



RATTLE UP My Boys

A quarterly publication for those with an interest in
sword dancing

Issue 1, Series 8, Spring 1999

Books about Sword dancing

Steve Corrsin, in his address to the Conference at the first Scarborough based Sword Spectacular way back in May 1996, commented on what an exciting time it was to be involved in sword dancing. He had in mind two books about to be published (one by Ivor Allsop and the other by Steve himself), and the sight of over five hundred performers from fourteen countries on the streets of Scarborough. Little did any of us (including Steve) realise that his book would be plagued by problems and delays. Thankfully things have now been sorted out - The Folklore Society has taken over distribution of the book and an embarrassing backlog of orders has now been cleared. The new system has resulted in a reduction in the price of the book.

Renaat Van Craenenbroeck agreed to review this important book.

Around the time that Steve's book finally appeared I was also given a copy of a book, in French, detailing the history and social context of the Bacchu-ber dance. A summary of this book also follows.

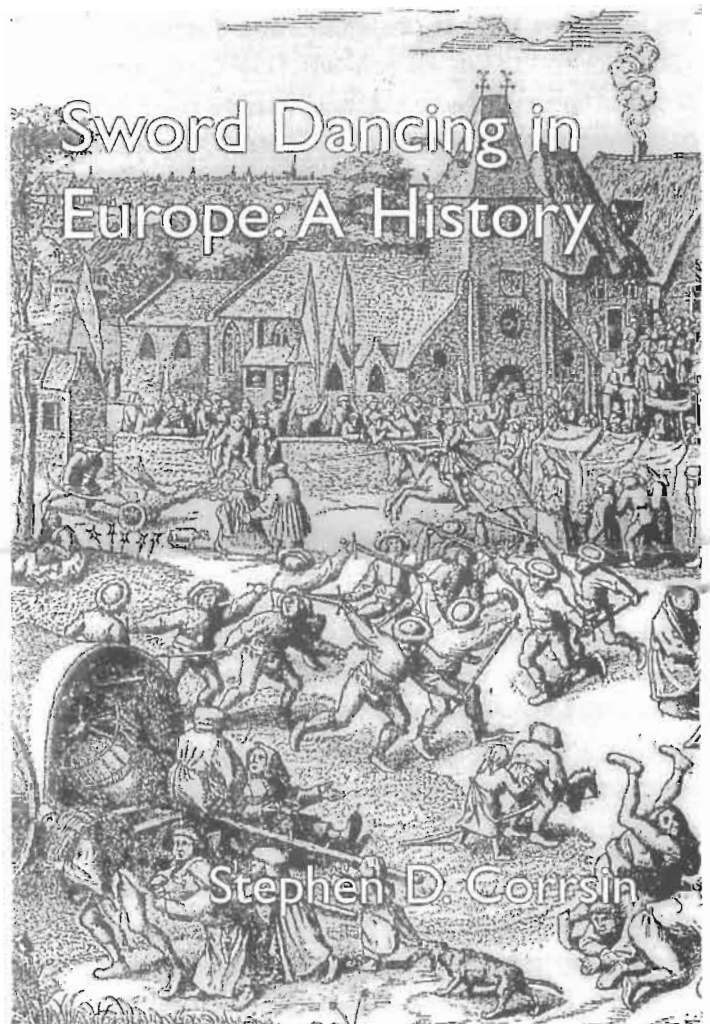
A review of Steve Corrsin's long-awaited book

By Renaat Van Craenenbroeck

***SWORD DANCING IN EUROPE: A HISTORY* by Stephen D Corrsin.**

Enfield Lock, Middlesex: Hisarlik Press, 1997. ISBN 1 874312 25 7. Hard back, 156mm x 234mm, xii and 290 pages with black and white illustrations, maps and an index. Folklore Society Tradition Series, 3. (available direct from The Folklore Society, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT - the price in UK is £25 including post and packing - North American readers should contact Steve Corrsin).

When I got Corrsin's book in my hands (after a lengthy period of waiting!) I felt very envious. It has always been a dream of mine to



produce a book which presents sword dancing in its historical context and details its current forms. But on reading *SWORD DANCING IN EUROPE: A HISTORY* I soon realised that I could not have done a better (nor as good) job than Stephen Corrsin has done. With his background and training as a librarian, his knowledge of many foreign languages and, moreover, the extraordinary richness (of content) of the American University libraries resulted in a publication that comes close to being an encyclopaedia of sword dancing.

However, nothing in this world is perfect - so I regret that the chapter about the Iberian Peninsula (and especially the information about Spain) is too sparse. I am convinced (and it was proven on a recent visit to

Spain) that, besides the well known dances of the Basque country and of Galicia, there is a lot more information to be found about sword dancing in this country. But I also know how difficult it is to find out such information, especially if we concentrate on the linked (hilt and point) sword dance and exclude dances with mimed battles and their variants.

I feel that something could have been said about garland dances as I am of the view that a lot of garland dances belong to the same "family" as the hilt and point sword dances (as Corrsin mentions himself). Replacing swords with other implements is a constant feature of the history of sword dancing. Countries such as Bavaria, Austria and Spain have an important tradition in garland dancing but Corrsin does not refer to them.

A further weak point I regret is the amount of emphasis he gives to the use of the sword dance by the Nazis and the political errors made by some researchers. I think that the influence of, and use by, the Nazi regime of the sword dance was more limited than Corrsin suggests. The influence of fascism on the work of some researchers (such as Wolfram and Gardiner) may be the subject of a separate study, but I think it gets too much attention in this book on the history of sword dancing.

It is a pity that in such a well documented study that the illustrative material is so poor. To look at the presentation of historic iconographs such as the etching after Bruegel, or the Brussels tapestry, you need a magnifying glass to discover the sword dancers! And, although the book teaches us a lot about more recent continental dances very few photographs are used to give us any idea of them. The same criticism can be made about the maps which are rather too simplified and often do not show important reference points which would help our understanding of the area in question.

Nevertheless this book has the merit that it is the first to take a scientific approach to study the phenomenon of sword dancing. We do not find in it any trace of "fantasy world" interpretations of the origins of the dance (such as links with the Vikings) nor any overblown claims "about the significance of the dance" (such as the explanation given by Tacitus). Every sword dancer - and everyone interested in sword dancing should read the book, especially the conclusions at the end.

Personally I find Steve's conclusions a little too "cool" and dispassionate. According to written documentation hilt and point dancing is indeed a relatively "young" phenomenon. But I wonder why performances of this type of dancing have been fixed on a specific date, unlike most other types of dance. And why has it for many years been danced only by men, often young, unmarried men? Chain dances for mixed couples exist in many countries - what makes sword dancing different?

And then, being a member of a traditional sword dance team, I ask myself why do we do it, even when the weather is bad - rain, snow, cold. I assure you that if the yearly outing wasn't "special" for me I wouldn't dance outside under such conditions. So? Renaat Van Craenenbroeck, Antwerp 1999

Other comments on Steve's book

Walter Abson comments

"I would like to point out that there is a mistake on page 236 of Steve's book - he states that Rolf Gardiner was a founder of the Morris Ring.

Steve has been advised of this error and agrees that it will be corrected in any future editions"

Brian Tasker writes

"I am enjoying Steve's book. I like his rather sceptical approach to old assumptions. What a pity that there is no evidence for a new theory for the origin of our dances. Has anyone ever considered the possibility of a link with the Spanish Armada of 1588? The storm wrecked boats all along the east coast, around the north of Scotland and down the west coast. It could account for the absence of sword dances in the south and their appearance in such places as Flamborough, the Shetlands, the Isle of Man and Liverpool. Perhaps DNA testing of the locals would reveal some Spanish blood!"

P.S. The next issue of RUMB will carry an article which sets out a theory for the distribution of sword dances throughout Europe - presented in an article by Alan Nowell.

Summary of a book on the Bacchu-ber Sword dance

A couple of issues ago I gave details of a new book (in French) and I asked for volunteers to translate a summary of it (thanks to all who responded). I received a speedy reply from Gillian Guest, then a musician for York Gentlemen. Gillian is a French scholar and she prepared the following summary of the book:

LE BACCHU-BER ET LES DANSES D'EPEES DANS LES ALPES OCCIDENTALES

THE BACCHU-BER AND SWORD DANCES IN THE WESTERN ALPS

Editor: Andre Carenini; published by EDISUD for the Mission Regionale des Musiques et Danses Traditionnelles, Aix-en-Provence, France, 1996. ISBN 2-85744-895-3, softback 210mm x 296mm (A4 format) 174pp. with colour and black and white illustrations. No index.

The Bacchu-ber sword dance, the subject of this comprehensive book, is described as a closed chain sword dance, the only such dance in existence in France, which is performed at Pont de Cervieres, once a small village and now a suburb of Briancon in the French Alps.

The first third of the book consists of a previously unpublished work written by Fernand Carlhian-Ribois, a retired archivist in Briancon and former dancer of the Bacchu-ber. This is followed by a number of essays studying the figures, history and music in comparison with sword dances from Italian Alpine valleys, including Bagnasco. In the third section of the book, documents (mainly 19th century) which mention the Bacchu-ber are reproduced, including one very important earlier history of the dance by Raphael Blanchard, published in 1914 but long since unobtainable.

Various etymologies for the name have been suggested, ranging from Bacchus to bears, but the authors have to admit that no satisfactory explanation has been found for the origin of the name.

The origins of the dance too are debated. The first written historical record is 1805, and one argument is that it was introduced at that date by a contingent of soldiers from Belgium who were stationed in Briancon

Another claim, made at the turn of the century, was that it was introduced from Ancient Greece to Rome, where Julius Caesar had it performed at his soirees, and brought it with him when he conquered Gaul! The village of Pont de Cervieres was established in the thirteenth century. No records have yet been found of similar dances in other French Alpine communities. Just as with its name, the origins of the dance remain shrouded in mystery.

The villagers guarded 'their' dance jealously, refusing to let it be danced outside the village or on the wrong date. Its popularity, began to wane but the timely interest and funding of the French Alpine Club in 1877 reinjected enthusiasm.

In 1887 the village was split by a decision by one man to take the Bacchu-ber on a grand tour of France, ending up in Paris. Opposition to the tour was bitter, and when it foundered having only reached Marseilles, the participants, (one of them by now pregnant!) returned to the village in disgrace which was such that the instigator of the tour eventually hanged himself.

In 1935 the Societe des Admirateurs et amis du Bacchu-ber was formed to ensure the survival of the dance by raising finance, providing the dancers' and singers' clothes and swords, and deciding where and when the group should perform.

Nowadays the dance is performed on 16th August, feast day of St Roche - the village's patron saint. It is danced twice, once outside the church and once on the village square, which is decorated with greenery at each corner, suggesting that it may have been danced on May Day, the date being changed to overcome church disapproval. It is a dance for 9 dancers, these being predominantly the young unmarried men of the village. Figures for 11 or 13 dancers are described, but it has only very rarely been performed with more than 9 dancers.

The book contains detailed descriptions and diagrams for the figures of the dance, as recorded by Raphael Blanchard. The dance is in 2 parts, the first of which has 19 figures. At the beginning the dancers in a circle place their swords on the ground in a heap, and after they have picked them up again and closed the chain, the chain is never broken even at the culmination when the lock is formed around the neck of one of the dancers. The lock is not displayed in the way we are accustomed. After a short pause, the second part of 26 figures includes the formation of squares, triangles and stars within the chain, but these are displayed obliquely.

The dance is described as slow and stately and takes some 22 minutes to perform, the speed being determined by the tempo of the music. It seems that the pace is slower now than previously, as in 1896 the dance was performed in 12¹/₂ minutes, and in 1913, 14 minutes 10 seconds. Is this a reaction to the faster pace of life?

Since the early years of this century the dancing costume has been white shirts with a narrow black ribbon tied at the neck, and white trousers with a broad red belt, though earlier photographs show that it had been danced in the men's Sunday best, white trousers not being owned by many.

Until 1938 swords were begged and borrowed from officers in the garrison in Briancon and then a very fine set of ceremonial swords was specially made, and a second set followed. It is these two sets which are still in use today.

The music for the dance is a wordless song performed by a group of local women wearing their regional costume. At one point in the past a violin was introduced, but the dancers found it hard to dance to and the Alpine Club vetoed its use, so it was dropped. Formerly it appears that a staff was beaten on the ground to keep time, but this was stolen in a fracas in 1812 by the young men of a neighbouring village, and was not replaced. The staff seems to have resurfaced after the second world war, only to be lost again, but not before it was recorded on photographs.

The book is generously illustrated with photos of the village and of the dance, some dating from as early as 1877.

This book is an impressively comprehensive account of one dance, bringing together all known sources and placing it in context with other dances in the western Alps, though its use as a reference work is somewhat hampered by a total lack of an index. Throughout, the sense of pride felt by the French for this part of their tradition is evident, and in the postface, written by the president of the Societe des admirateurs du Bacchu-ber, the dance is described as the 'soul of the village'. How different from here, where most Yorkshire men and women have no knowledge of, let alone pride in their own distinctive regional dance!

Gillian Guest, July 1998

P. S. Sorry about the lack of accents - entirely my fault, I have not yet discovered which keys to press. Trevor

Ivor's book is selling well ...

After an initial rush of orders for his "Longsword Dances from Traditional and Manuscript Sources" Ivor Allsop tells me that he gets a regular flow of orders from teams (or individuals) who have recently discovered the delight of sword dancing.

If any readers have not yet got a copy - shame on you!

Send orders to Ivor at 36 Green Spring Avenue, Birdwell, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 5RY - only £15 (plus £3.80 post and packing if we cannot find any other delivery method). For urgent orders or for details of generous discounts for quantities phone 01226 281146.

Thoughts on locks

Ron Shuttleworth writes about Norman Peacock's article

THE MECHANICS OF SWORD LOCKS.

What an amazing piece of work! Together with Krause's theory, you are well on the way to having a definitive reprint on the subject of locks. However, there is still at least one aspect that needs to be addressed before we could claim comprehensive coverage. This is an analysis of the materials used. You will need a metallurgist and/or a blade smith (if

you can find one). I offer here a few pointers from my own limited knowledge, which should be seen by no-one, least of all Norman Peacock, as criticism of this article.

'Mild steel' is term used for the cheapest steel with the widest tolerance on its properties and whose qualities may have altered over the years. In using these formulae to compare the swords of different teams it is dangerous to assume that their Young's Modulus etc. would be identical. The qualities of strength, etc. can vary in one piece of material, with the quoted figure being the lowest permitted.

The 'tempered steel of rappers'. This information needs to be expanded. Some steels, commonly 'carbon steel' can be hardened by being heated to redness and suddenly cooled - usually by 'quenching' i.e. plunging into cold water. It will then be 'glass hard' but prone to snap or chip. This stage is often too hard for use in tools, etc. and the steel has to be softened slightly in a tightly controlled way which is called 'tempering'.

Before the advent of modern high technology, this was done by carefully heating the bright-cleaned metal and observing the changing colour of its surface which indicated the degree of softening. When the desired colour was reached, quenching would end the tempering process. Sometimes the edge of a tool would be given a different hardness. This was the skill of the smith. Nowadays, much of the guesswork (and the skill) can be removed by the use of an electrical 'induction furnace'. Rappers would have to use 'spring steel', that is of a very high quality which must be consistent throughout the material.

There seems to be no reason other than cost, why Longswords should not be made of carbon or other higher-grade steel, heat-treated or not, with a consequent reduction in dimensions or weight. I believe that at least one team (is it Handsworth?) have or had swords made from stainless steel.

When we first started sword dancing, Coventry Mummers' swords were home-made from a ply of two strips of 14 gauge full-hard Birmabrite aluminium alloy, 1 1/4" wide and thickly spot-welded together at 3/4 to 1" centres. These were very light and showed up impressively in the raised lock. They lasted well, but eventually the flexing started to break the welds and the swords died. My subsequent commissioning of a set made from stainless steel was an expensive flop. I wish that I had had Norman Peacock's article at that time!

Ron Shuttleworth, Coventry. October 1998

Ron's comment on "completing the picture" by adding metallurgical details reminds me that Les Seaman (of Handsworth) told me that he had once obtained a detailed specification of an ideal grade of steel for swords. I will try to obtain a copy to print in a future issue - Trevor

Further Thoughts on Sword Locks

By Norman Peacock

When I was writing my article on the Mechanics of Sword Locks (1) I looked at the "Traditional and Invented Sword Locks" described by Rhett Krause in Ivor Allsop's book (2) and I pointed out that some of these were likely to be mechanically impossible. But what struck me most forcibly was the symmetry of the locks and the fact that the two most common long-sword locks, the six-sword and the eight-sword, have the

highest possible symmetries - six-fold and eight-fold respectively (i.e. if you rotate them about their centres they repeat six or eight times in a rotation). Furthermore there is symmetry in the making of the locks in that each man does the same thing, whether it be putting right hand over left, turning clockwise about his axis or passing his sword behind his back. I believe the only exceptions to this symmetry of form are the Kirkby Malzeard Double Triangle and the Riccall Portcullis locks which have three fold and four fold symmetry respectively. There is also loss of symmetry in making them e.g. for the Kirkby Lock nos. 2, 4 and 6 do something different from nos. 1, 3 and 5 (a difficulty of which I am acutely aware since I always danced no. 1 with the Leeds Morris Men and had the greatest difficulty showing the even numbers what to do!). I think the probable reason for this high symmetry of shape and execution was that the teams only practised for a short period before Christmas and needed as simple and effective a display as possible - above all things the lock must not go wrong (although it sometimes did, as Keighley Snowden's photograph of the Kirkby hexagonal lock (3) shows) because it is displayed to the public as the climax of the dance. Intriguing as some of Rhett Krause's locks may be, I think they are for the performer and the connoisseur rather than for the general public: indeed if I saw a team make one of the less symmetrical ones I would think they had "locked and made a bummell" (4).

The long-sword figures are on the whole fairly simple and, although in any one round of a figure the various dancers do different things, because each man leads off the figure in turn, everyone ultimately does the same thing. It is thus fairly easy to cover up any mistakes - it is said that the Kirkby men used to dance close to support each other when they were drunk

The Rapper contrasts quite strongly with Longsword in these matters. The nut may be highly symmetrical but in making it the dancers make very different movements. Also most of the more spectacular figures are very dancer-specific e.g. no. 3 must be able to do a back-somersault, but nobody else needs to be so agile. On the other hand there are times in the dances, e.g. in the "stepping" when uniformity is desirable, although the requirement that every member of the team should be a step-dancer in his own right could be counter-productive without the strict discipline which must be observed in all sword dances where the dancers are so closely linked.

References.

1. Norman Peacock, "The Uri Geller Thing". Rattle Up My Boys, issue 3, Series 7, Autumn 1998.
2. Rhett Krause, "Traditional and Invented Sword Locks" in Ivor Allsop's "Longsword Dances.....", pp 334 - 348, Battleboro, Vermont, 1996,
3. Keighley Snowden, "A Christmas Sword Dance", from the London Magazine, xvii (1906), pp 385 - 391
4. A quotation from Mark Lonsdale, "The Upshott", a poetic description including the (Kirk) Banton sword dancers in Cumbria in the early 19th century

Norman Peacock, December 1998



was taken by Peter some years ago and which clearly shows the popularity of the Boxing Day display outside the Old Harrow pub.

Plough Sunday at Bolton Percy

In spite of uncertainty created by a possible shortage of dancers resulting from illness and one dancer relocating in The Forest of Dean, the dancing at Bolton Percy took place on Plough Sunday.

Usually the dancing is done alternately by two teams - York Gentlemen and West Riding Sword. This year illness resulted in most of the dances being performed by a combined team. This no way affected the superb sense of occasion which makes this a thoroughly enjoyable day out.

The first dance spot was outside the Church (and in front of two ploughs - a traditional design hand plough and a massive modern device mounted on the back of a tractor). The group then went to the pub where they danced in various permutations (involving most of the visitors - including me!) for a couple of hours.



The piece-de-resistance was the final dance (a version of the Askham Richard dance) which, by adding bystanders as the dance progressed,

resulted in a lock of more than a dozen swords which held firm for the display.

Plough tour at Goathland

If the sun shines on the righteous then Goathland Plough Stots must have been behaving well recently. The sun shone for most of the day for the traditional tour of the village - however it was numbingly cold.

As is usual over recent years the Plough Stots assembled three teams (although the lads team had to borrow a man at some spots). In spite of being down to 5 boys it is great to see youngsters who are so keen on their tradition, especially when you realise that there are three generations of the Atkinson family (Mick, his son and his grandson) among the dancers and a number of "father and son" combinations.

Plough blessing at Kirkby Malzeard

There are three teams who either attend church for the traditional Plough Sunday plough blessing service - Goathland, York Gentlemen with West Riding Swords and Claro Sword. However there is (as far as I am aware) only one team who dance inside the church. For some years now the Highside team have danced inside their local church at Kirkby Malzeard as the last item in the plough blessing service. The acoustics and the atmosphere make this performance in the church a very memorable experience.

This year the team also danced outside near the Butter Cross, partly to honour their guest Renaat Van Craenenbroeck but mainly to pass time until the pub opened.

Ashvale Longsword

Gordon Ridgewell sent news of an appearance by Ashvale Longsword, a team local to him in Hertfordshire, who danced in Hertford on November 20th at a Medieval Night.



They danced outside a 16th century hostelry (The Salisbury Arms Hotel). Gordon recalls that there appeared a team profile of Ashvale in RUMB, issue 1, series 2 in Autumn 1988. What, he asks, became of this hoped for regular feature? I agree with him - surely there are teams out there who can persuade someone to send in some details of their team.



Kirkburton Rapier Dancers (left above) tour their home area on New Years Day - for this outing alone they "black-up". Highside Longsword (left below) behead the Bishop after dancing in Kirkby Malzeard church (Barnsley Longsword (right above) dance at Cawthorne on the first Sunday after Boxing Day.

Kirkburton Rapier Dancers. Highside and Barnsley Longsword

For those of us who do not dance with a team Boxing Day is often devoted to getting to see as many teams' outings as possible. It is therefore a relief to go to see teams who have made their "traditional outing" on other days than Boxing Day. I regularly get to see at least three - Kirkburton on New Years Day, Barnsley who dance on the first Sunday after Boxing Day and Highside who dance "around" Plough Sunday. This year I saw all three teams and enjoyed their dancing and their hospitality.

St George's Day event - don't miss it

West Riding Swords are planning a special event to celebrate St George's Day. At the Wuthering Heights Pub (at Stanbury, near Haworth of Bronte fame) on Sunday April 25th the team plan to hold a day which will involve a Knur and Spell competition, possibly Coracle racing, Timothy Taylors beer - and some dancing - turn up at 12 noon for the fun. I've met them before - I'll be there!

Incidentally if any readers want to locate a supplier of clogs I am told that one of the dancers with West Riding Sword has bought a shop in Haworth and will soon be making clogs. For more details contact Robin Longbottom phone 01535 642 086. Robin has also sent me a fascinating article which sets out his "table knife theory" (his description) relating to sword design. It will appear in the Summer issue of RUMB.

The Nut

One or two people have asked me about The Nut, the lively and informative publication aimed primarily at Rapper dance fans. The editor, Vince Rutland, tells me that pressure of work and other commitments (Vince is Secretary for the Sword Spectaculars - both the last one and that being planned for the

Millennium) have prevented him producing as many issues as he would wish recently.

The last issue published was No 12 (Winter 1998) Any enquiries or subscription requests to Vince Rutland, 36 Church View, Brompton, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL6 2QX, phone 01609 780 536 e-mail vr21@onyx.net

Details of overseas teams

Recent access to the Internet has surprised me - I had an impression of "surfers" to be what my grand daughter describes as "sad anoraks" Well either I've become one or I had the wrong idea from the beginning.

I have discovered that, properly used to search, rather than surfing aimlessly "hoping something will turn up" it is possible to search on such themes as the venues of overseas sword dances listed by Violet Alford in her book "Sword Dance and Drama" and also to follow-up leads coming from the Morris Dancers Discussion List These techniques, together with conventional letters from readers, brought the following details to light

Croatia

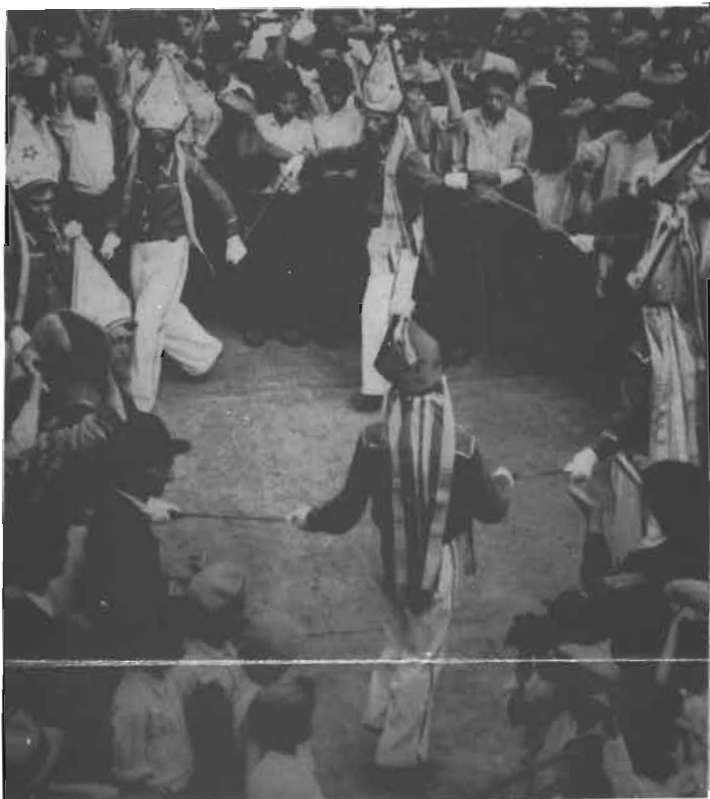
The first "find" was in April 1998 when one of the dancers with The York Gentlemen was sent literature which referred to sword dances in Croatia. Soon after this Steve Corrsin sent me an e-mail about an International Organisation (the ICTM Sub-study Group on Ritual) and buried in it were details of "field trips" to the island of Korcula, off the coast of what I knew as Yugoslavia and which is now Croatia. There were details of ICTM events which will take place in Korcula on dates from February to the end of August 1999 plus the address of a web site for Korcula. Going to that page revealed a lot about the local sword dance traditions, including photos and a programme of events they organise. Around the same time I received another e-mail from Sandy Glover, of St Albans Morris Men, who has seen the Korcula dances and has put on the web a well written

booklet about the tradition which describes two sword dances, one a mock battle and the other a linked sword dance. The mass of information which has built up from these contacts will provide the basis of an article later - that's if it isn't overtaken by a report of a visit in person. Get in touch with me if you are interested in details of the 1999 programme.

See web pages www.korcula.net/grad/sdfest.htm and www.totally.freeseve.co.uk/morecka.htm

Madeira

The second discovery came about in a more straight forward way. Folk fan David Reeves remembers seeing a photographic display in a Folk Museum in Ribiera Brava when he was on holiday in Madeira.



He was kind enough to send photos he took of the display which show a costume, a sword and a photo blow-up (in black and white) which clearly shows the performance (circa 1920) of a hilt and point sword dance. The feelers are out to gather more information.

Going Dutch!

Helmond Morris Men, from Holland, are perhaps the best known dance team from the Continent, having joined the Morris Ring some years ago and having attended a number of Ring meetings. I understand that, although they danced Longsword in the past, it gradually slipped from their repertoire. This was "corrected" last March when Ivor Allsop went over there to do Longsword workshops.

Lange Wapper's 30th birthday

If you read this after Mothering Sunday you will have missed the 30th birthday outing of one of my favourite teams - Lange Wapper Sword Dancers from Antwerp. On Sunday March 14th outside the impressive Antwerp Cathedral the team will dance together with guest teams from Spain (Markina), France (In de Kring), Belgium (Quevaucamp) and a village band from the south of Belgium

(close to Renaat Van Craenenbroeck's new home. Rumworth Morris were invited but were unable to field a strong enough team but a dozen people are travelling over from the UK.

Longwood Rapper have folded

Longwood Rapper from Boston USA, who danced at the First Sword Spectacular (their Bessy - Rhett Krause - will be remembered for giving a banana a starring role in their dance!) have folded due to lack of numbers.

Sword Spectacular organisers upset

Prompted by a complaint by the one of the organisers of the Sword Spectacular I re-read the article I wrote in the last issue of RUMB. Keith Thompson, who made the complaint, suggested that I was being unfair in the way it was presented. On rereading it I cannot find anything which I consider untoward but perhaps I am too close to the subject. I said clearly that the event was most enjoyable but I set out regrets concerning the shortage of overseas teams (although I fully understand how it happened as I tried to help Vince make contact with some teams only a few weeks before the event). I was also sorry that the organisers had dropped the academic aspect (talks and the Conference) which attracted interest and favourable comment at the First Sword Spectacular.

Having given up two years of my life, and experienced the traumas of change of venue etc, for the first event I am not perhaps the most uncritical observer to be found. I hope the event goes on to new heights and I will help in any way I can to help but I will also comment when I see aspects which I consider are retrograde.

As usual, I would welcome (and print) comment from the organisers - they were asked to put in a report for the last issue which would have enabled them to set out their improvements and innovations but it was not available.

I am pleased to hear that the organisers are hoping to resurrect the academic elements for the Millennium event.

New jackets for Grenoside

I hear that, after years of trying to match their existing jackets, Grenoside Longsword have decided to commission a new set of jackets which they hope will be ready in time for the various Millennium outings they are planning.

Old jackets from Cambridge

Subscriber Nigel Pennick wrote some time ago to tell me about an exhibit he had seen in the Folk Museum in Cambridge. The display case contained a cavalry sword, a dagger, a beret style hat and a jacket. The hat and the jacket are made of what appears to be a satin-finish material in pale blue and the jacket has red, pink, white and yellow bows added at random. Nigel kindly agreed to take photos of the exhibit but, as often happens, the museum gave permission for him to take a photo on the understanding that it was for personal use only and not to be published!

Photographs

Photos for this issue have been supplied by Noel Jackson, Maureen Tinker, Dick Shillaker, Gordon Ridgewell, Sheila Clarke, Sue Storey, David Reeves and myself.

Your last issue of RUMB?

This is issue 1 of series 8. Subscriptions for the remainder of series 8 are overdue (if you have not already renewed). The individual subscription for a 12 month series is (UK) £5 or (overseas) £8.50 - my address is:

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E-mail jtstone@globalnet.co.uk

The Summer issue will contain an extract from Paul Davenport's book "The Forgotten Morris" which explains his research in East Yorkshire; Robin Longbottom's "Table knife" theory; alternative ideas about the distribution of sword dancing throughout Europe by Alan Nowell (of "The Dark Age project" fame) and comment from Rhett Krause following his recent article on New and Invented Locks.

Contributions are welcome ...

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