



RATTLE UP My Boys

A quarterly publication for those with an interest in
sword dancing

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Those We Have Lost

Black Cap Rapper are seen here performing their version of the Stillingfleet longsword dance. This performance was at the High Spen Blue Diamonds' Diamond Jubilee in 1986.



Black Cap were from the Derby area, flourished in the 1980s, and disbanded round about 1990. Phil Heaton, second from right, went on to other things.

*Photograph:
Brian Tasker*

Not Lost, Just Mislaid

It was thought that **Fenestrelle** had stopped dancing, but here they are at **Bagnasco's** festival in July, 2004. The full story is on pages 4 & 5.

Photographs: Jeff Lawson



International Sword Spectacular

Whitby, 28-31 May, 2004



Here (*left*) are the Ploughstot Juniors. One excellent aspect of the festival was the number of school-age dancers who took part. As well as the overseas guests, there was evidence that sword dancing is alive and well in Yorkshire. Friday performances took place both in the town and at schools including Goathland CP, Fylingdales CE, Caedmon, Sleights, and Eskdale. Sword teams were fielded by Goathland (*Goathland dance*), Fylingdales (*Sleights dance*), Lockwood Primary (*Boosbeck*), Highcliffe (*North Skelton*), Lingdale (*Lingdale*), Airy Hill (*Sleights*), and Northgate Primary (*North Skelton & Bellerby*). In addition, two schools fielded Cotswold teams, and there was also dancing by Solstice, a youth team who perform both morris and sword dances. A superb achievement. *Photograph from Great Meadows M&S*



(*Left, centre*) Ryknild Rapper performing the Elgin Sword Dance at the Gala Display. It was necessary to reproduce this picture in black and white to avoid overdoing the yellow socks.

(*Left, below*) Stevenage Swords outside the Inn on the Moor, Goathland. Stevenage perform longsword as well.

(*Below*) Sullivan's Sword in the East Side, Whitby.

All photographs from Great Meadows M&S



From the Archives

Jenny Day has been trawling the records and has uncovered a variety of snippets, mostly from the English Folk Dance Society.

Handsworth

The E.F.D.S. News, 3 March, 1922, shows a photograph of the Handsworth Sword Dancers (not clear enough to reproduce here), looking very much as they do to-day, and issue 4 (November, 1922,) notes that 'this dance first became generally known when the Handsworth team performed it twice in 1920 at the [E.F.D.S.] Easter school at York, and everyone was struck by the "danciness" which the Handsworth men gave it. Practice of it revealed another feature, its difficulty.' The dance was subsequently taught by Douglas Kennedy and eventually performed by an E.F.D.S. team.

To innovate or not?

A lengthy meditation on the nature of folk dancing in issue 6 (Nov. 1923,) of the same journal discusses the acceptability of innovation, or what the author regards as anachronism, in traditional dance, and notes that 'when the Sword Dancers from Yorkshire danced before London audiences at the Palladium they were constantly introducing new steps and evolutions, and no-one could say that these innovations were spoiling the tradition, because of the vitality of the expression behind it all. Artistic control would be out of place here, for the folk themselves are in the great van of tradition. When these same dances are taken up and made an art form, then it is obvious artistic control is necessary. But this is because a fetish is made of technique.' The author goes on to satirize the 'perfect drawing-room manners' of some dancers in Hammersmith. Plus ça change....

Emberton Sword Dancers

Issue 12 (Sept. 1926) of the E.F.D.S. News has on its cover (once again, sadly, not clear enough for reproduction here) a photograph of 'the Haxby Sword Dance by the Emberton Team'.

Traditional Sword Dancing at Festivals

E.F.D.S. News, 14 April, 1927

'There are two Musical Festivals in the North of England which

have been instrumental in reviving the practice of traditional sword dancing. The "Tournament" at Newcastle, which is to be held this year from May 26th to 28th, forms the rendezvous for the "Rapper" teams which increase in number year by year. Lately long sword teams, undeterred by a journey of fifty or sixty miles from Yorkshire, have been entering too. The other "Tournament" which has done so much to promote local tradition is the Eskdale Festival held at Whitby, usually at the beginning of April, but this year on March 26th. Here the traditional dancing is all "Long Sword" and this year there were no less than five traditional and six other Sword teams. The traditional dances were represented by two teams from Skelton, one from Lingdale with an exciting variant of the Skelton dance, the *Sleights*, and the revived Kirkby Malzeard team, the members of which motored eighty miles each way in order to take part in what must have been for them a unique experience.

'The Kirkby dancers had no idea that any other dance existed beside their own, and they not only saw four other Sword dances, but they saw several other teams dance their own dance.'

Did Sharp Get It Wrong?

After noting, under the heading 'Sword Dance Variants', that there were, by September, 1927 (issue 15, 48-51) three North Skelton Sword Dances and at least two variants, Douglas Kennedy goes on to discuss Kirkby Malzeard at some length. The article explains that the dance was collected by Sharp in 1910, some years after it had ceased to be danced locally. Sharp taught it, and there was then a local revival, but the revived version differed significantly from the collected dance being taught by the Society. There follows a lengthy examination of 'Over Double Sword', the newer version of which flows better than the collected one. By comparison with similar figures from Handsworth, Grenoside, and Askham Richard, Kennedy highlights discrepancies or inconsistencies in Sharp's versions, and concludes that one possible explanation is that he simply got it wrong. This has implications for the (admittedly dwindling number of) dancers who still insist on going by the book to the last detail.

8th International Folklore Festival in Bagnasco 9/11

July 2004

The Bagnasco team are well known to British sword dancers as they have attended all four Sword Spectaculars. It was as a result of their visit to this year's event that Sallyport were invited to take part in their festival. Six weeks' notice? No problem. All prior commitments were quickly put to one side and a team of eight plus interpreter Pat Pickles set out from Stansted on 8th July, bound for Turin.

Bagnasco is a village set in beautiful mountain scenery in the Piedmont region of north west Italy, some 70 miles south of Turin. There were three sword teams taking part in the festival: Bagnasco, Fenestrelle, a local Italian team who perform a dance similar to that of Bagnasco, as well as Sallyport. Other teams taking part were: Folklorny subor Haviar Roznava from Slovakia and I Mattacchini and La Tarantella from Italy.

Bagnasco are not a national folk dance ensemble. They are a group of local dancers, trained and organised by the local school master. It is a village tradition and not specifically tied to the school. Youngsters are keen to join the team as membership brings the opportunity to travel as well as a good deal of local esteem. (Trevor Stone)

Not much is known about the dance before about 1900. There are the usual stories about ancient fertility rites, but they are purely speculative. The team today wear a costume modelled on that of the Saracen invaders of 1000 years ago, but a photo taken in 1914 shows them in a costume which could well be more Italian in origin. The costume evolved during the 20th century, going through a Turkish phase in the 1950's.



Bagnasco, photographed by Jeff Lawson

There are some 14 dancers accompanied by a harlequin and a prisoner. The dance is a linked sword dance consisting of a sequence of figures danced entirely to the beat of a group of drummers. It is interrupted by a cameo performance by the prisoner. A proclamation announces that he is to be executed for opposing the taking of his daughter into the service of the local lord. He escapes but is recaptured and swiftly executed.

A maypole dance follows after which the dance is concluded.

The visiting teams performed at the festival venue in Bagnasco on the Friday and Saturday evenings and all the teams performed at a gala performance on the Sunday afternoon. Each day ended with a rock concert, which was

rather bizarre. This fairly light dancing commitment gave Sallyport ample time to dance in the local bars and at a beer festival.

Our visit to Bagnasco was a truly memorable occasion. We were very well looked after by our hosts who provided us with accommodation in a local hotel. There we enjoyed wonderful meals: course after course of Italian specialities, which included the mushrooms for which the region is well known, washed

down with copious quantities of the local wine.

Brian Tasker

Sources consulted for this article:

Il Bal do Sabre by Giuseppe Carazzone 1992

Sword Dancing in Europe: A History by Stephen D Corrsin, Hisarlik Press 1997.



Fenestrelle

*Photograph:
Jeff Lawson*



More From The Sword Spectacular

Many thanks are owed to the Goathland Plougstots, who contributed so much to the success of the event. From a barn to a barbecue, from booking the village hall to providing essential manpower (and womanpower too), the team were behind the scenes throughout the weekend and long before.

Here they are (*left*) at the Gala Performance, showing that the tradition is safe in their hands.

Photograph: Great Meadows S&M

Meanwhile, Another One Bites the Dust

Andrew Kennedy



Since moving to Preston three years ago, one team I have been trying to catch up with is locally-based Hoghton Rapper, but to no avail. With DERT 2005 being held in Preston, the organisers contacted Hoghton to invite them to take part. The following letter was received in reply.

On Thursday November 18th Hoghton Rapper Sword Team held a meeting to consider their future. In the light of the current situation ie dwindling number of fit dancers able to form a viable team, it was decided to wind up the Team's affairs, and so we cease to exist. This is a sad time -- the Team has danced for 41 years-- but age and creaking joints have caught up with too many of us, and sadly we have to call it a day. It is particularly sad for me --I am the only founder member still with the Team after all this time! I wish you all the best with your Rapper Team.

Yours,

Thomas Calderbank.

Well, forty-one years is longer than many teams manage, and to stay with the team for the whole of that time is an achievement few can claim.

This picture (*left*) is taken from the Hoghton Rapper website, at <http://www.prestonarts.com/hrapper.htm> although it is unclear how long this will remain the case. The accompanying text reads:

Native to Northumberland and Durham, rapper sword dancing is one of two types of traditional English Sword Dancing; Longsword dancing is associated with Yorkshire and South Durham -- and a number of European countries have very similar dance traditions.

In the early 1960s a young Northumbrian (George Rowe) was appointed to the staff of Hutton Grammar School; he also joined Hoghton Folk Dance Club and soon interested some of the young men there in forming a Rapper team. Displays were put on at a number of Women's Institutes, Garden Parties, and School Fetes. For some years practices were held in a team member's kitchen! They were then transferred to Fulwood Boys' Hostel on Watling Street Road before moving to Fulwood Methodist Church -- where the team has been based for more than twenty years.

The repertoire expanded to include Cotswold Morris Dancing and Longsword Dancing and, occasionally, our displays include an exponent of Lancashire Clog Dancing. In fact we can put on quite a varied show.

The annual programme still includes local events but it also grew to include folk festivals and Morris Ring Meetings up and down the country; Preston's twin town of Recklingshausen has been visited too.

The team are wearing dark blue velvet breeches with a pale blue stripe down the outer seam; their ties are light blue and patterned, and their light blue sashes carry the letters HR in red on a black background; they wear red and white ribbons on their backs and at the bottoms of their breeches. Shirts and socks are white.

Midwinter Dancing

DECEMBER 2004

Sallyport Swords

Friday, 17th December: Shields Road Tour, Byker, Newcastle.
Phone Vince Rutland 01609 780536 or email:
svrutland@onetel.net.uk

Lord Conyers MM

Saturday, 18th December: Christmas Wassail at the Angel,
Killamarsh, 2pm onwards; includes Lord Conyers Sword
Dance and, at dusk (c4pm), the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance.
Email lordconyers@tiscali.co.uk

BOXING DAY

Barnsley Sword

1.00 at the Spencers Arms, Cawthorne. Phone Jack Ledger
01226 726585

Claro Morris & Sword

Dancing in Harrogate. Phone Bob Hart 01423 865873

Flamborough Longsword

12.00, White Horse, Bempton; then Rose & Crown,
Flamborough, with the young team; then round the village,
finishing in the Square at 2.30 (or possibly somewhat later).
Phone Richard Traves 01262 851311

Highside Longsword (Kirkby Malzeard)

1.00 at the Grantley Arms (approx 3 miles from Kirkby
Malzeard), then a tour of Kirkby village and session at the
Drovers at Dallowgill. Phone Ted Dodsworth 01765 620374

Redcar Sword

12noon at the gates of the Church in Greatham, followed by a
song session. Phone Brian Pearce 01642 454371.

Southport Swords

Approx. 1.00 at the Hesketh in Churchtown. Phone John
Clarke 01704 574762

Spen Valley Longsword (Cleckheaton area)

A tour of Cleckheaton, starting at the Moorside at 12 noon;
1.00 at the Wickham Arms; 2.00 at the Old Saw. All subject to
landlords' whims. Phone Dave Webster 01924 402 897

MONDAY, 27th December

Grenoside Sword

11.00 at the Old Harrow, Main Street, Grenoside. Dancing
followed by carols. Phone Ray Ellinson 0114 245 3361

Handsworth Sword

11.15 at the Crossed Daggers, Woodhouse; 12 noon outside
the Parish Church, Handsworth, followed by carols at the
Cross Keys. Phone Donald Watts 0114 258 5283

ALSO AFTER CHRISTMAS

Lordsmere Longsword (Saddleworth) (*Not confirmed*)

Phone Richard Hankinson 01457 834971

JANUARY 2005

Ryburn Sword (Halifax area)

Not sword dancing, but 'Long Company' mummers' tour:
2,3,5,& 6 Jan. Phone Sue Coe 01422 822569

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Kirkburton Rapier Dancers (Huddersfield area)

A tour of the Kirkburton area: 12 noon at the Carlton Club;
12.30 at the George Hotel; stops thereafter to be confirmed,
but finishing in the centre of Kirkburton.
Phone Roy Dyson 01484 665365

Monkseaton Morris Men

Ampleforth play and rapper: 12 noon outside the Ship,
Monkseaton. Phone Peter Brown 0191 252 3022

Wype Doles Longsword Dancers (Whittlesey)

Market Place, 12.45. Phone Robert Crick 01733 767779

SATURDAY, 8th JANUARY

Grenoside Sword

Village traipse. Phone Ray Ellinson 0114 245 3361

White Star Sword Dancers (West Kent)

Saturday: Plough Tour with guests including Insword and
North British. 10.30, George & Dragon, Speldhurst; 11.30,
Chafford Arms, Fordcombe; 1.00, Queen's Arms, Cowden
Pound: 2.30 onwards, the Fountain, Cowden; evening
rapper tour, followed by a song session at the Royal Oak,
Tunbridge Wells

Sunday: lunchtime tour of Rusthall Common and Tunbridge
Wells Common. Phone Brian Tasker 01892 862301

Whittlesea Straw Bear

Stone Monkey, Stevenage Sword, Sallyport Sword, and
Southport Swords, among other attractions. Possibly Sharpe
Sword too. Wype Doles out Sunday only. Phone Robert
Crick 01733 767779

SUNDAY, 9th JANUARY

Sullivan's Sword Plough Celebration (Nottingham area)

Plough Blessing, 10.30 in St Denis' Church Morton. Phone
John Holder 01636 896 311

Goathland Ploughstots

Plough Blessing: 10.30, St, Mary's Church, Goathland.
Phone Keith Thompson 01947 896480

SATURDAY, 15th JANUARY

Goathland Ploughstots

Tour - Goathland, Darnholm, and Beckhole.

Seven Stars Sword and Step Dancers (Wigan Area)

Tour, details tbc. Phone John Shiell 01204 669311

SUNDAY, 16th JANUARY

Highside Longsword (Kirby Malzeard)

Plough Blessing in Kirby Malzeard Church, 10.30 (includes
dancing). TBC. Phone Ted Dodsworth 01765 620374

Claro Sword and Morris (Knaresborough)

Plough Blessing and sword dancing
11.30 at Knaresborough Parish Church (after the service)
12.00 or thereabouts: Plough procession from church to
Knaresborough Market Place, followed by dancing.

And yet more from the Sword Spectacular



(Left) Here are the **Gay Blades** in full flow, having come all the way from Boston. Some sword purists were less than comfortable with the GBs' declared aim of putting fun first. And that was before they'd done their Cinderella routine at the gala performance. An absolute hoot.

*Photograph:
Great Meadows S&M*

Note From Ivor Allsop

Ivor has written concerning the photograph in *RUMB 2.13*, of the Mantle Road Junior Sword Dance Team. The picture is dated Saturday, July 20, but no year is given. This combination occurred in 1912, 1918, 1929, 1935, and 1940. Ivor regards 1912 and 1918 as too early, and 1940 as unlikely because of the War. He reckons 1935 because of the clothes. The dance is either Flamborough or Haxby, and based on his knowledge of the EFDS, he thinks Flamborough.

Yes, it's horrible

This is how **Sallyport** chose to relax in Bagnasco. All that puffy, white flesh (and that's just Ranko)....

Photograph by Jeff Lawson, who wisely stayed on dry land.

