! This

is all the more relevant as the piece by Chas Marshall remembering Angela Lee contains an example of Angela's art work which the monochrome of the printed page just cannot do justice to.

With the nights drawing in I am getting down to the task of putting the colour into the editions on the web which lack this feature. Obviously I will not be hand tinting the photo described by Mike in his piece above as, contrary to some opinions, I was not around at the time to note what the colours should be. And that's because I had yet to be born not because I was on holiday!

I'm still asking for candidates for the "Questions to..." feature. Young or old, male or female, Cotswold, Sword or Molly the age, gender or style is not important. It's the human interest we're after. So if you're human you probably qualify. Don't wait to be asked volunteer! Or failing that volunteer a friend – or even a foe.

And finally any hints, leads, tips or even just vague suggestions of people, businesses or products from which an advert for inclusion in the newsletter could be wrestled let me know.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR – E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR - LETTERS TO THE EDITOR – E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR



Dates for your diary

Just so that everyone knows when events that I organise, or have a hand in, are on, here's a list!

At the moment, all are on an open invite.

1. Fools and Beasts Unconvention, Colton, Nr. Rugeley, Staffordshire, UK. October 17th -19th 2008 Cost £50. All Fools, Animals, Beasts, Betsies, Characters etc. invited. Pass the message on to your Fool or Animal in your side! Please find application form below.

2. Advance Notice Fools and Beasts Unconvention, Utrecht, 23-25th October 2009!

3. Polperro Festival - June 20th-28th 2009. Teams required for weekends - nominal payment available for expenses, plus some subsidised food. Accommodation is free camping.

4. Banbury Hobby Horse Festival - we need as many Horses and other Animals to attend the weekend - self-catering basis with Feast on Sat night. Also Morris Teams required. I will channel all enquiries to organisers. July 3-5th 2009.

Early enough notice for everyone?? Please feel free to contact me for any further info!

Spread the word to all your colleagues re these events, please.

Sorry to those who have already had communications from me by other means - just making sure!

Rob & Trigger triggertrrotter1@aol.com

Editors Note: The application form is available on the Newsletter web page (www.mfnewsletter.info).

Attic Sale

Hello there,

I live in Hungerford, W Berkshire where we used to have a NW side called Hungerford Clog Morris. This folded some years ago and in a loft clear out preparing for a move we discovered this weekend: five pairs of bare undecorated bobbins and 14½ pairs (?!) of twisted ropes [I don't actually remember our one handed dancer!]

If these are of any use to a side they are here for the taking. Perhaps you could re-direct this to the right person if you are not that one. Perhaps there is a place on the website where sides can find things like this. I don't know. When we were in the Fed there was no such thing as a website!

Regards,

Joanna Stevens - ex Hungerford Clog Morris

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR – E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR - LETTERS TO THE EDITOR – E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

AN OLD FAVOURITE COMES ROUND AGAIN



The last issue carried a letter from Anne Brierley asking for an explanation of the origins of the blacking up that features in many of the English dance traditions.

The reason was that some people who saw her paintings of tradition dance found the blacking up offensive and she wanted to have some information to counter these objections. Within a few days of the issue hitting the door mat responses arrived from our readers. The first of these came from Fee Lock the Federation secretary.

The origins of black face are, quite simply, that of disguise. Blacked up faces in traditional dance in England are exactly the same as whited-up faces in African and aboriginal traditions, and came to prominence in country areas generally during the fallow period just after Christmas and before Spring. It was a period when the land was resting and, as Britain was mainly agricultural until the intense building after the First World War, most farm labourers could expect a lean time. It's difficult to appreciate now, in the mostly urban 21st century, just how much the agrarian year dominated people's lives. We take for granted that we can get to work in the next town by a certain time, that if it's bad weather we can take protective clothing and few of us have ever been absolutely soaked and unable to get dry and warm after a downpour. However, that was everyday life until just three generations ago: children would be expected to start formal work at 12, working locally, marrying a local at perhaps 14, staying at one parent's house until the old folk died, having no reason to leave the village and being buried there.

Farm work was unremittingly hard, the conditions harsh bordering on slavery, the prospects nil and the profits going straight to the landowner. People were expected to be strong enough to perform manual labour for at least ten hours a day. Antibiotics didn't exist so a cut from a brishing hook would gallop into septicaemia; anaesthetics were piece-meal. So tough luck if you're having a difficult labour (with no contraception it's a child every 18 months from marriage to menopause so losing one could be a blessing), and absolutely no welfare state. If you can't work, your family has to support you because the parish won't. Or it's the dreaded workhouse.

*For some excellent illustrations of this, try Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and the *Candleford* trilogy by Flora Thompson.*

Regardless of how good a worker you might have been, winter is always a time of fear. Long cold nights, short cold days, no electric lights to cheer, fires which have to be lit each day (if you can find or buy firewood), and the endless, gnawing hunger. Children grizzling because they're hungry, the littlest ones always having to forage because the older ones eat as much as they can; how many meals can you make out a leg of mutton? And all the best food having to go to the men because they're working outside and need the calories – most people were tenant farmers so no man working equals no house, equals - the workhouse. Food preserved by smoking, salting, drying, anything to eke it out a bit. Meals supplemented by turnips and other cattle food, or stinging nettle soup, were staples.

And then, the annual terror - being laid off. Early in the New Year the ground's as hard as iron, the frost is bedded in until March, the few hedging and ditching jobs are already gone, so - we'll have you back when the weather turns, boys. Until then, what?

Starvation, that's what. Everyone you know is in the same boat; try sending your eldest girl into service in the nearest

town to send back whatever money she can. Poach if you can but you risk summary execution by the game-keeper if you're caught. Or begging. And why not? It's an honest enough profession: you get exactly as much as you're good enough to get. Some beggars drifted from parish to parish, eventually pushing their luck and getting seen off to the bounds; others would dance or sing – strolling players often were little more than formalised beggars. No wonder, then, that groups of men would band together to dance where they knew there were easy pickings: their boss' house! Or the rectory, or other fine houses where the owners had made their money in other ways.

So a tradition grew up of performing, sometimes roughly, for money or food. Certain pockets remained into the early 20th century in East Anglia, and the clothes worn by molly dancers today often pay tribute to working clothes – corduroy trousers and working shirts; colourful clothes found in charity shops, strips of material found in the rag box and sewn onto old shirts. Workers performing near their places of work, where they would be recognised and undoubtedly lose their jobs, made sure they had low-hanging hats so their employers couldn't see who was demanding money with melody and menaces. If today you went on strike outside your place of work because your boss had fiddled the pension fund leaving you a destitute old age, wouldn't you wear a baseball cap and hoodie? I know I would!

Oh, and black faces? Mud's free, cork's better: burn it gently then smear it on your face for that "I'll be your mugger today" look. And if carbon burned red, we'd be talking about redding-up !

Well that set the scene for the social background to the tradition and drew some interesting parallels to the situation today. I had just finished digesting Fee's contribution to the debate when Terry Cook of Rainbow Morris came in with his views on the subject.

Political correctness strikes again as people are objecting to images of blacked up morris dancers ! Does the fact that it has nowt to do with referring to the colour of skin cancel these objections? Would they also object to this artist producing images of coal miners coming home for a bath? I heard a field recording (BBC) of early 20th century dancers talking of dancing in winter at the gentry's houses when the ground was too hard to work. So to earn money they danced as in Boxing Day, when I believe this particular guy was seen by Mr. Sharp who asked them to come back so he could notate the tunes. However the church frowned on dancing hence you blacked up for disguise.

This is only as my fragile memory recalls but the gist was there and direct first person evidence is worth a bit. No doubt there were other traditions and reasons in other areas for blacking up. Perhaps the BBC could locate the programme: - I will try as I was once offered such help by a BBC bod. There was also a touching radio play about a team who went off to WW1 and were very proud of their lines when dancing which of course was very useful for the machine gunners to have their deadly effect! I hope this is of interest and doesn't cause controversy! I'm always a bit cautious about these sort of incidents after the famous black bin bag hurly burly was traced back to conservative central office as a way of discrediting left wing councils so It's interesting to hear of Anne's direct encounters.

I'm not sure I recall a hurly burly over black bin bags but over the years the objections to blacking up always seem to have had a political undercurrent. The last item to arrive came from Peter Luckin of Mythago and Ditchling Morris.

At a Sidmouth Workshop talk some 20 years ago, the speaker (sorry, can't remember who), offered this explanation for Border Sides blacking up.

“The strict church clergy (sorry, can't remember denomination!) and many employers of the mainly agricultural working class dancers, disapproved of such behaviour. So dancers smeared their faces with charcoal and turned their clothes inside out in order to escape recognition. That has developed into today's theatrical face paint of many hues and intricately made 'rag' jackets.”

I have used this spiel ever since both to the crowds of enthusiastic onlookers (sometimes one man and his dog) and to the media - it has always been accepted by them with no argument. However I have not done any primary research into the subject - has anyone?

So there we are three views that provide fuel for the discussion when confronted by those who find the tradition offensive. The problem is of course that by simply by being traditional, even worse English this may be the trigger that sets off the objection. Take the debate on fox

hunting, to some a cruel and offensive activity that is a symbol of the landed gentry. To others a country pursuit that provided work, was a social activity and was also a useful form of pest control. But that is a can of worms I would sooner not open.



Of course one way to side step the objections is to adopt a guise of a different form. So the current trend for border sides and some molly teams to adopt elaborate face painting in shades other than simple black does not offend anyone. Or does it offend the traditionalists out there? Didn't some one once say "You can't please all the people...."?



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CONCERNED ABOUT OUR DANCING TRADITIONS...

I write with great and mounting concern about how our much loved and respected dance traditions are being disrespected, not only by some members of the public who know no better, but disturbingly, by the dancers themselves!

I was recently in Devon and some folkie friends of mine, told me of a terrible team they had seen dancing at a pub the previous evening. They described a team of (sorry to be brutal) "fat, old men in tatty kit, wandering around with no energy". After, the usual discussion about standards and public image, we left it at that.

However, the next day, in the local town centre, I saw the terrible team for myself. The brutal description I had heard was actually quite kind! The team was made up of men whose kit was tatty to say the least. Coupled with that, no feet ever left the ground during the few minutes I could bare to watch. One member was even wandering around not even dancing the heys properly (was he drunk, not bothered, incapable or all three?).

A month later (after seeing a few shocking sights at Warwick amongst some truly excellent teams) I was on my annual holiday at Whitby Folk Week and saw some busking and scratch teams that were not much better. A scratch team in the past often meant that individual dancers came to a festival with their own team kit and in order to dance, pooled their resources still having a good standard of dance. Kit although not uniform was still well turned out.

To me, there are two issues here. One is the fact that as soon as you dance in public (however large the audience), you are conveying the image of morris dancing (the public lumps us all together as 'morris'). The other is the disrespect the dancers themselves are showing for their own traditions.

I have often heard people say they dance because they enjoy it and 'being of a good standard' either takes a back seat,

or worse, was on the last bus out of town. I have no problem with people dancing for enjoyment; I enjoy dancing Cotswold, but do not dance it in public as I believe I am not good enough yet. This does not stop me going to workshops, morris practice or even doing a quick jig at a private party. Also, because I respect the tradition, I feel an obligation to do it well and as it should be before I show it off.

There is a place for doing the odd 'daft' dance with balloons, buckets and spades etc. and that is in front of peers who (a) know how well you dance normally, and (b) know the difference between serious dancing and a fun spot. (However, I do draw the line at naked rapper – it has happened! - but that's a personal preference). Having said that, when I have seen 'comedy spots', the dancing has still been of a good standard.

I once told some friends of mine that their morris kit was looking tired. They agreed, and had some new baldricks and badges made. What a difference it made. Good on them! And they knew that my telling them was because I cared about their team, not because I wanted to be critical or make them feel bad. It is not difficult to raise standards, a kit overhaul, watching lines, turning together and getting off the ground. The fact remains, though, as a festival organiser I can count on one hand the teams I would book in any one tradition. More of the good teams are in fact in the sword traditions, but then again, sword dancers have worked hard at standards, there is an expectation in the sword community to be good and it comes from and continues to be part of a competitive tradition.

There are many ways to solve the problem. I have lots of ideas, but initially, the morris organisations need to be involved. Teams need to realise where they are and look for help or improvement, just as teams do in rapper. There are plenty of experienced people out there who are willing to help. As a member of Rivington a lady once said to me that she could never join Rivington because she "wasn't good enough". This

is rubbish! Anyone can join a team. All the teams I dance with welcome anyone, experienced or not. The BIG difference is that these teams have standards, they **teach** people to dance in their style and to their standard and people are given kit when they are ready. None of these teams have magical, talented dancers with special super powers. The fact is that almost everyone (there will be the odd exception) **can** dance to a good standard if they want to. The key is "if they want to". There are some extremely talented dancers out there (who do look like they have dancing super hero powers), Dog Rose, for example, are of the highest standard, I'm not expecting everyone to achieve 'excellent', but everyone should **aim** for 'excellent' and be achieving at least 'good'. Certainly not 'adequate' or 'very poor indeed'.

I may sound like a grumpy old man, in fact I'm a woman in her early 30s who is a member of four teams in different

traditions, I've organised dancing at festivals since I was 16 and have been dancing since I could walk. I love my heritage, I love to see dancing, I love dancing. It is an important part of our culture. I'd like nothing more than to see some good Cotswold such as Dog Rose or Hammersmith at the opening of the 2012 Olympics. But this will not happen if the organisers have seen some of the dreadful teams that are around. And my heart sinks if I meet new people who find out I'm a morris dancer and ask if I've got a weekend beard, a tankard and am I part of that scratch morris team. Oh dear!

Sally Atkinson.

P.S. I'm sure some people will shoot me down in flames for this outburst, but I feel it needs saying. I'm certainly not the only one who thinks like this, I'm just the one who's saying it. And remember, I'm saying it because I care about our dancing traditions. And, I **do** have a sense of humour!

Trefor Owen, a Traditional Clogmaker

~These are not just Clogs, these are Trefor Owen Clogs~

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Remember: Often copied, never bettered!!

EVESHAM MEDIEVAL AND CIDER FESTIVAL

The Evesham Morris, Medieval and Cider Festival is a new venture for Wychavon Vale of Evesham Tourism Group. All the Morris events are organised by a committee of "Morris Persons" which is made up of dancers from sides in and around the area, including Black Jack, Belle d'Vain, Pebworth, Shakespeare and Earlsdon.

Invited sides arrived on Friday 14th June ready for a full weekend of tours around the Vale of Evesham and surrounding villages. The campsite on Crown Meadow overlooked the river Avon, showers and breakfasts were all provided in the excellent Rowing Club.

We all met up with friends old and new on Friday evening in the Rowing Club bar, a large session went into the early hours with music, singing and dancing. With excellent weather on Saturday morning four separate tours set off to perform throughout the day.

Invited weekend sides included ~ Betty Lupton's Ladle Laikers, Cam Valley, Chinewyrd, Earlsdon, Elephant up a Pole, England's Glory, Flagcrackers of Craven, Nancy Butterfly, Old Meg, Plum Jerkum, and Silurian.

During the day the villages of Fladbury, Offenham and Broadway and Pershore town were treated to displays, whilst others performed in Evesham, at various spots around the town, including the Shopping Centre, Abbey Park, the Almonry Museum, and The Trumpet pub. Everyone enjoyed the atmosphere, as we were welcomed wherever we went. During the day all sides also had a treat as they enjoyed a relaxing trip on the Avon to Offenham.

Lunches were provided at various pubs en route and we all returned to Crown Meadow in late afternoon to prepare for the evening's entertainment. This was a Ceilidh held in The Public Hall, Evesham with Steamchicken providing the music

and Dave Hunt calling. It was well supported and enjoyed by all. For those wishing to relax after all the hard work of the day, sessions took place in The Trumpet in Evesham and at The Fleece Inn, Bretforton.

Sunday morning brought further entertainment with dance displays in Evesham's attractive Market Square. The sides assembled to perform throughout the day. The highlight of the Morris festival was to be the presentation by the Morris Committee of a specially commissioned staff "The Evesham Stick". This to be presented to the side considered to have given the best overall contribution and performance during the whole weekend.



For those who may not know Evesham, which is on the edge of the Welsh Border and Cotswolds areas, has two traditional dances. One is "The Evesham Hankie Dance". The other, also known as Fanny Frail, is a border dance "Evesham Stick", still danced by several sides today.

It was agreed that the side who deserved to win this year was Betty Lupton's Ladle Laikers who were delighted with their award. The award will be given annually and plans are already under way for next year's event. Further dancing took place in the Market Square throughout the day, with local sides Pebworth and Belle d'Vain joining the visiting sides to entertain the crowds on a warm and sunny day.

The Morris events were part of the whole weekend festival, which included medieval displays and entertainment, together with stalls, a Cider Festival and a craft fair. The main event on Sunday was very special to Evesham ~ a

specially commissioned bronze statue was unveiled in the Market Square with the town's dignitaries present. The statue depicts the story of Eof (Eoves) ~ a swineherd who claimed to have seen a vision of the Virgin Mary at Evesham around 701. He related this vision to Egwin, Bishop of Worcester who founded Evesham Abbey on the site of the apparation. *Evesham* is literally "Eof's ham" (ham=homestead).

The Festival will take place again next year during the Midsummer weekend June 20th ~ 21st 2009. Sides interested in joining us next year can contact our organising committee for details. Next year will be a bigger and better Morris event so if you'd like a very enjoyable weekend in the Vale of Evesham, staying by the Rowing Club with its excellent facilities, on the lovely riverside Crown Meadow campsite, please get in touch. River trips, visits to dance in the Vale villages, Ceilidh and Sunday celebrations in the town plus the chance to become winners of "The Evesham Stick" are all included in our package.

Contacts for details:

Judy Watkins

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Rosie Stroud - stroudroxies@aol.com

Littleborough Rushbearing Festival

The Rushbearing tradition is only found in the Pennine and Lake District areas of the UK, and dates back to the time of Pope Gregory who instructed that parishioners should provide a tithe of rushes each year to cover the earthen floors of the churches. The rushes were swept out and replaced once a year, usually on the saint's day particular to that church. The tradition continued even after the church floors were paved and became the basis for a local festival with prizes given for best decorated cart etc. The Rushcarts were processed through the town accompanied by music and dancers.

Rochdale Morris revived the Rushbearing tradition in Littleborough in 1991. The Rushbearing is a full weekend of dance, processing the Rushcart through the streets of Littleborough stopping off at various pubs en-route.

For 2008 we managed to secure sponsorship from local businesses and were able to provide a free weekend (except for camping), we are hoping that we will be able to do the same for 2009. The dates for the 2009 Littleborough Rushbearing Festival are Friday 17th July to Sunday 19th July.

Any teams interested in joining us can contact me and I will send more detail as soon as it becomes available

Thanks

Jeanette Shaw

Secretary Rochdale Morris

email : rochdale.morris@ntlworld.com

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Angela Mary Lee (1945 – 2008)



At Brockhole, near
Windermere in the mid
1980s
Photo: Chas Marshall

Over the weekend of 10th and 11th May 2008 our Harrogate-based step dance team, Clogarhythm, attended the small but charming folk festival at Clennell Hall in Northumberland's Coquetdale. We were happily reunited on the Saturday after an alarming health scare concerning one of our own members and we eagerly anticipated meeting up with our friends the Hexham Morrismen. We spotted a group of Hexham men gathering on the lawn and Jeff wandered over to look for Frank Lee whom we expected would be contributing his matchless melodeon playing alongside the Hexham men's dancing.

Jeff came back, his face pale and drawn and the weight of the world undoubtedly resting upon his drooping shoulders. Frank, we discovered, would not be there as his wife Angela had, without warning, suffered a massive brain haemorrhage the day before. She had been admitted to the Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle and was not expected to survive the day. Our previous joy evaporated and within an hour or two we discovered that Angela had died, so bringing to an abrupt end a friendship that had been blossoming for nearly thirty years.

The show went on at Clennell Hall, as Angela would have surely wished, and there were occasional moments of great delight over the next two days but those feelings of joy would soon melt into despair as our thoughts returned to this untimely death. Even at the age of 63 this still seemed like a flower snipped off the stem before it was in its most abundant bloom. The glorious and powerful voices of Kimber's Men finished the final concert on the Sunday and the five singers paraded slowly from the room singing a heart rending "Leave her, Johnny, leave her. And it's time for us to leave her". We wept without shame.

There has been a strong bond of friendship between the Harrogate and Carlisle dance teams (in their many forms from both locations) since the early 1980's when the, then, Women's Morris Federation was undergoing major upheavals. I recall that these were both interesting and exciting times for the Federation. At the 1980 AGM in Harrogate the Federation agreed to allow mixed sex sides and joint sides to join the organisation. Then two years later at the AGM held in Carlisle membership became open to all sides irrespective of gender. Angela made a major contribution to the organisation of the Carlisle AGM and the Lee home acted as the administrative HQ for the event.



Throstle's Nest at the Women's Morris Federation AGM Harrogate
1980

Photo: Chas Marshall

The Harrogate – Carlisle liaisons began when Harrogatonian, Knaresborough Mummer and folk song singer Richard Hardaker moved to Carlisle. The first chronicled meeting of the morris teams was when the Carlisle and Throstle's Nest sides were guests at Betty Lupton's Ladle Laikers' May Weekend of Dance in 1981. A return trip to Carlisle was made in May the following year and the friendship continues to the present day.

There are a small number of notable people who have helped shape the folk dance revival and have provided an exemplar beacon for others to follow. Many of these leaders have been larger than life characters with personalities to match and they have spoken at workshops and seminars and written articles and books. Angela was not a great talker or writer as far as dance was concerned. She had skill, creativity and a great passion burning inside but her approach was more for “getting stuck in and getting on with it”.

This industry was perfectly displayed quite recently when the Skipton-based step dance festival Clogfest was struggling for funding and a few of us had talked idly about some sort of fund raising event. It was Angela and her “Old Spice Girls” dancing partner Georgia Shorrock who transformed our idle chatter into action. The two of them organised a day of dance in Carlisle followed by an evening ceilidh at Haydon Bridge. A band of willing helpers were sucked into the project and swept along by Angela’s infectious enthusiasm and energy. The day raised a creditable £600 for Clogfest.

It was probably Angela’s no nonsense approach which helped Clogarhythm to come into being. Jeff and Debbie watched Angela stepping during a visit to Vancouver in 1998 after which Deb wistfully mused “I’d love to do that”. “Well do it - get some clogs and do it!” was the immediate and typical Angela Lee response.

Angela was born at Brampton Cottage Hospital and as a child lived on a farm at Bewcastle, a hamlet in the unspoilt lands of Cumbria’s border with Scotland, and it was here that the foundations were laid for her lifelong interest in flowers, birds and the countryside. Frank and Angela met at Leicester College of Art where Angela studied for an art teacher’s diploma and they married in 1969.



One of Angela’s Silk Paintings
Photo: Frank Lee

Teaching was Angela’s career and it seems, as with most of her endeavours, she excelled at this with one examiner declaring that her pupils’ work was “beyond degree standard”. Some of her colleagues and pupils spoke about her with huge warmth and obvious love at her funeral. One of her pupils decorated her coffin with the most exquisite artwork. Angela spent many years as head of art at the William Howard School in her hometown of Brampton, near Carlisle, and retired only a couple years earlier.

Textile arts, from weaving and spinning to embroidery, printing and painting on silk was her speciality and in retirement Angela spent time in her studio producing work of sufficient quality to mount a successful exhibition and had just begun to sell her creations. The next issue of the quarterly journal of the Guild of Silk Painters will contain a major feature on Angela’s silk paintings. This interest might also explain a wardrobe full of many bright and colourful dancing costumes!

Angela was one of the first members of the Throstle's Nest morris team formed in 1977 by Sue Allan (previously Sue Mycock). Throstle's Nest was the local nickname for the town of Wigton. Their repertoire was largely in the NorthWest style including some Cumbrian dances collected locally such as the Blennerhasset Garland Dance and the Wigton Carnival Dance. The team then branched out into step and clog dancing which was initially, and not surprisingly, drawn from the Westmorland tradition. This led to the need for two dance teachers – one for NorthWest and one for clog step. Angela's natural talent coupled with her enthusiasm and teaching skills made her the natural choice for the clog step "forewoman".

Attendances at further workshops expanded Angela's repertoire into other stepping styles from different regions of the globe. As the Carlisle dance teams gradually developed and moulded into Carlisle Morris, Sword and Clog it was always Angela who was at the centre of things patiently initiating new members into the art of clog dance while continuing to develop her own knowledge and skills. So as her abilities became more widely recognised and appreciated Angela then ran workshops herself at leading festivals such as Sidmouth and Whitby.

The learning of different styles and steps over the years went hand in hand with Angela's own creative streak as she developed new steps, new routines and new choreography. These new elements were soundly based in the knowledge and understanding of the tradition which Angela had previously acquired – new recipes created from traditional ingredients.



The Old Spice Girls, Georgia and Angela, dancing in Carlisle at the Clogfest Fund Raising event – 19th April 2008
Photo: Jeff Garner

In her latter years Angela enjoyed a close friendship and close dancing partnership with Georgia Shorrock as the "Old Spice Girls". This is how I will remember Angela most – the sound of Frank's wonderful melodeon drifting through my mind and snapshot pictures of Angela and Georgia whacking into the ground as if their ultimate destination was to be Australia. Angela was not only a skilful dancer but also full of energy and vitality so it was surprise when Frank recently wrote:

"I've learnt more about Angela's uncomplaining nature as I've sorted through the drawers and found stockpiles of painkillers and rheumatism/arthritis remedies, but she rarely mentioned the word 'pain' except when asking me to remove jam jar lids and milk bottle tops. She continued dancing and out-dancing younger folk even when wracked with pain in her hips, knees and toes."

But Angela had skills other than dance and it would be appropriate here to quote

Sue Allan: "Angela's skill as a player developed over the years and you would often see either Frank playing for Angela to dance, or Angela playing for Frank to dance – which typifies for me their relationship. It's always been Frank and Angela – going together like Anthony and Cleopatra, Pinky and Perky or fish and chips, or the coach and horses which they drove through the folk music and dance scene not only of North Cumbria but of the North, the South ... all over England – and abroad. What a team!"

Angela played melodeon, anglo concertina and duet concertina. I have also heard that in later years Angela would astound listeners with her beautiful unaccompanied singing. Sadly I never heard her sing.

Angela's funeral was held on Thursday 22nd May 2008 in the lush country setting of Lanercost Priory, so fittingly adjacent to the farm where she was conceived. This moving occasion led me to ponder on a question - is there such a thing as the perfect funeral? It seems a strange notion to consider when set against the loss of such a wonderful woman, but that Thursday at Lanercost convinced me that there is such a thing, because it was indeed the perfect funeral.

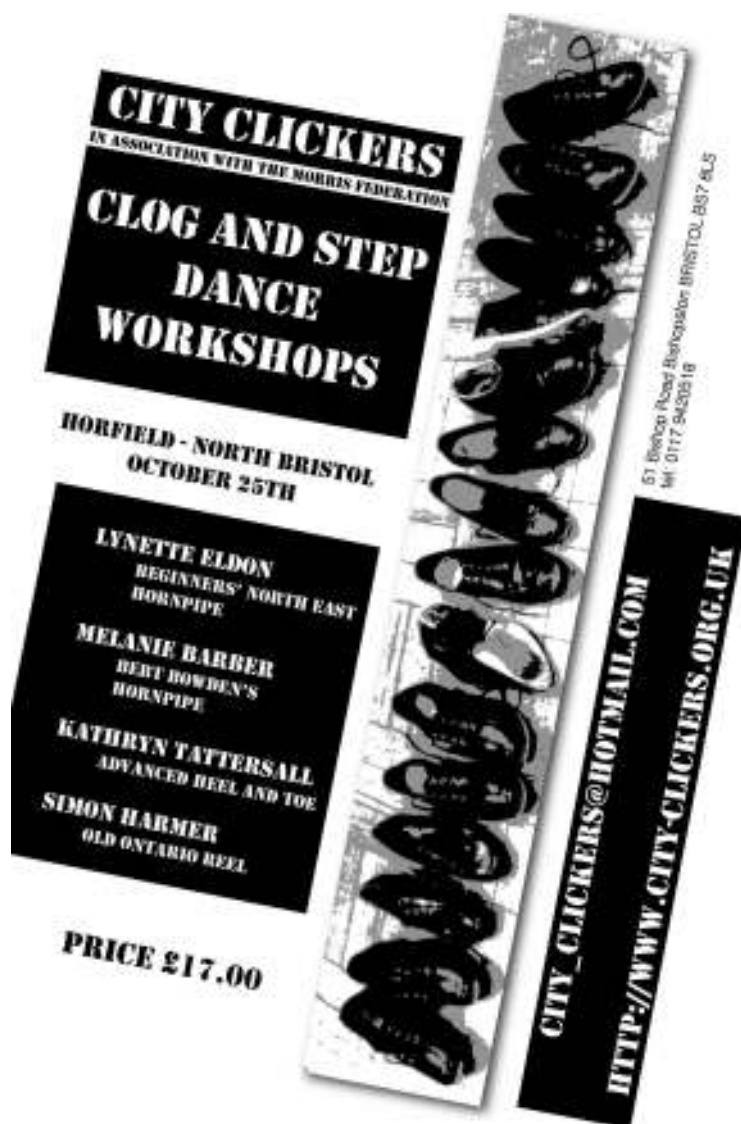
It was such a beautiful setting. It was such a gentle, warm and sunny Spring day. Gentle, warm and sunny – the perfect reflection of Angela's personality. The priory was packed to the seams with relatives and friends all come to pay homage to Angela, to celebrate her life and to lend whatever support they might to Frank. That there were so many people there speaks volumes of the love they all hold for Frank and Angela – two very special people. The service was so uplifting and yet so unexpected. The minister conducted the normal part of the service but said little of Angela. Instead a succession of people (friends, family, dancers, school colleagues and pupils) had the desire and compassion to stand up and speak from the bottom of their hearts about Angela.

But what amazing strength and courage was displayed by Frank himself, who was the first to talk with such warmth, such love and such teasing good humour about his "other half". Then the sound of Anne Marie Summers' plaintive bagpipes and Steve Tyler's ringing cittern tones rose from the rear of the priory to lead the long procession of mourners to the grave side where Angela was buried close by other members of her family. And finally the dancing, which was bright and cheerful in spite of all the heavy hearts. And who was the first to stand there and play for the dancing? It could only be Frank Lee. Peace be with you Frank.

*Chas Marshall – Harrogate - July
2008*

*With grateful thanks to Frank Lee
and Sue Allan for helping to fill in
some gaps in my knowledge and
for helping to correct mistakes in
my recollections.*

*Editors Note : To get the full
benefit of the silk painting
illustrated on page 15 go to the on-
line version at www.mfnewsletter.info.*



Questions and Answers with Val Marsden.



Have you ever been out watching a dance display by Bradford based Northwest side Persephone and thought “That dancer looks just like the lass who sings with Cockersdale”. Or maybe you’ve been at a concert watching Cockersdale in full voice and thought

“That lass on stage looks just like a dancer I saw recently”.

The answer to this apparent doppelganger effect is that Val Marsden is both a founder member of Cockersdale and a long time member of Persephone. Taking a chance I asked Val if she would be a subject of our regular “Question and Answer” feature and here’s the result.

Which came first the singing or the dancing and what started your interest in them?

As a child I did both, I went to dancing lessons when we could afford them. I did some ballet, tap and country dancing—mainly Scottish. I sang in choirs from a very early age.

At home my dad was always singing. He had a very tuneful light tenor voice and he encouraged me to sing.

I always found that dancing was much more fun than sport which I found a bit of a grind.

By the middle seventies I was singing solo in my local folk club.

At that time the only dancing I was doing was ceilidh dancing which I enjoyed and, of course still do. Then I remember seeing a lovely team called Derby Crown at Cleethorpes festival in about 1978 or

1979 and I thought—I’d like to do that. So after I moved to West Yorkshire I joined Persephone.

How long have you been dancing and singing?

I have been singing folk music for more than thirty years but as part of Cockersdale for just over twenty-five years and I’ve been dancing with Persephone since late 1988

Have you ever tried any other style or tradition other than Northwest?

I’ve attended workshops and dabbled in Lancashire clog, longsword, border, rapper, Cotswold and Appalachian as well as the above mentioned Scottish country dancing

What has been the high spot of your dancing life?

Twenty years ago I wrote a dance called Whiby Shindig now just usually called Whitby. In 1988 our team had very little experience of teaching at workshops, but in that year we were booked at Whitby Festival for the first time. I taught my Whitby dance that year and it was very successful. I get a buzz out of the fact that twenty years later several teams perform this dance and many of them are kind enough to attribute it to Persephone or to me.

Also I enjoyed teaching and having success with another dance of mine called The Train Dance, which we taught at Whitby Festival in 2005. At the workshop showcase that year we had eight sets up performing it. We had a lot of lovely people who had stuck with us all week, and as they danced off at the end I was almost in tears—of joy I might add.

And the low spot?

I don’t think there have been any low spots. Of course there have been those times when we’ve been soaked to the skin on long rushcart processions but they were usually something to end up laughing about.

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

I remember dancing on a floating wooden stage on a pond in a park in Scarborough sometime in the eighties. That was quite an experience. As you put your foot down the floor bounced back up to meet you. A lot of wobbly dancing.

Another time, a few years ago, we were asked to dance at the Lilliputt Lane convention. You know these gaudy ornaments that are replicas of supposedly well known buildings. We had to dance in small marquee, which had a central pole. Some improvisation was called for.

Have you ever been to a folk festival and performed with both Persephone and Cockersdale? And if you have how did it work out?

This hasn't happened recently but it used to happen fairly regularly at Whitby, Warwick and the old Redcar festival. The singing had to take precedence as I think it would have been noticed if I wasn't there! What I did was dance in the spots I was able to and then go and sing in the green Persephone dress, having removed the bells. I'm sure some people thought that I belonged to some sort of institution and had been let out for the day.

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

Always warm up well before you dance either at practice or dancing out

Aim to do your best. The more you try the better you get.

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

I wish people would stop calling it CLOG morris Call it by its proper name i.e. **NORTHWEST!**

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

I hate the idea that somewhere there is a "suit" working for the "Health and Safety" brigade who would like to put a stop to it.

There are already questions being asked about sword dancing

And I would fight to keep all aspects of traditional dancing alive in this country.

SO ENDETH THE LESSON

Thanks to Val for that and remember friend or foe or even you could be the subject for the next "Questions to...." Ed.

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NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION.....AND ALL THAT!

(Another Ringheye Morris of Mobberley production)

This must be a situation known to many a morris side - the need for a new dance to replace one which has somehow shrunk in the wash, gone out of shape, or just generally become unfit for purpose. Ringheye was in desperate need of a new dance for processions, but we just couldn't find a ready-made one to fit us!



Ringheye's first processional dance was the Blackrod Street Dance but this was succeeded many years ago by Milnrow. Milnrow is very impressive when danced properly - with slings flying, knees high and distinctive rant step. However, to dance it in its proper style is tiring, especially when we're part of the Knutsford Royal May Day parade and have to keep dancing for well over an hour. In recent years we started to feel that we weren't doing the dance much justice - many of the side were reluctant to commit to dancing a full procession, and we had to allow for dancers to move in and out of the set to have a rest at intervals. Finally, at our AGM in August 2006, we decided that we would write a new processional dance to suit us. Of course, these things always take longer than you think, so it wasn't until late in 2007 that ideas began to take shape.

First stage was to identify the most tiring parts of Milnrow and avoid them in the new dance. So - out went the slings. In Milnrow we walk and rant with our arms

outstretched at shoulder height, either to the side or straight ahead, for 95% of the time. Add in swirling the slings, and after a while it becomes torture. We now use bobbins instead, and simply swing them up and down during the chorus. Then the high-knee rant step had to go - although it looks impressive, some of us were finding it hard to cover much ground with each step so it was difficult to increase the speed at which we moved. Now we march and skip. If things really get tough, we can even reduce the march/skip to a walk - the movement of the bobbins and the flow of the figures maintain the interest of the dance.

Things didn't really begin to take shape until we had some music that inspired us - Lynn suggested some lively tunes played by "Brass Monkey" to which we fitted the simple chorus (4 walks with bobbins at sides, 4 skips with bobbins raised and shaking). Despite its simplicity even this took a while to tidy up - it's surprising how many different combinations of walk/skip/up/down 10 different dancers can devise!

Next came 4 simple figures to dance on the move. These needed distinctive, easily recognised names - anything too obscure or hard to hear just gets lost in the noise of a procession. At the moment we have "cast out", "over", "leap-frog" and "diagonal". If necessary we can use just the step-up and these 4 figures. However, there are times when a procession grinds to a halt and we can show off a bit in front of a captive audience. We lifted "chain" from Milnrow and "wrapper" is based on the Lichfield hey - "wrapper" because it makes a shape like a wrapped sweet. "Arches" was inspired by Hugh Rippon's

"Willow Tree". These three figures are quite long so we have to pick our moments to perform them lest the procession moves on all of a sudden and leaves us behind!



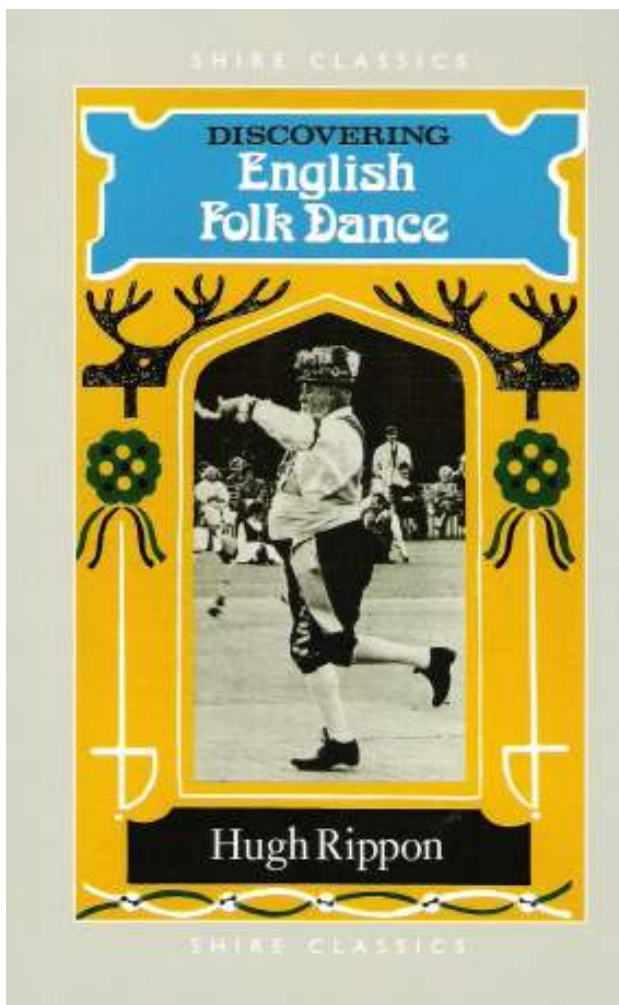
We spent most of last autumn reviving one of our old dances so didn't get serious with the new dance until January 2008. However, having accepted bookings for three processional events focused our minds (and our feet) wonderfully! As seems to be normal, we did not have the same side to practice for any two consecutive weeks but the dance began to take shape and eventually gained a name: Mallory's March*. Our first practice out of doors was on the Wednesday before Mallory's first outing at Mobberley Rose Queen! Although this was cutting it a bit fine, all went well on the day - the only disappointment being that most of the Mobberley audience did not even realise that we were doing a new dance!

By now, July 2008, Mallory's March feels more familiar although it is still a "work in progress" - we have already discarded one figure and replaced it with a better one. Nearly all of the dancers find the march/skip much easier than the rant. We can move forward more quickly to keep up with tractor-driven floats and cars bearing Rose Queens, and we end the procession looking pretty much as we started instead of dropping with exhaustion. However our accordion player Trevor finds it more demanding - because the dancers don't need to rest, he doesn't get a chance to stop playing his accordion! Dancing to a drumbeat is fine, but we do have a tendency to speed up!

One unexpected outcome has been that we haven't only gained a new processional dance - we're enjoying Mallory's March so much at the moment that we have been dancing it as a static as well. And, as an extra bonus, we have rediscovered Milnrow - it's a great dance, if you only have to do it once through!

Anne McGrath

** George Mallory, of Everest fame, was born 1886 in Mobberley, where his father (Canon Herbert Leigh-Mallory) was Rector of St Wilfrid's church 1885-1904. In the church there is a memorial window dedicated to George Mallory.*



DISCOVERING – ENGLISH FOLK DANCE

This book was first published in 1975. It is now published in a 2008 edition, which comes thirteen years after the last revision in 1993 and twenty-seven years after the 1981 edition I have in my library. It was this 1981 edition that gave me as a novice dancer a grounding in the world of English traditional dance.

So how has the book fared over the years and what has been added in this latest edition? Obviously the basic facts on the history of the dance and the revival at the turn of the 20th Century remain unchanged. The chapters covering the history of the ritual dance traditions and their social counterparts the country-dances are a concise and readable introduction to these two areas of the folk dance tradition.

The first noticeable change is when Hugh covers the modern teams. The revival of the border and molly traditions in the years since 1975 is given due credit and is well covered. Also the fact that women actually dance the morris is acknowledged and in deed we have photographs of women's teams in action.

The most obvious additions to the book are three new chapters, each of which makes for an interesting read. The first is "What the old morris dancers said" which supplies quotes collected by Cecil Sharp and published in an article by him in 1914. As Hugh points out the observations of these dancers still have a relevance to the dancers of today even if in true Sharp style they all come from Cotswold dancers. Another new chapter that will be of interest to those dancing today is titled "Further reading". Here a listing of published works across a range of traditions is given which can be used to take anyone with an interest in expanding their knowledge further into the subject. Whilst there are some notable omissions from the authors whose works are listed it makes a good starting point for those wanting to read further into the history.

The most noteworthy new feature of this edition is the chapter "How to get involved". Here the reader will find advice on how to contact and start dancing with a team or club. So if there is a flood of new recruits coming into the world of traditional dance in the next few years we will all own a debt of thanks to Hugh Rippon and this small and very readable publication.

So the bottom line is that if you already have a copy of this book there's something new for you. If you're already a dancer and want more information on the history of your hobby without being swamped in footnotes this also for you. And best of all if someone asks you "What's this dancing lark all about then?" you can recommend this book to them and who knows you might get a recruit!

Shire Discovering Classics No 206 ISBN 978-0-7478-0225-9 177mmx113mm 96pp

ST. GEORGES DAY EN FRANCE!



We are sad enough to have digital TV here in France and so are able to watch all the usual English programmes, if an hour later than billed, which can be a cause of confusion.

Thus, on St George's Day I was watching the Paul O'Grady show while waiting to don my bells and set off for the local English Pub to celebrate the good saint with my happy band of French and English Morris dancers.

I had duly watched the same show on St Patrick's when the entire hour was given over to celebrating his day, and so, was interested to see how our patron saint would be feted. Well, I waited and waited to find that there was not a single mention of the day, no red and white flags, no roast beef and certainly no morris dancers!

Now, I do not agree with the kind of patriotism that can become obsessive and scary, but a bit of loyalty to your own country is not a bad thing. I admire the Welsh, Scottish and Irish for their love of their countries and feel so sad that we English just don't seem to care.

As a morris dancer, I have always celebrated St George's Day, and although I am as baffled as every-one else about his origins, feel it is a day to show our love of England.

Sadly, the English in general complain bitterly that we have no traditions. Well if they could just drag themselves away from the inevitable football match on the television (with their faces painted with the cross of St George – do they know what it means I wonder) and look around them, they would see that we have many wonderful and whacky traditions still going strong, the best of all The Morris. Although sadly that is still seen as a joke.

I digress. I sent an email of complaint to the show (disgruntled morris dancer, Couptrain), but received no reply. And then went and celebrated St George in style in our sleepy village in France. Our French dancers had never heard of St George, nor the Dragon, but we had a good multi-national crowd to cheer us, and continued on into the night with music and song and beaucoup de vin!

I did decide however it might be un-diplomatic to quote the Henry V speech!

Don't mention Agincourt.

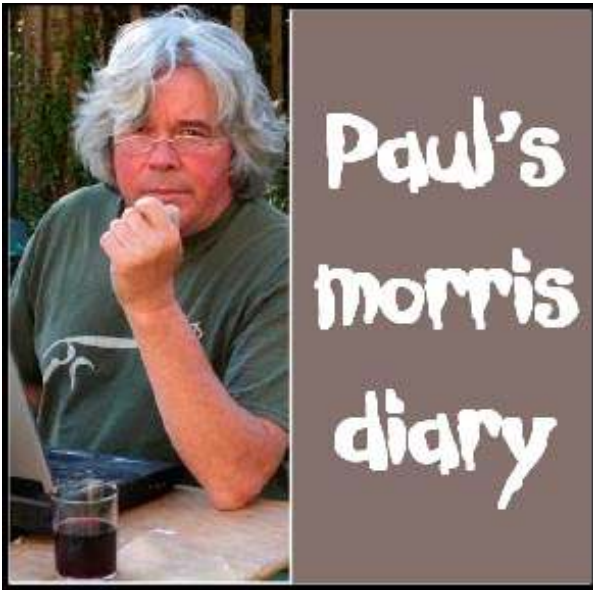
Sally Hamlyn

WHAT WORKSHOP?

The question is of course rhetorical. With the position of Federation events officer still vacant since Jean Smith stood down last year the Federation driven workshop programme has been less than full.

However the newsletter has featured several workshops run by teams over the last year or two. The world of the rapper and northwest dancers springs to mind as having had workshop sessions. And in this issue "City Clickers" are advertising their annual workshop down in Bristol (see page 17).

Now there's the key word "advertising". If your team is running a workshop or wants to find a tutor for a workshop why not contact the newsletter and we'll advertise the date or via the committee find you a tutor. Workshops are a fun way to spread the experience and raise the standards of dance so let's hear from you!



A SHUFFLE'S AS GOOD AS A MORRIS!

In the last issue, our Doug* made some good points about the nature of morris – or rather, those who dance it.

Dance! Well, in some cases it's more of a shuffle than a dance. But who cares? Having fun is what it's all about and if that means some sides are more impressive than others, so be it.

Let the brilliant ones rise to the top to be admired by all, including me. Morris at its best is nothing short of stunning, awe-inspiring, heart-rending and admirable. It makes one quietly proud to be English.

But let there always be room for those who are past their best or whose aspirations amount to nothing more than being able to get through a day's dancing without falling over through total exhaustion.

Over here in France the Couptrain team are currently building up for our first appearance at the Swanage festival. Always a favourite, where crowds are large, dancers and musicians congregate in their hundreds and where the sun always seems to shine.

Truth be told, not all our members can make it across the Channel so we will have a couple of ringers in the line-up.

We have given them Poirot-style false moustaches, stripy T-shirts and strings of onions, so no-one will spot the difference.

Practice has been a hoot. There's a new dance we are learning which depends for its impact on some neatly turned-out squares, executed with sharp corners and at a brisk pace.

Squares? Some of the shapes we are creating are, I am sure, hitherto undiscovered forms in the world of Geometry! We got one third of the way through the dance this week and called a halt.

The evening was so warm we practised in the car park but there wasn't a breath of wind so stout parties were collapsing at regular intervals. After the bag meeting (usual agenda: how can we raise more funds? We've got a mix-up on dates. Has anyone seen Marcel?), the bulk of the group loped off to the pub.

Good weather meant we all sat outside on nice white plastic chairs, had jolly conversations regularly interrupted by passing lorries and took it in turn to rescue the pub kitten from the main road, where it was dicing with death.

The dear little chap has become quite a favourite since being rescued from the skip over the way. He's only a few weeks old but that one night outside the bar accounted for a handful of his nine lives. He'd better get savvy, pronto.

Anyway, the bar should have closed at 11.00 but Cattie was persuaded by mass protests to stay open. So we had another and ended up dancing on the pavement, getting several innocent and completely bewildered visitors to join in, the whole picture lit only by the moon and the glow from the pub window.

I met one of them the next day, on his way to the boules court/pitch/rink. "Ahh," he said, faintly remembering the night before. "Danseur!" Nice to be recognised for one's art.

It got me thinking about some of the strange places we have danced in. There

was a very large US Air Force transporter parked on Plymouth Hoe, in which we danced, courtesy of the bemused officers.

And the late night vehicular ferry clanging across the Tamar. Motorists looked on in amazement as one by one, the be-tattered dancers and musicians emerged from their cars and without a second thought, went straight into a performance.

One of our May morning efforts was out on Bodmin Moor and it was distinctly damp. Not a downpour but a good Cornish mist. As we stamped and twirled one felt the presence of an audience. It turned out to be a pair of highly sceptical and rather large belted Galloway cattle who appeared pretty miffed that we had interrupted their own time-worn celebrations of the day.

A fairground in Germany, the end of a pier, half-naked in the sea, in snow, wind, rain and sun. Indeed, wherever the fancy strikes.

By the way, if this issue hits the streets before the Swanage Festival and you happen to be there, look out for Couptrain Morris and come and say hello.

That evening outside the bar, we handed Fabienne a melodeon. She's a great dancer but she's got a bad knee so can't cut the mustard at present. She's also a gifted musician, but is a stranger to the melodeon. Anyway, we told her she had been appointed musician for Swanage, which will free Sally up to dance.

I bet she does it, too!

**Doug Bradshaw, noble editor*

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GNOMES IN THE DAHLIAS



In response to your letter in the Summer edition please find attached a picture of a Old Harry Morris Gnome.

He appears regularly every year on the front cover of the Swanage Folk Festival programme (this year 5 to 7 September) in various locations. In fact due to declining numbers he is probably one of the more active members of the side.

Stephen Parker

MORRIS MATTERS



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

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Fools and Animals Unconvention, Colton, Staffordshire
Hosted by Stafford Morris
17-19th October 2008

As Convenor of the illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts, may I invite you as a Fool, Beast, Betsy or any other character associated with the Morris to the 2008 Unconvention. As in previous years, the invite is extended to all across the three Morris Organisations – the Morris Ring, the Morris Federation and the Open Morris.

The Unconvention will be based at Colton Village Hall, near Rugeley, Staffordshire, and will be hosted by Stafford Morris. Accommodation will be indoor camping.

There will be various workshops over the weekend, details to be arranged; and the tour on Saturday is around Rugeley;

Cost £50.00 per person, includes all meals except Saturday lunch time. See below for other rates for partial visit!

Please book your place by filling out and submitting the form available on the newsletter website (mfnewsletter.info) as soon as possible. Please send remittance payable to “The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts” to me at the above address – please mark envelopes “Unconvention Application”.

Closing date for applications 1st October 2008. I will be happy to answer any queries by phone or e-mail.

Robert Chisman - triggertrout1@aol.com

Tel: 01503 272250 (day) 01503 272437 (eve) 07970063922 (mob)

Full w/e £50.00

Saturday only - Including Feast £30.00 - Excluding Feast £15.00.

Happy Birthday



Whether or not he's the oldest dancer still going, there can't be many like Ragged & Old's Patrick O'Kelly who, as he celebrates his 80th birthday, still comes to practice every week (well, he still needs it.) dances out at every available opportunity, is Bagman and chief fund raiser, and almost single-handedly organises our biennial trips to France (where he is known, almost inevitably, as Le Grand Fromage).and he hasn't even had the sense to retire from running his own business yet!

You can imagine the pressure on the rest of us - how can any of us call it a day and rest our aching (& aging) limbs before he does? Many happy returns from us all!

Mike Davis.
(Foreman, Ragged & Old)



2008

September

6th

Taeppas Tump - Windsor as guests of Windsor Morris. Windsor Station? Eton & Windsor Bridge? 10.00am - 4.00pm Times and places TBC

7th

Three Shires at Rufford Park with Dukes Dandy from 2pm

October

4th

The Morris Federation AGM, Skipton, Yorkshire. Hosted by Flagcrackers of Craven.

12th

Three Shires at Matlock Illuminations 7pm

18th

Shrewsbury Morris Dancers-Ceilidh as part of the Big National Ceilidh in aid of Water Aid. Sundorne School, Shrewsbury, Shropshire with "The Cuckoo Ale Band" and caller Bev Langton. For more information contact 01939 233977 or email ray.langton@talk21.com.

17th-19th

Fools and Beasts Unconvention, Colton, Nr. Rugeley, Staffordshire, UK.

25th

City Clickers clog stepping workshop in Bristol

November

15th

Winter Newsletter deadline

December

26th

Three Shires and Harthill Morris in Harthill. 11am Blue Bell & 12 noon Bee Hive

2009

June

19th -21st

Scarborough Fayre 's 20th Morris Festival and Yorkshire Coast's 30th Birthday celebrations.

Contact Shirley Doyle at Northfield, Middle Lane, Hutton Buscel, Scarborough, YO13 9LP.or email sadoyale04@yahoo.co.uk

Evesham Morris, Medieval and Cider Festival

Contacts for details:

Judy Watkins wat.courtfarm@tiscali.co.uk

Rosie Stroud stroudrosies@aol.com

20th-28th

Polperro Festival.

July

3rd-5th

Banbury Hobby Horse Festival.

17th-19th

Littleborough Rushbearing Festival

For details email : rochdale.morris@ntlworld.com

October

23-25th

Fools and Beasts Unconvention, Utrecht.

FOR SALE – ACTUALLY IT’S A FREEBIE

Flowers of May were members of the Morris Federation, now inactive. So, we have stuff on offer, free to another side.

Items are:-

- ❑ Black + white hankies/headscarves - 38 - 40. Black background, five white stripes around the edge and groups of three white spots.
- ❑ Part bolts of fabric - grey poly-cotton and white with black spots cotton
- ❑ Drum - 2'+ diameter, metal screwed tensioning bars and both-shoulder harness. Needs new skins, unless you can remove the logo painted on the plastic skins.
- ❑ Folding cart - Made by my husband 25+ years ago, to take handbags, coats etc. and keep safe while dancing; especially useful for processions. Also for tired small children! Open, about 2' x 3' tapering up to 3' square and 3' high. Folded, about 3' square, 14" high and goes in an estate (fits old style Escort or Astra). Room between the wheels to put other stuff (e.g. a bass drum!). Wooden with two wheels, two castors, pull handle and waterproof top cover. Needs painting to take off logo.
- ❑ One pair of black clogs - lace up size 7ish

Email - susanbell@tesco.net if interested in anything. Photos available.

North West London area, for collection. However, if localish and near a good music session I might deliver!

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.

£4.00 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

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.

£4.50 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

North West Morris: This book contains notations, illustrated with figures and diagrams for ten of the best North West Morris dances, originally researched by Trefor Owen.

£4.00 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Wheatley: Wheatley is a very pleasing tradition to dance and yet one of the most straightforward. This book was produced from a complete review of source material and includes current practice and innovation.

£3.25 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Hinton: Traditional and creative Morris by Sue Swift.

£4.00 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Abram Circle: Provides background, complete notation, pictures and music for the Abram Circle dance. The dance originates from the North West but has a different structure to most North West dances.

£3.00 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Molly: Dancing into the Twenty First Century, by Tony Forster

£3.50 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

BOOKLETS: A series of A5 sized booklets with between 8 and 20 pages

Warm-up exercises: Clear diagrams and careful explanation of exercises designed to prepare dancers and reduce the risk of injury.

£0.90

Publicity tips: Hints on promoting your team, attracting new members, etc.

£0.90 (Temporarily out of stock)

Twenty Years On, 1975-1996

£1.25

Women and the North West Morris Dance

£0.90

Raglan Bantamcocks Morris: characteristics of the tradition, notation and some music

£1.25 + £0.50 UK, £1.00 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Beginners and Basics: Roy Dommet's ideas on the basics of Cotswold. Essential reading for leaders and foremen.

£1.25

Border Morris: a brief outline

£0.90

A Few Facts About the Morris

£1.00

BELLS

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¾"	£9.00	£16.00	£32.00	£10.00	£18.00	£35.50
⅞"	£9.00	£17.00	£33.00	£10.00	£19.00	£36.50
1"	£11.00	£20.00	£39.00	£12.50	£22.00	£43.00
1⅛"	£12.00	£23.00	£45.00	£13.50	£25.50	£49.50
1¼"	£16.00	£32.00	£62.00	£18.00	£35.50	£68.50
Nickel						
¾"	£9.00	£16.00	£32.00	£10.00	£18.00	£35.50
⅞"	£9.00	£17.00	£33.00	£10.00	£19.00	£36.50
1"	£11.00	£20.00	£39.00	£12.50	£22.00	£43.00
1⅛"	£12.00	£23.00	£45.00	£13.50	£25.50	£50.00
1¼"	£16.00	£32.00	£62.00	£18.00	£35.50	£68.50

Bell prices include postage and packing.

PROMOTIONAL GOODS:

Sweatshirts & T-Shirts: may be available on request – please telephone or email for details.

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

£1.25

Compact Discs:

The Magic of Morris - Double CD £15.00 p&p £1.00

Prices are correct at time of printing.
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