



# RATTLE UP My Boys

A quarterly publication for those with an interest in  
sword dancing

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Report by Elsie Ivancich Dunin, Professor Emerita, Dance Ethnology, University of California at Los Angeles; Currently a dance research consultant with the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb in Croatia.

This report on a field observation of a sword dance event in Croatia was written for the Study Group of Ethnochoreology, a sub-group of the ICTM (International Council on Traditional Music). Some members of this Study Group are interested in an analysis of ritual complexes in comparative perspective. Sword dancing in ritual context will be featured in the next symposium of this Study Group, to be held on Korcula island (Croatia), July 3 - 9th, 2000. For information about this symposium, or about a visit to Lastovo in the year 2000, contact Prof. Dunin at LCDunin@AOL.com.

## LASTOVO

(February 13-16, 1999; dates are at end of carnival, preceding Lent)

Thank goodness for the lull in activities during the Lenten period. The visit to observe the carnival event on Lastovo island was fantastic, its intensity, its sequence of male singing through the streets of the hillside village, visitation and dancing at most households, finishing on the square in front of the church, leading up to the burning of the straw effigy and the ringing of the church bells at that moment - a cathartic experience.

Here is some background information on Lastovo, which emphasizes the relative isolation of this island and allows me to speculate that this carnival event has had a long continuity that might give us a peek into the structure of winter/spring events in earlier centuries, and provides a good base from which to compare similar events in other parts of Europe and beyond.

This island appears to have been an unimportant outpost for centuries under various political administrations: the lengthiest under the jurisdiction of the Dubrovnik city-state over five-hundred years (mid - 13th century to 1806), six + years under French Napoleon's rule, one year (1813) under English rule, a hundred + years under Austria (1814-1918), and then 25 years under Italy (between two world wars), returning to a Slavic administration under Communist Yugoslavia, when part of the island became a military base and therefore, off limits to "foreigners", and since 1991, a part of Croatia (the base language of the island is Croatian, since at least its Dubrovnik period). The population numbers have remained relatively stable at between 800 and 1400 (currently at the



*The small island (and town) of Lastovo is off the coast of what was formerly Yugoslavia in the Adriatic Sea. In her book "Sword Dance and Drama" Violet Alford listed a sword dance on the nearby larger island of Korcula.*

minimum numbers), and in contrast with so many other European areas, has not had population exchanges since at least the arrival of the Slavs in 7th - 8th centuries, when they assimilated with or eradicated the remaining population of Illyric-Greco-Romans who left artefacts for archaeologists to uncover.

The event of the year is "poklada" (carnival), a dancing season which begins on January 6 (Gregorian calendar) and culminates whenever Lent falls (this year, February 16; in year 2000 the date will be March 8). On Lastovo island, there is only one major community, on the inner side of a steep hill - facing away from the sea, so that it was not visible to marauding sea-pirates, that traversed the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas. There is nothing on this small island (11 km x 6 km) to attract it to outsiders, and the population was relatively self-sufficient with its fishing, agricultural and small animal-based lifestyle. Furthermore, the closest inhabited and large island (Korcula, 20 km in distance) was under



*The sword dancers at Lastovo perform many movements which will be familiar to UK dancers. This photo shows a Dip and Dive movement.*

*Photograph supplied by Elsie Ivancich Dunin*

Venetian administration, passive enemies of Dubrovnik for centuries, so there was limited contact and intermarriage between families. Even this century, a minimal number of brides are from the island of Korcula.

Now the fun part for us - the chain sword-dancing that is done only once a year for "poklada" (carnival). During the Yugoslav period, I had seen this chain sword dancing demonstrated at festival programs, but now I realize that that version was a very tame and abbreviated version, plus the research and descriptions by late 19th century and late 20th century ethnographers have neglected to write about the strength and significance of the dancing during carnival - they stressed other aspects, such as song texts, the construction of the straw effigy, the sliding of this effigy down a long rope, the masquerading with particular characters (such as doctors), and then they say - there is a dance that looks like Kumpanija (referring to a chain sword dance on the island of Korcula).

This year, Iva Niemcic and I were impressed by what we saw, plus we had the advantage of Dr. Ivan Lozica, who is Croatia's specialist on carnivals, along with his young assistant to provide us with in-depth knowledge about the event. They were available to answer our questions and to give us hints of what was to happen next. They were also consulting a television crew from Zagreb, who were making a documentary of this year's event.

The following description is focused on structural features, that interest me, and I hope that some points will strike a point of comparison that others will want to observe or to follow up with future discussion related to sword dance and carnival events.

There were four "groups", but who do not relate to one another until their co-appearance on the square just before the burning of the effigy:

1) the "**pokladari**" (closed male society) who are responsible for the straw effigy - they are also the chain sword dancers (wooden swords, in the style of swords,

similar to those on Korcula island). This year there were at least 46 men, all dressed in costume from Tuesday noon, until after sunset. Their hats are bedecked with flowers and long ribbons; their red jackets are criss-crossed with ribbons on their chests and backs. Throughout their activities (Sunday night through Tuesday after sunset), a "lijerica" player accompanies them with background music or music for their dancing. The three-stringed instrument is played vertically with a bow (related instruments in Europe are the gudulka in Bulgaria, and the lira in Greece).

2) the "**lijepi maskare**" (pretty masqueraders, who are females, and who are "protected" by male "guards") - they also dance the chain sword dance, but substitute scarves for the swords, and dance separately from the "**pokladari**" until the last moments on the square, when the two groups integrate and dance together in one mass chain. Their "guards" do not dance with them, but improvise movements on the outer edges of the dance groups.

Both 1) and 2) make house-to-house visitations on Tuesday afternoon, where they perform a shorter version of their chain "sword" dance, drink wine and nibble on light foods, make merry, sing certain song verses, and then go to the next house. These two groups must not encounter each other on their routes through the village. The "guards" of the "pretty ones" keep watch so that their group does not meet the "**pokladari**"

3) "**grube maskare**" (clownish-vulgar masqueraders - one of the characterizations was a doctor), who on Monday afternoon, made house-to-house visitations to gather eggs in baskets). There were three sub-groups of "**grube**" - no masks, but with made-up faces, all costumed and with outrageous behaviour.

(a) males - many dressed as women; most of these men are from the "**pokladari**" group.

(b) males and females, who tended to be part of the "**lijepi**" on Tuesday;

(c) children, dressed like - Gypsies, Indians, Southern Belles, clowns, fairies.

4) the "**luda**" (crazy one - clown figure - fully masked), who appeared on the



A Croatian team, *Kompanija Pupnat*, have expressed interest in attending the Sword Spectacular in May of next year.

Photograph supplied by Elsie Ivancich Dunin

square during the dancing, and who circled around the dancers, completely unrelated to the dancing groups 1) and 2) above. This year there was only one of these; we were told that the number varies from year to year.

One of the peak moments of the carnival event, which is concluded with a long version of the sword dance, mid-afternoon on Tuesday, is the pokladari's straw effigy and its sliding down a long rope three times (about 400 meters?) from a hill top into the village. Each time the pokladari bounce rhythmically to the *lijerica* music and when the effigy reaches them in the village, they encircle it, brandishing their swords, release the effigy from the rope, to be carried up for the next slide. After the third slide, the pokladari dance a full version of their chain sword dance, and then they commence their house visitations.

The chain-sword dance has about ten figures. There is only one stepping pattern: a step, close, step (like a two-step). At the beginning of the dance, this stepping is contained while the dancers execute changing formations - at first two parallel lines facing one another, crossing with one another, then several dipping under double-held swords or stepping over the swords; serpentineing a chain, and one of the last figures is like "rolling up a ball of yarn" into a tight group, and then unwinding. At the height of the dancing on the square, just after sunset, the step pattern is performed at a full running pace with both groups joining one another in a massive chain (pokladari and the pretty ones - the clowns and guards are not part of the chain); the straw effigy was carried into the centre of this tight circle three times, and then set afire. The dancers who were full of wine, dancing at breakneck speed, were clearly in a transformational state, and then all came to a sudden stop. The square clears of people - all go home to eat their last "greasy" meal. The whole village is involved - about a third of the adult population is dancing on the square (100 + dancers) while the remaining numbers are those who are "visited" or who come to the square to watch. You should realize that only about 800 people live on the island.

© Elsie Ivancich Dunin, Croatia, June 1999

## The Richmond sword dancers

by Bob Schofield

Readers may be aware of the description below, but if not it is fairly good source material (the old teams may have done just about everything in the book).

Also you are probably sick to the back teeth of quotes from Olaus Magnus, but his description is important to this article.

"RICHMOND - THE SWORD OR MORISCO DANCE is an old custom practised here during the Christmas Holidays by young men dressed in shirts, ornamented with ribbons folded into roses, having swords, or wood cut in the form of that weapon. They exhibit various feats of activity attended by an old FIDDLER, by BESSEY in the grotesque habit of an old woman, and by the FOOL almost covered with skins, a hairy cap on his head, and the tail of a Fox hanging from his back: these lead the festive throng, and divert the crowd with their droll antic buffoonery. The office of one of these characters is to go about rattling a box, and soliciting money from door to door, to defray the expenses of a Feast and a dance in the evening. This old custom cannot be more curiously or better described here than it is by OLAUS MAGNUS in his *History of the Northern Nations*, which passage has often been quoted by other Authors. "First, with their swords sheathed, and erect in their hands, they dance in a tripple round; then, with their drawn swords held erect as before; afterwards extending them from hand to hand, they lay hold of each others hilt and point, while they are wheeling more moderately round; and changing their order, throw themselves into a figure of a hexagon, which they call a rose; but presently raising and drawing back their swords, they undo that figure, to form with them a four square rose, that may rebound over the head of each. At last they dance rapidly backwards, and loudly rattling the sides of the swords together, conclude the sport."

This appears to have been invented by a warlike people, and probably is a composition made up of the gleanings of several old customs. The dance is now performed with the single alteration of laying their swords upon the ground, when formed into a figure, and dancing round them, singing and repeating a long string of uncouth verses, after having cut off (in appearance) the fool's head. The Fool and Bessy are plainly fragments of the ancient Festival of Fools, held on New Year's Day, when all sorts of absurdities and indecencies were indulged in."

Clarkson, Christopher, (1814), *History of Richmond*, Richmond, Bowman p296.

\* Add the following from the 1821 Edition.

Sometimes a kind of farce, in which songs are introduced, is acted along with the dance; the principle characters of which are the King, the Miller, the Clown, and the Doctor.

Note: this extra sentence from the 1821 edition is identical to one in the description of sword dancing near Whitby in Young, George, (1817) *A History of Whitby*, vol 2. and must be considered to be a copy.

Fine about the stuff on Richmond. It's one of those times I seem to run from one story to another. I wouldn't mind going into Richmond in more detail. It appears to me to be a rather unresearched area, both in the eighteenth century and earlier, and especially when one considers its importance as a centre at those times.

The original copies of the books are in the library of a close friend of mine, together with loads of others on Yorkshire from the same period. This report stemmed from my first dive into the volumes and I spent last Sunday evening copying them out. My friend seems to have many other books which are relevant to Whitby, Cleveland, Hull, Beverley, Craven, etc, etc, so it's a pretty good resource for starters.

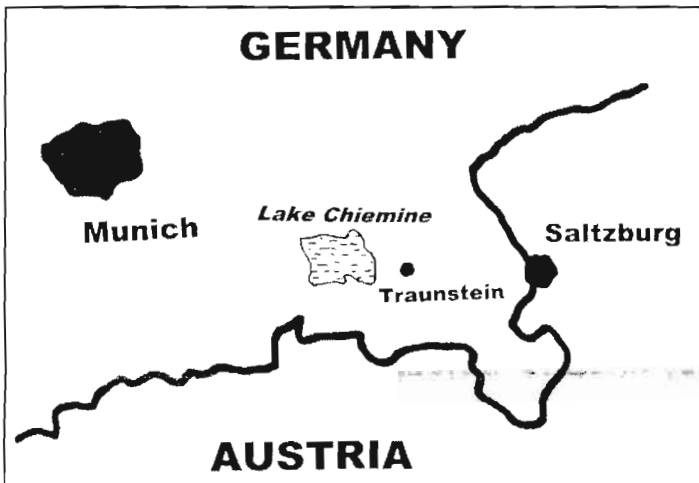
I was reading Steve Corrsin's book and particularly his extract from Brand (1777). It would appear that Clarkson pinched some of his material from Brand, and word for word at that. (Obviously plagiarism wasn't the problem in those days that it is now.) Readers should compare the two extracts to work out the bits that are truly Clarkson's own observations and which are from Brand. Fortunately there are enough observations for the extract to remain fundamentally sound.

© Bob Schofield, May 1999

# A visit to Traunstein - Easter 1999

By Trevor Stone

Last Easter (April, 1999) I joined Renaat Van Craenenbroeck on a long journey (a total of more than 1,200 miles) to Bavaria in South Eastern Germany where we saw a sword dance we had heard of previously but neither of us had ever seen. It was the dance from Traunstein, a town 20 miles from Saltzburgh, 50 miles from Munich and only 15 miles from the German border with Austria. In spite of proximity to an area with many records of sword dances (1) there is no long term record of a sword dance in the town. The Traunstein dance and its associated traditions were established in 1926 and seem to have been based on the efforts of a local pharmacist and historian (Herr Georg Schierghofer) who, as far as we can deduce, had never seen a sword dance performed before he proceeded to choreograph the dance which has now become Traunstein's traditional dance and is now an important part of an Easter Monday ceremony in the town. The town of Traunstein is in an area which attracts tourists - it is near to the popular Lake Chiemsee.



## The performance

We were lucky to have made contact (in part by using the Internet) with a local researcher who was not only able to confirm the date and times of the performances but who also made arrangements for us to occupy good positions in order to video the proceedings (2). This was particularly helpful as the dance took place on a high platform (which restricted the positions available for videoing) erected specially for the occasion in front of the church in the Town Square.

The event is a major local attraction with large crowds gathering and the Town Centre closed to motor traffic. Entry for pedestrians to the Town Centre was by the (voluntary) purchase of a badge. The dancers performed twice - first at 9.30 a.m. (and they meant precisely at 9.30) and, after lunch and liquid refreshment, again at 2.00 p.m. The first performance was preceded by the marching into the Square of a large party of dancers, guards and extra characters to music supplied by over 20 pipe and drum players. However, the music for the dance was provided by a brass band from the local Music School - it was stately and rather slow by our standards.

The dance is performed by 16 men who were accompanied by more than 30 musicians and extras, all of whom wore exotic interpretations of mediaeval costume. On their heads the dancers wear skull caps fringed with flowers, jerkins and pantaloons of either pale Blue and White (the colours of Bavaria) or Dark Green, Gold and Black (the colours of the Town) and handmade shoes.

The costumes were renewed three years ago and we were told that they are faithful copies of the originals used since the team was formed in 1926.

The dancers come from a wide variety of occupations and are mainly from the town of Traunstein although one or two travel from Munich. All dancers must be



*The costume worn by the Traunstein dancers is very elaborate and costly. It was renewed recently with financial support from a local business.*

*Photograph by Trevor Stone*

members of the local Sports and Athletic Club and they practice the dance for 6 weeks before the Easter Monday outing. They claim to have performed continuously since 1926, except for the war years when they chose not to dance (3). To date they have never travelled outside Germany, indeed they seldom dance outside their home town and there they perform only at Easter.

## The dance

In addition to the 16 dancers the entourage includes two jesters and a character (dress in red) who, we were told, represented Spring. They had, however a large contingent of attendants comprising 3 drummers, more than 20 fife players, 18 pike carriers, two ceremonial sword carriers and 4 flag wavers (all in mediaeval costume). They were also accompanied by a group of young women who carried a model of the Church where the ensuing parade was blessed. The dancers swords, which were renewed approx. 20 years ago, are longer and broader than we are used to (approx 40 inches long and 2 inches broad) with a cross piece below the handle. At the beginning of the dance the dancers carry a small bunch of flowers attached to the tip of their swords. At the start of the performance all the dancers remove these nosegays together and throw them into the crowd.

As the dancers march on to the platform they are preceded by flag wavers - the platform is surrounded by "guards" in mediaeval costume. The dance is preceded by a line up, a salute and a song then a proclamation is read by one of the characters accompanying the team. They then commence their full dance which lasts approx 15 minutes. The most distinctive feature is the stepping - rather sedate which involves the dancer leaning slightly back, lifting and bending



*The Traunstein dance includes a number of set piece displays. Anyone familiar with the Belgian team Lange Wapper will recognise some of these "tableaux" figures.*  
*Photograph by Trevor Stone*

his knee and kicking his leg forward followed by a hitch step. The movements are rather more varied than we see in England - mainly because of the larger number of dancers.

Many figures do not involve a linked circle instead there are lines, V shapes, straight heys, and set pieces including a "fencing" session in pairs and some very elaborate sword play. The dance comprises a number of "set piece" displays when the team pause to display the tableaux they have created - anyone who knows the Lange Wapper dance would recognise one such pose - Renaat openly admits that he based one of the figures in their dance from a photograph he saw of the Traunstein dance (4)

The dance ends with the two jesters (who represent the Winter and who have - rather irritatingly) pranced about doing somersaults during the dance being captured by the dancers and beheaded. The team then form a platform and hoist the character representing Spring. The dancers then line up whilst a second proclamation is read and they then march off. Much of the performance appears to involve chasing, capturing and killing two jesters (representing Winter) aided by a character dressed in red who represents Spring.

## Georgritt

The sword dance is linked to a much older custom known as St George's Ritt (Ride) organised by the Society of St George which was established in 1891. When the dancers have completed their morning performance and left the platform there follows a most unusual parade comprising more than 400 horses and their riders and attendants. The horses are magnificently groomed and decorated with ribbons etc and most of their riders are in costume, usually variations on the traditional costume of Bavaria where Loden Green dominates.



The high point of this parade was a massive horse carrying a knight in armour and carrying a banner - no doubt representing St. George, the patron Saint of the town. This key character is accompanied by Heralds and attendants in magnificent costumes. However the parade also involved a local priest together with a group who accompanied the Cross of Saint George from the local church, many small children atop full size horses and a number of horse drawn carts



carrying groups (in some cases a band) who joined with representatives from neighbouring villages.

The parade passed through the town and travelled to a small church just out of the Town for a service of blessing - such a parade obviously created a distinctive "trail" (good for the roses!) but literally minutes

after the last horse had passed a team of workers appeared and swept the streets clean.

The dancers (in the way of all sword dancers?) had, many years ago, abandoned the journey to the church and instead went to a nearby bar where they drank, ate and socialised until it was time to dance for a second time.

## The Evening Presentation

The team met again in the evening in a crowded private room at their favourite bar. There they entertained the Mayor and other local dignitaries and their VIP visitors. The band played and in between there were presentations to the Leader of the team for long service and speeches by many of the guests. The dancers and the team officials who we met were most helpful and thoughtful - many were however a little surprised that we had travelled so far just to see their dance (it does sound a little eccentric when you put it like that). They were surprised to learn of the wide spread of the sword dance - they knew of their neighbours from Uberlingen (5) (100 miles away) but they had not realised that sword dancing was found over such a large area - Steve Corrsin's book was an eye-opener for them (6). They were even more surprised to learn that Saint George was also the patron Saint of the English!

Even though Renaat speaks excellent German the team were careful to ensure that an English speaker (an ex-dancer) was on hand to keep me informed of the events. Through this interpreter I heard many of the usual claims and "theories" (about the dance bringing fertility, driving away the Winter etc) which seem to surface in one form or another everywhere we travel.

The team have an extensive archive and they generously supplied us with copies of any and all documents which they thought would be of interest. (How I wish I had studied the German language at school).

## NOTES

I am grateful to Renaat Van Craenenbroeck for his companionship, and for taking on the bulk of the driving on the trip, to Edith Fiedler (our contact through the Internet) for helping to make our visit so worthwhile, to Herr Gerhard Hiemer and Herr Herman Geiselmann (the teams' non-dancing Leader and Deputy Leader respectively) and to the dancers and other people we met in Traunstein for enabling us to enjoy their unique sword dance.

## References

(1) Reference to sword dancing in the area includes details of the Hallein Miners dance at Durenburg. Many more records were gathered by Richard Wolfram of Austria in the 1930's to 50's.

(2) My video record of this event (along with most other videos I own) can be viewed by arrangement - see contact details on the front page of this publication.

(3) There was some disagreement between informants - one claimed that the dancing continued throughout the war, the other said that, as the authorities insisted that they use a flag with a swastika rather than the Bavarian flag, the team decided circa 1941 to suspend dancing until the end of the war.

(4) The Lange Wapper figure is the "Fuss-und Kopfabschneiden".

(5) Even though many dancers from Traunstein knew of the Uberlingen dance very few members of the team had seen it performed.

(6) Members of the team were especially interested in a reference in Steve's book to a dance at Unterwossen, a small village a few miles from Traunstein. They had never heard of the reference to this dance location and were mystified as to why it was included whilst their dance was left out of Steve's book.

Trevor Stone, April 1999

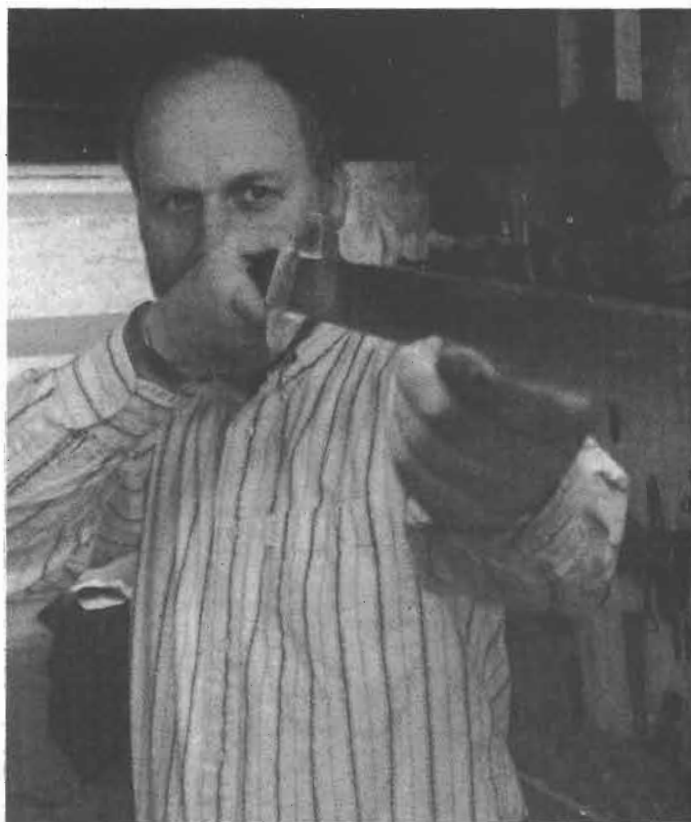
## Do Not Replace the Chamber Pot Under the Bed After Use

By Robin Longbottom

A notice that formerly appeared in boarding house rooms asked customer not to replace the chamber pot under the bed after use for the fascinating reason that the rising steam caused the iron work to rust.

You may think that this has nothing to do with sword dancing but you would be wrong and seriously wrong if you happen to be looking for good quality, inexpensive (and sometimes free) spring steel to convert into swords. I am referring, of course, to the beds irons that used to link the bed head to the bed end at the sides. Of particular use is the 1930's to 1950's bed iron.

The irons come in handy six foot lengths and are angle irons. Once cut down each iron has enough material for four swords, all you need is one redundant utilities period bed and your in business. Cutting them however can be a little tricky. It can be undertaken with a hacksaw but beware - you will need a sack full of quality blades, plenty of spare time and arms like a sumo wrestler. The easy way out is to use an angle grinder but be prepared to file the edge that has been cut down by about 1/8th inch as the heat of the grinding will have taken the temper out and softened the metal. The metal tang for the hilt can be reduced in width by hacksaw and drilled for fitting a handle, I would recommend wood, either turn your own or use hammer shafts (each shaft will make two hilts).



*Robin Longbottom is not only an enthusiastic Longsword dancer but he also makes clogs from his property in picturesque Haworth.*

*Photograph from The Independent newspaper*

We at West Riding Swords made our swords some ten years ago. They are slightly tapered towards the tip to aid balance, have a short cross piece of mild steel and individual turned wooden hilts. The result is a well balanced sword of polished, tempered steel which gives a good quality ring when clashed.

So don't sit and debate over the quality of your swords or whether or they "look traditional" (whatever that means) get round the junk shops and junk yards or better still attics (but not the boarding houses).

Gather up ye bed irons while ye may! Good luck.

Robin Longbottom, West Riding Longswordmen. April 1999

## A possible route for the development of Longsword and Rapper dances

Gordon Ridgewell wrote to me some time ago commenting on various aspects of Steve Corrsin's book. In this letter Gordon referred to the Murton Sword Dance from County Durham which Gordon sees as of special importance in the development of longsword and rapper. The following is taken from his letter and from the supporting material he sent:

### The two styles of sword dancing

by Gordon Ridgewell

In discussing the two distinct styles of longsword and rapper I was surprised that in his book Steve Corrsin did not mention the Murton Sword Dance from County Durham which is of special importance in the history of longsword and rapper as this dance incorporates figures from both styles and is worthy of further investigation. An account of the recovery of this dance is given by Christopher Cawte in Collector's Corner, *English Dance and Song*, Volume XXI, No 4, March/April 1957, pp 139-40. Of particular importance is the paragraph:

"The dance at Murton is unusual in several ways. The numbering of the dancers is the reverse of the usual and the Lock is made upside down, with the left hand on the right. There is a beheading figure in which the Lock is made round the Tommy's neck and then tightened so as to take his hat off. Between the verses of the Calling-on song, the dancers walk round clashing their swords. All the figures except two are moving figures, and those two, a "straight line" figure and "Horses", are standing figures of the simplest sort. Finally, it is the furthest south that the Rapper dance has been found, and only three miles from a village where there was a Long Sword dance. The beheading and clashing are features of the Long Sword dance not usually found in the Rapper dance; the "moving figures" are related to Long Sword figures, while the "standing figures" occur only in the Rapper dance and are a relatively modern development."

A photograph of the Murton traditional sword team, taken on Boxing Day 1904, was published in the *Morris Ring Circular*, Winter 1984. It would be interesting to hear if any rapper sword dance team has the Murton dance in its repertoire.

## Change of address

Steve Corrsin has moved house to:

5166 Patrick Road, West Bloomfield, Michigan, 48322 and his new e-mail address is corrsin1@hotmail.com

## Photo identified

Following on the extract from Paul Davenport's *Forgotten Morris* I received an e-mail from Chas Marshall - it reads:

Thanks the latest *Rattle Up My Boys* concerning the *Forgotten Morris* - I just can't wait to "rattle" off this reply!

I hope this won't pre-empt my own intended publication, which has a working title of "*The Return of the Blue Stots: An Aspect of Traditional Drama in Yorkshire*". I had hoped that this would be ready for the Knaresborough Mummings 25th Anniversary this year, but I seem to be falling behind!

I have exchanged some views (via e-mail) with Paul Davenport on an obvious overlap in our work and we hope to meet soon to explore this further.

However to my main point - the photo (illustrating Paul's piece) was published in the *Yorkshire Post* on Monday January 11th, 1937 in an article about the Plough Boy's Play. An interesting aspect of this is that my researches suggest that the Clayton family kept the Blue Stots/Plough Stots play alive in this area, while Paul's information suggests that the Clayton family organised the dancing. This might suggest a very close relationship between the play and the dance - at least in the Clayton family. I also have one or two more scraps of winter time dance customs around Boroughbridge which will add to Paul's evidence.

## More from Norman Peacock

Following soon after Chas Marshall's notes on the photo used to illustrate the extract from Paul Davenport's "*Forgotten Morris*" I received a letter from Norman Peacock referring to the photo - he writes: "On the front page of the last issue of *Rattle Up My Boys* you put a copy of a *Yorkshire Post* photograph of Plow Stotts at Selby. I enclose a photocopy of this photograph as it appeared in either that newspaper or the *Yorkshire Evening Post* and also a copy of the stock exchange report which appeared on the reverse side of the photo. Neither of these specifies the date but the caption does put it around 1930 and this is confirmed by the redemption dates for the "Colonial Governments" stocks none of which is earlier than 1926-36 and most are post 1930. I have sent a copy of this to Gordon Ridgewell. When I was in Leeds I did try to locate this but was pressed for time (even in those days!) - perhaps someone else will be more successful. It will be interesting to see what "Northerner" had to say."

Gordon Ridgewell has undertaken to look up the newspaper and supply details of any supporting information when he next visits the Newspaper Library. Norman added a humorous touch to his letter - (tongue in cheek) he asked: "Has anyone ever refuted the idea that "Rapper" is derived from "Wapper" (presumably pronounced "Vapper") - or is this just because I read "Just William" when I was young?"

## New ruling on 'dance decency'

Paul Freeman (of Highside Longsword) sent a cutting from the Independent which read:

"Dancing for pleasure is forbidden in Iran, but sword dancing elevates the mind, the minister of Islamic guidance has said. "Dancing should not be always known as an indecent act," said Ataollah Mohajerani, a reformist."



I wonder if the Ataollah has ever seen the rapper dance! He couldn't fail to be impressed by Stone Monkey shown here dancing in Whitby at the 1998 Sword Spectacular Photo by Maureen Tinker

## Comments from the previous issue

### Lange Wapper medals

Renaat Van Craenenbroeck tells me that I got the details of the presentations at the team's 30th year celebrations slightly wrong. The team presents dancers with a medal for 5, 10 and 15 years dancing. The handful of dancers who make 20 or 25 years receive a special medal. Renaat, who is the only one so far to make 30 years, received a commemorative painting from the team and an inscribed plate from the town council.

Prints of the painting are available for sale - unmounted prints will cost you 500 Belgian Francs (plus postage). I'll pass any orders on to Renaat.

### Workshop at Cecil Sharp House

Cyril Swales wrote asking about the next Sword Spectacular and supplying more details of the workshop he taught for teachers at Cecil Sharp House. Cyril says that the workshop went very well and resulted in a wider knowledge of the dance and an increased respect for the tradition. He feels that, being conversant with the dance since he learnt it when he was at Primary School at the age of ten, he can do the dance justice.

My comment was not aimed at Cyril's teaching which, backed by many years experience, I am sure is exemplary but rather my comments were about the Society's wisdom in choosing a dance currently danced in the village of Flamborough - there are more than 15 other dances which are no longer performed by a village team, indeed Cyril's letter refers to a Scarborough based men's team he is associated with who perform the Boosbeck dance.

Cyril tells me that there are two boy's teams at a primary school in Scarborough who dance Kirkby Malzeard, one of which has been invited to perform at the

EFSS Carol Concert at Cecil Sharp House in December. The Scarborough based men's team could do with a few more dancers - anyone from the area who fancies taking up dancing the most fascinating dance style should contact Cyril Swales direct.

## Goathland Plough Stots' plans for the Millennium

Keith Thompson recently sent an e-mail message:

**"Goathland's Day of Dance, January 16th, year 2,000**

Now that I have a little time here are a few details for Rattle Up My Boys.

We have decided (as only we can) to change the format of the Goathland Plough Stots annual dance event. This change is in recognition of the millennium and its historical significance, especially as there is little chance of us seeing another one!

The format will be the same with minor (or major) adjustments to accommodate our guests who are Sallyport & Lange Wapper. We are also hoping to have with us all the former Plough Stots with whom we have been making contact, again to celebrate the special event.

Obviously, with numbers possibly approaching 250 at the evening event, we have had to move locations and to change from the traditional Roast Beef dinner to a buffet.

The Plough Stot Rosh will probably be held on the Friday night for us and our guests. When I have more details I will forward them to you."

Keith Thompson, August 1999



*The sword dance team from Bagnasco (in Northern Italy) attended both of the two previous sword events and are enthusiastic to return. They will join an exciting line up of overseas teams, including six teams who have not been to England before. Photograph by Steve Armitage*

## Another sword maker

Steve Adamson, Treasurer for the Morris Ring, tells me that the Ring have located a new supplier of Rapper and Longsword swords. The swords are made from annealed spring steel (to BS CS70) by C G Barrett Metalwork of Northampton. Longswords cost £18 and Rappers £25 each. Further details or to order contact The Morris Ring Treasurer, Steve Adamson, 44 Whetley Close, Bradford, BD8 8HL, tel/fax 01274 773830. e-mail: stephen@adamsonbfb.freereserve.co.uk

## The next Sword Spectacular

Vince Rutland, Secretary of the Committee organising the Sword Spectacular sent the following:

"The World Millennium Sword Spectacular Festival will take place in Whitby, North Yorkshire, from 25th - 29th May 2000. All UK teams and individuals are invited to attend and be a part of this very friendly and well-organised festival.

Overseas groups which have provisionally accepted are:-

- In de Kring, Dunkirk, France
- Boerke Naas, St.Niklaas, Belgium
- Bacchu-Ber, Pont-de-Cervièrès, France
- Lange Wapper, Antwerp, Belgium
- Baden-Württemberg, Germany
- Bal do Sabre, Bagnasco, Italy
- \*Gaiteros da Xistra, Vigo, Galicia, Spain
- \*Kompanija Pupnat, Croatia

- \*Volkstanzgruppe St. Martin im Sulmtal, Austria
- Markinako Zerulxu, Markina-Xemein, Basque Country, Spain
- \*Kemen Dantza Taldea, Irun, Basque Country, Spain
- Podsable, Komna, Czech Republic
- Bobkovnici, Bystrice pod Lopenikem, Czech Republic
- Orion Swords, Boston, Mass., USA
- \*Velocirapper, Boston, Mass., USA
- Jack the Rapper, Norway
- \*Danza de Espadas Redondela, Galicia, Spain

Around 50 UK teams attended the events in 1996 and 1998. UK teams who have already registered their interest include: Goathland Plough Stots, Handsworth, Coventry Mimmers, Sallyport, Flamborough, Coventry Morris Men, Newcastle Kingsmen, Ryknild Rabble, Pengwyn, Thrale's, Stone Monkey, Black Adder, Carlisle, Hexham, Ryburn, Castleford, Seven Stars, Shorn the Sheep Rapper, Southport, High Spen and more.....

Teams who do not consider themselves as "mainly sword" are welcome. The weekend will include dance spots in and around Whitby, excellent camping facilities, Gala performances, social events, and the chance to get to know our overseas guests. A conference on Sword Dancing is also planned to give the Festival an academic side, and workshops will be included. TO REGISTER FOR OUR MAILING LIST, e-mail me NOW (rutland@onyxnet.co.uk) and I will send more details as soon as they're available. Reduced rates apply for early booking."

Vince Rutland, September 1999

\* overseas teams who did not attend either of the two earlier events.

*The Winter issue will carry details of the Christmas/New Year outings for many Longsword teams - don't forget that, as Boxing Day this year falls on a Sunday, you may have the opportunity to see more traditional dance outings than usual. I also hope to supply an update on plans for the World Sword Spectacular 2,000 and I have a contribution from Bob Schofield about the 25th anniversary of Kirkburton Rapier Dancers*

### Contributions are welcome ...

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