



Issue 1, Series 12, Spring 2003

## International Festival Returns to Whitby

The next **International Sword Spectacular Festival** will take place in Whitby on the holiday weekend of the 28-31<sup>st</sup> May, 2004. It is hoped that about a dozen overseas teams will attend, but as usual the event will depend on the support of the home sides for its success. One idea being considered is for some of the visiting teams to be 'adopted' by British host teams. This would involve helping them to find their way around (geographically and culturally), and might also include entertaining them on their way to or from Whitby.

As usual, the weekend will include dancing in Whitby and nearby towns, workshops, guest speakers, and a full dance show at which all performers will be present.

For more information about the festival contact any of the committee, including Keith Thompson/ Ian Davies/ Mike Smith (Goathland Ploughstots), Vince Rutland/ Stuart Higson (Sallyport Swords), Vin Wynne (Sallyport/Kingsmen), Jeff Lawson (sword tart), or Andrew Kennedy (RUMB).



*Felix Mommen of Tongeren, in Belgium, sends this picture of his new team. The 18<sup>th</sup>- century Tongeren dancers hoisted their leader on a platform of swords, some of which still survive in the town museum.*

Welcome to the new series of **RUMB**. It's come a little later than I intended, and as you can see I'm still working on the look of it, but it's out at last. There was so much material that the next edition should follow fairly soon, after which I'll be aiming for September and early December. I'm very grateful for all the good wishes I've been sent, and also for the contributions of news, articles, and information. Please keep them coming.

Andrew Kennedy

## GOLD BADGE FOR CAWTE

On the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2002, Dr. E.C. Cawte was presented with an EFDSS Gold Badge, at Cecil Sharp House. The citation was by Dr. Norman Peacock, and reads as follows:

In the days when universities were few and far between, King's College of Newcastle housed the Engineering Faculty and Medical Faculty of the University of Durham. Thus in 1940 a Scot was appointed lecturer in Civil Engineering and later became Professor, and in 1952 a former chorister and son of a music teacher entered the College as a medical student. The Professor was Bill Cassie who was awarded a Gold Badge in 1970 and the medical student was Christopher Cawte whom I present today for this medal.

Bill Cassie was the leading sponsor of the King's College Morris Men and he encouraged them to perform the local Rapper Dances and to search out and research them. A chance encounter in Rag Week in 1953 led Christopher to join the Morris Men as a musician and he very quickly became involved in the search and research.

Always ready to help, Bill Cassie arranged for the KCMM to come to Greatham to assist me in noting the details of that Dance from Tom Armstrong, and Christopher was there to play and to take photographs. Later we visited Tom together and separately on a number of occasions. Inevitably this led to correspondence – between us and with Alex Helm, who contacted me about then. Early in 1955 this took the form of "Dear Peacock", "Dear Mr. Cawte", and "Dear Mr. Helm", but by the middle of the year had become "Dear Norman", "Dear Christopher", and "Dear Alex".

1955 saw the blossoming of the "revised Needham" (a reference to the then exhaustive catalogue of Ritual Dance which Joseph Needham published in the JEFDSS in 1935). Because of our various interests this rapidly became "A Geographical Index of Traditional Ritual Custom in Great Britain", which bore fruit in the form of "A Geographical Index of the Ceremonial Dance in Great Britain" in JEFDSS in 1960 and 1961, and English Ritual Drama: A Geographical Index, published by the Folklore Society in 1967. The fruit may not always have been as ripe as some would have liked, but these two publications have served a whole generation of researchers without very serious criticism.

Christopher's own fieldwork continued apace. He took advantage of hospital training in Bishop Auckland to investigate in Weardale, and spent his leave during National Service as a medical officer in Singapore in 1957-8 seeking out traditional rituals in Malaya,

Sarawak, and even India, finding many parallels there with the customs we were recording in the Index.

Back home in the 1960s Christopher turned his attention to the Border Morris which resulted in an authoritative account in JEFDSS in 1963. From this time onwards also his service as a GP in the Ibstock area of Leicestershire gave him wide opportunities to talk to many people about a range of customs which are recorded in the Index and elsewhere.

The experience of the Index convinced Christopher and Alex that there was a need for monograph accounts of individual subjects and thus was born the Guizer Press, which combined Alex's printing with Christopher's business acumen. Under this aegis were printed in 1967 & 68 accounts of the Rapper Dances at Murton and Winlaton which Christopher had researched in the 1950s, as well as work on the Play which Alex and he had done. Sadly, Alex's early death in 1970 more or less brought the Guizer Press to a close.

In 1975 Christopher became a member of the Editorial Board of what was by then the Folk Music Journal, which makes him the longest serving member of that Board. At the same time he was bringing to fruition work on another section of the Index which had always interested him, that on Animal Disguise, and his book Ritual Animal Disguise was published by the Folklore Society in 1978.

But the Rapper remained a constant interest, not least because it has a well-recorded history – if you care to look for it – and is one of the few customs of which you can say, "it began THEN" – or at least "about then". Certainly we can say when the authoritative history of the Rapper was written – it was in the Folk Music Journal in 1981, and like most authoritative accounts has been added to as recently as this year.

In recent years Christopher has been engaged in deciphering the atrocious handwriting of Cecil Sharp in some of the Field Notebooks which resurfaced a few years ago, and in cataloguing his writings and recordings of James Carpenter, whose handwriting is only slightly more legible than Sharp's. This brings us back the full circle, because we first heard of Carpenter as the mysterious American who came in a large limousine to visit Tom Armstrong in Greatham one Sunday in 1935 and was duly repelled to return on a more appropriate day. Carpenter, we are told, concealed his notes and recording cylinders in sacks under his bed – it is to Christopher's great credit that, far from hiding his findings under the bed, he has always been so helpful to others working in the field.



*Norman Peacock and Christopher Cawte, at Cecil Sharp House, on the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2002.*

*Photo: Gordon Ridgewell*

I present to you Christopher Cawte for the award of the Gold Medal.

# Sword Dancing – a Village Tradition



On the left is 'Towny' Tremain (in suit) beside Mr. Porte, and front left is Bob Evans

*Yes, this is apparently the North Skelton men – the photograph is undated. Thanks to Chris Little who sent this extract from issue 28 of 'The Key', a local newsletter for the North Skelton area. Seen at <http://burluroux1.freemove.co.uk/key28.htm>*

'During his research into folk dance, a Mr Rolf Gardiner visited North Skelton. In his journal he describes his visit, including some detail of the dancers practising in the 'Band Room' His visit led to a revival in sword dancing and, with the assistance of the Pennyman family of Ormesby Hall, eventually to the formation of a second team in North Skelton, the 'Primrose' team' at Lingdale and further teams at both Boosbeck and Loftus.

'Thanks to Rolf Gardiner's involvement, the North Skelton team travelled all over the area and taught visiting miners from the Ruhr and Silesia and went on exchange visits with the miners in Germany. The team performed at the Albert Hall in London and, in 1932, acted as 'guards of honour' at

Rolf's wedding at Southwark Cathedral. Rolf Gardiner's association with North Skelton Sword Dancers spanned the years from 1925 until 1939. Sadly, sword dancing went into decline in the area but has recently been revived at Lockwood Beck Primary School, Boosbeck.

'Bob Evans, of William Street, North Skelton, was a member of the sword dancer's team and one day invited Rolf into his home for tea. Bob's daughter Jean (now Jean Tokarski), as a child of 2-3 years, sat on his knee for most of the visit. Her Dad later told her that Rolf had made such an impression on her that on the day he got married she was broken-hearted!'

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Trevor has asked me to point out that in Series 4, Issue 11, two picture captions were transposed, confusing the Dinkelsbuhl and Bagnasco dancers.

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Jim Spriggs of the York Gentlemen asks: "How about requesting ideas from subscribers for future articles/inclusions? E.g. Worst ever sword dancing experiences?" Over to you....

# DERT 2002

## April 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> 2002

### Kelham Island Museum Sheffield



Now you can't host the world cup and not play can you? So a new team was born and we needed a name to celebrate the Tyzack connection. The 'Legs of Man' is based on a three-legged Manx symbol generically known as a Triskele, and that's what we became. Given the inexperience of some members, and the overall distraction of organising DERT, we were quite pleased with our effort, but there is still lots of room for improvement. We were particularly proud to dance with a set of Tyzacks which had been lovingly restored and fitted with new fixed handles by Frank Lee.

Having organised a few events on our home territory as members of the South Riding Folk Network we quite liked the idea of hosting DERT. We invested some time in researching Joseph Tyzack's sword making in Sheffield. Those of you who saw the exhibition at Kelham Island will know the details. It is worth recording here that Tyzack swords are frequently mentioned with a degree of reverence though some stories of breakages are around too. Many sets of Tyzack swords bear the patent No. 9835. It started to feel quite spooky when we discovered that the Sheffield patent records were stored at Kelham Island Museum and that, after a very dusty search, we discovered that patent No.9835 was registered in 1902 – DERT was going to happen in its centenary year. Joseph Tyzack's factory is still standing, though no longer working, and his descendant, Don Tyzack, supplied us with some of the family history. Surprisingly he was totally unaware of the sword making activities. We tracked down some 30 sets of swords and recorded their provenance. We did discover distinct batches of swords, slightly differing sizes and constructions and the evidence would indicate that Tyzack swords were produced between the early 50's and the mid 70's. This makes some sets 50 years old and still being danced, all bearing the distinctive 'Legs of Man' trade mark - which brings us neatly to Triskele Sword.

Most teams arrived on the Friday evening and put the local pubs to the test. We belatedly celebrated Aubrey O'Brien's 50th birthday with a cake and a pint (or three), but finally peace descended– the lull before the storm!

The warm up tour on Saturday morning went very well. There were too many teams to do much moving from pub to pub, get a dance, and eat. Everybody got into at least 2 pubs and looked fairly happy as they arrived at Kelham Island. The late morning had been taken up with a small but highly competitive Clog Dancing event, organised by Melanie Barber, assisted by Sue Rutland. Although intended to attract the Rapper dancers to show off their skill in this related art, in fact none of the DERT competitors took part.

And so to the main event. The exhibition hall at Kelham Island is a great space – and that is the problem! Its cavernous nature makes it difficult to create atmosphere and excitement and so we divided the hall into three distinct areas, the exhibition space, the competition arena and the bar / socialising space. One recurrent problem at previous DERTs has been enabling everyone to see the action and we tried to overcome this with the AV screen in the bar area. The overhead camera? – that idea came from the evening bash at the Cutty Sark in 2000. The

ubiquitous Doc Rowe was hanging over the balcony filming the lads doing a turn down below in the bar. We realised that this was the view of the dance never normally seen and decided to try and replicate it in 2002. The 'Fat Cat' pub, just next door, organised and ran the excellent bar selling the specially blended 'Rapper Ale' from the local Kelham Island Brewery.

24 teams entered the event, of which 4 were exhibiting and three were dancing in two classes. We invited Handsworth and Grenoside longsword teams to give exhibitions (getting them together is quite a rare occasion). The winning clog dancers were also invited to do a turn. The judges were in for a gruelling session and they did a magnificent job. It is a judge's lot not to please everyone, and their task was made more difficult by the high standard of the dancing.

We had decided to spend extra on the prizes and medals so that everyone took something of substance home with them. We picked up on Sally Atkinson's suggestion that the 'Buzz Factor' was just as important as technical excellence, and thus we inaugurated The Tyzack Centenary Trophy commemorate the famous sword maker.

The afternoon was a blur!! Triskele danced first - well someone has to – and it seemed like two seconds and it was over. From then on everything flowed pretty smoothly due to some excellent marshalling by Pam & Stella from Gift Rapper. Time keeping, P.A., Judges' runners and many other essential tasks were covered by members of Gift Rapper, Triskele Sword, and City Morris, with total commitment. Chris Sexton was awesome as M.C. - probably the most stressful job of the day! Doc Rowe was everywhere filming the action and

trying to change the tapes in three different video recorders.

We had over run on the afternoon, there were misunderstandings about how the score sheets worked, no one trusted the computer to add up accurately, and most of us were heading for a coronary!! Needless to say, it got sorted and John Hampshire, Executive Director of the museum, was finally able to present the

prizes. We had invited Don Tyzack to present the Tyzack Trophy, but he is in his 70's and not in good health so declined, but sent a goodwill message.

One final piece of theatre remained. The museum did not possess a set of Tyzack swords, nor any record of their manufacture. Triskele Sword decided to present a set to the museum, and asked High Spen Blue Diamonds to dance them into a lock, which was presented to the Director. This is now on display with accompanying history, some notes about the dance and DERT 2002.

We hear everybody had a good time on Saturday night, certainly the Real Ale pubs did well, and the Kingsmen put on a great workshop on the Sunday morning. Phil Heaton led an interesting forum / discussion,

and then..... everyone went home!

I haven't mentioned team performances individually, because they were all memorable of a very high standard. I'm sure I've omitted to mention some one who worked very hard to make it all happen, and so to the whole DERT Committee, Gift Rapper, partners and friends, and the Burton Street staff, I can only say a heart felt thank you. **Ron Day**

<b>Open Evolved:</b>		
1st	Fallen Angels	86.6
2nd	Mabel Gubbins	70.2
3rd	Mersey Morrismen	64.4
<b>Open Traditional:</b>		
1st	High Spen Blue Diamonds 2	76
2nd	Sharpe Sword	76
3rd	Mabel Gubbins	67.8
(Ties decided by character marks)		
<b>Premier Traditional:</b>		
1st	Newcastle Kingsmen	90.8
2nd	Sallyport	87.2
3rd	High Spen Blue Diamonds	83
<b>Premier Evolved:</b>		
1st	Black Swan	94.8
2nd	Stone Monkey	83
3rd	Short Circuit	76.4
Steve Marris Trophy: Black Swan ( <i>pictured</i> )		
Tyzack Centenary Trophy: Black Swan		
Best Musician: Bryony Griffiths		
Best Character: Chris Pitt		
<b>For more information, go to</b>		
<a href="http://www.triskele.btinternet.co.uk/Links.htm">http://www.triskele.btinternet.co.uk/Links.htm</a>		

# Christmas and New Year

**White Star Sword**, having decided a year ago to stop dancing regularly but to continue with their annual Plough Saturday tour of villages near Tunbridge Wells, were out as usual on the 4<sup>th</sup> January. This time they were making a bit of a splash, and had hired a preserved coach to take them and their guests, **North British** and **Mrs Postlethwaite's Vegetable** (step dancers), round the pubs. The tour was the familiar one: 'George and Dragon', Speldhurst; 'Chafford Arms', Fordcombe; Queen's Arms (Elsie's), Cowden Pound; and 'Fountain', Cowden. As the tour progressed they were joined by the **Broadwood Mummers** and the **Udimore Bellringers**. Sadly, **Westpec**, the Hooden Horse was indisposed this year with a nasty case of the botts or some such thing.

White Star danced rapper from Newbiggin and Winlaton, plus the Escrick sword dance. North British performed their own two rapper dances plus their versions of the Elgin, Papa Stour, and Manx (White Boys') dances. At some stage during the day, the Vegetables decided that they wished to be known in future as **Mr. Kipling's Tarts**. A questionable choice.



Sign outside the 'Queen's Arms', Cowden Pound, a favourite stop on

There was the usual singaround at the 'Fountain', before the coach returned to Speldhurst. At this point, the tour would usually pause at the village hall for home made-curry and home-brewed cider, but the hall burned down during the firemen's strike. Fortunately, the landlord at the

**Jeff Kirk** sends word of the **Biggar Siguisers**, in Scotland. A couple of years ago they revived their local mummers' play, complete with sword: a six-man dance of their own devising and a version of the Elgin sword dance. This year they appeared at the town's Hogmanay celebrations.

'George and Dragon' stepped in and allowed the use of his kitchen for heating White Star's food, a generous gesture from a pub that makes much of its money from selling its own excellent meals.

In the evening the crowd was further enlarged by the arrival of **Women in Harmony**, a women's choir from Tunbridge Wells. Needless to say, there was a lot more singing. A small party of singers, musicians, and dancers went and performed in the village's other pub, the 'Northfield'. The next day there was an announcement from the landlord that he was closing for good!

As usual, it was an excellent and varied day. Long may it continue.



White Star performing the Newbiggin dance in the Fountain, Cowden. Photo: AK

**Footnote:** North British, being a widely-dispersed team, were staying with Brian Tasker, White Star's leader, who accommodated nineteen guests on the Saturday night. On the Sunday, they went for a rapper tour of Rusthall and Tunbridge Wells Common, combining a walk through the snow with dancing at five pubs.

These involve, among other things, a torchlight procession to a bonfire, a pipe band (what clever person thought of putting bagpipes and a bonfire together?), and, somewhere in the middle of it all, the mummers. Their show climaxed with the sword dance performed to the bagpipes.

The EFDSS Carols and Customs Concert was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2002, at Cecil Sharp House.



Gordon Ridgewell reports that the **Redcar Sword Dancers** performed the Eston and California Sword Dance as well as the Greatham dance and play. **East Saxon Swords** provided a rapper dance. Redcar revived the Greatham in 1967 and have performed it ever since.

More information about Redcar's dances can be obtained from the Secretary, Brian Pearce:  
brian@pearce15.freemove.co.uk

Redcar can be seen here showing the distinctive lock from the 'Eston & California' dance.

*Photograph from Gordon Ridgewell.*

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**Noel Jackson** writes: On New Year's Day a link was made with the past when Belmont's **Sexy Sword Squad** danced out at Heswell, the only place other than Greatham where longsword has been recorded on County Durham. The sword squad have now left school and are in their first year of university. We just managed to field a team and surprised the locals at the 'Plough' by performing the Belmont sword dance in the lounge. (We developed this dance following the workshop **Carlisle Sword** ran for Folkworks – a whole tradition came out of a single day's input!)

There was a good (if somewhat bemused) audience as they had gathered for the football match on the wide screen telly. The Squad are very pleased with their missionary work and hope to repeat the process (and take photos) next year.



On Boxing Day, **Southport Swords** made their customary outing. They started in the town at 11.30, before moving on to the 'Hesketh Arms', in nearby Churchtown, at about 1.30. After dancing a couple of figures of North Skelton they put on their bell-pads and did some Morris. The weather was deteriorating meanwhile, and it was a pleasure to get inside the warm, dry pub, where they did another North Skelton figure.

After this they moved across the road into the 'Bold Arms', where a music session was well under way. Here there was

an impromptu rapper dance from **Shorn the Sheep** Rapper, to the distress of the landlord, who was convinced that they would block his passage. The Southport men then found a space and danced the Elgin Sword Dance, after which they finished with their own Southport dance. They even replaced the decorations when they had finished.

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*There will be more midwinter reports in the next issue.*

## Hoisting

One team which has expressed an interest in coming to the **2004 International Sword Spectacular Festival** is the **Dithmarscher Schwertertänzer** (pictured right), from Albersdorf, near the west coast of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany). The earliest references to the dance date from round about 1500, and it was revived in the 1930s at a local school. It was taken up again in the early 1950s by a local youth group, since when it has continued largely unaltered.

Eight dancers, a drummer, and the King perform a series of figures which lead to the formation of a lock on which the King is hoisted. The dance is performed 8-10 times per year, and the team has been abroad on a number of occasions. The dancers are insistent that they maintain the traditions of the dance: it is performed only by men, and they do not permit alterations or additions to it.

The question of hoisting a character was raised by **Steve Corrsin** in RUMB (*ser11, no4*), and it is not clear whether this has always been a feature of this dance or whether it appeared as part of the revival. The team's website ([www.dithmarscher-schwertertanz.de/index.html](http://www.dithmarscher-schwertertanz.de/index.html)) stresses that the dance has not changed since the 1950s, so for them, at least, it's no passing fad.



The Manx **White Boys' dance** has certainly used the lock as a chair for many years – originally for the Doctor, more recently for a young boy. Whether this counts as an English dance is something that is discussed in an article by **Colin Messer** later in the year. On the same subject, **Ian Porter** writes:

If we, the ceremonial dancers of the 21st century, really are guardians of a tradition, then we should allow that tradition to evolve, just as we can assume it evolved in the past. In that sense I agree wholeheartedly with the sentiments expressed by Trevor in the last issue. However, I believe that we should allow this only within certain boundaries - the boundaries drawn by what we have received from the past. English Sword dancing has characteristics that are not seen in sword dances from other parts of Europe. I fear that if present-day dancers 'borrow' figures and actions from anywhere, then the essentially 'English' characteristics of the dance will be lost.

I cannot object to the invention of dances as I am responsible for such behaviour myself, but I would make a plea that when creative urges or downright necessity result in new dances, those dances fit within the boundaries that the history of sword dancing in England has laid down.

In this letter, I am essentially reiterating a view I expressed in a short article Trevor was kind enough to publish in Issue 4 of the 7th series of RUMB. I would be interested to hear if everyone disagrees with me, or if my words strike a chord with some!