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# EDITORIAL

YES - another Morris Matter - at last!

Regular readers will no doubt have noticed that our ambition to produce three issues per year has yet to be realised...apologies to you all. The basic problem is, as always, lack of time. Not only time to produce the magazine, but time to persuade, cajole or pressurise people in print. To encourage you all, we include a piece by Roy Dommett, that most prolific of morris writers, called 'Writing That Article'. If, as we hope, you are inspired, get it onto paper and send it off to the address below. Copy dates are a formality we have dispensed with; just put it in the post, and we'll use it when we can.

Another way you can help, if you have access to an electric typewriter or word-processor, is to have the copy ready for the printer (35 characters per line, justified both sides). Interviews or dance notation is better typed 70 characters to the line. Remember, the copy is photo-reduced, so the typeface must be clear and dense enough to start with!

So let's have your thoughts, news, reviews, ideas, and who knows, the next issue may be with you before Christmas '88 !

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JOHN PHILIP GASSON, 1957 - 1987

On Saturday 1st August 1987, John Gasson died in a car accident whilst driving to Sidmouth International Folklore Festival. He was 29.

John was gifted both musically and interlectually. He was a graduate of both Loughborough University and the Plastics and Rubber Institute. He worked for Letraset in Ashford in Kent as part of a research team with John Thornley, also of Seven Champions.

John was a founder member of both the Seven Champions Molly Dancers and the Mr Jorrocks Morris Dancers, each from his native Weald of Kent. He played full parts in dancing and fostering their musical styles in a generation of local morris teams renowned for their originality and creativity. He thought nothing to leaping in his car and driving over a hundred miles to see really good morris teams in action. It was outside the "Donkey House" at Windsor where we cemented our friendship by sharing one of his disgusting inch-thick spam and mustard sandwiches while watching the incumbent team perform! Oubliez la dance - mangez! Oh, yeah!?

He was a keen disciple of the Old Swan Band inspired English Country Music revival. He was a member of "Mr Fuggles Hop Band" and other Champions' House Bands. He formed his dance band "Melons for Ecstasy" together with Chris Rose, Alison Thornley and Gavin Atkin before it expanded to its present six-plus line-up. More recently, he had been deputising for members of "The Hop" following Nigel Chippendale's equally tragic death last year. His musical horizons were broad and expanding, having played in the Champion's "Terrapin" jug band, a jazz band called "Fifth Quarter", and by accompanying singer-guitarist Bob Piggott (of Jorrocks) at a number of folk club bookings. He was multi-talented on fiddle, anglo-concertina, saxophones and melodeons. He could read music and speedily identify a good spunky tune from manuscript without the benefit of recorded fodder of lesser mortals. There are many, including myself, grateful for his patience and enthusiasm, who attended those sessions at the "Mason's" at Sidmouth alongside him.

Once it becomes emotionally safe to do so, there will be enough John Gasson anecdotes to fill a book - and all make for amusing reading. I shall say, with the greatest fondness for the man, he was oftime an aggravating bugger! He would stride into a session with his sax or melodeon and pull apart "The French Assembly" - a waltz from the Sussex Tune Book featured on Blowzabella's "In Colour" album - and play it in 5/4 time, missing out a beat on alternate bars. If that sounds irritating, John's spontaneous idiosyncrasy has since become a Seven Chamions Dancee. A testimony indeed! He was a rogue, a lovable rogue, but always a gentleman.

History cannot record that John gained all the accolades that he deserved. He didn't live to see or participate in his geatest triumph - a week of superb dancing by his own Mr Jorrocks team, and the Seven Champions carrying off the 1987 Ritual Dance Trophy (which we hope will be renamed in his memory) - yet, out there in the ether, I can hear him cheering as loud as anyone else in the audience.

His life as dancer and musician, coupled with his sense of fun and enthusiasm for every task he undertook, will act to inspire us all.

George Frampton.

# WRITING THAT ARTICLE!

Roy Dommett

Magazines are always short of material for publication yet many people have the germ of an idea for one within them and only lack the discipline to put it onto paper. The biggest problem always seems to be how to assemble enough thoughts and to present them in a logical order.

The traditional method taught in schools works from the top down. The title suggests headings which can be broken down into paragraphs and then supporting ideas. The balance within the article and the credibility of the arguments can be seen continuously. The technique implies that you start with it sorted out in your mind. The more practical alternative is to find out what you have to say and then structure it.

Choose your topic - something that has been recently on your mind or perhaps has been building up over some time rather than something which requires correlation of book found information. Have a few initially blank A4 sized lined sheets as used by students - scraps of paper and backs of envelopes are only for emergencies. Thoughts will not come in a logical order so capture the ideas by writing them in the random order that they occur to you or arise in some discussion. Do it as it happens, do not imagine you can recollect everything at some later time. Odd sentences, phrases or even just key words will do - the only criterion is that you can read them later. This activity can be spread over several periods

- it might even be worth carrying a jotting notebook with you during this time. You will want about 3 or 4 handwritten sides for a convenient sized article.

Look at what you have and breakdown the ideas into a number of headings that fit the material. Then allocate the rough notes to the headings and number them into some sort of order. Now write them out again, but in sentences and with some of the links put in, so that you can check the balance of ideas and headings and can see what you are actually trying to say. It is now not a bad time to talk it over with somebody else who may have different insights.

The real work is in the final stage. Insert anything else that needs to be said. Look hard to eliminate the bits that do not say much, the long phrases that can be shortened, the involved sentences that can be clarified. Prune, slim and hone till what you want to say is clear to the reader. Put it aside for a few days and come back to it with a fresh look. Do not strive too much for style but aim for flow and readability.

Two pages of A4 typed at double spacing fits a magazine quite nicely - about the equivalent of four handwritten sides. If it is up to twice that length then it would have to be a major feature in the magazine and so would have to be a major contribution, and the editor's assessment of the topic's worth in column inches may not be yours.

## MORRIS MATTERS

# INTERVIEW

Three American teams toured in England this summer; all stopped off at Windsor for varying lengths of time. We took the opportunity to interview representatives of each team to find out how they experienced English Morris and the British Way Of Life!

## KINGSESSING

Background:-

Kingsessing are a men's team from the city of Philadelphia. The team began in Fall 1977, with several experienced dancers who had danced with other teams. There was some input from visiting English dancers, and many of the team had attended morris workshops run by Tony Barrand at Festivals. They now dance Bledington and Ducklington. They are famed for their invented dance "Mr Softy" to the ice-cream van jingle of that name .... the choruses are based on TV characters and are therefore unintelligible to English audiences; but it is recognisably funny!

This tour:-

Late May to early June, lasting 10 days in all. They travelled from Colchester to Derby to the Welsh Borders to Thaxted, dancing mainly with Ring teams (Windsor was an exception as we'd met them twice before in the States). Their contacts were mainly through John Dexter of Bowerey Boys of New York, a team that had toured England twice before.

Interview:-

Morris Matters: What motivated you all to get into morris dancing?

Kingsessing: Just for fun really - the dance itself. The first time we danced in public was also the first time we'd worn bells - we were all smiling uncontrollably, it was a magical feeling, we were hooked!

MM: Was there any element of a rural nostalgia, "this quaint English Custom", etc?

KS: No, not at all. It was just a cool thing, you know?

MM: What is the audience response to seeing you perform at home?

KS: The reaction is great, people love it. But they always assume that we are German or Latvian or something, it's rarely recognised as English.

MM: What made you decide to come to England?

KS: Well this year is our tenth anniversary year; it was Jamie's (the Squire) idea originally. Lots of US teams had done it and had had such a good time. And we wanted to see more English teams, and to see the different types of Morris that aren't so common in the States, like Border, North West, etc. We wanted to see the Cotswold villages where the tradition had originated. And, mainly, just for fun!

MM: What were the main things that struck you about England and the Morris in this country?

KS: Well, firstly, that there are as many different philosophies among the different teams as there are in the States, for example as to whether to dance one tradition or twenty, whether to dance with high energy or low energy. It's as if the States is a microcosm in that way. At the same time, there is a greater variation in the tradition here - in the States you don't see teams specialising in Clog so much, and there's hardly any Border Morris. Some teams may do a bit of it, but we hadn't seen any teams that specialised until we came here. We also noticed that some men's teams have a problem about women dancing Morris - that's just not a problem in the States, it's not an issue.

The sense of history is stronger here - at home no team is older than about 12 years, that's what we call an old team. Here, dancers have been in a team for 27 years...it makes you wonder how it will be in the States in 17 years time.

The Folk Dance scene is different here too, in the States it'd be the same people who do Morris and Folk Dancing, whereas here there seems to be less overlap.

Our touring season is different, in July and August it's too hot to dance out so we have a break then and pick up again in the Fall.

MM: What about the tour itself - any problems?

KS: We overestimated our ability to travel - it's a lot of work just sitting in the van all day, it's tiring.

MM: Any comments on stylistic differences between English and American Cotswold Morris?

KS: Well, we didn't see a lot of Cotswold. But it did seem that whereas in the States there is a more standardised style - just this amount of energy, this level - here the dancing level is on either side; either loose feet, and small stepping, or gigantic movements, way past how we would dance. Same with the energy level, we saw teams with a very low energy level, and some who were very energetic. On the whole, you could say that the English sides are better with the sticks or hankies, where the US sides are better at stepping.

MM: Any other thoughts...what about the future?

KS: There's a danger of not getting new dancers in the side. In the States, there are tons of teams starting up, but not so many can sustain. We have lost a lot of people because of injuries, and where are the new dancers going to come from? We've tried the Folk Dance scene, where now? Maybe we should try dancing to Karate Clubs, and Football clubs. If we didn't make England this year, there's the feeling that it might be too late!

# RING O' BELLS

## Background:-

Ring O'Bells are a women's side from New York City, who started up in 1974, the first women's team in the States. The original dancers the team had learnt Morris at CDS (the Country Dance and Song Society) in New York as well as at Pinewoods Camp. Although they started dancing Headington, they soon moved on to Ascot, Brackley and Ilmington. They dance many invented dances in their own style, based on those traditions. There has been a complete change in personnel over the last 13 years, with none of the original dancers remaining on the side. Any woman who has danced morris before is automatically offered a place on the team if she moves to New York.

## This Tour:-

From mid- to end of July. They did a round trip: Windsor, London, Bournemouth, Exeter, Stroud, Shropshire, Bath, then back to London. Many of the team had visited England before separately and had many contacts with sides here, and the tour was compiled by contacting all the teams that various members had known.

## Interview:-

**Morris Matters:** What was your motivation in coming to England to dance?

**Ring O'Bells:** The team had toured England in 1979 and had had a wonderful time. Only one of the present dancers had been on the team at that time, and the others really wanted to experience it. It was a bit like a trip to Mecca, to come to the place where it all started. We were slightly nervous, coming to the "source" - almost as if people in England were born galleying!

**MM:** How did you find English Morris in fact? Was it as you expected?

**RoB:** We were pleasantly surprised at how similar it was to the dancing in the States. There was more variety in the types of dance - it was great to see Border and North West - no teams in the States specialise in those. The Cotswold was quite similar, although we did see some teams dancing much slower than anything we'd see back home.

**MM:** What about differences in style, attitudes, etc.?

**RoB:** There seems to be more self-consciousness here of how different teams fit into the spectrum. In the States there is more agreement about what good dancing is, and most teams strive towards it. We also were aware that there is a consciousness about the men/women issue that we don't feel in the States. Last time the team toured they were shocked by some of the attitudes of some of the men. We didn't feel that at all this time, in fact it was the opposite - a strong positive feeling about women dancing. But that isn't an issue in the States either way. The politics are more defined here, perhaps because of the existence of the institutions like the Ring and the Morris Federation...in the States there are no 'official' camps like that.

**MM:** What about the tours themselves, where you danced, and the reaction of the audience?

RoB: Well, it's wonderful to dance in pubs! We have no pubs like that in New York, and we really enjoyed the pub experience, it was so welcoming. There is an easy fit between the dancing and the place. The crowd knows what morris dancing is (they don't think it must be Peruvian or Greek) so you aren't plagued with silly questions. There also seems to be an easy fit between the dancers and the audience - "Oh, it's the Morris dancers". The tours are less formal than in the States - I mean once or twice we met another side unexpectedly on a tour and they joined us for a bit. You just don't run into other Morris teams by accident in the States!

MM: Did you notice any cultural differences?

RoB: Oh yes - we had trouble with the language. In the end we spoke English most of the time! Noone misunderstood us - I suppose American accents are familiar over here because of TV - but we had a hard time with some of the dialects sometimes. It was a shock seeing the English villages, but that's because we are all city dwellers rather than a nationality thing. And people are more mobile in America - we were surprised by people speaking of another town or city that we considered quite near as though it was a long way away. England is so small, but places quite near each other can be so different, culturally and linguistically...the places have a separate identity.

MM: Did you meet up with any problems?

RoB: We hadn't toured this long together before, and we did a lot, dancing every night. It was a mistake coming to London at the end of the tour - we had a great time but we were all so tired! It would have been nice to stay longer in places, maybe 3 or 4 days instead of just a night, but then it's harder to ask people to put you up. After all, we were staying with complete strangers usually, we were welcomed and fed and we felt we made friends. Morris people are morris people the world over - we had a great time. It was a pleasure to meet people and to see and enjoy each others' dancing. We're already talking about next time - and we hope to welcome some English teams to New York!

## MARLBORO

### Background:

Marlboro are based in rural Vermont. They started off as a mixed side in 1974, led by Tony Barrand. The next year they had an influx of both men and women and separated into two sides under the same name, with Andy Barrand taking over the role of foreman in the womens team. Initially both teams danced Headington, but soon the women added Ilmington and the men Lichfield to their repertoire. The Ilmington that the women dance is distinct and has developed from a suggestion by Roy Dommett that the turns in the figures could originally have been galleys. Most of their repertoire is now made up of their own dances; they dance very few collected Ilmington dances. There was a further separation between the teams in the year before the trip to England, and it was the women's team who came here in 1987.

This tour:-

Mid- to end July. They spent a weekend in Kent as guests of Mr Jorrocks then came to Windsor for the rest of the time, going from there to dance with teams within travelling distance : Berkshire Bedlam, Bamton, Kirtlington. Some of team travelled to Sheffield to meet Trevor Owen and buy clogs.

Interview:-

Morris Matters: Marlboro has a reputation as a first-class dancing side - is that the driving aim?

Marlboro: Yes - to be the best! People have lots of reasons for taking up Morris Dancing - ours is to dance as well as we can. We put all our expression into the dancing, not into companionship, or other things.

MM: You are also well-known for running the Marlboro Ale every year. Can you tell us how that came about?

Marlboro: It started in 1976 with the goal of improving the standard of Morris dancing in the US. First it was just a gathering of sides, but then as the number of teams increased we became selective in who was invited hoping that people would want to come and would work towards that. Also, it gives a format for teams to be competitive - on the Saturday mornings people get up and do a show dance for the other sides and want to be as impresssive as possible. That has really helped towards making up new dances.

MM: What made you decide to come to England?

Marlboro: Windsor Morris! We had never considered coming to England as a team before - it would have been like taking coals to Newcastle. But you started pressing us to come, and we thought about it and decided it would be fun, and it would be good for our dancers to come and see where it all started, to get a sense of history.

MM: What are your main impressions of English Morris?

Marlboro: There is a huge variety over here - in the States most people dance Cotswold Morris, and there's a little bit of Stave Dancing, and North West and some step dancing. But we have nothing like Seven Champions or Lizzy Dripping! I think in the States people have more respect for the tradition - here there are teams who have a lot of respect and other teams who treat it with irreverence - and that's fun too!

From what we saw on this trip, the standard is very high, but I guess that's because the teams you arranged the tours with were selected! From what I've seen on other trips I would guess the ratio of good to bad is maybe higher in the States.

MM: What about cultural and social differences?

Marlboro: Well, I've drunk more tea and beer in the last two weeks than in the rest of my life! Things are very pub-centred on Morris tours here - I wish we had pubs to dance at. That makes a huge difference. The Cotswold villages were wonderful - we have nothing like that!

Another difference is the attitude to social dance here. Several times on tours the teams did a bit of social dancing outside a pub - we would never do that.

We found the reaction of the other teams to be more reserved than in the States. There you get more feedback - if people like your dancing they come up and hug and kiss you and say how wonderful you are! Here people will comment to their neighbour, "Oh, they're very good aren't they" - they aren't direct! It's disconcerting at first when you are used to a lot of pats on the back.

We didn't find as much chauvenism as we feared, again I suppose that's to do with the teams we danced with.

The audience reaction was a little strange - I was surprised to hear English people ask me what Morris Dancing was. I overheard a typical interchange: the Fool came round asking for money. A woman said "Oh yes, of course" and gave her child some money to put in the hat. The child came back and said "Mummy, who are they?" Mum says "Well...I don't really know!"

MM: What were the worst things about the trip?

Marlboro: Travelling, definitely. When you're all stuck together in a van for long periods there can be a few tense moments! In general it made us much closer as a team. It was good that we made time for individuals to do their own thing - too much group time can be a problem.

MM: And the best things?

Marlboro: Meeting up with old friends, making new friends, seeing wonderful dancing....it was good for us to feel inadequate at times, and to be going home with new ideas and a new aesthetic to strive for. It was great to go to Sheffield and see tapes of Pat Tracy, see clog teams and step dancing. We are going home with a lot of inspiration!



IN CONCLUSION.....

All three teams had a thoroughly enjoyable time, although they all mentioned the problems of travelling. Obviously the sheer variety of traditions and styles in England was an eye-opener - the concentration of teams in England is so much greater than in the States that there is more pressure on teams to do something different. There's also the greater freedom with the tradition when it is home-based!

There was also a strong recognition that Morris as danced in the States is real Morris, and that transplanted as it may be, it is still the same tradition!



Many thanks to Sara Henry of Ring O'Bells, Andy Barrand of Marlboro, and Gary, Jamie and Mike of Kingsessing for agreeing to talk at such length into a tape-recorder. Time didn't permit us to check over these transcripts with them, so we sincerely hope they recognise the views expressed as their own, and we accept responsibility for any misunderstandings!

# COSTA DEL MORRIS

In the search for publicity and sponsorship, anything goes. So, when Rogue Morris were invited to Cobreces Folk Festival, in Northern Spain, last Easter, and had exactly five weeks to raise £700 towards our fares, even headlines like "Costa Del Morris" in the local free newspaper didn't put us off. With amazing teamwork rivalling our better dance displays, we organised our publicity drive. The graphic artist in the team type-set the leaflets, the ex-public relations officer outlined our strategy and composed a begging letter, the geologist laid it out on the word-processor, the physiotherapist and the town planner organised the mailing list, and everyone stuck down scores of envelopes asking local companies for contributions in return for a mention on our leaflets. We then contacted the British Council, Iberia, British Airways, and even the local bus company, to negotiate cheap fares from Oxford to London and from London to Bilbao.

Two months later the refusals from the mail shot are still coming in, but we received a cheque from a local garage which covered the cost of mailing, and got another couple of contacts which have lead to profitable bookings over the summer. Oxford City Council were very helpful, and booked us for two Recreation Department events.

Following an "appearance" on Radio Oxford, and articles in all the local papers, we had a great day of dance in Oxford with Lizzy Dripping from Sheffield, when we were able to collect £100 (more than double

any previous total). Finally, someone suggested that we persuade our friends to sponsor us on the day of dance, and we were well on the way to having the amount we needed.

At almost the last minute, we had a phone-call from Iberia offering us discounted seats - at almost exactly the amount of money we had raised - and before we knew it we were in Bilbao and en route to Cobreces.

The Festival itself featured traditional performers, including many local pipers and singers, in addition to other revival musicians from other regions of Spain. The main focus of the Festival was an all-night concert - which started up about 10pm on the Saturday night and was still going when I got up at seven the next morning! Before the concert we had been taken to the next village by the organisers, for dinner at a restaurant of high repute in the area. Unfortunately, noone had told us that there was dinner already ordered and prepared for us, so when the second group of dancers arrived at the restaurant with the organisers, everyone was very embarrassed explaining to the waitress that in fact the English group didn't want the a la carte meals they had just painstakingly ordered in halting Spanish....

When we finally arrived back at the concert, we were just in time to catch a fine set by the most amazing performer I've ever seen - Benjamina Bejo, from Caloca, a mountain village in Cantabria, who

sang ballads and dance-songs and accompanied herself on the tambourine. You could tell that she'd had an incredible voice in her youth, but even now her singing was tremendous, and the tambourine rhythms of Cantabria make one wonder why one needs any other accompaniment of any kind (Morris musicians, please note!)

Most of the concert was recorded on special cassettes by the organisers - including virtuoso performances by other musicians such as Javier Gonzales, a harpist who may be coming to England later in the year. Most of Rogue only got to hear the music on recordings, because after a hard day sunbathing on the beach we just couldn't hold out till seven in the morning - and after all we'd been told we'd be dancing soon after 10.30 am the next morning, so we wanted to be well-rested; and after the castanet-players in the next room had finally finished practising, we finally settled down (some the worse for wear on the 50 pence bottles of wine, others having learned their lesson on the first night).

Another thing we had to learn was the difference between the British and Cantabrian way of life. We thought that 10.30 meant 10.30, or perhaps 10.45 at a pinch. They knew that 1.00 would be fine. Two Rogues had also picked this up quicker than the rest of us, and we were all very worried by the time they rolled up in very good time at noon to meet us, who had been standing round since 10.20 all dressed up, and feeling rather stupid. We finally started to dance at about 1.00, and shared the stage with two very impressive groups of local schoolchildren - every one a virtuoso tambourine player - performing traditional dances from the area and dressed exactly like a group of mini Chipping Campden Morris dancers.

Our dances are based on the Border tradition, with input from Roy Dommett and rather a lot of imagination - the main impression we try to give is of energy and enthusiasm and to show that we're enjoying ourselves. We didn't quite

know what the locals would make of it all, but we needn't have worried; we've never had such a good reception! The traditional ceremony of "presenting the Teeshirt to the organiser went down well too, though the organiser himself seemed a little confused by that, and my un-fluent Spanish commentaries were more or less understood by a very tolerant crowd.

More food and drink followed, and even the weather stayed hot and sunny all weekend. What else could we ask? It only struck us at the end that all of the events were free, and so the two thousand or so spectators were having their entertainment provided by the local council (hence the fact that the festival date had been strategically changed to before the local elections). The audience ranged from kids to the elderly, with lots of locals and a number of people from further afield.

We were the first foreign team to be invited, though Spanish musicians from outside Cantabria are more or less seen as foreigners in the area. It all seemed just like a big family party in a way - so when will the big city councils follow suit?

This was the third annual Cobreces Folk Festival. The area is beautiful; Cobreces is a couple of hours drive along the coast from Santanda towards Asturia. There's wild coastline, sandy beaches, incredible flora and fauna, beautiful old cottages and churches; and particularly friendly people - from the organisers, to the lady whose bathroom we were using, to the people in bars who had to understand our Spanish, and to all the local people who all made us feel very welcome and at home. We'd go back at the drop of a morris stick!

Fiona Frank July '87

(Rogue Morris went to Cobreces in May '87 and would like to thank Iberia Airlines, Oxford City Council, and everyone else who helped us get there.)

# M.F. NEWS

REPORT ON LEADERS' NORTH WEST  
INSTRUCTIONAL 31ST OCTOBER - 2ND  
NOVEMBER 1986

Friday 31st October 1986 saw approximately 42 North West Team leaders and representatives heading for Ossett, near Wakefield, to participate in an Instructional weekend organised by the Morris Federation. Overnight indoor camping accomodation plus sufficient supplies for breakfast and midnight snacks were provided courtesy of the Wakefield team at the Ossett Scout Hut. However the main venue for the event was the Ossett Community Centre, just a short walk from the Scout Hut.

There were 2 Dance Instructionals, the first on the Saturday morning immediately after introductions had been made all round over coffee and biscuits. 5 sets of 8 dancers were made up and Trefor Owen taught the "Carr Lodge Polka". He regards this as a 'conglomerate' dance originating at the NW End of the Colne Valley towards Huddersfield and Slaithwaite. The fragments which make it up may well be derivatives of the 'Marsden' type dances and figures originally from Staleybridge and Staleywood over the tops from Manchester. The dance uses long sticks and consists of five figures followed by a 'final figure' with a 'step-up' in between each figure. The 'final figure' has been borrowed from Yorkshire Chandelier and is virtually the same as the original figure but has a better flow and timing. In the final discussion session Trefor suggested that "Carr Lodge Polka" should be kept in as 'pure' a form as possible and used for Massed Displays. This was considered to be an excellent idea. It will be interesting to note how 'pure' this dance remains when incorporated into the repetoire of the different teams!

The second Instructional took place after a very good lunch on Saturday afternoon and was of a rather different format. Trefor gave each of the five sets the title of a typical NW figure and 15 mins to work one out to be taught to everyone else. Sue Swift was asked to do the 'step-up' and to my consternation I was asked to do the 'final figure'. At all events we all managed, not without some difficulty and much good humoured laughter and bewilderment, to teach each other our invented figures. Sue then called the invented figures for each side to perform in turn and everyone watching was asked to make constructive criticisms and comments. Everyone felt this was a very worthwhile exercise.

There were three main discussion sessions all ably led by Sue, although inevitably some of the most valuable discussions were rather more informal and lasted until the small hours. The first session was concerned with the historical background and method of collection of the dances taught by Trefor. The second session involved teaching and leadership styles, the management of teams and some discussion on constitution, recruitment methods, warm-ups (Trefor doesn't believe in them, other teams swear by them) and injuries during practice and performance. The final session was all about Kit, presentation, standards and music. Those who had brought Kit and equipment showed the various items to everyone else for comment and/or admiration. One interesting point made was that although the dance style has its roots in the Edwardian Era, apart from the crocheted and tasselled black skull cap worn by 'Aidleys' not one item of Kit reflected the style of that age. The item giving rise to most comment was a pair of bright yellow 'Fluffy Morris' american style 'pom-poms' brought along by Sue.

At this point the discussion turned to presentation and the Morris Federation and here we hit a snag. The President, Sally Wearing, pointed out that the Constitution states that 'dancing in public at Federation events does not allow mixed sets'. This was originally intended to encourage better standards and an event such as this where everyone had learnt the same dance in the same style and could therefore be expected to produce a good standard of performance in mixed sets, had not been foreseen. Perhaps this should be an item for discussion at the next AGM. Eventually a vote was taken and about 50% were willing to perform in kit. Some sides have a constitution which does not allow this, others had already written it out of their constitution or abandoned the constitution altogether. Eventually 4 sets agreed to dance with some people dancing twice to make up the sets. A quick run through of "Carr Lodge Polka" for each team was followed by lunch of pie, mint sauce and

'mushy-peas', the first I've ever tasted. This was followed by the 'Grand Finale'.

The four teams in two lots of two mixed sets, to enable some dancers to dance twice to make up the numbers, performed the "Carr Lodge Polka" as a processional across the Ossett Pedestrianised Shopping Precinct, in mixed sets, called by Trefor in his striking black, blue and gold Wakefield Kit. This was a very colourful and inspiring sight, unfortunately with too few of the public to watch and applaud in the autumnal sunshine. Nonetheless, a very fitting to a thoroughly enjoyable and stimulating weekend. All thanks are due to the officers of the Morris Federation for setting up the event, to Wakefield for splendid hospitality and organisation, to Trefor for inspired and sympathetic teaching and to Tony, Wakefield's musician, without whose music no one could have danced a step.

Libby Byne-Grey,  
Assistant Foreman,  
Hertfordshire Holly.

A survey is being undertaken of all injuries sustained whilst Morris dancing during the year 1987. There will be collaboration between the three Morris organisations to produce this survey and it is important that as many sides as possible participate. Attached sides will be contacted via their organisation but we are also keen to hear direct from unattached sides so that they may take part.

A questionnaire will be circulated at the end of the survey period. In order that the information gathered be as accurate as possible, we would ask sides to keep a record during the year. The survey is intended to cover all injuries caused by Morris dancing whether immediate or gradual.

The following should be noted:-

Type of dance; Specific movement causing injury or discomfort; Dancing surface; Type of injury, Treatment immediately and subsequently.

In this way we hope to produce an accurate, informative and potentially useful report of the injuries sustained by Morris dancers, and their treatment. It is hoped, in addition to the information being made available to Morris sides, that the findings of the survey will be reported in professional medical journals.

The collaborators for the survey include:- Alan Tuffery, Stella New, Roy Pinder, the Morris Federation, The Morris Ring and Open Morris. There is considerable relevant professional expertise among those involved but additional support from other physiotherapists or medical practitioners would be welcome.

# LETTERS...

## BIOGRAPHIES

Dear Morris Matters,

As usual, Roy Donnett has produced a near-faultless article on a very interesting and important subject - "Who should Dance the Morris" - Morris Matters Vol 9 No.1.

His analysis and reasoning are as sharp as ever. There are many points contained within that could stimulate discussion, but far too many to air at one time in this forum. However there is one particular passage which is very thought-provoking, and which all of us should examine. I quote:

"This is the level of speculation at which the answers are unknowable because we have too few biographies at the required detail for any generalisations."

This comment was made when examining "Who did not dance the Morris"; but it could equally apply to those who DID dance the Morris, as insufficient information about these individuals is also known.

All the above raised questions in my mind about future researchers who may wish to examine the increase of Morris dancing in the 1960's to 90's, etc. What "biographies" would they use to make "generalisations" about who danced the Morris and why? I ask myself - and I ask you and your readers - should there be a repository where current and past dancers can deposit their own histories for future analysis?

I know that some people will argue that only a few people dancing today, i.e. those with "traditional Village Teams" should be considered for this "honour" or even have the right. I do not subscribe to this view, and my understanding of Roy's article is that neither does he.

Doesn't his article say that the dancers of today are really no different from those of the past - all that has changed is society?

Roy's arguments suggest that as society has changed, so has the "area of restrictions" on those who dance the morris. There are less restrictions on place (if there ever were any), due to greater travel opportunities. Less restrictions on jobs, etc. - is not yesterday's wheelwright or stone-mason the same level as today's computer programmer or car salesman? There are certainly fewer restrictions on women, although some will argue with that statement!

If you agree with my view, or even if you don't, why not write your own biography, or at least examine your attitude to the Morris. Can I suggest the following aspects for examination:

1. How you became interested and why.
2. When it was and how old you were
3. Where it was, and details of your first team.
4. What your job was and your parents background.
5. If you had any other musical or entertainment interests.
6. The influences on your attitude to the morris at the beginning and since.
7. The teams you have danced for since, when it was and the differences between them.
8. Why you dance now.
9. If your views have changed over the years - why?
10. What are the current problems of a morris dancer?

There must be a host of other questions, at an individual level, that could also be asked. Throw them all into the melting pot.

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I do not imagine that the worthy publishers of this excellent magazine would thank me for suggesting you post off your "biopic" to them. (Dead right! MM). For the present, keep hold of it, you never know, there may be someone out there waiting for this wealth of knowledge. Even if there is not, at least you now know why you dance Morris, and I hope that you are the better for that experience?

Tim Radford.

## CRIE DE COEUR

Dear Morris Matters

I write to you out of sheer frustration and in the hope that those offenders of common decency amongst us may realise the error of their ways.

Having organised many Morris events over the past few years, it never fails to amaze (and frustrate) me, the lack of consideration some sides show to others.

Each year it's the same, we write to X, Y, and Z. X and Y reply with a yes or no, nothing from Z. Six months later you have to ring Z, who then says, "Oh, sorry for not replying, what was the date again? Oh, well maybe, I'll let you know." (Some chance.)

And then there's the:- "Yes, we'd love to come." six months in advance, followed by "Sorry, we can't get a side" the week before (a lot of use), and then, worst of all (this really makes me mad) - "Yes, we'd love to come" six months in advance, never to be heard of again, and after millions (well, a lot) of letters, phone calls, smoke

signals, messages left with spouses, you finally manage (phew) to get their Squire or Bagman on the phone a few days before the event, only to hear, "Oh yes, I meant to ring you but you know how it is, can't get enough to make it worth while, sorry, hope it doesn't spoil your plans." WHAT!!! Not spoil your plans! (!!!) It makes me mad!

Imagine, you've organised a day of dance, you've got sides coming from all over the country, 80 dancers in all. You've arranged accommodation for Friday or Saturday night (camping or otherwise), meals for Sat. lunch and tea, Sunday lunch and a ceilidh for Saturday night. A good tour is arranged and advertised, two buses booked, deposits paid. Only one week to go, what could possibly go wrong?

The phone rings. "Hi, it's Fred from X. Sorry, we can't make your weekend after all - John's getting married and we're all going to the wedding." The phone rings again. "Hi, it's Pete from Y. Sorry, Bill's got a cold, Jack's wet his nappy, etc. etc, not coming" and so on.

By the middle of the week, your 80 is 40, your accommodation plans are wasted, a bus deposit is lost, the ceilidh has now got to be advertised outside the Morris to cover the band fee. You've been on the phone all week, trying to replace sides, and all your hair's fallen out. Who cares - "Hope it doesn't spoil your plans" - pathetic!

This is not fictitious - it happens all the time. Before writing this letter, I spoke to several Morris persons in other sides, and they all had similar tales to tell.

Now I realise that the unforeseen sometimes does happen, and no matter how hard you try, you are just unable to fulfil all your commitments. But I also realise

# LETTERS...

that these occasions are few and far between and with a little more consideration to other sides, 90% of "letdowns" could be coped with, if enough notice not to attend was given. To ring a side the week before the event saying "Sorry" is DISGRACEFUL.

If you don't care about other sides, at least spare a thought for your Squire or bagman who has to make the apologies, and spare a thought for those members of your side who do really want to attend the function. Not only are you letting down the host side, but you're also letting down your own side, and they're supposed to be your friends.

So, not wishing to fall out with anyone, or cause any undue animosity, my message is simply this:-

For God's sake, all you  
SELFISH SELF-CENTERED  
THINK OF NOONE INCONSIDERATE  
MORRIS PERSONS,

GET YOUR FINGER OUT

GET ORGANISED, or

GET LOST!

Lots of love,  
Trev Smith  
White Boar Morris

## DUNS TEW

Dear Morris Matters,

Thankyou for the interesting current issue Vol9 No.1. I find it odd that the tunes suggested for Duns Tew dances give no indication of which variant (e.g. Old Woman Tossed Up) is to be used. I play several versions!

Can't decide whether the article is serious or a leg-pull. They sound very Adderbury-ish.

Norris Winstone,  
Norwich.

## REPLY

Tony Forster comments:

The rediscovered tradition of Duns Tew was reconstructed in 1986. Morris is recorded as having occurred in Duns Tew (a village about miles south of Banbury) in about 1850; no other details other than its occurrence are known

Accordingly, the workshops at Sidmouth Festival which set out to reconstruct the tradition started from likely influences - Bucknell, Kirtlington and Adderbury, the three local traditions - and built up a set of dances from these foundations and the considerable experience of the dancers in the workshop, led by Tim Radford of Adderbury Morris Men.

The resulting set of dances were danced at Sidmouth 1986; subsequently the workshop participants met for a reunion weekend in June 1987, in Duns Tew itself. The team has also danced at the Open Morris Showcase and at Sidmouth 1987.

Any further enquiries about the tradition or the team should be diverted to Tony Forster,  
220 Belsize Ave.,  
Peterborough,  
PE2 9HX  
(0733 315307)



**SQUIRE**

Marshall Coombs,  
5 High Street,  
Hastings,  
E. Sussex,

**BAGMAN/SECRETARY**

Nick Lynas,  
422 Harold Road,  
Hastings,  
E. Sussex,

Dear Morris Morris.

**MAD JACKS MORRIS, JACK IN THE GREEN, 31st APRIL TO 2nd MAY 1988**

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Further to the successful celebrations held in Hastings over this years May Day bank holiday weekend, when 16 morris sides enjoyed the sun drenched festivities, we have been granted further extensive resources by Hastings Council to do it again in 1988. However this time we will be organising the publicity.

I realise that this is slightly early, but as May Day is a popular day of dance both locally and with other sides, we thought that we should try and get in first.

Therefore may I on behalf of MADJACKS cordially invite you to our JACK IN THE GREEN weekend.

We have decided to make a few changes to the running order this time so for those of you who are interested in coming along I set out below a very approximate programme, which at this moment in time can only be taken as a guide.

**SATURDAY 30th April** 12:00pm Sides converge on Hastings to meet in the Royal Standard in the Old Town with dancing along the sea front.  
8:00pm Get together/guest singer/group/folk evening/sing along in ST Clements Caves, FREE ENTRY, this year we had Fred Vedlock, next year we hope to do better!!!!.

**SUNDAY 1st May** 6:00am Mad Jacks dance at dawn.  
9:30am Either coach tour of Mad Jacks Follies OR a walking tour of the Old Town. Any preferences?????  
12:30pm Dinner time get together in the "Standard" with dancing, wining and dining.  
8:00pm FREE Ceilidh with BLOZABELLA.

**MONDAY 2nd May** 10:00am Jack in the Green procession.  
12:15pm FREE Lunch and drink at the Falaise Hall.  
2:30pm Process to the Castle for a combined stand.  
4:00pm Killing of the Jack  
4:30pm Hibernate.

If you like the look of the above and wish to join in, just drop me a line and we will try to rush you further information by the new year, though if you are already booked but might be free for 1989, let me know anyway.

Looking forward to hearing from you,  
Yours in the Green,

