

RATTLE UP My Boys

A quarterly publication for those with an interest in sword dancing

Millennium year issue 4, Series 9, Winter 2000/01

A history of the Grenoside Traditional Sword Dancers - part 2 Cecil Sharp learns of the existence of the Grenoside Dance

Copies of Sharp's correspondence to Mrs. Eden¹ and Mrs. Gatty² - submitted by Gordon Ridgewell

The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House contains a collection of letters from Cecil Sharp to Mrs. Horatia K. F. Eden (ref. CJS/7/10 - 19, dated 1910/11). Mrs. Eden drew Sharp's attention (via Mr. Nicholas Gatty) to the existence of the Grenoside dance.

Mrs. Eden recalled a visit, 40 years previously, to Ecclesfield Vicarage of a morris team who performed "intricate sword dances". She reported this in 1904 in a letter to *Notes and Queries*, 10th series, Vol II, October 8 1904 and described the costume as "dark green suits, with ribbons of the same colour hanging in short streamers, and they were called Sherwood Foresters"

Sharp's letters give a fascinating account of the stages which he went through - it is particularly interesting to see how rapidly he followed up the initial information. Five days after his first letter he was professing "Your letter has proved amazingly interesting to me and I am brimming with excitement at the prospect - however faint - of being able to see this wonderful dance." and a month later he saw the Grenoside dancers.

The package of letters was given to The English Folk Dance and Song Society on March 13, 1945 by Mr. Ivor Gatty³ of Sheffield. I am again obliged to Gordon Ridgewell for drawing this sequence of letters to my attention.

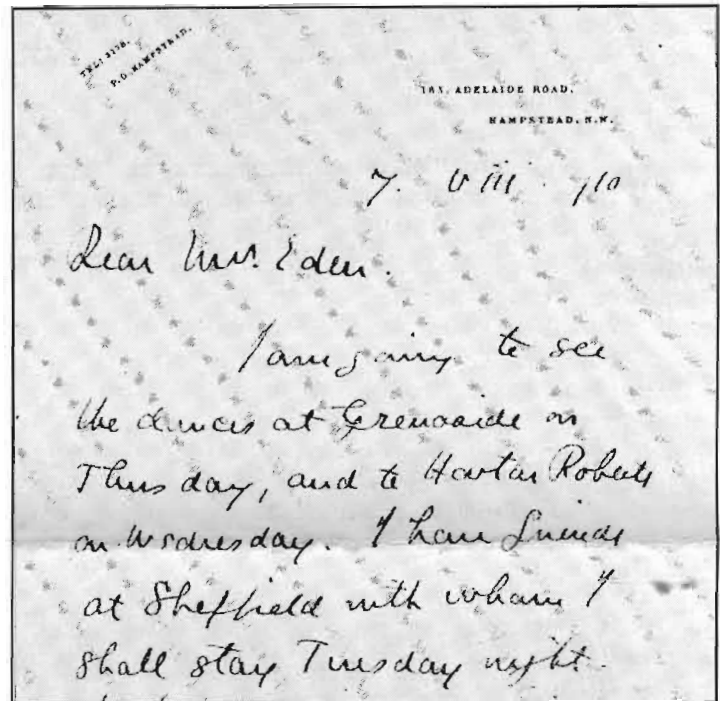
On headed paper with the address: 183, Adelaide Road, Hampstead, N.W.

Letter to Mrs. Eden

11 July 1910

Dear Madam,

I have heard from my friend Mr. Nicholas Gatty⁴ that you know of some Morris dances in your native village in South Yorkshire. I have not yet found any genuine and traditional Morris dancers in that part of the world, so that I shall be most interested to hear of your village. If you will kindly give me its name and any particulars about the dancing that you know



Sharp's letters give an insight into his activities when he was made aware of the Grenoside Sword dance. The problem is reading his writing.

of I shall be most obliged. Apologising for troubling you.

Believe me
Yours truly

Cecil J. Sharp

16 July 1910

Dear Mrs. Eden

Your letter has proved amazingly interesting to me and I am brimming with excitement at the prospect - however faint - of being able to see this wonderful dance. I have recently been investigating a somewhat similar dance in the North Riding and also one at a village about 12 miles north of York and had you been here, in Adelaide Road, 2 or 3 days ago you would have seen a very fair reproduction of the dance on my lawn!

Personally I do not think that it has anything whatever to do with Morris dancing - except that both are by nature ceremonial dances. For one thing the Morris is essentially a Spring Festival, the other, one belonging to the winter solstice. However, this is too intricate to explain by letter. I am going to try and accept - hot haste - your invitation to come and see you, tomorrow afternoon! At present I am engaged elsewhere but I think I can pay this other visit this afternoon instead of tomorrow - in wh. case I shall come & see you between the hours you have named. Yes! I heard first of you and the dance from Ralph V. Williams, and only lack of leisure prevented me visiting you. When Mr. Gatty wrote also his letter overcame my foolish procrastination and I wrote to you, mentioning his name only to save time!

Y sincerely
Cecil J. Sharp

7. viii./10

Dear Mrs. Eden,

I am going to see the dancers at Grenoside on Thursday, and to Hooton Roberts on Wednesday. I have friends at Sheffield with whom I shall stay Tuesday night. If I can be of any service in taking anything up to your brother please command me. I shall get back at the end of the week and will come over and tell you all about my adventures.

The enclosed - if I have not already sent it you - will interest you. The dances went splendidly and the audience - a very cosmopolitan one - was delighted and most enthusiastic. It was I believe the first time that English folk-dances have been performed abroad.

With kind regards

Believe me
Y sincerely
Cecil J. Sharp

24. viii./10

Dear Mrs. Eden,

With your letter this morning came one from Mr Gatty enclosing one from Wragg⁵. The latter said there had been difficulties but he seemed to think he had surmounted them. Anyhow, as I have written to Mr. Gatty, I think it well to go up as arranged on Friday and see what I can do and what I can get. I have 2 other sets of sword dancers arranged, at Whickham (Co. Durham) and Newcastle and I am going to see the Ripon men again also - so I have plenty before me.

At present I am reading at B. M.⁶ filling in an interlude. I will let you know how things go.

Y sincerely
Cecil J. Sharp

(Address on note paper changed by hand to "Newcastle on Tyne")

Note added alongside letter heading:

Has Miss Margot got all my Somerset books? If not will she allow me to complete her set?

Sept. 2 1910

My dear Mrs. Gatty,

I have had a very strenuous time since I left you last Monday. I saw the Durham men dance that evening unhappily in very wet weather. The dance is quite different, technically speaking, from the Grenoside one and much more intricate, but not nearly so beautiful nor so dramatic & picturesque. It has puzzled me very much. I am however to see another set of men perform to me tomorrow and as their dance is more or less the same I hope to get clear on the doubtful points. On Monday I begin to make my way home and to Ripon to renew my acquaintance with the Kirkby swordsmen - I found that my host at Whickham Mr. H. E. Taylor knew of your husband and his work very well and the man I am staying week end with, Mr. Parker Brewis, is equally well acquainted with him. Brewis too knows Mr. Greenhill (?) of Durham and had I been able to spare the time he was going to take me to see him today.

Today has been horribly wet so I spent it at the Workhouse where I found a very cosmopolitan lot of men hailing from Wales, Scotland, Ireland and all parts of England. One singer started by showing me a shocking leg he had got, and then told me he had spent 40 years in prison! He seemed proud of both! I got a lot of songs but nothing really fresh.

I enjoyed myself very much indeed at Hooton Roberts and I shall never forget your kindness in taking me in and assisting me to collect the Grenoside dance. It was a very pleasant week end and I hope to be able to renew my experience someday when I shall not be so preoccupied with my work.

With kind regards & many thanks

Believe me
Y sincerely
Cecil J. Sharp

11. X. /10

Dear Mrs. Eden,

According to my promise I am sending you my description of the Grenoside dance. I am afraid it sounds very cold but it is of course a technical & practical book, so that the emotion should be in the dance and not in the book. I am going away tomorrow till Friday so do not trouble to return it till then. I have no "side" of dancers going yet, but I tried to teach some men belonging to a club in connection with S. James's church, near you, last night. But I doubt whether they will give the amount of practice that is necessary. My book is getting on but the descriptions take a long while and need very careful writing. The introduction will be the most important part to the ordinary

reader and that I have only sketched at present. There will be two Yorkshire dances and two Tyneside, and I shall add the Horn Dance as well
Y sincerely
Cecil J. Sharp

15. X. /10

Dear Mrs. Eden,

Many thanks for your letter and M.S. which arrived quite well thanks to the excellent and careful manner in which you packed it. I cannot say when the book will be ready. I cannot quite finish it till I have been up to Newcastle once again as there are one or two small points I wish to verify. But I shall be back again on the last day of the present month and the book if all goes well will be in the printers hand within a week. They will I believe get to work at once upon it in which case it ought to be out well before Xmas. As to teachers I cannot say when I shall have any ready. I do not know yet how long it will take to train a side of men. I begin on an educated class of men on Tuesday evening next at Chelsea. Some of them are physical instructors with diplomas. I fancy the dance will want a lot of practice to "go" well. Theoretically it is not so difficult but to get the figures together quickly and easily means a lot of practice & quick wits. One practice a week will not be enough. However in a few weeks I shall be in a better position to answer your questions. If I had time I would go to it anew and start them. I met Ivor ~~the other day~~ and renewed my promise to come and help him and he said he would write but I have not yet heard from him. Mrs. Wragg sent me up 2 coats yesterday so when you would want a pattern you can have the loan of one.

Y sincerely

Cecil J. Sharp

Do come in whenever you are passing this way - Four o'clock is my and our best time.

4. iii. /11

Dear Mrs. Eden,

I was glad to hear from you but sorry that you are unable to come to either of my Chelsea Shows the more so as we shall be doing three Sword Dances including the Flamboro one. The letter you sent me - wh. I am keeping, is this right? - gives rather a poor account of the Sleights dance but I shall go there and see for myself. If I find that they are dancing at Coronation time I may run up North and see them. Don't bother about the photographs, unless you can get them actually in dancing when of course it would be very valuable. I should think they are pretty sure to turn out on Coronation day. I have just been appointed Director of the Stratford on Avon Summer School of folk singing & dancing for teachers and students. This will mean 4 or 5 hard weeks at Stratford from July 22 but I am glad of the opportunity wh. it offers to do a

little good. The enclosed circular may interest you - I am only responsible for one of them. Please remember me to Mrs. Ward, whose improved health I am delighted to learn of, and Mr. Ward and the family generally. I shall never forget their kindness to me on my flying visit there!
V

Cecil J. Sharp

Letter heading changed to The Ladle Farm, Armscote, Stratford-on-Avon

13. iv. /11

Dear Mrs. Eden,

Many thanks for your letter. I am on a mild collecting expedition in search of songs & dances and - incidentally - health. I have had a bad attack of influenza and am rather knocked up. However, 3 or 4 days in the country amongst my old friends the singers and dancers has already worked wonders. I find I know some people at Whitby and I have written to them about Sleights and they are making enquiries and they want me to stay with them. Many thanks for your information. I do not know Donkin except by name but I will remember what you tell me supposing I were to meet him. I got to the bottom of the West End affair and concluded it was not worth while going there. It was clearly a case of mummers pure and simple and not sword dancing. Of course I should be delighted to have some photos of the Flamboro dancers especially if they could be taken in characteristic positions e.g. the ring holding up the meshed swords, or the straight line hey etc. But I expect these will be difficult to get. I expect to be home again early next week. I have got some very interesting songs and many dances - a really excellent haul so far. I am so sorry to hear of the trouble that has befallen Mr Eden. Please tell him how I feel for him.

Y sincerely

Cecil J. Sharp

NOTES:

1. Mrs. Horatia Katherine Frances Eden (1846 - 1945) third daughter of the Reverend Doctor Alfred Gatty (1813 - 1903), Vicar of Ecclesfield from 1839 to 1903 and Mrs. Margaret Gatty (1809 - 1873) who was well known in the literary world and was the founder and first editor of *Aunt Judy's Magazine* in 1866. Mrs. Eden was a collector of mumming plays and a collection of these was published in *Folklore* Vol LIX, 1948..
2. Mrs. Florence E. Gatty, wife of the Reverend Reginald Alfred Gatty (1844 - 1914), Rector of Hooton Roberts from 1888 to 1914. Hooton Roberts is a village situated 9 miles to the east of Grenoside and it was with that family that Cecil Sharp stayed when collecting the Grenoside dance in August 1910.
3. David Ivor Vaughan Gatty (1879 - 1947), third son of the Reverend Reginald Alfred Gatty, and Mrs. Florence E. Gatty. Ivor was an artist having studied at the Slade School of Art and in later years an art master at a secondary school in Sheffield. He contributed the article 'The Old Tup and its Ritual' to the *Journal of the English Dance and Song Society*, Vol V, No 1, 1948.
4. Nicholas Comyn Gatty (1874 - 1946), second son of the Reverend Reginald Alfred Gatty, and Mrs. Florence E. Gatty. Nicholas held a doctorate in music and was a composer, but spent most of his working musical life devoted to criticism. From 1907 to 1914 he was music critic on *The Pall Mall Gazette* and for more than 20 years served on *The Times* in a similar position.

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5. Wragg - leader of the Grenoside Sword Dancers.
6. British Museum.
7. It is interesting to note that Sharp went on to include the Grenoside Sword Dance (together with the Kirkby Malzeard dance) in the first volume of his book *Sword Dances of Northern England* which was published in 1911. Sharp credits the help of Mrs. Eden, the Reverend Reginald and Mrs. Gatty in the preface to his book and he refers to the article in *The Pall Mall Gazette* (but with an incorrect date) in his description and notation of the dance.
8. I acknowledge with thanks the assistance given by the late Roy Judge, Norman Peacock, Trevor Stone and Malcolm Taylor in deciphering Sharp's particular style of handwriting.

Gordon Ridgewell, October 200

The Grenoside Dancers after the first World War

Shortly after their contact with Cecil Sharp in 1910 the Grenoside team became moribund and ceased to meet regularly, no doubt resulting from the situation shared by many teams - a once enthusiastic group of dancers all grow old together - and, in part, due to the impact of the First World War.

However the break was short. Interest was growing circa 1921, mainly as a result of articles in the *Sheffield Independent* where on Tuesday February 8th 1921, in a piece entitled "BACK TO FOLK DANCES" a writer under the name "The Passer By" wrote:

"During the last few days I have had several more instances of the interest that has been aroused by the references in this column to our Yorkshire folk-dances. There is certainly some indication of a revival. It is sufficient for the moment to say that I am hopeful, if not of seeing this old troupe of dancers back again in the arena, that a new troupe will be trained by them and come forward to take their place in carrying on this exceedingly interesting tradition.

I am given to understand that a new troupe of dancers, to follow the Grenoside tradition, has been in training for some time past in another village about 10 miles from Sheffield"

The Gatty family encourages the Grenoside Sword Dancers

Over many years members of the Gatty family took an active interest in various local traditions, especially the Grenoside Sword Dance. In an article in the *Sheffield Independent* on Thursday December 31st 1925 writer J T Higgins summarised the activities of the Gattys. He wrote:

".... thanks are due to the Gatty family of Ecclesfeild, the father of which was Dr Alfred Gatty, the editor of Hunter's History of Hallamshire, for keeping the folk dance and its traditions alive to this day. Were it not for the Gattys, the Grenoside dance probably would have been lost in obscurity.What it meant to have the Gattys behind old world customs, folk dancing and the like, may, best be appreciated from a recital of facts. Most notable, perhaps, was the late Sir Alfred Scott Gatty, Garter King of Arms, whose sober office in later life scarcely would associate him as the author of plantation melodies such as "Shine, Shine, Moon," and "De Ole Banjo," he not only interested himself greatly in the folk dance, but often toured the villages singing costume songs of his own composing to aid worthy objects. Other members of the family were equally active in this and other directions."

Dealing with the First World War and the subsequent revival J. T. Higgins wrote: "For some years during the War the custom (of Sword dancing in Grenoside) failed, the dancers had grown old and Father Time had claimed victims, and with none to fill the gaps the Grenoside Dances seemed likely to die out. But once more the Gatty family came to the rescue, and in 1922, through the interest of Colonel Mackenzie Smith, of Barnes Hall, and

grandson of Dr Gatty, it was revived with the result that today the troupe seems to be alive as ever and hopeful of winning laurels in the great Metropolis of the Empire" (The Grenoside team performed at the English Folk Dance Society's All England Festival held in the Great Hall of London University on January 1st and 2nd 1926).

Throughout the years such involvement by middle class benefactors made an unavoidable impact on teams, including the Grenoside dancers. Cindy Sughrue in her 1988 Lecture at Cecil Sharp House entitled "A Grand and Worthy Task, a the Implications of Middle Class Benevolence in the Folk Dance Revival, A Case Study of the Grenoside (Traditional) Sword Dancers", referred to the involvement of the Gatty family (and others). This aspect offers scope for a further article to explore the pros and cons of such involvement.

The Rover Scout team of the 1920's

The revival of interest in the Grenoside tradition appears to take two directions - some of the old team attempted to form a new team whilst the *Sheffield Independent* of Wednesday March 2nd 1921 reports that the Vicar of Wentworth, the Rev. G. Scott Smith, was training a troupe of a Boy Scouts who aimed to be ready to dance out by Christmas.

The Rev. Scott Smith was the grandson of Dr. Alfred Gatty "whose family in years gone by took an exceptional interest in these folk-dances, and also the old-world mumming."

The Rover Scout team was established and trained by one of the old dancers Mr Harry Housley - the team included two of his sons, Colin and Harrington and music was provided by Walter Fleetwood who was to become the teams musician (and one time Secretary) for many years.

J. T. Higgins in his article in the *Sheffield Independent* of January 1st 1926 says that the Scout team had at that time already broken up but an article by John Mitchell in the *English Dance and Song*, Vol XXXV, No.1, Spring 1973 features a photograph which is captioned "The Rover Scout Team which danced in London in 1926...."

With acknowledgement to Gordon Ridgewell for contributing the three articles from which I have used extracts on this page. A list summarising the many newspaper and magazine articles mostly submitted by Gordon which refer to the Grenoside Sword Dance will be carried in the next issue of *Rattle Up My Boys*.

Trevor Stone, November 2000.

Early film of the Grenoside team

In addition to the many written and photographic records of Grenoside there is also a useful film record of the Grenoside and Handsworth teams performing at Buxton circa 1927. The film is short but it clearly shows that the men of the Grenoside team wore jackets of different designs (and various shades of grey). The photo emulsions of the day did not render reds accurately. The quality of the film is far from ideal but it is obvious that the performance of this 1927 team was not as "polished" as more recent teams.

A comment from Cindy Sughrue

Following receipt of the last issue of *Rattle Up My Boys* Cindy Sughrue e-mailed me. Some years ago Cindy produced a thesis on Longsword dancing in South Yorkshire for her Ph.D. at Sheffield University.

In her e-mail Cindy points out that her work for her thesis included the tracing of a range of source material - including *The Pall Mall Gazette* article of 1895 which Gordon Ridgewell "rediscovered" as a result of his studies in the Newspaper Library of the British Library at Colindale.

Cindy makes no claim of plagiarism - she is sorry that Gordon had to go to the trouble of repeating the search she did in 1986.

Over the years "myths" have sprung up about Cindy's thesis and the likelihood of accessing it. Cindy confirms that her thesis was, at her request, "embargoed" for five years but the document is now available for reference at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (formerly CECTAL) at the University of Sheffield) and also at Sheffield University Library. Gordon's work, although covering the same ground, has made the important *Pall Mall Gazette* article more accessible to those readers who do not have the opportunity to visit these venues.

In the past Cindy has been invited to submit material from the work she did for her thesis for publication in *Rattle Up My Boys* but career pressures have prevented her doing so. She has, however, confirmed that any of the material in her unpublished thesis relating to the history of the Grenoside Sword Dancers may be used in future issues of *Rattle Up My Boys*.

The end for another team? The West Riding Longswordmen

The picture below shows the West Riding Longswordmen outside the Friendly Pub at Stanbury, near Haworth, on their annual St George's Day dance out last April. It now seems almost certain that this was to be their last appearance.

The group was founded in 1987 by Robin Longbottom, who was also a member of the York Gentlemen Longsword Dancers. His first motive was to have a team on his Keighley doorstep, rather than undergo the 90 mile round trip to York each week throughout the winter. In this he was fundamentally successful, but in fact both he and his brother-in-law, Dick Hodgson, held membership of both groups, right up to the virtual demise of the Gents, a couple of years ago.

In their thirteen year existence the West Riding Longswordmen were based at Stanbury, practising each Monday in the village chapel, and drinking in both village pubs. No fewer than five of the local landlords have turned out with them, three of them as long standing and accomplished dancers.

They have had a turnover of about fifteen men and half a dozen musicians over the years, who have combined to produce a repertoire of about ten dances, most of them choreographed by the members, culling from traditional dances, and adding invented moves, to produce short interesting pieces, designed to hold an audience's attention for five or six minutes, rather than to bore it with long

repetitive sequences, of more interest to the cognoscenti than the general onlooker, yet without compromising the traditional ethos. All but one were in the traditional longsword style. The exception was a curious hybrid rapper, making up with a frenetic enthusiasm bordering on terror, what it lacked in speed and authenticity!

The group's swords were of home manufacture, from the sprung steel of bed irons, with turned hardwood hilts, which were often admired, and handled well to produce a distinctive and spectacular clash.

Dance outs have been held about six times a year, mostly at local venues and bounded by Grassington in the north, and Whitby and Hebden Bridge to east and west. For several years until 2000, the team has combined with its friends, the York Gentlemen, to dance at, and keep alive the Gents' Bolton Percy tradition, which has latterly been reported in *Rattle Up My Boys* (issue 3, series 7, Spring 1996). This once spectacular and convivial event may now be in jeopardy.

The West Riding Mens' decline has been due to want of dancers who can regularly commit themselves to both practice and dance out. It would only take two or three new faces to resurrect the team, so if anyone from the Aire Valley, (or elsewhere), who is interested reads this, musician or dancer, practiced or beginner we will welcome them.

So there it is; two once active, and always picturesque, longsword revival teams of considerable skill and enthusiasm, probably lost to view as the 21st century begins, both the York Gentlemen Longsword dancers, and their friends the West Riding Longswordmen, who have joined forces to dance together on many a

Three founder members of the West Riding, survivors from that January 1987 afternoon in the Sun Street Methodist Hall, Haworth, where they danced their first steps to hurdy gurdy and recorder duo, are in the picture. They are Robin Longbottom, Vaughan Crossley, and Dick Hodgson. The full group, left to right is: Terry Cook, guest musician; Graham Jenkins, ex landlord, and lady companion; Dick Hodgson; Robin Longbottom, Captain; Mick Shackleton and partner Janet, long serving musician; Ewan MacLachian, and son Harry; Vaughan Crossley; and just Tony, newest member, initially press ganged from the Friendly, but whose enthusiasm ensured the team's active life for a few more years.



happy occasion. They've rattled 'em up, in rain and shine, eaten and supped in rare style, and had some fun keeping the Dance alive that small bit longer.

Dick Hodgson, October 2000

There is not, as yet, any news on what will happen to the Bolton Percy event in January, 2001 - although Dick suggests that some people will make their way to Bolton Percy out of force of habit - dance or no dance!

The Sword-dance and Gilbert and Sullivan at Buxton an unusual project tackled by Ivor Allsop

Ivor writes:

In December 1998 I was contacted by David Duffy, the director of a group called "The Savoynetters". He said "We are not the usual Gilbert and Sullivan Society - we don't meet on a regular basis. But we talk to one another almost everyday via the internet." They planned to perform **Ruddigore** at the Buxton Gilbert and Sullivan Festival the following August and they would like to end Act 1 with a sword dance instead of the more usual country dance. "Could it be done?" After I had recovered from my initial surprise I asked about music! "No problem! There are 64 bars of music allowed in the score, can you devise a sword dance to fit it?" "How about practice?" I asked. "Ah well! Can you make it to Blacker Hill after Christmas to a get together of some of the people who will be in **Ruddigore**?" (Blacker Hill is close to my home but he didn't know that.)

I turned up on the Monday after Christmas with Barnsley's metal swords and wooden swords so that they could practice - after I had discovered what they would like to do and what they could do. After introductions and a brief chat I found that they would like eight dancers performing something!!! So, I thought, what better way to start than to make the Lock. The director decided that any one of the eight should carry the Lock to the front of the stage at the end of the dance. They made a Lock with eight metal swords. I chose a slight young woman to lift the Lock - it didn't move for a couple of seconds and then it went to the floor with a crash as the weight took over. It was decided that metal swords could not be used. Bring on the wooden swords. They made another eight sword Lock with wooden swords. The same young woman still had difficulty in lifting the Lock. "Shall we use six people in the dance" asked the director.

Having settled on a dance for six, the musician (an excellent pianist) managed to keep them in some sort of time during the Clash and Single-under. An hour later we had the figures and the Lock almost ready to be performed. There had been much laughing, some groaning, a little swearing when fingers got trapped but all agreed that it was feasible to do what the director wanted. And above all everyone had enjoyed it. It was my turn to be entertained with a complete performance of **Trial by Jury**. It ended with me being invited to run another session on Easter Monday.

At Easter too many of our singers were involved in performing **The Messiah** so it was put back to the May Bank Holiday at Peterborough. On arrival I found an almost new set of people, only one of the six had been at Blacker Hill. So, back to the drawing board. I decided to have them working in pairs, so the dance became Clash, Open Ring, Arches-up, Lock. After an hour and a half they had got some semblance of dancing. Then came the next bombshell - only two of them were going to be in the sword dance at Buxton. I had suggested to the director to have two teams each going in opposite directions, one team to have the swords in their right hand and the other to have swords in their left hand. I expected the right-handed team to be those at Peterborough leaving me to teach a left-handed team in Buxton. This of course meant that I would have ten newcomers to teach. Before leaving Peterborough I was treated to Act 1 of **The Pirates of Penzance**.

I arrived in Buxton on Sunday August 1st and went to the Pavilion where the Savoynetters were meeting for the first time from all over the United Kingdom, the Continent, Australia and America, some of whom were to be the

sword-dancers. I decided to rehearse the right-handed team first since this contained the two people who had been at Peterborough joined by a Scot, a Belgian, a Welshman and another Englishwoman. We soon had the basics worked out and for an hour we practised with much laughter. Then I started with the second set, only to find that No. 1 was taking part in another G & S show, so instead of having five days to get this set ready I had only four days. Nevertheless with me dancing No.1 we quickly learned the basics - not too bad considering the team was made up of two Swedes, an Australian, a Belgian, an English woman and me standing in for an Englishman, none of them had seen or done any sword dancing before. By the end of the afternoon we were ready I put the sword dance into place at the end of Act 1. Apart from it being very rudimentary and not polished it proved that the director had got the right idea and it was going to work.

Monday's practising had to be fitted around the rehearsals for the rest of **Ruddigore**. The new man fitted in quickly and soon was able to take his full share of the action. I was on call in case anything went wrong. Nothing did! It had been decided that the right-handed No.1 would call the detail of the figures. This proved to be a wonderful decision since the rest of the dancers could concentrate on where they were supposed to be not on how to get there. The improvement was most impressive, the movement of the dancers was also improving but the company had only five days to get the opera ready for their one-off performance on the Thursday. This meant rehearsals each day from 9am to 6pm with a short lunch break. They certainly worked hard. Thursday arrived and we were at the Opera House by 10am! This was wildly optimistic - they were still assembling the scenery! Lunch time arrived and they were not only assembling the scenery but also working out lighting. We were told to be back by 2pm only to find that it was a band call! The musical director (an American Professor of Law) managed to convince the orchestra to rehearse at the same time as the singers. This worked very well until the finale of Act 1. It had been decided that the two Locks should be made about twelve feet from the front of the stage and that, as a curtain closer, they should be broken by two of the 'baddies' This duly happened. However, the stage at Buxton Opera House is steep from front to back. When the Locks were broken the swords cascaded towards the orchestra pit with a great rattle. The members of the orchestra nearest the front of the pit were up and away with "we are not playing tonight" The musical director yelled for the director who in turn yelled for me to "Sort it out" The director still wanted the Locks to be broken so a compromise was that the Locks be broken in the middle of the stage and the cast asked to step on any wayward sword, making sure that they didn't go anywhere near the orchestra pit. All this happened just three hours before the performance was due to begin. The performance of **Ruddigore** that evening was wonderful, everything going as planned, the dancers would not have disgraced any team.

I had a wonderful time teaching these complete beginners a basic sword dance and they said how much they had enjoyed the experience. My reward? Thirteen wooden swords!

Ivor Allsop, February 2000

Day of dance at York City of York Millennium Morris Dance Festival, September 9th, 2000.



The organisers of the York Morris Dance Festival, now in its twelfth year, are to be congratulated for assembling an impressive collection of 30 teams - all from



ABOVE: The Claro Sword and Morris team from Harrogate included a number of faces who have been on the local dance scene for many years - yes Ian - it's a polite way of saying how we are getting old!

BELOW: Castleford Sword Dancers included the Longsword dance from Riccall, an eight man dance, the restoration of which involved the late Rennie Pickles, one of the founder members of the Castleford team.

photos by Trevor Stone



Yorkshire (and missing out at least a further half dozen teams who either couldn't or wouldn't attend) When I first became interested in dancing in the early 1970's the number of Yorkshire based Morris and Sword teams could be counted on two hands. There has been a massive increase in the number of teams, especially in mixed sex teams and teams performing Molly and Border Morris styles of dance. Perhaps creeping old age colours my judgement but I was a little overwhelmed by the large number of teams who added lots of YIPPEE's and screeching to their performances.

For me to see Green Ginger Clog, after a break of many years, was a reminder of just how impressive skilful dancing can be. And of course I made a bee line for the four Longsword teams who attended the event - Kirkburton Rapier Dancers, Castleford Sword Dancers, White Rose Sword, and Claro Sword and



The Kirkburton Rapier Dancers turned up with a generous number of dancers and musicians. Within a few minutes of meeting them they had "marked my card" for the best pint in York. *photo by Trevor Stone*

Morris Goathland Plough Stots were on the programme but I was unable to find them in a very hectic day of dancing so I assume that they had to cry off.

An interesting observation - with the exception of a couple of spots by Castleford there was no Rapper sword at the York event!

Handsworth dance at Halifax Traditions 2000, September 23rd, 2000

One of the most alarming things about the York Day of Dance was to realise just how much the generation gap has opened up in the years since I last had regular contact with teams and dancers from West Yorkshire. Of the 300+ dancers in York for the event I knew very few - even by sight. However at an event staged in Halifax by Pete Coe it was just the opposite - dozens of people, including some old friends who I had not seen for some time.



Teams attending included High Spen Rapper, Rumworth Morris, Craven Flagcrackers, Green Ginger Clog, Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers and a team of Pakistani dancers who added a touch of colour (literally) to the day.

photo by Trevor Stone

LONGSWORD DANCE OUTINGS

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR 2000/01

As usual you are recommended to confirm details before travelling.

EARLY DECEMBER

Barnsley Longsword

December 19th (Tuesday) Dodworth Fire Festival (Near Barnsley) approx 8.00 pm.
Phone Jack Ledger (01226) 726 585 to confirm.

East Saxon Sword at Cecil Sharp House

December 17th 6.30 pm - EFDSS Carol Concert. Phone EFDSS (0171) 485 2206 for ticket details.

Lord Conyers Morris (South Yorkshire)

December 23rd at 2.00 pm - Christmas Wassail at The Angel Inn, Killamarsh including singing. At dusk the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance. Phone John Ledbury (01332) 799 074 to confirm.

Seven Stars Sword & Step Dancers (Wigan area)

December 9th 11.30 am onwards - Dickensian Day - street fair and parade in the Cheshire village of Lymm. Phone John Kelly (01744) 884 931 to confirm.

BOXING DAY, Tuesday, December 26th

Claro Morris & Sword (Harrogate area)

Dancing in Harrogate from 10.30 am onwards probably starting at the War Memorial. Phone Bob Hart (01423) 865 873 for details.

Flamborough Longsword

Starting at 12.30 'ish at the White Horse, Bempton then to the Rose & Crown and a tour of Flamborough ending at 2.45 pm approx at Dog & Duck Square (may be joined the school junior team). Phone Richard Traves (01262) 851 311 to confirm.

Grenoside Sword

11.00 am The Old Harrow, Grenoside dance (possibly followed by local guest teams) and a song session. Phone Joe Dunn (0114) 246 0463 to confirm.

Handsworth Sword

11.15 am at The Crossed Daggers, Woodhouse; 12.00 noon outside The Parish Church, Handsworth. Phone Peter Macham (0114) 255 4137 to confirm. Singing as in the past at the Cross Keys.

Highside Longsword (Kirkby Malzeard)

1.00 pm Grantley Arms; 1.30 pm Kirkby Malzeard Market Cross followed by a tour of the village. Phone Ted Dodsworth (01765) 620 374 to confirm.

Redcar Sword

Dancing at 12.00 noon at the Church gates in Greatham followed by other venues. Phone Brian Pearce (01642) 454 371 to confirm.

Spenn Valley Longsword (Cleckheaton area)

A tour of Cleckheaton and Gomersal area starts at 12.00 noon at the New Packhorse; 12.45 at the Wickham Arms; 1.30 at the Old Saw and 2.30 at the Wheatshaf. Phone Dave Webster (01924) 402 897 to confirm.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY - Dec. 31st

Barnsley Longsword

1.00 'ish at Spencers Arms, Cawthorne. Phone Jack Ledger (01226) 726 585 to confirm.

NEW YEARS DAY, Monday January 1st 2001

Kirkburton Rapier Dancers (Huddersfield area)

T.B.C. A tour of the Kirkburton area starting at 12.30 pm at The Carlton Club, and ending at The Smiths Arms from around 3.00. Phone Roy Dyson (01484) 665 365 for further details.

Monkseaton Morris

Monkseaton Morris will again perform the Ampleforth play and dance on New Years Day, 12.00 noon outside The Ship in Monkseaton. Phone Peter Brown (0191) 252 3022 to confirm.

Wye Doles Longsword (Peterborough area)

A Cycle tour, visiting the homes of members of the team. Phone Coral Cornell (01733) 204 348 for more details.

JANUARY 2, 3, 5 & 6th, 2001

Ryburn Sword Dancers

Tours by the "Long Company" (doing a mummings play) to pubs in the Sowerby Bridge area. All outdoor performances start at 8.00 pm and are followed by seasonal songs and novelties (including a challenge dance with Kirkburton Rapier Dancers at the venue on Jan 3rd. Phone (01422) 822 569 for more details.

SATURDAY, January 6th 2001

Boars Head Morris Mens' tour

A tour of Bradford centre (hopefully with Kirkburton and Spenn Valley sword teams). Phone Andy Fieldhouse (01274) 585 595 to confirm.

Seven Stars Sword & Step Dancers (Wigan area)

Traditional Plough Saturday dance out. Dancing in Wigan followed by a tour of Chorley, Lancs. Phone John Kelly (01744) 884 931 to confirm.

White Star Sword (West Kent)

Plough Tour from 11.30 am Chafford Arms, Fordcombe; 1.00 pm at the Queens Arms, Cowden Pound and 2.30 The Fountain, Cowden (all afternoon); evening at George & Dragon, Speldhurst. Phone Brian Tasker (01892) 862 301 to confirm.

SATURDAY, January 13th 2001

Goathland Plough Stots

Starting at 10.00 am outside shops the team will tour Goathland and Darnholm ending up at Beckhole. Goathland Plough Blessing Service is the previous Sunday (7th). Phone Keith Thompson (01947) 896 311 to confirm

Grenoside Sword village tour

The Village "Traipse" starts at approx 10.45 'ish from outside The Village News and then tours the village. Phone Joe Dunn (0114) 246 0463 to confirm.

SUNDAY, January 14th 2001

Claro Morris & Sword (Harrogate area)

Plough blessing at St John's Church, Knaresborough followed by dancing outside the Church and a procession to Knaresborough Market Place. Phone Bob Hart (01423) 865 873 for details.

Highside Longsword (Kirkby Malzeard)

10.30 'ish Plough Blessing Service in Kirkby Malzeard Church (includes dancing in the Church). A new Bishop will be beheaded! Phone Ted Dodsworth (01765) 620 374 to confirm.

Sullivan's Sword Plough Celebration (Nottingham area)

Celebration of Ploughtide, Church service and Plough Blessing at 10.30 Morton Church followed by refreshments and dancing at 12.00 noon Crown Inn, Rolleston; 13.30 Full Moon - followed by a pub session. Other teams welcome. Phone John Holder (01636) 830 480 to confirm..

AND LATER IN THE YEAR

February 3rd Haddenham Ceilidh

East Saxon Sword will be at this popular event. Contact Dave Law (0181) 550 0032 for details

*February 24 - 27 Carnival in Lastovo (Croatia)

DERT (March? - venue and date uncertain)

I have been unable to get details - try Vince Rutland (01609) 780 536.

Whitby Competitive Dance Festival (March? - date uncertain)

Contact May Beeforth (01947) 604 203 for details.

*March 11 "In De Kring" traditional outing (Dunkirk)

*March 25 "Lange Wapper" traditional outing (Antwerp)

Contact me for details of overseas outings (01377) 253 431.

Just before going to press I heard the sad news of the death of Roy Judge. Roy died peacefully on November 17th after a short illness. Like many people, I will miss his support and encouragement, and his vast knowledge which he was always willing to share.

The next issue, the first in a new series, will feature the third and final part of our history of the Grenoside Traditional Sword Dancers. To include the masses of material (mostly assembled by Gordon Ridgewell) the next issue will have 4 extra pages. Contents will also include a report by Pat Pickles describing a visit to France when she witnessed, and became involved in, preparations for the Bacchu-Ber dance tradition.

Be sure to renew your subscription for a further year.

Contributions are welcome ...

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