



RATTLE UP My Boys

AN OCCASIONAL BROADSHEET FOR THOSE
WITH AN INTEREST IN LONGSWORD DANCE

Issue 2, Series 6. Autumn, 1996

THE SWORD GATHERING MAY 24-27th 1996

a report by Trevor Stone on the International gathering
of sword dance teams, based in Scarborough.

Part of this article appeared with the notes from the Conference held at the Sword Dance Gathering.

An International Folk Dance event was held in London in 1935. Early on in my studies of sword dancing I came across a film of teams who attended this International Festival. From that day on I often thought about how I would plan an International event.

The film, from the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, was wound on the same 16mm reel as the 1932 film of the North Skelton Longsword dance which I had hired on behalf of Spen Valley Longsword. The film of the 1935 International

Festival included early colour film and depicted an interesting and lively event and I was fascinated by snippets of film which depicted a sword dance from the village of Fenestrelle in the Piedmont area of North West Italy. I followed up more details at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and found photographs of the Fenestrelle team and an Austrian sword dance team and a programme which made it clear just how extensive, and impressive, the week long event was. In the Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Vol. 2 1935, I found a very full record of the event, including Conference papers (a Conference was held on 4 mornings), and was especially interested by a paper "*Ritual and Dramatic Associations of Sword and Chain Dances*" presented by Professor Richard Wolfram of Vienna.

It was studying this fascinating event which laid the foundations for the event I would plan more than 20 years later.

Jack the Rapper, 'Norways' national Rapper team", put on a superb show.



**The Sword Dance Gathering
was spectacular**

Thanks to the hard working committee who achieved many months work in a few weeks the Sword Gathering went ahead. 45 teams, including 14 teams from overseas, performed at the world's biggest sword dance event.

Thanks to those teams and individuals who sent enthusiastic and kind comments

The 1935 event was planned by a high-powered group of over 60 VIPs - the Queen was patron and committee membership included Lord and Lady Baden Powell, John Masefield and Sir William Rothenstein. They received the backing of the Foreign Office and attracted a powerful group of International supporters. Seventeen Continental countries sent 515 dancers (58 came from Norway alone) including the Austrian sword dance group under the leadership of Richard Wolfram and the sword dance team from Fenestrelle. Approximately 300 dancers from throughout the UK also attended the 1935 International Festival including what the programme described as "Traditional Sword dancers from the North East" - Royal Earsdon Rapper, the North Skelton White Rose Longsword team - and a scratch Longsword team intriguingly called the Black Tulips! (see the report on a Library Lecture by Derek Schofield, RUMB Issue 3, Series 5, Spring & Summer 1995.)

The total budget of £6,277 19s 4p was raised by public subscription over a two year period, worth at least £100,000 in today's values. Compare this with the figure of approx. £12,000 available to the organisers of the 1996 event.

The gradual build-up to the 1996 event - the Longsword weekends

In 1977 a number of Longsword dancers, mainly but not exclusively, from Spen Valley Longsword and the now defunct Middleton Longsword, (two of the many teams which arose as a result of the workshops at Whitby Folk Festival by the late Kathy Mitchell) decided to have an informal social weekend together. The village of Ampleforth was chosen as a venue and I was nominated to organise it. The organisation was limited - fifteen people camped in a field without any facilities. There were few enough of us to fit comfortably in the bar of the local pub. The weekend didn't involve much dancing but it was a most enjoyable social occasion and everyone agreed "we must do it again" - which we did two years later when seven teams descended on Hutton-le-Hole, thus creating the format for the Longsword weekends which led to the 1996 International Sword event. (Details of the Longsword weekends in 1977, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1987 and 1989 are in RUMB Issue 2, Series 1, Autumn 1987). In the 1980's I moved across the Pennines to live and work and Mike Cook took over the weekends and organised the events in 1987 and 1989.

My main reasons for organising the Longsword events was to stimulate interest, mainly amongst dancers, and to encourage teams by enabling them to perform for knowledgeable audiences. The weekends were successful in encouraging the formation of new and junior teams and were responsible for the discovery of an old set of swords, a photo of a team circa 1910 and many leads. They reached a peak (in size) in 1984 when 15 teams attended and performed for over two hours to large crowds in Malton.

As a result of attendance by Lange Wapper at one of the Longsword weekends I met their leader Renaat Van Craenenbroeck and at our many subsequent meetings we regularly mused about the practicality of an event to mark the 600th anniversary of the earliest record of a sword dance (in Brugge in 1389). On and off we returned to this idea and Renaat explored the practicality of an event to be held in Belgium. For my part I trailed the planned event in "Rattle Up My Boys".

Unfortunately there was insufficient financial support in Belgium and the date came and went without anything happening. However mention of the plans in "Rattle Up My Boys" had interested some readers and I was flooded (three letters if memory serves me correctly) with enquiries which would not be put-off with the news that Lange Wapper had abandoned their plans.

An International event moves closer

UK teams continued to enquire about progress. Almost in desperation, hoping to close the topic, I offered to assist any UK team who convinced me that they were serious about a UK based event and I was surprised by the number of teams

and individuals who volunteered to get involved in such a time consuming task. The most persistent were Carlisle Sword & Morris and so in February 1994 we held a preliminary meeting to draw up proposals for an event in 1996. The Carlisle people were smitten by videos of European sword dances and were keen. However at subsequent meetings the numbers dropped and it became obvious that their Secretary, Jeff Lawson, was doing most of the work.

It came as a shock when, after more than 18 months of planning, Jeff rang to say that Carlisle had decided to pull out. I circulated copies of Carlisle's statement to "Rattle Up My Boys" subscribers and was delighted to get offers of help from Andrew Kennedy, from Keith Thompson and the Goathland Plough Stots, and from Pete Coe.

By this stage more than 30 Longsword and Continental sword teams had confirmed interest but I was surprised, when, after a suggestion by Vince Rutland (editor of "The Nut") that Rapper teams should be invited, I received a flood of applications from teams and, as the UK teams boosted the budget I was loathe to restrict numbers.

Building up enthusiasm for the event

As the plans for an International Event developed I began to consider which overseas teams should be invited. Over the years I had met a dozen or so Continental teams and I began the task of "selling" the event to some of these teams. Bearing in mind that most Continental teams receive many invitations to folk events and a trip to England would be costly as some teams had large numbers of performers. To attract the overseas teams I wanted took time and effort, including trips to Germany, to Belgium and to France, but I realised that they would form the nucleus of the event and would be the main attraction for UK teams and for the general public.

The move to Scarborough

As more teams accepted the invitation to attend the size of the event, even as it was before the withdrawal by Carlisle Sword, created concern. Carlisle was an ideal venue for a dozen or so teams but there are few towns within a reasonable distance which would provide four venues for a large event.

Faced with alternative venues it seemed logical to choose the area with a strong link with sword dancing. The Scarborough area has a long history of sword dancing and boasts two long-lived teams, Goathland Plough Stots and Flamborough Longsword. Scarborough also offered a number of venues within easy travelling distance for tours but it lacked a major area in which to present the main display, forcing us to use two locations.

The teams who didn't attend

The teams who didn't respond to our invitations made it difficult - had they decided not to attend or simply overlooked the event? Some teams didn't even reply - Oni Kenbai (Japan), Baccubert (France), Baiona Sword Dance Team (Spain), Borsky Mikulaus (Czech Republic), Castelletto Stura (Italy), Redondela Sword Dance Team (Spain), San Sebastian Danzas (Spain), Westerlo (Belgium), Burgos (Spain), Marlboro Sword (America) and Loftus.

Eight months before the date the Papa Stour team from Shetland pulled out when it became clear that they could not get together a team in the tourist season. Spen Valley, my own team and the team who could be credited with founding the Longsword weekends, pulled out when they were asked to finalise numbers and send their money. Four teams withdrew within a few weeks of the event - Strani (Czech Republic), Boerke Naas (Belgium), White Boys of Mann (UK) and Fenestrelle (Italy).

The teams who attended

Over 80 teams from throughout the UK and Europe were initially invited in April 1994. Of these 7 teams never replied and a further 6 did not currently perform

sword, had closed down or had insufficient members to take part. Grand Union Rapper made a financial contribution towards the event even though they had other commitments! Eventually 45 teams attended the weekend. They were:

Baden-Württemberg Sword Dancers (Germany)



A team from Baden Wurttemberg (in Southern Germany) attended the event and gave a number of impressive displays of their dance which ends with the hoisting in the air of their leader who then made a short speech which he thoughtfully translated into English.

This team perform to the beat of a drum. An alarming feature is the 'hanging of the fool' who has his neck surrounded with swords, is hoisted into the air and suddenly dropped to the floor as the swords are withdrawn. The climax of their dance involved raising on a platform of swords their leader who made a speech calling for international goodwill and praising the sword dancers. (See RUMB lissue 2, Series 5 for a translation of the traditional words of this proclamation). The team also gave an impressive display of Flag waving.

Bagnasco Bal do Sabre (Italy)

There are several sword dance teams from the Piedmont area in the North West of Italy. The Bagnasco team perform with curved scimitars. Their colourful dance includes an unusual maypole figure and is performed to the beat of drum. They wear Turkish style costumes with golden pantaloons, white shirts and striped turbans. The team lost some property during the weekend but this did not spoil their obvious enjoyment of the event.

Bobkovnici (Czech Republic)

In Southern Moravia a number of groups traditionally tour at Carnival time before Lent. The team from Bystrice pod Lopenikem is known locally as "The Recruits" as the team once comprised young men who were about to go into the armed forces. Their colourful costume includes black hats with long white feathers - but the hats were taken off to dance. Their short dance was accompanied by singing, whistling and much noise which created a superb carnival atmosphere. Together with the Czech team from Komna they put on a specific show for the organisers as a way of saying "thank you".

Half Moon Sword (USA)

A well established and skilful women's dance team from New York who perform English sword dances - both Longsword and Rapper. They have a distinctive version of the Papa Stour dance. The team are organisers of an annual "Sword Ale" dance meeting held in New York every year.

The team (with their adventurous musicians), gave an excellent show of skilful dancing plus a highly entertaining comedy sequence and also played a big part in creating an atmosphere at the weekend with their informal, impromptu performances.

In de Kring (France)

There were records of a sword dance in their area and the Dunkirk group decided to recreate a dance with the help of continental dance expert Renaat van Craenenbroeck. Their dance, as with many Continental sword dances, ends with the Leader hoisted into the air on a platform of swords whilst he flourishes a large flag. When performing at Whitby the video record shows a fishing boat sail past - and then reversed - to see what was going on!

Jack the Rapper (Norway)

A late entry, who saw the event promoted on the Internet and phoned a couple of days after the Italian Fenestrelle team withdrew. This mixed team, who claimed to be "Norway's national rapper team", performed rapper crisply in the "traditional" style and put on an excellent stage show and I suspect we will see the back in England before long.

Komna (Czech Republic)

One of a dozen sword dance teams from Czechoslovakia, the Komna team tour their short dance around their village 'to bring good luck' in the days before Lent. The four dancers wore a coloured headscarf around their waists and are bedecked with ribbons and beads and wear rouge and were accompanied by a characters in fancy dress and many excellent musicians who took every opportunity to play.

Lange Wapper Dansgroep (Belgium)

Founded over 25 years ago by Renaat Van Craenenbroeck the Lange Wapper Dance Group from Antwerp, by regularly inviting other sword dance teams to their traditional Half Lent event, acted as a catalyst for this International event. Their eleven man sword dance is a reconstruction based on Flemish dances described in old records and depicted in paintings and an etching. The haunting music is provided by drums and traditional instruments. The group's display at the Saturday evening ceillidh was one of those "tingle" experiences as a large audience, of all ages, sat enthralled.

Longwood Rapper (USA)

An American dance team from the Boston area who perform the English Rapper dance. They have an updated calling-on song and their 'Betsy' has skilfully 'Americanised' the traditional character who must have got through a staggering amount of bananas during the weekend (which he used in their performance - if you want to find out how why not buy a copy of the video? See end of [this](#) article for details).

Markina (Spain)

This team was from the twin towns of Markina and Xemein in Biscay in the Basque region of Euskadi in Northern Spain. They performed a range of Basque dances including sword dances from the region - the local version is called 'Xemeingo Ezpata Dantza'. Markina were accompanied by a womens group who had the opportunity to perform a number of Basque dances.

Orion Sword (USA)

A team from Boston, America, who are currently celebrating their 10th year of dancing. The team begun by dancing 'standard' English Longsword dances but they have developed their interpretations and created new dances, the latest being named "North Shirley Volunteers" after their leader's home town. Their's was one of the performances by New World teams which demonstrated just how vibrant and varied the sword dance tradition has become in North America.

Quevaucamps Sword Dancers (Belgium)

The newest of the sword dance teams to attend this event, this team from Southern Belgium performed a sword dance developed in conjunction with expert Renaat Van Craenenbroeck. The team's hard work to get their dance ready was evident in their smooth and faultless performances over the weekend - of particular note was their young drummer who kept superb time for their unique dance.

Toronto Women's Sword (Canada)

Canada's only sword team, founded in 1989, their repertoire includes English Longsword and Rapper which they perform at impressive speed, Lancashire Clog, American Wooden Shoe dancing and a variety of other jigs and 'creeps'. They are well travelled in Canada and USA but had never been to England before but they now know all about a "lock-in" at an English pub!

Überlingen Sword Dance Company (Germany)

The Überlingen dance is thought to be the earliest recorded sword dance which still regularly performed. The Sword Dance Company is descended from a Vintners' Guild and they claim the right to perform the dance in return for their loyalty when their town was under siege. The team includes a character (known as Hånsele) who uses a long whip to clear space. Their performance ends with three "couples" dances of differing tempos when the men are joined by women dressed in ornate 18th Century costume. See RUMB, issue 4, series 5, Autumn 1995 for more details of the team and their traditional outing

The Überlingen group were delighted with their visit and gained lots of press coverage when they returned to their home town - they tell me that it will be a long time (if ever) before they forget the experience.

Addison Rapper

A Rapper team from the traditional home of the dance in the North East of England. Addison regularly taken part in dance tournaments - the Rapper dance style has been influenced by such competitions. During the weekend they put on some of their best performances in pubs.

Bishop Gundulf's Sword

From Rochester in Kent the 'Bishop's' team perform their own adaptations of a number of traditional Longsword dances including an unusual five man dance they call 'Six Bells'. They enjoyed the whole weekend but seemed to get most out of the "Sword lock" workshop on Monday morning led by Rhett Krause where they helped Rhett create one more "new" lock.

Carlisle Sword, Morris & Clog

In addition to the Papa Stour Sword Dance Carlisle Sword also perform two Longsword dances of their own composition - one of which has been copied, performed and passed on as far away as America. Their repertoire also includes Rapper and 'Border' Morris and their ladies group gave displays of Clog dancing over the weekend.

Claro Sword & Morris

From Harrogate this men's team mix 'Cotswold' Morris dances with two Longsword dances from the villages of North Skelton (in Cleveland) and Kirkby Malzeard (not far from their base in North Yorkshire). They gave a smooth, elegant performance and, when called on to stand in for a missing team, managed to extend their planned performance with an extra dance.

Clydeside Sword and Step Dancers

Members of this Rapper sword team have made a study of some of the recorded sword dances from Scotland. Their dance is a reconstruction of the 5 man Longsword processional dance from Elgin which was taken from 17th Century records. Shortage of dancers restricted the teams performances but those who attended had a great time.

Coventry Mummers

The traditional folk play, called the 'Mummers play', was often associated with the Longsword dance. This is Coventry Mummer's 30th year and they enjoyed entertaining the crowds with their plays throughout the weekend - including a team member (Ron Shuttleworth) who turned up everywhere on his bike.

Dorset Button Rapper

The original Dorset Buttons team is a well established women's team. The team's musicians, most of them men, were determined not to be outdone and took up Rapper dancing - in clogs. They gave a number of (noisy) much appreciated performances.

East Saxon Sword

Sword dances were once concentrated mainly in parts of Northern England. Nowadays sword dance traditions have spread throughout the country. This team travelled from their home in Essex for the event. Some of the members of East Saxon sword attended the forerunner of this event - a Longsword weekend held in 1981.

Flamborough Longsword

A sword dance team was flourishing when, in 1912, Cecil Sharp visited this small fishing village on the Yorkshire coast. The dancers wear dark blue knitted sweaters - the pattern is distinctive to their village - the pattern was used to identify bodies of sailors drowned at sea). The current team seldom leave their village, preferring to tour the village on Boxing Day and we were pleased to welcome them for a few hours on Sunday afternoon.

Gift Rapper

Sword dancing was, in the past, a male pastime however it has been taken up by a number of women's teams. Gift Rapper, a women's team from Sheffield, perform a number of Longsword and Rapper dances. They enjoyed the weekend as it gave them a chance to show how they could stand their corner in a predominantly male gathering.

Goathland Plough Stots

The Plough Stots can trace their history back to the early 1800's. The team are known as 'Plough Stots' because of their association with a Plough Blessing tradition when a plough was taken around the village to bring good luck. 'Stot' is a dialect word for the bullocks used to drag the plough. The team danced at a limited number of events as members were busy acting as tour guides, collectors, door men and a mass of other tasks..

Grenoside Traditional Longsword Dancers

A long established traditional team from a village near Sheffield, their dance is one of the few English dances which does not end with a display of the sword

lock - the Grenoside men display that early in their dance - just before the Captain is 'beheaded'! Grenoside were one of the teams who, because of other commitments, were only able to attend on one day.

Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers

Sheffield boasts two sword dance teams who can trace their histories more than 100 years. The eight-man Handsworth team were only able to attend on the Sunday of the weekend but they helped to demonstrate the enormous variety in British sword dancing. Their costume is said to be similar to the uniform of a Yorkshire Hussar from the early 1800's and they were mistaken for solidiers by some of the Czech team.

High Spen Blue Diamond Rapper

High Spen Blue Diamonds are a traditional rapper team from the pit village of High Spen (near Chester-le-Street) in the North East of England. The 100 year old dance is still in the care of the Forster family. The High Spen tradition has some 40 figures mainly grouped into three dances.

Their full team was only able to attend on the Saturday but a number of individuals, including the team's organiser Ricky Forster, stayed on to help with workshops, presentations at the Conference and other tasks.

Newcastle Kingsmen Rapper

A long established Rapper sword dance team from Newcastle - descended from a University team which was formed in 1949. They were perhaps the noisiest rapper teams I have ever seen but they danced with precision and enthusiasm.

Redcar Sword Dancers

A well established team assembled in the folk revival of the early 1970's to perform the Longsword dance from the village of Greatham in County Durham. Redcar made an impact on many of the overseas visitors by making a "guard of honour" with their swords as teams left the church service on Sunday morning.

The Rumworth Morris of Bolton

The Rumworth Morris were invited, even though they do not perform sword dances! The teams' dances are from the mill towns of the North West of England (including their home town of Bolton). They are an impressive and friendly team who brought much colour (and noise by their large band of musicians) to the event. Many of the members also have links with a number of sword teams.

Ryburn Longsword

Two teams, adult and junior, were founded by folk singer and musician Pete Coe. Based in Ripponden in West Yorkshire, the Ryburn teams dance variants of Bellerby and North Skelton Longsword dances. Since seeing the Continental teams the Ryburn juniors have adopted the "Hoisting" of their leader as part of their dance.

Ryknild Rabble

"The Rabble" was formed in 1988 as a Rapper team. They have since extended their repertoire to include step clog dancing, Rapper and Border Morris and were able to demonstrate the latter in addition to their rapper dances.

Sallyport Sword Dancers

Based in Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne, the Sallyport Sword Dancers originally came together in 1969 to perform in Czechoslovakia. The team performed traditional rapper dances from it's native North East at the weekend and joined in the social life with gusto.

Snark Rapper

A Snark is a mystery beast which many have claimed to have seen. It is also the name of an "occasional" team of Rapper dancers from a number of other teams. The team lived up to their reputation for humorous and skilful performances. One of the memorable photos from the weekend (to be printed in a later issue) depicts a member of Snark who has obviously overdone it

Southport Swords

Founded in 1968, the team perform sword dances from North Skelton (including their own compilation figure) plus the Papa Stour sword dance which they performed with style and skill at the UK Showcase show.

Stone Monkey Rapper

Many teams owe their origins to the activities of enthusiasts. Such a group exists in Derby. Stone Monkey Rapper were encouraged, trained and led by Phil Heaton, one of the organisers of an annual showcase for traditions called "Dancing England". Phil was with them as "Tommy" during the weekend.

Stevenage Sword

This team was formed in 1973 by a member of the Sallyport team who moved away from the North East. The team performed their variant of the Newbiggin Rapper dance and the Greatham Longsword dance and they made a great impact on our Belgian visitors by dancing in a pub in what some of the Belgians described as "an impossibly small space".

Sullivan's Sword

Sullivan's are no strangers to the area although they hail from Nottingham - for many years they have competed at the Folk Dance Competition held annually in March/April at Whitby. The handful of teams who attend have a great time.

Sullivan's perform a number of Longsword dances including one of their own composition.

Thrale's Rapper

A team which owes its existence to the activities of a man who moved from Glasgow and set up a team in the South. Such mobility of labour has played a large part in spreading the sword dance. In spite of "drawing the short straw" when we had transport problems on Saturday morning the team were enthusiastic in their praise of the event.

White Star Sword Dancers

Traditional sword dances were once concentrated in the North of England but have spread to all parts of the country - and include this team from Kent. The team usually concentrate on rapper (no doubt as a result of limited numbers) but for this event they brought the Escrick Longsword dance up to standard.

Wype Doles Sword Dancers

Founded in 1992 this team, from Whittlesey in Cambridgeshire, are one of a dozen or so teams who have chosen to concentrate solely on Longsword dances. Their dances are based on the North Skelton and Kirkby Malzeard dances but they have combined some features and altered some moves to create a set of distinctive dances.

Yorkshire Coast Morris

As the sole Scarborough based dance team members of Yorkshire Coast played a major part in planning and organising the event. They are a mixed team who dance Morris. The two members of Yorkshire Coast who gave most help with the Sword event (Gordon Crowther and Shirley Doyle) have already started work on a major event in 1999 which they hope will feature over 1,000 teams of all types.

The differences between Rapper and Longsword teams

One feature which surprised me at the event was the differences between the Longsword and Rapper teams attending the event. Rapper teams have an excellent communication network created, in part, by the practice of dancers dancing with a number of teams. News of the Sword event spread rapidly and at least a dozen Rapper sides contacted me to ask to be included. On the other hand the event had to be "sold" to many of the Longsword sides who seemed less interested in the social side of the programme and more interested in seeing and dancing with the foreign teams. Most of the Longsword teams, and their members, seemed to be more mature - many appear to have an older average age of membership which may be a factor.

The people who made it happen -

Soon after the withdrawal of Carlisle Sword I was reassured by the offer of help by Keith Thompson on behalf of the Goathland Plough Stots. Planning to move the event to Scarborough started in earnest - imagine my dismay when, following a team meeting of the Plough Stots Keith told me that the team had decided not to act as backers for the event. With this rejection the event came close to complete collapse and cancellation.

In the meantime offers of help had come from members of Yorkshire Coast Morris and other individuals so, as a last ditch measure, Keith called a meeting of a handful of interested people (Shirley Doyle and Gordon Crowther of Yorkshire Coast, Vince Rutland and Stuart Higson of Sallyport Sword Dancers, Keith and Mike Smith of Goathland Plough Stots plus Jeff Lawson, Maureen Tinker and myself from the original group) in an attempt to assemble a group who would back the event. That meeting resulted in a group who decided to "have a go" at running the event, the programme for which had already been advertised widely limiting the latitude for change. Effectively they had to condense two years work into a few months.

At the initial meeting in Goathland Keith was accompanied by two Goathland Plough Stots, Mike Smith as a committee member and Michael Atkinson, the Plough Stots President, who explained the teams decision to help but not to take on the organisation of the event. In spite of this initial reticence the Plough Stots went on to provide the bulk of the manpower for door duties, tour leaders etc and the village of Goathland also provided accommodation for almost a quarter of the overseas visitors.

Keith Thompson

Keith Thompson is Secretary and general factotum for Goathland Plough Stots and, as such, has a wealth of local knowledge. His contacts enabled us to meet the officials of Scarborough Borough Council and to contact the Bursar at Scarborough Independent College, both of whom were critical to getting plans moving rapidly.

Keith was Chairman of the organising group but his major contribution was in coaxing the people of Goathland to accommodate so many foreign visitors.

Shirley Doyle and Gordon Crowther

A few days after Carlisle's withdrawal came a phone call offering the help of two members of the local Morris team Yorkshire Coast Morris. For some years they have organised a Morris gathering in Scarborough as part of the local authority sponsored "Scarborough Fayre".

Two individuals from the team got involved in the organising group, the team's Squire Gordon Crowther and Shirley Doyle, both live in Scarborough and brought local knowledge and contacts which helped enormously.

Stuart Higson and Vince Rutland

We were never sure if Stuart Higson and Vince Rutland, both members of Sallyport Sword Dancers, volunteered to get involved to represent the interests of Rapper teams or if they simply drew the short straw. Both men were regular

members of the committee, in spite of the distances they needed to travel to meetings. Vince's involvement as Editor of "The Nut" ensured greater publicity amongst Rapper teams and his help in attracting press interest was invaluable
Jeff Lawson

Jeff Lawson was the Secretary of Carlisle Sword and the main contact when we were involved. When Carlisle withdrew he offered to continue his involvement and it seemed logical, especially as he is a bank employee, that he should be Treasurer. Jeff was one of a number of people who saw relatively little of the weekends proceedings as he spent most of his time in the office administering tickets and manning the sales desk.

Mike Smith

Goathland Plough Stots supplied much of our manpower including Campsite Manager, General Administration, tour leaders and collectors and door men at events but one "Plough Stot", Mike Smith, also attended the planning meeting and provided much local help.

Maureen Tinker

Maureen was involved in organising most of the preceding Longsword weeks and maintains regular contact with many of the overseas teams. She took on the task of sorting out and organising the accommodation in the various rooms at Scarborough College. As the rest of us she was overwhelmed by the numbers but, with the valuable assistance of the staff of the College, she managed to welcome and settle-in over 300 overseas visitors.

The many others

The 1935 International event mustered over 100 guides to look after the seventeen overseas teams. In 1996 we had to manage with less than a quarter of this number and, as cash was limited, we had to manage everything on a shoestring - a single mailing to all teams cost over £100 and so we had to keep the costs to a minimum.

Yorkshire Coast Morris and Goathland Plough Stots between them provided around 20 people who acted as tour guides and collectors but the administrative accommodation and general management had to be undertaken by a handful of people who, in return for their hard work and long hours, saw very little of the dance displays.

The highlights - and lowlights

At points in the weekend I wondered if anything else could go wrong. Arrangements for accommodation for over 300 overseas visitors were chaotic, mainly because Scarborough Independent College did not finish normal classes until 4.00pm on Friday afternoon and it took 2 hours to clear the classrooms and set out the beds. All that time weary and bewildered groups of foreigners were standing around wondering what was happening.

Having cleared that hurdle the following morning brought further problems, this time with a shortage of space on the tour coaches - it became clear that some of the overseas teams had given misleading information to our questionnaire and some UK teams brought more "family and friends" than we were aware of.

The gathering was planned to offer a variety of events - shows where one could sit indoors and see examples of the many traditions, events which allowed teams to get in as much dancing as they wished, spectator events within the town, chances for dancers to socialise with other teams. We also wanted a strong academic element in the form of workshops and a Conference.

The highlight was the procession on Sunday morning after the church service at St Martin-on-the-Hill Church which passed through part of the town to the dance spots at the Spa Sun Court and in the Town Centre.

A full house in the magnificent Gymnasium of Scarborough Independent College saw a memorable Overseas Showcase with a programme which included Überlingen (Germany), Bagnasco (Italy), Jack the Rapper (Norway), Toronto

Women's Sword (Canada), Half Moon, Longwood Rapper and Orion Sword (all from USA).

We were pleased to welcome five UK sword teams, often called "traditional" teams, who have long and illustrious histories. They were Flamborough Longsword, Goathland Plough Stots, Grenoside Longsword, Handsworth Longsword and High Spen Blue Diamond Rapper. The appearance by the village team from Flamborough was particularly gratifying as the team seldom dance at other times than their Boxing Day outing and it is many years since they were tempted to perform outside the village.

The Conference and workshops

From the start I intended that a key element of the weekend was to be the formal and academic proceedings in the form of workshops, talks and a Conference.

The Saturday morning workshops for the general public were a failure - there were many dance shows throughout the area to be seen - only one 'outsider' attended and to form a single set for Ivor Allsop's Longsword workshop needed a number of people 'press ganged' to take part. However the Monday morning workshops for dancers (Renaat Van Craenenbroeck teaching the Flemish "Trawantel" dance, Ivor Allsop teaching the "Papa Stour" dance and Rhett Krause demonstrating his range of traditional and invented sword locks (as described in a recent issue of "Rattle Up My Boys") were well attended.

The Sunday morning Conference attracted 60 delegates who enjoyed an important and highly relevant range of presentations. Serious study of pan-European sword dance traditions has been boosted by the work of a growing number of researchers with an interest in this area and the Conference was intended to present the latest thinking on sword dance scholarship. The programme was rearranged to avoid overlap of the sessions which resulted in cutting the time for each speaker but the presentations flowed well. It was supported by the English Folk Dance & Song Society, the Folklore Society, the Morris Ring, Folkworks, Open Morris and the Morris Federation. The Conference was introduced and the first speaker, Steve Corrsin who works as Head of Acquisitions for the Library of Columbia University, New York, set the scene with a presentation - 'Sword dancing throughout Europe'. Renaat Van Craenenbroeck then spoke on 'Recreating a tradition' followed by 'The North East clog stepping tradition' a talk by Chris Metherell from Newcastle. We were treated to video and films in 'A Rapper Family' - by Ricky Forster from Chester-le-Street and the event was rounded off by 'Delving into the Sword Dance Archives' a report on material in the collections of the Morris Ring and the background to the Barnsley Longsword team by Ivor Allsop. Questions were cut short as many members of the audience were anxious to get off to see all the teams in procession on their way to the dance sites. Extracts from some of these presentations will be printed in future issues of "Rattle Up My Boys".

A talk "A World of Sword Dancing" was presented to a select (some may say small) but enthusiastic audience on Sunday night. The evening featured details of the latest research in both the UK and in the Low Countries together with video of a number of teams and traditions not represented at the event including film of a sword dance from Thailand which was discovered in the material left by Kathy Mitchell.

The supporters

The main problem faced by Carlisle Sword was the difficulty of raising funds. As sponsorship becomes an increasingly commercial matter it is becoming increasingly difficult to raise support for events of a specialised nature. In addition local authorities now rely on the national schemes operated by National Heritage. We were lucky in that Scarborough Borough Council had already earmarked funds for their "Scarborough Fayre" events. Other financial support came from Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, from The National Trust, Sewerby Park and one local trader. Funding from Stone & Co was been boosted

under the Government's Pairing Scheme, the National Heritage Arts Sponsorship Scheme.

We would have been lost without the help of the Bursar and staff of Scarborough Independent College. The event was backed by English Folk Dance & Song Society, Folklore Society, Folkworks, Morris Ring, Morris Federation and Open Morris all of whom circulated publicity material etc but could not give any financial support.

An important element was the support of the UK sword dance teams. They paid promptly and their charges included a contribution towards the costs of accommodating the overseas visitors. In addition a number of teams played host to overseas teams (especially the North Americans) who arrived early and spent a few days settling in and sight-seeing.

The final outcome was satisfactory - we almost broke even when we included the income from the collections, profit on the items we sold etc.

Why I will not attempt further International events!

I don't begrudge a moment of the two years the event took to organise. My overriding objective was to demonstrate just how varied and dramatic sword dancing was and to impress on performers and spectators the pan-European nature of the dance. I am confident that I achieved these aims. The enormous variety of styles was readily apparent even to a casual observer. However the character of some individual team displays was swamped by the numbers of people present - over 40 teams involving more than 500 people. In my view rapper displays suffered particularly as they benefit most from the restricted space and intimate atmosphere found in pubs. The need to organise and marshal teams also removed some of the spontaneity found in many of the traditional displays as it was impossible to create the atmosphere in a Czech village or outside a major church which differentiates the character of many of the teams from Europe.

The Überlingen team preferred to dance outside and, whenever possible, outside a church as is their custom - they were concerned that their performance did not transfer to a stage and did not compare with the polished and slick performance of the American teams! Most displays of English dances work best when performed in small, compact areas (such as pubs) whereas the Italian, Belgian and German dances need large spaces, and their dances look best when performed outdoors. The exotic style and vivid colours of the Italian's costume suits the bright sun of their home setting - they looked a little out of place under the overcast skies at Scarborough Castle.

Having illustrated the variety and richness of the sword dance traditions the ideal next step would be for individuals to travel to see the foreign teams in context - in their own locality, in their traditional setting, and on their usual outings.

A regular sequence of major events would almost certainly have an impact on the teams taking part and their performances - at this event we had to ask the Italian team to cut the length of their dance (usually 26 minutes long) which they reluctantly did. At least one foreign sword team has already created a choreographed stage show which is closer to the style of "State dance troupes" than to the original local tradition which I initially found so attractive.

On a purely practical level Carlisle Sword where correct - the financial risk of this size of event is too great to be borne by individuals. If the weather had been against us, or had some other disaster occurred, I and the other organisers would have been faced with bills of many hundreds of pounds each. Local authority funds are hard to come by and, as none of the national organisations have the funds, or the will, to organise such events it seems unlikely that there will be another specialised event on such a scale again.

A further point is my conviction that cock-ups that were forgiven on this first pioneering event would be much more irritating on any future event.

One last personal point - I am resolved never again to organise any event which demands so much of my time and effort as to interfere with my enjoyment of the event. If there wasn't such a good video record of the event I would feel very left out! Added to that I missed speaking to so many old friends at the event, many of whom I have not met since the series of Longsword weekends in the 1980's.

In spite of my personal reluctance to repeat the event I am pleased to see that a number of groups and individuals have been inspired to plan further events as a result of contacts they made at the Sword Spectacular. These include International events in Germany and/or Belgium, a further sword event in "a couple of years/1998" in Scarborough, and a (limited) tour of the historic sword dance locations along the Belgian and French border. Readers of "Rattle Up My Boys" will be kept in touch with these plans as they mature.

A 2 hour 45 minute VHS video of the highlights of this impressive event is available to purchase - price including postage and packing is £14 (add a further £2.50 for overseas postage). Orders should be sent to me at 6 Priory Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 2BR.

Trevor Stone - September 1996

Two books dealing with Sword Dance, one by Steven D Corrsin and the second by Ivor Allsop (edited by Tony Barrand) were announced at the Conference. The first "SWORD DANCING: A HISTORY" will be available in the Autumn, the latter "LONGSWORD DANCES FROM TRADITIONAL AND MANUSCRIPT SOURCES" was on sale at the weekend. Please note that the introductory special offer on Ivor's book has run out. The current price, including the latest postage increase, is £18.80 - orders should be sent to Ivor Allsop, 36 Green Spring Avenue, Birdwell, Near Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 5RY.

Steve Corrsin's book was not ready for the event and has been further delayed and the publishers, Hilsark Press, expect it to be available "in a few weeks time". To those readers who ordered and paid for a copy at the Sword event I can only apologise and assure you that it is worth waiting for!

ILLUSTRATIONS OF LONGSWORD

'Morris Matters' (8/2 1985, page 21) carried a letter from John Maher (currently Overseas Bagman of the Morris Ring) on his sighting of a painting dated 1601 at Kronberg Castle in Denmark depicting what he described as "11 dancers holding swords in Longsword fashion in what appears to be a dance. The music was either from a hurdy-gurdy or bagpipes in the foreground". The letter asks for information on the painting - does anyone know if anything was forthcoming?

AN INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE GROUP?

One of the many good points which came from the Sword Gathering came in a letter from Steve Corrsin, the leading speaker at the Conference held on Sunday morning. Steve suggest that an informal group of people with an interest in the history and development of sword dancing from any country be formed to offer help, support and to provide a way to exchange information.

Steve offered to set up and (initially) run such a group which would correspond by phone, fax, letter and, for those so equipped, by e-mail. Any developments will be reported in future issues of "Rattle Up My Boys".

This is the first of two issues to deal with the Sword Spectacular. A future issue will carry letters and reports from individuals who were there - if you have comments to make simply set pen to paper. The next issue will carry additional material from Rhett Krause relating to his recent article on locks.

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

DERT

By the time this issue is "put to bed" and printed the DERT Rapper tournament will have been held at Burton on Trent. I hope to persuade Vince Rutland to provide a report for the next issue.

Corrigenda

Regular readers may guess who provided the following items - Gordon Ridgewell has been hard at work again. I take a relaxed view towards the letters from Gordon about spelling mistakes, literals etc as I hope most readers are tolerant of most errors but often he draws attention to some important errors of fact which, if left uncorrected, would confuse and mislead future researchers. In August he wrote to me about a reference in John Ledbury's article "The Historical Evidence for Sword Dancing in Britain" in RUMB issue 3, series 4 in the Autumn of 1993.

Gordon points out that John quoted Sharp's Sword Dances of Northern England (part 1, page 54) which refers to an article on Grenoside in the Pall Mall Gazette on January 8th 1885. Wishing to follow-up this reference Gordon visited the British Library's Newspaper Library at Colindale but could find no such article in the January 8th 1885 paper. On a subsequent visit Gordon found the article headed "Twelfth Night on the Moors - Morris Dancers in Yorkshire" in the newspaper dated January 8th 1895.

Gordon also pointed out that I got the date of the Carol Concert at Cecil Sharp House (at which the Society's Gold Badge was presented posthumously to Han Pitts) wrong. Apparently I was there on December 17th, not the 13th as I printed in the report of the event in RUMB issue 5, series 5.

Gordon also drew attention to omissions and errors in locations listed in my article "Sword Dance Locations in Northern England" in issue 3, series 4. I am on with the task of updating information from the 1962 Geographical Index and I hope that I have persuaded Gordon to take on the task of preparing an updated map.

Snippets

Pete Coe wrote to me soon after the Sword event and enclosed a photo of the Ryburn Longsword Dancers (junior team), who made such an impact at the event, hoisting their leader in the manner of the Continental teams they saw at Scarborough. The photo appeared on the cover of the recent copy of *English Dance & Song*. Pete also said that the team use the "Hunton King's Song" as the basis of their calling on song.

Apologies that this issue was not sent out earlier - I intended that it should go out within a few weeks of the Sword weekend but domestic matters intervened. It now seems certain that I will be moving house, back to my native East Yorkshire at the end of November. Details of address etc later.

Trevor Stone October 1996

Contributions welcome....

Copyright of all photographs, articles and material used in the Broadsheet is 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 appropriate