

LOTS OF MATERIAL

After my complaint in the last issue about the lack of material from other people, I am delighted to be almost embarrassed by the response.

I would like to carry more articles in each issue but the broadsheet size and format is rather restricting. Unfortunately I have to stick with the format for the first series but it looks likely that series 2, starting in June 1988, will be in the more conventional A5 booklet format.

Don't let this put you off sending in anything of interest, especially anything which increases our knowledge of the dance. Longsword is under-researched in comparison to many other traditional dances.

In the pipeline

Information on the new Kirkby Malzeard team, the history of the Handsworth team, Swords - sizes and designs of currently available swords and those in use in the past, Longsword in literature just a few of the topics in hand. And the delayed article on Goathland Ploughstots may finally appear.

In the next issue

A painting depicting an unknown team.

Cindy Sughrue discovered a painting dating from approx 1850 which clearly shows a longsword team in action. She asks your help to identify the team.

Plus the first (of many?) team profiles of two revival teams, Spen Valley Longsword and Sullivan's Sword.

why not subscribe now?

Single copies of the Broadsheet not available.

All five issues in the first series only £2 inc postage

Subscription list for this series closes soon.



Whitby Boys

One of the many junior teams trained by Joe Brown, mainly comprising boys from Caedmun School, and one of three junior teams who attended the 1984 Longsword weekend in Malton.

Copyright of all photographs, articles and material used in the Broadsheet rests with the author, or in some cases with the team or performers involved. Permission must be obtained before submitting material to the Broadsheet.

Views in the Broadsheet do not necessarily represent the views of the publisher.

Reasonable efforts are made to check the accuracy of material used and ensure that the author has the undisputed right to publish such material. However we rely heavily on authors to follow the usual conventions and obtain approval.

Organisers of Longsword events!

Why not use the enclosed newsletter to promote your event or tour.

For further information on this fascinating Yorkshire tradition send for a copy of the only booklet on this subject.

Trevor Stone, 6 Priory Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 2BR.

90p a copy, or by post £1.10



Be sure to let us know if you change your address.



RATTLE UP

MY BOYS....

an occasional broadsheet for those
with an interest in Longsword dance

In this issue

Junior teams

An interview with Joe Brown, a well known character in the Whitby area, who must have taught thousands of boys to dance Longsword and Morris.

Also details from Ewart Russell and Mike Cook about the trials, tribulations and delights of teaching school teams.

Issue No ~~2~~ ³, Series 1



INTERVIEW WITH JOE BROWN B.E.M.

This interview was carried out on Saturday, March 12th 1983 during the afternoon session of the Whitby Competitive Festival. The interview was held in the bar of the Spa Theatre. On the previous evening three of Joe's Longsword and Morris teams had entered the junior classes of the competition.

For more than 60 years Joe Brown has taught Morris and Longsword to junior teams. For this work, and for his dedication to the Sea Scouts, Joe was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1984.

There may be dozens of people like Joe Brown throughout the country, working with enthusiasm within their own locality. They seldom attract public acclaim outside their own area. Joe is not widely known but hundreds, if not thousands of boys were introduced to Morris or Longsword through the unstinted efforts of Joe Brown B.E.M.

The interview

TS Tell me, how old are you Joe?

JB Eighty!

TS Are you still going round on your bike?

JB Aye, still going out on a bicycle.

I started sword dancing at The Friends school at Great Ayton then I left school and went to Ravenscar. We started sword dancing with Miss Hall, she was the local folk dance teacher.

TS I saw Miss Hall last night. She sends her best wishes.

JB She taught us at Ravenscar. We went from Ravenscar to Whitby, and started a team at Aislaby with Miss Yeomens.

I took over the Sea Scouts and we started sword dancing. We went to London in 1951 to the All England Festival ¹. We were the first young sword team to dance there, before any other junior team. That was at the Albert Hall, London.

Miss Yeomens was behind us then, and Miss Hall. She used to come and see the Sea Scouts dance. I was Scout Master. The Sea Scouts kept a team for maybe ten years. We won lots of trophies.

I started teaching the schools at Caedmun College. We used to enter for Whitby ² and used to go to all the garden fetes. We do now, we go to Egton Church do, to St Hilda's Church and to the Marquis of Normanby's. We dance at all the June Concerts in here ³.

We are trying to get all the schools doing Morris and Sword. We had all the teams under my direction last night, all except the East Whitby lot. I used to take East Whitby but Barnett ⁴ takes them now. I'm jolly pleased he does, he's doing a grand job.

If we can get it into all the schools we're going to put a foundation for this tournament. We had over 30 lads last night from four schools. My lads took three classes. We are trying to get all schools doing sword dancing but when they get over 12 we lose them.

I like to make it full of enjoyment for the lads and we don't charge 'em anything. We'd one lad last night, he hadn't a Mother and hadn't a pair of shoes. His teacher said "you can't go in them". She wanted them all in black.

I said "Come with me to the shop", got on my bike, went and got him a pair of shoes. I said "you do well for us when we dance at the Spring Bank Holiday. Don't say owt about what it costs because it didn't cost you anything. We get it back at Bank Holiday, it isn't coming out of me" That's how we finished up.

A team from Scarborough came to dance at Whitby one Spring Bank Holiday. I said "what are you coming here for?" They said they had a licence (permission to dance and collect). I said you have no business to be here.

So I wrote to Scarborough and said it will just have to stop. Spring Bank is for these Whitby school children, and we got it back. Then somebody took it up again so I went to Scarborough Council and I played hell. I said "we won't be messed about. Spring Bank holiday is ours and we are going to have it". And they gave us it back. We need it and nobody else is getting that day.

TS Who taught you sword dancing at school Joe?

JB I was at the Friends school in 1916 for three years, a Quaker's school. We did a bit of sword dancing there.

TS Whereabouts was this?

JB It's near Great Ayton, it's a very fine school. In them days the war was on you see. When I came out of school I started teaching sword dancing with the Sea Scouts and at Caedmun College. We always had the pick of the lads. It was different in them days, they were interested. It wasn't all this disco dancing, and wireless and television. All they did was go to the pictures. But now they've got football, pictures, rugby. We have a job to keep lads together.

TS Has there been a men's team in Whitby? It's surprising that you taught so many lads and they never formed a men's team.

JB Well Bob & Cyril Swales tried but they didn't get away with it.

I trained the two young Piersons ⁵ and now they're playing well with Goathland. Cyril Swales of Scarborough, he was one of my lads. But until we find leadership we'll be lost.

Take Mrs Beeforth ⁶ doing all this good work to keep this festival going. She tries to be treasurer and secretary and the lot. I'm keeping sword dance going. If you can get three leaders from a school for Scouts, Cubs or sword or morris dancing, you do a good job. They're not there today.

TS Do you get any backing from the Local Authority?

JB No, we get no backing. All we get is Spring Bank Holiday. But if I get the lads we're alright. For forty years we've done a damn good job. As long as I'm alright I'm going to carry on sword dancing. It took a lot out of them lads. They came on Friday night and on Saturday afternoon. When you've got them you can hammer them. Sometimes they act the fool but you take the good with the bad.

For the music we just ... (singing)... Bean Setting. You get that into them. Their teacher said "What about music?" I said "they have it in their heads, they can dance without". I said "dance lads," and they just got the beat. If you get the tune into their legs its OK...Blue Eyed Stranger ... (singing). I say get that step lads, keep that going. But once they get the music they come out with a lighter step. If we'd had a piano last night we'd have had a faster step. But to the fiddle the lads do a rolling step. The Kirkby Malzeard tune takes a bit of getting with a mouth-organ or a fiddle. With the piano you step on the note you see.

TS Have you always done the Kirkby Malzeard dance?

JB Kennedy said this is their dance ⁷. It should be called the Ruswarp Sea Scouts dance. So you need to be a Ruswarp Sea Scout to dance it. That's what Kennedy used to say. And he said its Joe Browns Drop(demonstrating stepping).

One night when Kennedy was judging at Darlington ⁸ we went on against Goathland Ploughstots and against the Catholic troupe. Some of these lads used to be in my team so they said they'd put a team in against me. So I went with my lads. We beat Goathland Ploughstots that night. The adjudicator said it was marvellous to see.

TS Was this against the Goathland lads team?

JB No, the men's team! They were practicing regular. I remember Mr Scarth ⁹ was with them.

TS What did you think of the men's teams? You say you thought Goathland ¹⁰ where best?

JB I thought all the teams were good. But the Goathland musicians give the lift. Those Pierson lads have music in 'em. They went to Darlington with mouth organs. And now they're learning folk dances. With an accordeon you've got the lift.

The Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance music is dead if you don't lift it. Same as you had this afternoon. You ¹¹ got the step you see. Your musician lifted it and you do marvellously with your Double Over.

TS What did you think of the team from Kirkburton, the winners?

JB They were good. It makes a change to see a different dance. Then there's Loftus. Loftus is what you call special, they've had it and it's always there and you're not going to beat it. I've never seen them beaten. Goathland are very good but sometimes they don't get that lift into em. They danced better this afternoon than last year, but they're a high class team.

We had to steal lads from the other team last night ¹², one lad was lame. I said you get in there you're going to dance. Them lads that did Bacca Pipes were only 12 you know.

With morris and sword dancing and Bacca Pipes we can give a show. Someone said "can you come in September", I said alright. We can give 'em variety.

To get them lads to come we have table tennis at Church House. Sometimes they'll dance and sometimes they won't. The little beggars dance if I hammer them.

TS They seem to be a lively set of lads.

JB Oh aye they are, them little lads. But by God they are keen. Rum but keen. And when their mothers see them in their whites they are astounded. Them shorts are £3 a set, vests are £2 and socks a £1. It costs some money you know. We have three sets of red braids made by St John's Church. You can't get braid like that now. Somebody went to wash 'em, I said you will not. I said they are as good now as they were new.

We provide all the schools except East Whitby. They paid £22 for a set of swords. We couldn't do that. They have a big school and the parents form a committee to make money. But we were as good as they were last night.

Wouldn't you say lads look better in shorts at their age? Get them into white shorts and bells and they look right.

We have the bells and we have the shorts and all. If a lad hasn't shorts we let him have them. At £2 a pair you can't expect them to buy them. We get them given or we'd have been in a mess now.

TS Do you travel far with them nowadays?

JB We go to Loftus, Staithes and to Scarborough in September. We could have got to Darlington but I hadn't entered because my team wasn't ready. We'll go if we have a team next year.

TS Have you ever been to London again?

JB No, we aren't classy enough. But we have been with you.

TS To the Longsword Weekends? ¹²

JB Aye, they enjoyed it. We had Elizabeth with us who is the backbone of the team. You can put that down to me, she'll come and play and she'll come and teach. She can teach better than me.

TS What are you going to do for music when Elizabeth Holmes moves away. She's at college isn't she?

JB There's Emma Hedbridge, and I'll get some choir lads.

TS Was it Emma playing the flute?

JB Aye. She'll play for us any time. She goes to the school where these lads are. She was trained by Mrs Hunt. Elizabeth was trained there. She's a good lass, she won't stop away.

TS Do you remember the teams when you were young?

JB Sleights were dancing. Sleights sword dance team. Them two lads you had this morning, ¹³ they're coming on because it's born in them. They are grandsons of Tom Woodward who danced with Sleights. That little lad, it was the first time I put him in. I said you can dance in there lad. He was delighted because he was having a go.

TS Have you ever danced with any mens teams?

JB Only with Ugthorpe with the parson and Miss Hall, she taught them. We danced with their team. They did North Skelton I think.

TS You danced the North Skelton dance? So what made you choose the Kirkby Malzeard dance to teach?



Joe Brown did not usually dance with his teams. This photo shows Joe, on the extreme right, dancing with the Ruswarp Sea Scouts team who visited London in 1951. Photo kindly supplied by Vaughn Williams Library, EFDSS.

JB I was taught Kirkby Malzeard by Miss Hall for the Albert Hall, London. That was a marvellous little team, with 6,000 people watching them lads with their shorts and uniforms on. We stung Whitby. Nobody knew we had a team Ruswarp Sea Scouts in London!

We showed them. All the best dancers and the best choirs were there. The Irish dances, the Scottish dances, the Spanish dancers, they were all there. We stopped at the YMCA. Miss Hall and Miss Yeomens paid all our expenses, we had a marvellous time. Tell Miss Hall you have been talking about the Albert Hall.

TS You know there is a Longsword Weekend in 1984? I hope you'll join us with your lads.

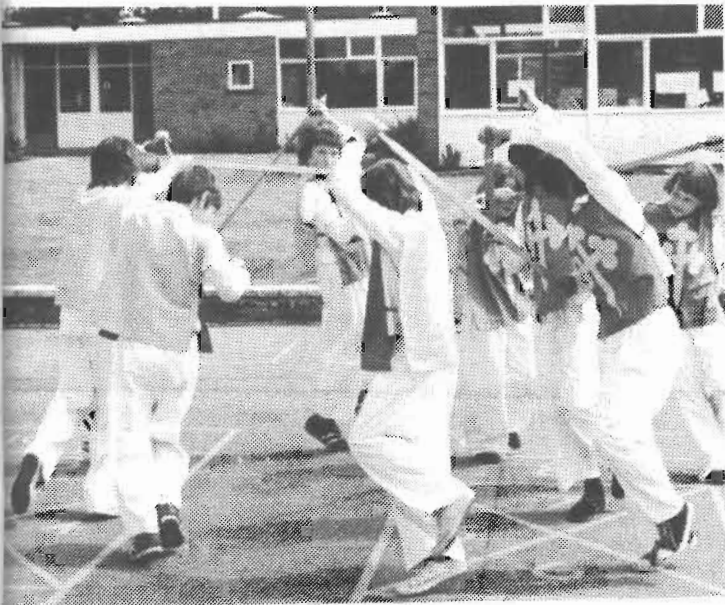
JB Aye, we might have a team by then. We'll be there alright.

And he was!

1. The English Folk Dance & Song Society Festival "FOLK DANCES OF THE BRITISH ISLES" a special event for the Festival of Britain held at the Royal Albert Hall on June 21st, 22nd & 23rd 1951.
2. For many years Mr Jack Scarth was leader and organiser of the Goathland Ploughstots.
3. The Whitby Competitive Folk Dance Festival is held every year in March.
4. The Local Authority organise summer concerts at the Spa Theatre, Whitby.
5. Mark Barnett was then a teacher at East Whitby Community school. He has since moved but continues to train junior teams in the area.
6. Twins Reg and Steve Pierson are regular musicians for the Goathland Ploughstots.
7. Mrs May Beeforth is Vice President and plays a major part in the organisation of the Competitive Festival.
8. The Darlington Competitive Dance Festival.
9. Douglas Kennedy was adjudicator at the Darlington Festival for a number of years.
10. The sword dance class earlier in the day featured Goathland Ploughstots, Spen Valley Longsword and the winners of the class, Kirkburton Rapier Dancers.
11. Joe was referring to the team I dance with, Spen Valley Longsword.
12. Joe brought a boys team to the Longsword Weekends in 1979, 1981, 1984 and 1987.
13. Earlier in the day I interviewed Alan and Lee Boyes who danced the previous evening in one of Joe's teams.

Junior Longsword teams

Details of two junior teams trained by Ewart Russell and Mike Cook.



For eighteen successive years I had a morris side in the Gosbecks Primary School in Colchester.

The first team, of eight eleven year olds, showed only the Flamborough Sword Dance: that dance chosen because my experience with children in folk dancing indicated that the step for that sword dance would be natural for the boys; more so than what would be required for the Kirkby Malzeard dance, the only other longsword dance known to me - the dance used by the Colchester Morris Men over many years.

As the years went by an half-hour's programme of Morris developed (Wheatley, Headington Quarry, Bromsberrow Heath), but always ending with the Flamborough Longsword dance.

Sides were usually of ten to twelve boys (near enough, the school's football team!): it was a fine sight to see a dozen eleven-year-old boys do Headington Quarry Bacca pipes; and to see a twelve sword lock in the Flamborough.

The whole side would begin the sword dance, and stay in until lines and rolls began. Eight boys would continue, and the extras would dance off, to stand a little way from the bottom of the set; they would dance in again at the beginning of the hey.

In our dance we included whole rolls after the rolls down - two up and two down. Photos of the 1927 men's side which I obtained from a lady in Flamborough could only be explained by the supposition that the side was doing whole rolls. I asked Douglas Kennedy who saw the 1927 team about this. He couldn't remember but said there was no reason why they should not have done so. I decided that the movement was a worthwhile addition to the dance.

Selection of a captain was never a problem: he would emerge during his penultimate junior school year; always one of the boys who stayed for the after school folk dancing, and always one of the best at games.

One captain, with an instinctive panache, took lock and team round the onlookers seated in a large square at a school fete. Another, who had been told, once, in a casual remark, that any morris side would repeat a figure if it felt that the onlookers would like it, did that with the Flamborough hey, all on his own, without any word beforehand with "sir", who watched with alarm!

The boys gave a polished show; there was never any difficulty in getting them into five half-hour practices a week, mostly in the lunch hours, from November until the end of the Spring term. The final team, in 1976, gave thirteen dressed shows, including a recording by the County Film Unit.

Ewart Russell 1987

A junior team was formed in January 1984 called Fishergate Lads after the school where it started. The first season saw them performing the Haxby and Wiggington Dance at the 1984 Malton Longsword Weekend.

1985 saw an almost new team apart from the original Captain - Lee Watkinson. This team decided to change the name to York Castle as Clifford's Tower (the keep of York Castle) was within sight of the school.

This was the best team in the three and a half years that York Castle were active. The dance repertoire was extended to include Salton, Ampleforth (dance and play) and 'East Lilling' a comedy dance based on a performance by Lange Wapper from Antwerp.

Displays were given at Cleethorpes Folk and Beer Festivals, Whitby Folk Week and appearances throughout North Yorkshire. The team were on local television and local radio. This team received a First Class Certificate with Honours at the Whitby Competitive Dance Festival.

Problems struck when most of the team left school. For 1986 we were down to only two or three of the 1985 team with new members of varying ages from 9 to 11 years.

A full programme that year included Folk Festivals at Cleethorpes, Redcar and Whitby. We dropped the Ampleforth Dance but added Sleights which we entered at the Whitby Competitive and gained a First Class Certificate (a good performance considering that we had to enter the 12-16 years as two of the team were a few months over 12 years old!).

Over the Winter 1986/7 six members from the 1986 team continued to practice including Lee and another stalwart Tom Derbyshire. In March things went wrong. The 'stream' of prospective members from the school dried up. Eight experienced members had been practicing the Kirbymoorside Dance for the Whitby Competitive Festival but more members were needed to cover for holidays and illness, so we enlisted three boys from the Scout Troup at Haxby.

Only two weeks before the Competition three boys left. The others weren't ready so we had to withdraw. We managed a passable performance ready for a May Day Dance-out at Haxby before the final blow fell.

Lee, who had been a keen leader through 1985 and 1986, had to leave. We tried to carry on but enthusiasm had disappeared. Two 'sides' had developed, Fishergate v Haxby, and I was faced with the prospect of little enthusiasm, little co-operation, lack lustre dancing and the prospect of having to cancel engagements at the last minute. The team could carry on in half-hearted fashion for three to four months or finish straightaway. I decided that the only course was to end the team straightaway.

I kept the equipment in the hope of an opportunity to start again.

York Castle Phoenix?

In September 1987 I approached the Heads of the four Junior Schools in the Haxby and Wiggington area to train teams to perform their own dance in the villages in January. There was a poor response.

I intended to give Fishergate a rest I was persuaded to 'give it another try'. I was surprised when some 20 boys attended an initial meeting but only five letters of parental permission were received. I reluctantly decided not to start. I hope there will be more interest next September.

But as one door closes another opens. I was asked recently to coach a Cub Pack to do a sword dance. Is this the start of something? Who knows one can only hope.

Mike Cook 1987

Ewart Russell was for many years the highly respected Editor of the Morris Ring magazine 'The Morris Dancer'. Ewart has now handed over to Eddle Dunmore.

Mike Cook organised the 1987 Longsword weekend in Malton. He is a busy man, playing for Goathland, sword foreman of Ebor Morris and determined to train a team to perform his local Longsword dance - the Haxby/Wiggington dance.