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fedextra

The quarterly newsletter of The Morris Federation

Autumn 2017

Inside this issue...

Becoming a clog maker

Simon Brock takes us on the first stage of his journey

New Esperance

Celebrating diversity and winners of best parade team at Pride London

Happy birthday to...

Rivington Morris (40)
Bourne Borderers (25)
and Buttercross Belles (25)



Day of dance

Bringing folk culture to the city of Hull

issue

Autumn 2017



New Esperance at Pride London 07



Bridport Festival 08



Boss Morris 10



Becoming a clog maker 14



Our Day of Dance – Hull City of Culture 16



Rampant Rooster 18



Ellington Morris 26

04 Welcome to the Autumn issue: a message from the editor

04 Contact your committee: details of how to get in touch

05 President's prologue: introducing the mastering performance workshop

06 Rivington Morris: 40 years of women's North West Morris

07 New Esperance at Pride London: winners of Best Parade Team

08 The 'First' Bridport Folk Music and Dance Festival: a review by the organiser

09 Ridgeway Step Clog and Garston Gallopers: moving and shaking in Belgium

10 Boss Morris: a new team making tracks into different audiences

12 Dates for your diary: events and workshops coming up in the new year

13 Chelmsford Morris: harnessing the power of local and national press to recruit

14 Becoming a Clog Maker: Simon Brock takes us on the first part of his journey

16 Our AGM Day of Dance: pics of the day in Hull – city of culture

18 Rampant Rooster: braving the storms at Wickham Festival

19 Mayflower Morris: stomping and shaking and enjoying a year of big days out

20 Bournemouth Borderers: celebrating 25 years of Border Morris

20 Buttercross Belles: celebrating 25 years of North West Morris in Otley

21 Belfagan Morris: dodging the showers at Largs Viking Festival, Ayrshire

22 NYFTE: can you help give youngsters the opportunity to get to know English folk?

23 National Morris Weekend: a roundup of the event and the winners of the Evesham Stick

24 Crook Morris: proving that the small town of Kendal was up to the challenge of DERT

26 Ellington Morris: dancing and making merry around Lake Garda and beyond

28 Marlins Morris: a French adventure at Le Douliou Ducasse

29 Hook Eagle Morris: a roundup of events and dance-outs – in pictures

30 Silkstone Greens in Berlin: an Easter weekend of dancing and friendship

31 Paul White's Diary: adventures on the road to Hull, and an invite to dance in Cornwall

Cover Stars

Wakefield Morris, The Morris Federation Day of Dance, Hull – City of Culture, September 2017
Photograph: Sam Ross

Do you have a great action picture of your team that could feature on the cover of FedExtra?

Send a high quality image suitable to print in A4 portrait format, some background info about your team, details of where and when the image was taken, and the photographer's name to: newsletter@morrisfed.org.uk

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contact your
committee



President's
prologue

welcome to the Autumn issue of **Morris FedExtra**

As we head deeper into the practice season, I am reminded of how thin the line is between having a comfortable number of dancers on the books and barely enough to scrape a set together.

One of my teams frequently fluctuates in numbers, and last year was both our best and our worst. At its peak the team numbered a grand total of 12 (including two musicians), but after three left for far-flung lands, and two have taken leave of absence, our single recruit has led us back to the minimum six dancers and two musicians.

My first team had to hang up their bells just one year shy of their 40th anniversary due

to aging members and a lack of new blood. Unfortunately, the realisation that ongoing recruitment was needed came too late and a final push at the eleventh hour bore no fruit. It is, however, gratifying to see that *Chelmsford Morris* (page 13) managed to avoid the same fate in their men's team through hard work and some fortuitous national news coverage.

I am pleased that many teams are constantly aware of their predicament and make annual inroads into preventing their extinction. As an old friend said to *Somerset Morris* before moving on to pastures new, "You need to continue to recruit even when the team is strong, as no one will join a team that appears to be failing." Wise words.

Sam

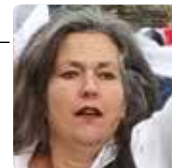
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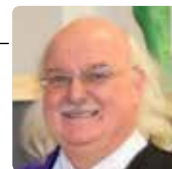
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Hello! I hope you've all had a great dance out season, be it at festivals, local galas or just outside your local pub.

A massive thank you to our 2017 Day of Dance and AGM hosts - *Beverley Garland, Green Ginger Garland, Makara Morris and Rackaback Morris* - for a wonderful day in Hull on Saturday 23 September. It was great to see so many teams out and about. One of the aspects that teams really appreciated was having their own City of Culture Ambassador as a tour guide. We're not always going to be as lucky to have city ambassadors available, but it is something that is worth considering by future hosts to help with the smooth running of the day. The AGM went well with both motions being passed, one unanimously and the other with a large majority, and everyone that wanted to comment on the discussions had time to do so. Full minutes will be online as soon as possible, and hard copies will be published with next year's AGM papers.

My one disappointment in the day was to see a number of teams walking dances rather than dancing them. I personally feel that this completely misses

the point, and can leave a really interesting dance appearing flat and lifeless. I'm not going to name names here - that's not my style - but if you would appreciate any feedback then please email me.

On a related subject, we are planning a 'Mastering Performance Workshop Weekend' on the 28-29 April 2018 at North Muskham Community Centre, near Newark. The weekend is still in the planning stages, but will incorporate workshops on performing traditional and evolved North West and Cotswold Morris, including how you use the space available and how you present yourselves. Between workshops there will be panels and round table discussions on subjects such as team kit, how to run a practice, team strategy, making a dance a performance, and audience awareness. There will be an early booking discounted rate available to Morris Federation members before we open the event up to all comers, so watch out on our website and Facebook page for further details. We did originally plan to include a far wider range of traditions, but decided to start with just a couple to test the

water. I really hope to see lots of North West and Cotswold dancers there, and we hope you will find it a worthwhile use of a weekend.

The next Joint Morris Organisations' National Day of Dance is being hosted by Open Morris in Peterborough on Saturday 19 May 2018. Details should be out soon, but please remember that The Morris Federation places will be on a first come first served basis, so please make sure your place is confirmed before booking accommodation. Also, if your team have dropped out of previous days of dance then I will be double checking your commitment before allocating a place as they are limited.

As always, as we head into the winter months, it's time to reflect on what we need to concentrate on in practices to make sure that next season is an even better one. Happy Dancing!

PS Don't forget to complete a feedback form for *New Esperance* about the 2018 AGM weekend. The form is downloadable from our website at www.morrisfed.org.uk

Melanie

guidelines for submission of articles

Please send articles as doc, docx, txt or odt formats.

Articles over 750 words will be trimmed, and all articles will be subject to copy editing for both readability and space restrictions.

Please accompany all articles with at least three high quality images. Any images embedded in documents should also be sent separately.

If images are very large, please use WeTransfer.com to send photographs and text documents together, rather than sending multiple emails.

Photographs and illustrations should be jpg, eps, tiff or pdf, although other file types may be accepted.

Make sure you have appropriate permission to publish all words and pictures.

Credit will be given to photographers, and captions printed, where provided.

publication schedule 2018

Winter

Deadline for articles:

15 December 2017

Publication date February 2018

Spring

Deadline for articles:

16 March 2018

Publication date May 2018

Summer

Deadline for articles:

15 June 2018

Publication date August 2018

Autumn

Deadline for articles:

14 September 2018

Publication date November 2018

deadline for next issue: **15 Dec**
next issue published: **Feb 2018**

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You can also download a copy from the FedExtra pages on our website: www.morrisfed.org.uk

useful info

Contact all Morris Fed members: broadcast@morrisfed.org.uk

Update your team's contact details: contacts@morrisfed.org.uk

keep it **social**



Rivington Morris celebrate 40 years



Rivington at Garstang with former members
Photograph by Derek Blackburn

MIKE
GOTT

It's now 40 years since *Rivington Morris*, from near Bolton, Lancashire, was formed. Born into a world and area where there was still sometimes open hostility to women dancing the morris, *Rivington* set out with an agenda to simply dance their North West tradition as well as it could and should be danced, with vigorous stepping, big sets, and straight lines at all times.

There was definitely a *Rivington* mind-set, which, 40 years down the line is still there, with the team still bloody-mindedly striving to dance the North West Morris as precisely and energetically as it can be, whilst at the same time thoroughly enjoying themselves doing it.

Rather refreshingly, we now often dance in the company of some of those teams who wouldn't have anything to do with us back at the start.

Back in June 2017 the team held a weekend based at the Whittingham Club, near Preston, to celebrate their birthday in the company of several other teams who have become friends over the years.

On the Saturday, coaches took everyone to dance in the Lancashire market town of Garstang followed by more dancing on the prom at Morecambe. In the evening there was a meal followed by a ceilidh at the club where a number of former members came along. Enough of them were still in good enough working order to join with the current line-up to put up three sets to dance an impromptu *Ashton* – the first dance the team learnt back in 1977. Sunday lunch time saw the teams gather at a pub for some more dancing before everyone headed off home.

Rivington practise on Wednesday nights 8-10pm at Blackrod Community Centre, not far from M61 Horwich Junction 6, just off the A6.



Rivington at Newark Traditions Festival, 2017
Photograph by Mike Everett



ZAK
KEIR

NEW ESPERANCE AT PRIDE LONDON

As a long-established women's Cotswold side, with currently around a third of members identifying as LGBTQ+, *New Esperance Morris* were all wildly excited to be included in the Pride London parade.

We assembled in Regent Street on a glorious, blazing Saturday in July, having made a few modifications to our usual kit for the occasion, our white hankies were swapped for rainbow ones and we all had rainbow shoelaces. We even co-ordinated our make-up with everyone sporting rainbow paint and glittery cheekbones.

Some of our dancers who weren't yet in kit had learned the *Esperance Processional* and were given kit for the day so they could parade with the rest of us, and we had our recently re-discovered and beautifully refurbished banner to show the crowd who we were. One team member had also been thoughtful enough to pack some canned gins and tonic to refresh us while we waited for the signal to form up and set off.

Due to the enormous number of people, groups, and floats in the parade it was a while before we actually got going, but once we were underway it all went magnificently. Each time we switched

from walking to processional step the crowds went wild, and those of us who gave out flyers to the audience found that everyone wanted to hug and high-five us as we passed along the route.

There had been some security concerns in the run up to the event, given the current volatile political climate, but the atmosphere on the day was wonderful – happy and relaxed and celebratory all the way through.

The next morning, shattered but proud of ourselves, we were further thrilled to hear we had been awarded the prize for



Best Parade Team. As there were 325 other groups there on the day this was a real honour, and a smaller group of *Esps* claimed the trophy on stage at Sunday's *Pride In The Park* in Vauxhall. We're looking forward to doing the whole thing again next year!



Beltane Border Morris

THE 'FIRST' BRIDPORT FOLK MUSIC AND DANCE FESTIVAL

What a Fantastic Festival we had. The music, dance, and colour were truly spectacular and our thanks to all the dance sides who made the festival a success.

We put out a call to support the first Bridport Folk Music and Dance Festival and you responded with numbers, good humour, and enthusiasm.

Among the 26 dance sides including Border Morris, Cotswold Morris, Clog, Appalachian, and even Bulgarian, were Wessex Morris celebrating their 60th year – here's to the next 60! However, the biggest attraction were the inimitable *Beltane Morris* leaping with feigned aggression toward the crowds amidst the music and sound of beating drums and on frequent occasions stopping the traffic as the crowds swelled into the road. (Note to self, must be better prepared safety-wise next year.)



Not be outshone, the local side *Wyld Morris*, led by squire Briony Blair, worked tirelessly to perfect and perform their new *Rope Dance* specially created to celebrate Bridport's rope and net industry heritage. *Wyld* also ran a very successful Cotswold dance workshop teaching *Journeyman* to a flock of willing and some not-so-willing participants.

Unfortunately, the Guinness World Record attempt failed due mainly to lack of

management on my part, and so I deeply apologise to all those dancers who had stayed on late to participate and for any disappointment caused. On a brighter note though I, along with many others, have had a constant barrage of emails, texts, and tweets, praising the standard of the festival and the exciting programme it provided.

The feedback locally and from afar has been amazing and that is in no small part due to our wonderful dance sides, so

I feel the following should be addressed to you:

'Wow Bridport, where did that come from? It took Sidmouth 40 years to reach the standard of your first festival!'

'Well done to the organisers of the first Bridport Folk Festival. It was just like Sidmouth in the good old days!'

We can be quietly proud of our achievements but not complacent. There were mistakes and we could have done better, but we couldn't have put more passion and commitment into bringing our festival to life.

All the dance sides performed brilliantly, with energy and smiles to large appreciative crowds. Despite the heat of the summer sun they all created a truly electric atmosphere. I am honestly and truly humbled by the commitment and belief that the dancers and musicians gave to the festival. We couldn't have done it without you.

My personal thanks go to dance co-ordinator Ian Cox (Wessex and Wyld). Ian worked tirelessly to organise the dance programme and did a fantastic job despite the many obstacles and amendments thrown in his way.

Thank you all, sincerely and well done all of you, and please come back next year!

CHRIS DEACON



Wyld Morris

Photographs by @DorsetdayPhotography



Garston Gallopers

A STEP AND A GALLOP IN BELGIUM

The organisers of the Artifoire, an artisan craft fair in the village of Hollain, are immensely proud of their event, and rightly so, as what started 43 years ago in this small village south of Tournai, Belgium, with five local artisans, has grown to a three day event attracting 10,000 visitors.

JIM CRICK

Dozens of artists who work in wood, metal, clay, glass, paint, crayon, thread, and fabric, not only sell their wares, but demonstrate their skills and explain the techniques involved.

Music is also a huge part of the event, embracing a wide spectrum from the local choir and brass band, jazz, rock, blues, accordion, rockabilly (from St. Albans), and traditional street music from France and Belgium.

Artisan food and drink are also there in abundance, with butchers, bakers, confectioners, cheese makers, chocolatiers, brewers, and distillers.

Each year the community invites one country to bring its folklore traditions to the event. With Brexit in mind, the organisers were keen to extend the hand of continued friendship to Great Britain, a sentiment echoed shortly after in the Passchendaele commemorations, and *Ridgeway Step Clog* were invited. With close links to *Garston Gallopers Morris* a joint party was formed and the organisers also invited *Earlsdon Morris* and the *Coventry Mummies*.

Our programme involved three days of dance spots around the festival site, during which we were able to show a variety of traditional English dance styles, and culminating in a Sunday workshop with the local traditional Walloon dancers. *Earlsdon* had us parading up and down, albeit without their immaculate precision, *Ridgeway* taught some basic clog step patterns, *Garston* led a traditional joining in dance, and we all did some interesting local progressive circle dances with our hosts. A group of Belgian men also performed an impressive longsword dance, with great precision and intensity.

We were also invited to take a small part in the Belgian National Day celebrations, and in kit we attended a church service that celebrated the formation of the Belgian Nation State in 1830. We then moved to the war memorial, where each of the fallen was remembered. It was an emotional event, during which we were formally welcomed in English.

We could not have been better looked after. We were treated with great respect, consideration, and generosity, and in accordance with the tradition of

the village were accommodated with local families. We like to think we made a small difference and showed that not only are our traditions long, varied, and very much alive, but that we also share their spirit of amity as good neighbours.



Ridgeway Step Clog

Boss Morris at WOMAD Festival
Photograph by Helen Rogers • www.helography.co.uk

BOSS MORRIS

A NEW TEAM MAKING TRACKS INTO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Boss Morris, started in the summer of 2015 in Stroud, Gloucestershire, led by Alex Merry (ex-Belles of London City) and Steve Rowley. The members were drawn from the buzzing creative arts scene in Stroud (many having worked for Damien Hurst at some point in their careers), so not surprisingly the kit has always been a little on the unusual side. Apart from Alex, none of the dancers had performed morris before, so they had a steep learning curve before their first spot at Stroud Festival in August 2015...

Boss dance a Cotswolds style, alongside a mediæval fighting dance. As most of their audiences wouldn't know their Fieldtown from their Leafield, Boss don't worry about sticking to individual traditions. That's not to say the dances look messy or disjointed, as a distinct coherent Boss tradition seems to be forming and the music always fits with and enhances the dance.

The original concept of being eye-catching hasn't changed in the last two years, but the costumes regularly do. That said, Boss aren't a 'looks are more important than the steps' team. Practices are for concentrated dancing, leaving the admin to be sorted and costumes to be designed, discussed, and worked on outside of rehearsals.

As well as dancers and a musician, Boss have a 'beast crew'. Some teams have a single 'animal', Boss have at least eight available ranging from the bizarre (Sweet Red Onion and Ghengis), through simple hard-hat based Goat, to the divine Ewegenie.

1st May saw the first appearance of Stroud's Jackie-in-the-Green, and one of the Boss beasts won the Sidmouth Horse Trials in August.

Although I was vaguely aware of Boss's existence (I saw some walk past the previous summer whilst in a café), I'd not looked into offering to play for the team.



Lazing at Liverpool – backstage at the Shirley Collins gig at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

As Stroud District has five other thriving morris teams, I couldn't see a need for another and I was already quite busy with *The Outside Capering Crew*, non-folk music commitments, work, and family. I'd also seen a few social media posts from a former *Stroud Morris* colleague who had played for them on occasion. I respected her as a good morris musician, so thought that Boss certainly didn't need me.

In March 2016, I saw a request on the web for a musician to play for Boss at a festival, as Steve Rowley was unwell and their other occasional musicians were not available. I was free on the festival dates, so volunteered – hell, I could see their rehearsal room from my porch, so it would have been churlish not to offer. To their mild surprise, I asked if I could go to a couple of practices before the gig – at which I just stood quietly, not chatting much, just playing along and familiarising myself with the music and dance style.

Three weeks later I found myself in Pontins, Prestatyn, for Stewart Lee's ATP 2.0 Festival. Boss were booked there to dance for the folk rock band *Trembling Bells* (no need for me to play), but would also be doing some ad-hoc dancing around the festival over the weekend. I knew the team were alright when I went back to the

MARK ROGERS



Ewegenie and Sweet Red Onion backstage at the Barbican
Photograph by Mark Rogers



Top + Bottom: Boss Morris at the Royal Academy



Jackie-in-the-Green maiden outing on 1st May at The Prince Albert, Rodborough • Photograph by Mark Rogers

four-bed chalet to find two more bottles of spirits had joined my bottle of gin on the kitchen table. The dances went well, but sadly the festival went bust on the Sunday!

So why haven't you seen Boss at a folk festival or dancing out with other teams? Good question! Boss have been quite busy outside the folk circuit. We're not avoiding the wider morris world and hope to meet up with other teams next year, but rather than go to pubs on summer practice evenings, we've been practising for forthcoming events. We feel that if we're being paid to perform, then the performance should be worth the money.

As well as ATP, in the last year Boss have also performed at The Royal Albert Hall with *Trembling Bells*, Christies Auction

House in South Kensington for their Festival of British Folklore, Punchdrunk Theatre in London for the opening of their production facility 'Village', Shirley Collins' Lodestar tour where we danced at The Colston Hall Bristol, The Barbican, Warwick Arts Centre, and Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (the wonderful *Brighton Morris* were also involved in the tour), The Royal Academy Summer Social, various stages at WOMAD, and Walthamstow Folk Festival.

We don't only do big gigs. The initial concept was to perform at local arts events, so we've done a midsummer festival at Stroud's Brunel Goods Shed (again with *Trembling Bells*), Chalfest (where we were finished in time to watch Dick & Dom), part of an International Women's Day stage show in Cirencester, dancing for Elvis (who

may have been an impersonator) to the music of Kate Bush's *Wuthering Heights*, the Creative Bath Awards, Stroud Goodwill Evening, and Stroud Wassail.

As well as dance spots, Boss were the cover photo for the May edition of *fROOTS* (since which the editor is rumoured to have been performing occasionally in the beast crew), filmed two pop/rock videos and an avant-garde video, with another rock video currently mid-production, spent an evening filming for regional BBC news, had several professional photoshoots and a film crew are booked in to make a short film about the team.

To find out more about *Boss Morris*, visit: www.bossmorris.com, or find them on Facebook @bossmorrisdancers



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diary dates 2018

12-14 January

Whittlesey Straw Bear Festival
Historic festival in Whittlesey nr Peterborough
www.strawbear.org.uk

23-25 February

IVFDF
Hosted by Five Rivers Morris, Sheffield
<http://ivfdf-2018.ceildhsoc.org>

18 March

Sherborne Jig Workshop (Improvers)
Hosted by The Knights of King Ina,
Keinton Mandeville, Somerset
www.koki.org.uk

28-29 April

Mastering Performance Workshop Weekend
Hosted by The Morris Federation,
North Muskham Community Centre, near Newark
www.morrisfed.org.uk

19 May

The JMO National Day of Dance
Hosted by Crosskeys Clog, Peterborough
www.jmodayofdance.com

22 September

The Morris Federation AGM
Hosted by New Esperance Morris,
Cecil Sharp House, London

Know of an event that could be featured here?

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Coming soon...

CLOGS



MILDLY ECCENTRIC CHELMSFORD MORRIS' SEARCH FOR MEN

CELIA
KEMP

"Do you have to be mildly eccentric to be a morris dancer?" was the question that floored me. I thought that being a morris dancer defined you as mildly eccentric, rather than eccentricity being an entry requirement. It seemed that 'mildly eccentric' was the phrase from our press releases that caught the imagination.

Chelmsford Morris is a joint side – men's Cotswold and Ladies' North West Morris. We all glory in the high standards and sheer fun of our women's side, but the men were short of numbers and long in years. Last autumn it was decided that the men's side would fold up this summer, after its 45th season, if no new members could be found.

I sent press releases to the local papers, who both published decent articles and pictures. I sent press releases to local radio and television and to relevant parish magazines, which gave us some good coverage. By chance, a news agency picked up on the theme. It was just before and after Christmas and the news was all Brexit and terrorism, so I think we provided a little light relief.

What surprised me was the article and photo in the Daily Telegraph. Excellent! And this was followed by a flurry of media interviews – including

TalkSport Radio and BBC Scotland. The height of our pride was becoming an item on The News Quiz on Radio 4, followed by a mention on the BBC Breakfast programme.

The Sunday Times dallied with us, and the London Metro printed a small paragraph, but BBC Online picked up the story, and sent a chap along to the men's practice.

He interviewed all the members, joined in with some dancing, and produced a really worthwhile piece on Chelmsford Morris and morris in general.
www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-39065775

Through all this publicity we have attracted three new men, all via the local media, as we would expect. One is the same age as most of the existing side, one is middling, and one is young enough to wear tight stretch jeans without socks


as part of his kit. Ah, the fashions of youth!

The two who joined first are already dancing out with us at a pretty fair standard, and their enthusiasm has revitalised us all.

Our predicted 'Final Fling' weekend has been happily downgraded to a day of celebration for 45 years and the future of the side.



Chelmsford Morris



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Contributions always welcome.

Morris Matters



SIMON BROCK

The journey to becoming a clog maker

Episode 1: serendipity, generosity, and big scary knives

THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ABOUT CLOG MAKING, MY PROGRESS IN WHICH HAS BEEN GENEROUSLY ASSISTED BY A GRANT FROM THE MORRIS FEDERATION.

I write this article after visiting the director of a leather merchant in Northampton. We were about five minutes into our meeting when he asked the big question:

"Why do you want to make clogs?"

It's a tricky one to answer. I enjoy making things. I needed some footwear to get married in. It's one way to get round folk festivals! Finally, I said something pompous like, "Because someone should carry on the craft", and that's my main motivation. I'm happily making leather goods, and nobody ever got rich from clogs as far as I can tell; so something must be spurring me on to put in the time, money and effort required to become proficient at this obscure craft.

I might just as easily have answered, "Because it's my destiny to make clogs", which would have sounded even more pompous! But fateful coincidences,

good decisions, happy meetings and the generosity and goodwill of others has helped get me this far.

This started in 2010 when, at Whitby Folk Week, I first met clog maker Trefor Owen, a name familiar to the folk dance world. Having trained as a cabinetmaker and being used to the tyranny of straight lines, jigs and third-angle projections, I was fascinated by the idea of making something with such bonkers compound curves as a clog sole; and was delighted when Trefor offered to teach me the rudiments.

It was during that short stay with Trefor that I first encountered leather and decided to teach myself leatherworking. Six years later I re-emerged, butterfly-like (ha!) into the folk world as 'Leather for Folkies', and promptly got my bottom kicked by Trefor for not having started making clogs yet. "You've got the knives", he grumbled – and this was quite true.

For the uninitiated, arguably the most essential, odd, and fearsome-looking bits of kit in a clog maker's toolbox are the three clog knives: the block knife, hollower, and gripper.

My wife and I plan to lash the block knife to her motorbike and use it to deadly effect riding around the post-apocalyptic wastelands in the event of the collapse of civilization. I'm sure you can see why it's suited to this task.

These tools haven't been made since maybe the 1920s and, even constantly stalking eBay, are notoriously hard to come by. But, in the second example of chance meetings, an old boy in Dorset found out (via clog dance genius Melanie Barber: who in serendipitous twist of fate Number 3 lives five minutes walk from my house) that I was looking for a set. He was an ex-pat Lancastrian and gifted me his knives on condition that "they go back Up North [the fact that I was Yorkshire born and bred didn't seem to faze him] and they get used". I've been able to fulfil both criteria.

Remarkably, the clog knives only cost me the fuel to get to Dorset, a pub lunch (laced with loudly proclaimed insults from my Lancastrian benefactor about

southerners!), and a bottle of Scotch, the latter expense beginning a proud tradition of paying for my clog making apprenticeship with whisky.

The knives had languished in a garage for maybe 25 years and were badly pitted – but invaluable. I procrastinated about fettling them. I decided the best thing to do would be to stick my head in the sand and go and see Trefor again.

So it was in January, I lowered the tone of Trefor's neighbourhood by parking the van on the sea wall (broadside to some chilly winds from Cardigan Bay!) and stayed there for a few days. A clog enthusiast dropped into Trefor's workshop while I was there and promptly explained to me how to sharpen clog knives. I could scarcely believe my luck: serendipitous meeting Number 4.

I scoured off the rust, sharpened the knives until I could shave with them (and, as it turned out, draw a spectacular fountain of blood from my thumb) and was all set to make clog soles.



CLOG KNIVES BEFORE SHARPENING



CLOG KNIVES AFTER SHARPENING



A DECENT PAIR OF CLOGS BUT IT TOOK A WHILE TO GET TO THIS STAGE!

My good fortune is only the start. Follow my journey over the next editions of FedExtra as I...

- cut down a tree
- get a workshop
- dig a sewing machine engineer out of retirement
- make some wedding clogs
- track down a popular face from the past
- am awarded a grant from The Morris Federation

OUR AGM DAY OF DANCE

Morris Federation teams from around the UK took to the streets of Hull, in advance of our AGM, on Saturday 23 September 2017. With thanks to *Green Ginger Garland*, *Rackaback Morris*, *Beverley Garland*, and *Makara Morris* for hosting the event.



Rampant Rooster at Wickham Festival, 2017
Photograph by Barbara Kerridge

RAMPANT ROOSTER MORRIS AT THE WICKHAM FESTIVAL

A small group of Rampant Roosters were among the morris sides that danced at the Wickham Festival.

Although the torrential rain had stopped by the first day of the festival, we still had to contend with erecting our tents in 40mph winds. At one point we did fear that three of our dancers (plus the tent they were hanging on to) would end up in Portsmouth Harbour.

Given the horrendous weather the organisers did a magnificent job to get the festival up and running by Thursday evening, and despite ankle deep mud on the main festival site we all enjoyed the music in the main tents, including Andy Fairweather Lowe and 10cc – taking many of us back to our youth.

As we were a small side for this event (four dancers and two musicians), our Foreman, Sheila Gray, had spent a lot of time adapting most of the dances in our repertoire for four people. This meant that we spent quite a while on Friday walking through the new routines – much to the amusement of our fellow campers).

Roosters had been allocated three dance slots on Saturday and three on Sunday. Our first stand each day was in the square in Wickham followed by two further stands on the festival stage. We gave good displays along with other morris sides, which included a massed *Fanny Frail* organised

by Wickham Morris Men and Worcestershire Monkey danced with some members of Clerical Error, coming together with Rampant Roosters to form a scratch side – Rampant Error or Clerical Rooster if you prefer.

Our musicians – Alan Mead, who usually plays for Ewell St. Mary, and our own fiddler, Jo Hughes, did a fantastic job. Playing on the festival stage was a challenge as it was only a couple of hundred yards away from one of the main music stages. I doubt Alan and Jo could hear what they were playing but they managed magnificently, even when Jo's fiddle received a whack from our squire's stick as he was

passing. Fortunately, neither Jo nor her fiddle suffered any lasting damage, and neither did the Squire due to Jo's restraint!

We are particularly grateful to Alan who agreed to play for us as our own box player was unavailable.

All in all Roosters had a very enjoyable time and if we are invited back next year would hope to field a larger side, if only to save Sheila a lot of sleepless nights trying to make figures work for four dancers instead of six or eight.

ROSIE MITCHELL



Wickham Festival massed dance • Photograph by JoAnne Hughes



Vixens with Rampant Rooster



MAYFLOWER MORRIS ENJOYING A YEAR OF BIG DAYS OUT

DAVID JOHNSON

Mayflower Morris, the women's North West side from Ash Vale on the Hampshire/Surrey border have been stomping and shaking this year all along the south coast from Devon to Sussex at festivals and days of dance.

Kicking off in traditional fashion with Oxford in April, the team enjoyed quayside sunshine at Weymouth for the Wessex Festival, and Folk on the Quay in Poole, where it was good to see new morris faces as well as old. There were plenty of old friends at Kennet Morris' 60th anniversary bash in Reading

in July, with some high profile spots to entertain hundreds of city centre shoppers. Victory Morris excelled themselves with their annual day of dance in Portsmouth, with 24 sides turning out to enjoy the sun and nautical vibes. Our high spot so far has been an invitation to dance at

the 40th anniversary of the Dartmoor Folk Festival, in the delightful and ancient village of South Zeal, where as well as being amazed as ever by the wonderful Bampton Traditional Morris, we shared great spots with local sides Tinnars Morris and Cogs and Wheels.

September saw us at the first Folk Dance Southampton, organised by King John's Morris to be a city-wide showcase for all local morris and other dance sides, and we wound up the season in October at the Lewes Folk Festival, always a good day in a lovely town. Great beer from Harveys too!



Photographs by @DorsetdayPhotography



JOHN BIRD

BOURNE BORDERERS AT 25

Reaching our quarter life crisis we took the chance to host a weekend of dance from 23-25 June 2017.

Inviting our friends Powderkegs, Ely and Littleport Riot, Rattlejag, and Black Sheep, to join us for the weekend. They provided us with

entertainment and wonderful dancing, plus the Saturday evening party pieces were as memorable as always.

A big thank you to all the sides who joined us in Stamford on 24 June. It was wonderful to see so many sides in such a small town!

We had a more relaxed Sunday, heading down to the Rutland Steam Fair and enjoying the wonders of steam engineering, and some dancing.

Thank you to Bourne Borderers members for running the event and feeding everyone.



Bourne Borderers in motion



Poacher Morris sacrificing their youngest

We like to camp and dance and sing
We like to eat and drink
A date in June swiftly set
Our weekend of dance to celebrate
Our 25th Birthday
A wee, a wee, a wee, a wee
A weekend of dance was run
A chance to celebrate.

The drum boomed out a clear four-beat
The band began to play
With a whoop and a cry
And a scream and a shout
Friends came to join in the fun
A tune we all could play
A tchoo, a tchoo, a tchoo, a tchoo
A tune we all could play.



JANET HINDLE

25 YEARS OF BUTTERCROSS BELLES

Large crowds turned out for this year's May Day celebration at Otley Maypole, and the sun came out too.

Children, parents and the Town Mayor all enthusiastically joined in the dancing, making patterns around the Maypole with the colourful ribbons. The event was organised by Otley's North West Morris side, The

Buttercross Belles. Border Morris side, Wayzgoose, also joined in the dancing, and the afternoon ended with a May Day Mummers play performed by Otley Players.

This was a particularly special May weekend for the Belles, as they celebrated 25 years of dancing on the Friday

evening with a re-union for current and ex-Belles dancers and musicians. Jaci Bowman, The Buttercross Belles' Squire, said, 'We had a very happy time sharing our dancing experiences, with former Belles travelling from as far away as Switzerland and France to join us. On May Day it was so lovely to see so many children,



parents and grandparents joining in to help us keep the dancing tradition going at Otley's historic Maypole.'



SHOWERS? BELFAGAN DODGEM!

STUART WILTSHIRE



Belfagan Women's Morris were invited to Largs Viking Festival by organisers seeking new attractions.

and making an unusual spectacle. We couldn't resist a photo-call with dancers sitting in the cars, and their musicians and showman Warren, standing between.

We were only too pleased to take our traditional dances north of the border for a weekend of dancing alongside the Viking campsite on the seafront in this lively Ayrshire town.

Maybe we could market this in this techy world – I can see the spiel: 'Dancers! Tired of dancing in the damp? Download the "Dodgems App". Instant cover for damp dancers at the click of a heel.'

A wonderful Saturday dancing for crowds in hot sunshine was followed by a strong easterly wind bringing heavy rain for Sunday. But Belfagan are up for anything and seeing an empty covered space asked the dodgems owner, Warren Taylor, if they could dance there. The result was an hour's display of dances before he switched on the power.

Belfagan Women's Morris are still going strong after over 35 years and during this summer have been dancing around the area raising money for Riding for the Disabled.

Passers-by were amused to find a dozen dancers in mill-girl dresses and clogs rattling the metal floor

We practise at Eaglesfield Village Hall on Monday evenings at 7.45pm and would be very pleased to welcome prospective new dancers. For more information visit www.belfagan.org.uk





NYFTE

HAVE YOU GOT THE SKILLS, TALENT AND DEDICATION TO WORK WITH THE MOST AMAZING GROUP OF YOUNGSTERS ON THE FOLK SCENE?

NYFTE has given the opportunity to hundreds of youngsters to learn to love our English folk music, song and dance traditions and perform them to a high standard, there are NYFTE 'pensioners' involved in the folk scene all over the country.

If you're interested in joining a team to take over from Dave and Heather Leverton who will be retiring at the end of 2018 please get in touch.

Dave has been involved since the inception of NYFTE in autumn 1989 and has a great deal of experience to impart.

There are a variety of roles to fill both administrative and technical and a number of people have already come forward including a new artistic director.

We're intending to hold a meeting in January or February 2018 to discuss roles to allow the new team leaders to shadow the incumbents throughout the year and take over the reins from Spring 2019.

Please ask yourself - why not?

For an informal no obligation discussion, please contact Dave and Heather Leverton: david.leverton2@btinternet.com tel: 0117 9866316, or for more information about the team visit: www.nyfte.org

DAVE
LEVERTON

NYFTE – The National Youth Folklore Troupe of England (pronounced 'nifty') – comprises 20-40 youngsters from all over the country aged 10 -18 who busk, present concerts and run workshops at festivals throughout the year. NYFTE present Cotswold (a variety of traditions), North-West and Border Morris; Garland; Longsword; Rapper; Social, Playford and Ceilidh Dance; Clog and Step Dances; plus solo items. The team members also sing and play for all their performances.



NYFTE at Priddy Folk Festival, 2017



NYFTE celebrating Hereburgh's 30th birthday with Silhill, June 2017



NATIONAL MORRIS WEEKEND

This year's weekend event had, as the weatherman said, 'The hottest days in June since 1976.'

We had three sides from North Carolina, one North West Morris, one Border Morris, and one Garland. All arrived by Friday evening, took advantage of food at the rowing club and then sessions which continued into the early hours of Saturday morning due to the fine weather.

On Saturday morning coaches took everyone to various villages around the area for the

daytime tour, before returning all sides to the café on Abbey Gardens to dance for each others' entertainment in the afternoon.

In the evening two minibuses ferried the sides to the National Trust Fleece Inn, where there was a ceilidh in the marquee, and mummies performed their play during the interval.

Sessions in the pub went on late, with the last bus returning at 1am and the session in the rowing club continuing for a second night into the early hours.

Sunday began with the American sides dancing in the church for the morning service, followed by the duck race on the river, which once again did not seem to know which way to flow.

After the prizes were handed out everyone

processed from the park up to the market square where each side had 10 minutes to show off their dances.

The Evesham Stick was presented at 3pm by the Mayor's representative to the winning side – *Domesday*, after which the host side *Belle d'Vain* performed their show dance, and *Domesday* invited the public in to dance with them. The end of yet another brilliant weekend.

We are already starting to organise next year's event.



Dames Rocket from North Carolina, USA

If you are interested in coming along, visit our website nationalmorrisweekend.co.uk where you will find further details and booking forms. We look forward to welcoming you!



Belles & Broomsticks Morris from Guernsey



Domesday Morris
Winners of Evesham Stick 2017
Vale Of Evesham National Morris Weekend



DERT 2017 WHY DID A MORRIS SIDE OFFER TO HOST IT?

Crook Morris has danced rapper for 25 years, and danced the same basic dance for many of them. In 2009 they gained new dancers with some rapper experience, and over the next three years a couple more dancers joined and wanted to learn. Time for Crook Morris to take a development step forward?

A new rapper foreman, seven dancers, three musicians, and people up for Tommying. We had a reasonable team, more figures, new steps and a smart new kit. Off to DERT we went, with some trepidation – but we had some success, which encouraged us.

After a couple of years of competing, we had some questions. Why was DERT almost always in a city? Why so much walking from one competition pub to the next? Why did we only meet 25% of the other teams during the day? Why was the showcase often a distance from the accommodation? And why was DERT mostly organised by 'pure' rapper teams?

Our thoughts: Crook is good at organisation and staging events (15 years of morris weekends), Kendal is a wonderful town with history, great pubs, atmosphere and accommodation, and two main venues that are really close together.

The groundswell of opinion grew. Was our rapper team up for it? Yes!

We went to the whole side for support - we wouldn't undertake it unless everyone was on board. Almost everyone was, and even those that weren't said, 'Go for it!'

Two years before the proposed hosting, the two main venues were reserved, and we

were ready. Our application to the *Sword Dance Union (SDU)* was submitted. The response came back remarkably quickly, 'What a great idea! It's yours.' What had we done?

We knew there would be a phenomenal level of work. Let's not dwell on the detail of the hiccups: the pub that was shut by the brewery 10 days before the event and the need to find a replacement; our brochure map to be reprinted and stuck over the first print; the landlord who slept in - he should have been open as a warm up pub; the IT failure at the showcase on Saturday night...

Crook just set to and dealt with them. Challenges not problems!



The 'DERT Bake Off' winning cake made by Crook Morris' Juliet Baddeley

Let's remember the brilliant Friday night at Kirkbie Kendal School with the alternative judges and their 'Bake Off' competition. Entries were anonymous but it was won by Juliet Baddeley, Crook's cake baking supremo. Result!

MARTYN HARVEY

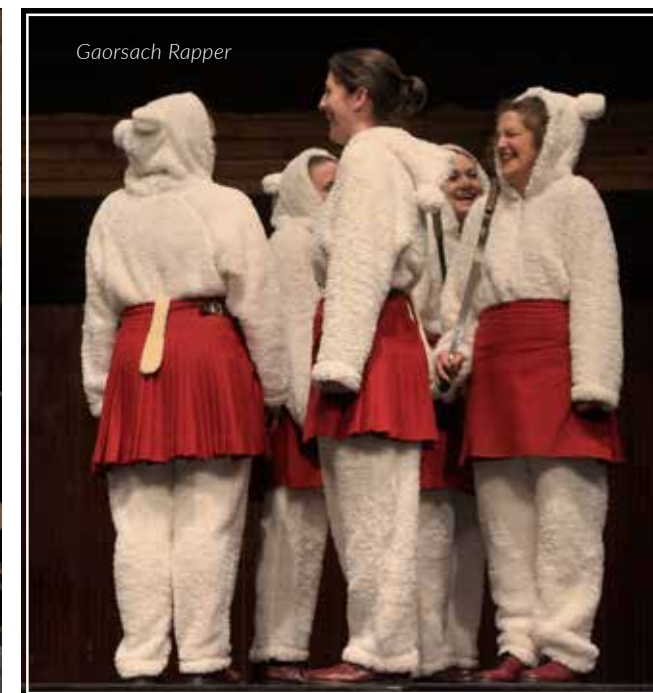
A brilliant bar that got through 11 barrels of beer, 85 pints of cider, 7 litres of gin, 4 litres of damson gin, and 15 bottles of wine. Competition day with all the teams intermingling, egging each other on. Typical Kendal weather – dry, hot, and clear skies. An excellent showcase with another six barrels of beer, free chocolate treats and everyone could wander around freely. A post-showcase party that truly buzzed with happy smiling faces, and finally, a relaxed Sunday workshop and meeting.

We didn't reach the 28 teams of recent years but we'll still manage to donate £1000 to the SDU, as we didn't borrow any money (small town venues don't ask for deposits). Kendal loved the colour, the excitement and the atmosphere, £600 was raised for The Great North Air Ambulance, and the pubs had a great day.

Crook achieved what it set out to do and proved that small towns can work for DERT; there is less walking between pubs which gives more time to enjoy the other teams, and the showcase and accommodation being close together is a real bonus. Our merchandise all sold well and we had a financially successful DERT with beer at £2.50 a pint!



Whip the Cat Rapper



Gaorsach Rapper

Feedback from our guests:

"We love Kendal" - Red Mum (Denmark).

"First rate beer and at a decent price."

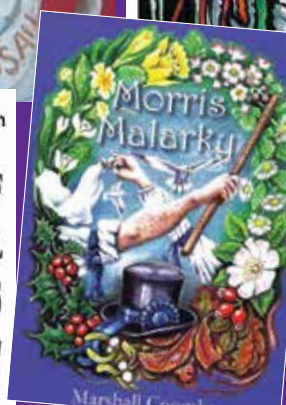
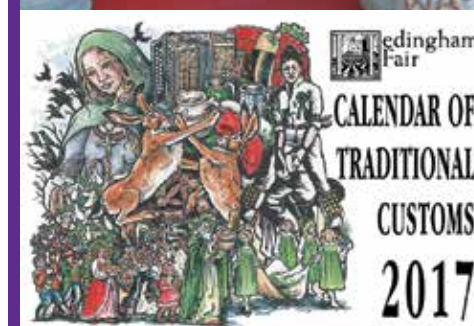
"Best organised DERT in many a year." - two judges, one Sallyport, and one past organiser.

"I organise our team for DERT, it can be quite stressful. The minute we got to our second pub in just five minutes I relaxed. Brilliant, thank you."

"Great job guys." - two SDU officers.

"Great to be able to circulate easily at the showcase."

One competitor who has 10 items he judges each DERT against and gave Crook Morris ticks against all 10.



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Bampton in Malcesine

A GARDA CAPER

PENNY
BARON

19 Ellington Morris folk, musicians, dancers and their faithful followers, boarded an early Easyjet flight to Italy in June, complete with all the paraphernalia needed for dancing and making merry.

A coach transfer along the eastern shore of the beautiful Lake Garda dropped us with goods and chattels in the centre of a delightful waterside town called Malcesine – the locals pronounce it Mal-ches-i-nay. Our hotel nestled comfortably in the middle of the old town not far from the harbour, the funicular, central bus station, and the castle, one of our dance venues.

Most of our repertoire is Cotswold with a sprinkling of Border for good measure, but we had a quick run through with the rapper swords on Monday afternoon so our final number could be polished and impressive.

There were so many tourists milling around, we thought we'd need crowd control marshals. Bob, our Squire, had rehearsed a few words of introduction in Italian and on our first evening he started boldly with: 'Signore e signori, noi siamo i Ellington Morris d'Inghilterra'. Even those of you whose Italian might be a little rusty, will be able to guess what this means.

Encouraged by a lively reception, he went on to say: "Noi siamo qui per ballare la nostra danza tradizionale inglese per voi. Alcuni di questi balli sono centinaia d'anni vecchi (e così sono alcuni dei nostri ballerina)". And this means: "We are here

to dance our traditional English morris dances for you. Some of these dances are hundreds of years old (and so are some of our dancers)." More laughter and applause from spectators.

Our second slot at the castle was a tad misjudged. By the time we reached the confines of the castle walls it was getting on for 6 o'clock and the castle closes at 5.30pm. Only a handful of people were left wandering around and looked down on our floorshow from the battlements above. On a higher level still, the half dozen hang gliders, coasting on the thermals in the sky over our castle, had a bird's eye view and I'm sure would have been clapping if they'd had two free hands to put together.



A promising morris dancer in Malcesine

On the Thursday, instead of strutting our stuff in the castle, we danced by the harbour which was ringed with cafes and restaurants. Here our audience numbers were more constant as most were in the process of eating and drinking so sat back and enjoyed a slice of the action. One of the waiters showed real promise as a morris dancer, but was busy on a Wednesday evening, our regular date for practice and dancing out.

There were four destination choices for the days we weren't dancing and we covered all of them between us. First, a trip round Lake Garda, next a visit to Venice, then one to Verona, and lastly the Dolomites. These tours included a guide and cost extra, but were well worth it.

Venice proved most eventful. The coach parked up, we transferred to the ferry, and from there to a point past the end of the Grand Canal to the eclectic quayside. Our guide escorted us via St Mark's Square to the foot of the Rialto bridge where she disappeared. We were free to explore at leisure and reconvene at 4:30pm where the ferry had dropped us.

During the afternoon, an unattended bag was reported to the authorities and the



Bear Dance



Rapper in Malcesine Castle

police swiftly closed one of the three bridges across the Grand Canal thinking it might be an act of terrorism. The Venice Six, who had been masquerading as members of Ellington Morris, were trapped on the wrong side of the bridge and prevented from continuing their canal-side walk to the meeting place.

Time passed and everyone began to assemble at the quayside in anticipation of the ferry ride back to the coach park. There are constant queues for space at the quay so the boats work to a rigorous schedule and are hovering with passengers a boat length from land waiting their turn.

Our ferryman was exceeding his slot time and we had to abandon our friends and leave for the coach. As the main body of Malcesine tourists boarded the heavens opened. Members of the party sitting in a comfortable dry seat in the coach let out a great cheer as the missing were eventually absorbed back into their midst an hour later, looking more like drowned rats than morris dancers in mufti.

The day trip to the Dolomites took us through some spectacular scenery which morphed from Italian to distinctly Alpine. At the highest point, beyond Pordoi, the temperature dropped by 25°C and being

above the tree line, looked more like an alien landscape. Our journey was marked by two long delays where a 6,000 strong stream of cyclists crossed the road and diesel gave way to pedal power.

We were all a little disappointed and surprised that our morris dancing hadn't drawn bigger crowds, even with the population numbers swelled by an influx of German visitors on a four-day weekend. But by virtue of being morris dancers and musicians, with excellent food and drink around us, and in such a beautiful part of the world, we all had a wonderful time and were sad when our week drew to a close.

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MARLINGS FRENCH ADVENTURE

Photographs by Laurence Costaganna

Laurence Costaganna and Veronique Lorian are two ladies who live in the small town of Le Doulieu in Flanders, Northern France and love Britain so much that they have set up an organisation in their home town called 'So British'. When visiting Kent last year they saw *Marlings Morris* dancing at a local pub and immediately asked the side if they would like to visit France and take part in their local 'Ducasse' (festival) in 2017. *Marlings* are not a side to turn down an invitation and immediately set about booking shuttle tickets!

GILLIAN
BILSLAND

We arrived on the first Friday evening in August and were pleasantly surprised to receive an official welcome from Monsieur le Maire and the Ducasse Committee who hosted a dinner just for us.

Saturday morning saw us up bright and early at the village 'brocante' (street/flea market), where we entered into the spirit and provided a stall selling handcrafted gifts, chutneys, jams and cakes which proved to be very popular.

The side danced and performed music throughout the morning to the delight of the stallholders and visitors, before enjoying a long lunch with our hosts followed by a visit to the Rural Life Museum at nearby Steenwerck. Here we performed alongside local folk dance group *Vonchelle*, who perform Flemish

folk dances, and we were surprised to see them perform a dance with sticks, not dissimilar to Cotswold, as well as a maypole dance.

The French were unfamiliar with morris dancing, however with several expert French speakers amongst our side we were able to explain the

history of morris dancing and in particular North West Morris.

With no time to rest, we were whisked off to a charming and fascinating museum of mechanical musical instruments. Everything from fairground organs, pianolas, and music boxes to musical

toothbrushes! The owner opened especially for the side and was happy to demonstrate all the beautiful instruments. This is really worth a visit if you are ever in Flanders, regardless of whether you're a musician or not.

A quick freshen up and we were off to the village hall, for the Ducasse dinner and party where we performed to 250 guests before joining everyone for dinner and a disco - what a party! We decided to forego the dessert course and made our excuses at midnight, leaving everyone else to party the night away.

Sunday was a leisurely start with some of the side visiting the nearby Ballieul bell tower, whilst others visited the site of the WWI Battle of Fromelle and the Commonwealth War Graves.

Following another long lunch, we prepared to participate in the procession through the village which we were informed would take three hours. 'Surely not,' we said, as there were only twelve other local dance/musical groups in the procession.



Vonchelle performing a traditional Flemish 'maypole' dance



Marlings Morris performing in France

How wrong could we be?

The route of the procession was just over a mile long, winding down the main street and into housing developments to ensure all the residents could view the procession. However, unlike processions at UK folk festivals, each side would process and then stop and perform several dances at various locations along the route.

This gave us many opportunities to showcase our dancing and was a lot of fun. We were met with chants of 'we want more' all along the route, plus beer and cake at the end!

In the evening we had a farewell dinner with our hosts

at a great Belgian restaurant in the nearby town of Estaires and were later invited to return next August.

Should we do it again? Definitely yes!

Marlings is currently a side of six dancers and five musicians, but we are always keen to find new members. Both ladies and gentlemen dancers are welcome, so if you live in the south-east, why not check out our Facebook page: [@MarlingsMorris](https://www.facebook.com/MarlingsMorris) and website: www.marlingsmorris.co.uk for more details and come along to a practice night.

You could be joining us in France in 2018!



Vonchelle performing a traditional Flemish stick dance

It's been a busy old summer for Hook Eagle Morris



Hook Eagle Morris Men 'sitting with Jane (Austen)' during Alton Morris Day of Dance in Alton, Hampshire
Photograph by Jonathan Buisson



Hook Eagle Morris Men performing 'Hay on Wye' on stage at the Wickham Festival, near Fareham, Hampshire
Photograph by Jonathan Buisson



A 'White Hart' triple – left to right: Boxhill Bedlam, Hook Eagle Morris Men, and Moonshine all perform their own version of Hook's dance White Hart during the Wickham Festival
Photograph by Healey Newson



SILKSTONE GREENS IN BERLIN SPASS IN DER HAUPTSTADT

The Easter weekend saw a large group of *Silkstone Greens North West Morris* heading over to Berlin for two days of dancing for our 10th anniversary, following an invite from team member Emily Hewitt, who has been living there for a year.

FIONA DUTTON

After an early start on Good Friday, followed by a delay at Doncaster airport, we finally arrived at our hostel in the heart of Mitte and headed out to a bar selected from Stuart Higson's book 'Around Berlin in 80 Beers'. The price of beer is run like a stock exchange, which crashes every so often sparking frenzied purchasing at rock bottom prices, this makes for an interesting if slightly crazy experience.

On Saturday morning we had time for some sightseeing before meeting up in kit for our first dance out in the city. The warmup dance was followed by a short stroll to the square in front of the Französische and Deutsche Dom. Just as we were about

to start, the heavens opened, but quick thinking Joe Dreimann cleared it for us to dance inside the Deutsche Dom, where we received a very warm welcome from the staff and were invited to perform several dances. One of the staff then gave us a short presentation in English on the German political system and we were able to look around the museum. An unplanned experience which ended up being one of the highlights of the weekend.

That evening we met up with representatives of the Berliner Volkstanzgruppen for a social evening and sharing dance traditions. We learnt a few figures from their dances, as well as

teaching them some of our dance *Jacobs's Ladder*, enjoyed a shared supper, and showcased some other traditional dance such as rapper and a clog dance from Melanie Barber.

Easter Sunday saw us dance out in front of the famous Fernsehturm am Alexanderplatz and the Hackischer Markt train station – good dancing despite the bitterly cold temperatures and drizzle. No trip to Berlin would be complete without the obligatory Currywurst, a trip to the Ampelmann shop, and a photo in front of the Brandenburg Gate. A fantastic first trip abroad for *Silkstone Greens*. Where shall we go next year?



Paul White's DIARY

Adventures on the road to Hull (and back),
and an invitation to dance in Cornwall

So many women! And so many of them in clog sides. It won't be long before we start hearing onlookers, on seeing a mixed or all-male side, saying, "I didn't know men were allowed to do that."

Same goes for *Wakefield Morris*. A clog side that really grabs your attention. No fannying about here. The kicks are high, the ranting in unison, the energy levels impressive. And if it's lines that turn you on, look no further.

chip shops in Skegness and the beauty of the town's beach and coastline, awed by the exhibits in the South Yorkshire Sculpture Park and stymied in our intention to visit Manchester, Chester, and Liverpool when a crane blew up and caught fire causing mayhem on the M62.



Rain didn't stop the dancing in Swanage

So we changed our plans, cut the trip short and headed home, in time for the Cat's Eye AGM. In summary, enough dosh in the bank to see us through, a good year's dancing was had and another one is being lined up, new dances are being learned, numbers are steady in both the dancing and musical departments, and recruitment is encouraging.

Oh, and we are planning a weekend of dance in May. The venue is sorted, the itinerary is in the process of being organised, transport planned, food in hand, and there is a bar. All that's left is to get a few sides involved. Invitations are out and some have confirmed, others have had reminders. All is going swimmingly. But with me at the helm, I don't expect it to last. There have already been casualties and there are bound to be more. So if you fancy a weekend of action in Cornwall and would like to put your name in the hat, do get in touch. Contact details below.

A month on the road gives you a new perspective on life. Well, if it doesn't, you might as well have stayed at home. First stop on the tour was at Swanage in Dorset, where Sally was playing for her old pals, *Phoenix Morris* from Rickmansworth, and I took time out to nip across the Channel on the ferry from Poole to spend a couple of days with my son and family near Cherbourg.

On the way back I lost my wallet waiting for the last bus of the night to the campsite. Disaster. But I found it again the next day in a pub. Joy unlimited, and an opportunity for a celebratory pint! It meant I didn't have to cancel all my cards and spend hours talking to the banks. So I was able to keep to the original plan and see the main procession on Saturday, which ends up along the sea front and with each side dancing through a long arch made by all the other performers.

It's a grand sight, and normally the sun sparkles on the sea producing a splendid backdrop. But this year it was raining. It didn't seem to dampen the spirits though and sodden as they were, most sides braved it and did the rain dance without a murmur of complaint. I am not sure I would have been so hardy. Many wore the clear plastic capes to keep instruments and kit dry, but most were happy to take what nature threw at them and carry on regardless.

Onwards and upwards towards Hull where many sides gathered to mark the 2017 Morris Federation AGM with a day of dance. For us, the joy was being able to see sides we can only normally catch up with on Facebook or YouTube.

A couple of sides really caught my fancy. *Sheffield City Morris* was one.

Why was I so taken? I love their attitude.

Their kit is simple; different, but in keeping with the tradition. While dancing well and giving due attention to the basics (simple things like lines, knowing the steps etc.), they also have a sense of fun and really know how to entertain.

These two sides are based not much further than a stone's throw apart and Wath on Dearne is located just about equidistant from their home cities. Now, if I can just knock a few years off my age, lose a stone or two and learn the basics of the Cotswold and North West traditions, it might just be worth moving back up north!

We were stunned by the magnificence of the Lincolnshire wolds, amazed at the number of fish and

Journalist, editor, ukulele player, and singer, Paul White has been dancing the morris since the year 2000. He is a founding member of both *Wreckers* and *Cat's Eye* in Cornwall, helped form *Couptrain Morris* (France) and *Turncoat*, and has also danced with *Lodestone*. Paul can occasionally be found in Europe introducing fellow campers to the joys of morris, using baguettes, umbrellas, or tent poles for sticks. contact: pwhite420@btinternet.com twitter: @morrisbells or Facebook



Silkstone Greens and members of the Berliner Volkstanzkreis



Silkstone Greens dancing in the Deutsche Dom am Gendarmen Markt

Photographs by Joachim Dreimann



Something you would like to see?
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Sizes are approximate, as supplied by the manufacturer, and are measured as the diameter from the outside of the rim, across the slot.

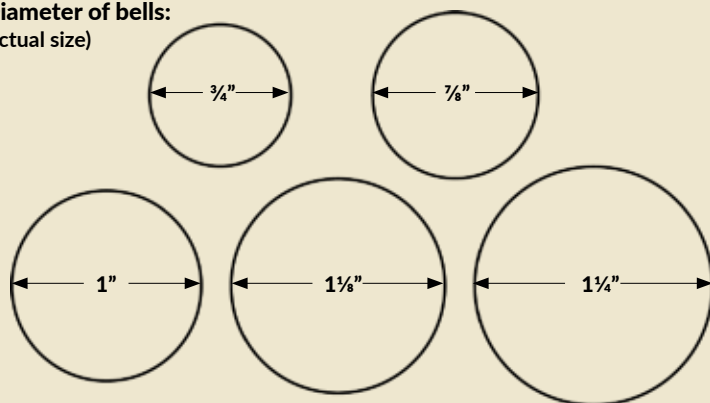
Price per bell:

	Members	Non-members
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⅞"	£0.50	£0.70
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