



RATTLE UP My Boys

A quarterly publication for those with an interest in
sword dancing

Issue 4 Series 15, 2006-7

The Lingdale Primrose Sword Dancers

By Andrew Kennedy, Jeff Lawson, and John Roberts

Photographs supplied by Alison Younger.

Interview with Teddy Knight recorded by Chris Pollington.



The Lingdale Primrose Sword Dancers in Whitby, c.1960. At the centre, in bow tie, is Bill Knight. (Photograph originally from local press; copy held by Alison Younger)

In his description of the North Skelton Sword Dance, Douglas Kennedy included a footnote referring to the founding of the Lingdale Sword Dancers.¹ "Since these notes were first written, another team has arisen in Cleveland district, namely, at Lingdale. The revival at Lingdale is due to Mr. Featherstone, who is a contemporary of Mr. Winspear (*credited by Kennedy with teaching the North Skelton White Rose team*), and evidently learnt the dance from the same source as he did (*"an old Plough Stot living in Loftus"*). The differences that now exist between the North Skelton and the Lingdale Sword-dances serve to show how new variants of folk-dances and songs depend for their creation on a forgetfulness [continued on page 2]

¹ Kennedy, D. (1927?) "The North Skelton Sword Dance", in Kennedy, D., Sinclair, M., and Whiteman, E. *The North Skelton Sword Dance and the Newbiggin Rapper Sword-Dance*. (London: English Folk Dance Society).

[continued from previous page] that is compensated for by individual artistic creation." Well, maybe. Ian Porter's article [*this issue*] suggests a different view of dance creation. Kennedy's version of events is also alluded to in a web-based history of the Loftus sword dancers.²

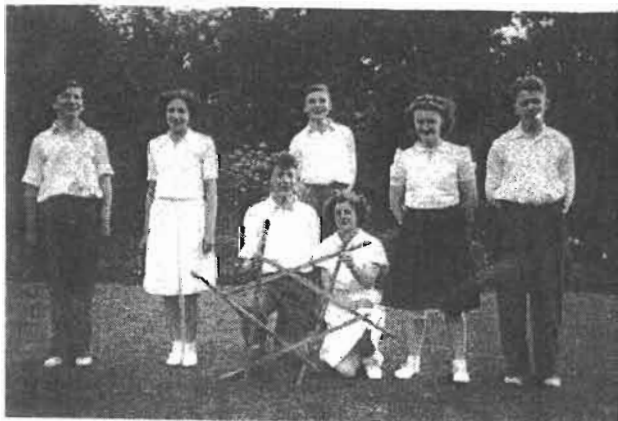
An alternative account of the founding of the Lingdale team is that given by Ian Keeler, who credits the local influence of the Pennyman family of Ormesby Hall, allied to the enthusiastic visits of Rolf Gardiner.³ Still more information can be found on the Communicate website, much of it contributed by Redcar Sword Dancers' Kevin Hall.⁴

The reason for publishing this article now is because of information provided by Alison Younger, who will be known to some of you for her work in the Mrs. Ackroyd Band, with Les Barker. Alison told us that her grandfather had founded the Lingdale Primrose Sword Dancers, that she had photographs, and that she also had a tape-recorded interview with her Uncle Teddy, who danced with the team.

Alison's Account (interview with authors 28.2.2007)

Alison's grandfather was William Rosevere Knight, known as Bill. He was born in 1899 in Brotton, near Loftus, and worked as an ironstone miner at Boosbeck and Lingdale mines. As a young man he danced with Squire Wharton's team⁵, between Guisborough and Loftus, and in the mid-1920s he formed the Primrose Sword Dancers, in Lingdale, with other local miners. In the early days they practised at the Boosbeck and Lingdale schools, and music was provided by his wife, who played the piano. The couple had fourteen children, of whom Alison's Uncle Teddy was the youngest of his generation to have danced. He is now 83 years old and lives in York.

The pre-War team enjoyed the patronage of a woman who was always referred to as 'Madam Sinclair' [*probably the same Marjory Sinclair who jointly collected the Newbiggin dance*]. She was linked both to Squire Wharton and to Cecil Sharp House, and it was she who was able to secure the first invitation for the team to travel to Germany. The musician at this time was Arthur Marshall. [*Marshall is not named on the Communicate site, which identifies the musician as Dick Hoggarth*].



The next generation of dancers, shortly after the Second World War. Nora, one of Bill Knight's daughters, is standing second from left in the left-hand photograph. (*Photograph from Alison Younger*)

¹ This is the North East₁ (undated) **Sword Dancing**. <<http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/loftushistory/page1.phtml>> downloaded 7.5.07

² This is the North East₁ (undated) **Sword Dancing**. <<http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/loftushistory/page1.phtml>> downloaded 7.5.07

³ Keeler, I. (2000) **Sword Dancing – A Village Tradition**. <<http://www.nymcam.co.uk/key28b.htm>> downloaded 3.3.2007

⁴ This is the North East₂ (undated) **Sword Dancers**. <<http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/lingdaleitshistory/page62.phtml>> downloaded 3.3.2007

⁵ Squire Wharton appears to have been William Henry Anthony Wharton, who succeeded his father at Skelton Castle in 1901. For more information, see Skelton-in-Cleveland in History (undated) **1900~1901** <http://homepage.nflworld.com/band1/danby/Skelton1900_1901.html> downloaded 7.5.2007

Uncle Teddy's Story (recorded late 2005 by Chris Pollington, © 2007, Cock Robin Music)

Teddy was the only one of Bill Knight's sons to dance sword, although he thinks that his brothers might have learnt the [Cotswold] morris. He was born c1924 and joined the team when he was 14½, so he missed the first German trip and was considered too young to join in the second. Round about 1938 he was a member of the junior team that won a cup in the Darlington competition, and a few weeks later the men's team won at Whitby. The Whitby competition was judged by Madam Sinclair, and the men's dance was slightly different from that of the juniors. This could be linked to his description of the dancers themselves, who he says were all miners and 'stiff in the knees'. He remembers having to lie about his age and claim to be 17, because if he had admitted his true age (14) he would have been disqualified.

At this time the team wore black shoes (highly polished), black serge trousers, and white shirts. They did not wear ties, and sashes were only worn for the morris dancing (along with bells). They did wear black cummerbunds. Waistcoats, if worn at all, were taken off before dancing to prevent the men from getting too sweaty.

The swords were made by the blacksmith at the mine, who also used to repair damaged swords. He would make a new set every year. The swords were scattered when the team dissolved, and his brother, Ron, still has one. [*Ron lives in Lincolnshire, and Alison is going to pursue this*]. When asked if he ever saw rappers, he said yes, but they 'sounded a bit tinny compared with ours'.

The dance included a beheading and finished with a lock. There were six dancers and two 'clowns', who wore no special costume but were expected to be very smart. It was one of the clowns who was beheaded in the dance. Teddy was emphatic that the dance was known as the 'Yorkshire Long Traditional Sword Dance' – he states this more than once. His role in the pre-War years was to stand in when one of the men was sick.

Music was usually provided by Dick Hoggarth, who played the melodeon. He would play any danceable tunes, traditional or popular, such as the 'Lambeth Walk'. He was sometimes joined by a trombonist! Teddy identifies the musician pictured outside the farmhouse⁶ in 1935-6 as Hoggarth, but thinks that the one in the post-war photograph at Whitby is Arthur Marshall. [**Note:** Arthur Marshall definitely played for Loftus.⁷ Further information has been published by Folktrax in publicity material for their recording *The Plough Stots*.⁸] The two teams certainly co-operated in other respects, as when Teddy describes them sharing taxis home from the sword competition.

Bill Knight had worked as a miner in Rotherham and Durham. Teddy thinks that he might have learnt to dance at school, in Brotton, round about 1912. He first taught the dance when living in Moorsholm, round about 1920, and continued to do so in Lingdale, where he was living by the time Teddy was born. The team danced widely: more local events included Squire Wharton's castle and the Rowntree's chocolate factory in York, but they were also invited through the English Folk Dance and Song Society to dance at a miners' gala in Haringey (London). Teddy's impression was that Bill did not create the dances from scratch, but added bits to what he'd learnt.

The 1936 trip to Germany was at the invitation of a group of German miners who had already visited Britain. The team went by boat from Hull. The event was linked to German arrangements for the Berlin Olympics of that year, and the Cleveland Gazette reported the team's refusal to do the Nazi salute. [*According to Alison, the 1938 visit was a far less happy affair, and despite their refusal to salute, the team returned to Lingdale to find their houses daubed with swastikas*].

⁶ This is the North East₂ <<http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/lingdaleitshistory/page62.phtml>> , the caption identifies 'the little one on the right' as Sid Ellwood, but Alison says that this is Bill Knight.

⁷ This is the North East₂ <<http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/lingdaleitshistory/page62.phtml>>

⁸ Folktrax (2006) **FTX-111 The Plough Stots** <<http://www.folktrax.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/menus/cassprogs/111cleveland.htm>> downloaded 7.5.07

Teddy might have missed the German trips, but he did dance at the Albert Hall. He left the team when work took him away from the area. He says that one trophy is still in the family, and Alison is going to pursue this, as well as the surviving sword. It would be interesting to know what might survive in German archives about the pre-War visits, particularly in relation to the Olympics.

We are, of course, indebted to Alison for her information, and would be interested in hearing what others might be able to add to this account.



Lingdale Primrose
Sword Dancers,
c1959-60
*(Photograph originally
from local press; copy
held by Alison
Younger)*

Sources

Kennedy, D. (1927?) "The North Skelton Sword Dance", in Kennedy, D., Sinclair, M., and Whiteman, E. **The North Skelton Sword Dance and the Newbiggin Rapper Sword-Dance**. (London: English Folk Dance Society).

Folktrax (2006) **FTX-111 The Plough Stots**

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Keeler, I. (2000) **Sword Dancing – A Village Tradition**. <<http://www.nymcam.co.uk/key28b.htm>> downloaded 3.3.2007.

Skelton-in-Cleveland in History (undated) **1900~1901**

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/bandl.danby/Skelton1900_1901.html> downloaded 7.5.2007

This is the North East₁ (undated) **Sword Dancing**. <<http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/loftushistory/page1.phtml>> downloaded 7.5.2007.

This is the North East₂ (undated) **Sword Dancers**. <<http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/lingdaleitshistory/page62.phtml>> downloaded 3.3.2007

International Sword Spectacular – 2008

The committee have made a site visit to the school which they are intending to use for accommodation etc. All appeared to be satisfactory, and they are awaiting the outcome of financial negotiations before making further announcements. For further information about this event, contact **Stuart Higson** at 8, The Close, Romanby, Northallerton, North Yorkshire.

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Evolution In Sword Dancing Today:

The Claro Experience: Part 2.

Ian Porter

The Knaresborough Sword Dance

In 1980, the Claro Sword and Morris Men were invited to dance at a civic reception hosted by Dr Arnold Kellett, a retired teacher, Yorkshire dialect expert and local historian, who was then the Mayor of Knaresborough. Dr Kellett asked me well before the event if there was any possibility of reviving the Knaresborough Sword Dance. He had found references to sword dancing in Knaresborough in E.Hargrove's "The History of the Castle, Town and Forest of Knaresborough". In the 6th edition, dated 1809, Hargrove writes: '*The Sword-Dance is still practiced here, during the Christmas holydays. It is a very ancient custom, and is performed in much the same manner as described by Olaus Magnus in his history of the northern nations.*' He then goes on to give a translation of a very unhelpful description furnished by Olaus Magnus, which tells of an unknown number of men dancing with swords; at first sheathed, then unsheathed, then taken in a hilt and point ring. "Then by changing their order (*a figure? -my insert*) they throw themselves into the figure of a hexagon which they call a rose." So the description does not help very much. I told Dr Kellett that the description given was too vague and too general to be of any use in reconstructing the Knaresborough dance, if indeed there had been an indigenous dance, but I was able to reassure him that we would be able to perform a dance from a nearby location which would possibly have resembled what was done in Knaresborough in 1809. We duly presented our version of the Kirkby Malzeard dance.

After the successful Morris Ring meeting hosted by Claro in 1987, we invited Dr Kellett to become our club President. His excellent after-dinner speech at the Ring Meeting feast and his clear enthusiasm for traditional pursuits, especially for those rooted in Yorkshire, made him an obvious candidate for the Presidency, and he has served in this capacity ever since. He has accompanied us on trips to the Continent and has often met us on our local tours and has occasionally been heard to tell our audiences that the Kirkby Malzeard dance they have just witnessed was, in fact, the Knaresborough sword dance.

Post-millennium, the Claro Sword and Morris Men have fallen on hard times. It is a familiar story. Increasing age, bringing with it increasing fragility and stiffness of joints, and extra demands on the time of men no longer in full time employment has meant that the pool of experienced dancers able to turn out for an event has fallen. It was becoming obvious that we needed a dance which could be performed with five men rather than six or eight, so that we would be able to fulfil some of our commitments. I gave this some considerable thought. I wanted to produce

- (a) a dance for five men only
- (b) a dance that used only figures common to English Longsword dances, or derived from them
- (c) a dance performed to a tune in 9/8 time.

The last criterion was not essential, but I had always found the 9/8 Ampleforth tune particularly appealing, and somehow dancing to that rhythm has a special drive which is different from that produced by tunes in other time signatures. After a few weeks, the new dance was unveiled and tried out on a willing set of Claro dancers.

The dance starts with a slightly unconventional clash in the low and high positions. The first figure is a 'single under' figure with resemblances to the Ampleforth 'third man under' insofar as the second man to pass under the raised sword turns the opposite way to the others and is directed back to his place by his neighbour while carrying the two swords over the heads of the others. This is repeated with all swords being raised in turn. Each turn is followed by a four-bar clockwise circle. The second figure is like the first, except that it is a 'single over' figure. The third figure bears some relation to, and was probably subconsciously inspired by, the Loftus 'advance and retire over swords'. It is in this figure that there is a small advantage in having five dancers rather than six. The three dancers with number 1 in the centre advance towards the other two, who also advance, forming a line of five. The two step over the swords in front of them (lowered, of course - this is a dance, not an exercise in gymnastics) and the set opens into a back-ring. This circles anticlockwise for four bars, then the line of five is re-formed

and the middle dancer of the three – number 1 in this case – steps backwards over the sword behind him to return to the normal ring formation. This figure could be repeated five times, but in practice we have found that three repetitions is enough, since the whole movement occupies 16 bars of the 9/8 tune. I wanted to introduce a hey into the new dance but there is a small problem with a five-man dance. Most sword dances that incorporate heys have either a circular hey, or two parallel straight heys, both of which require an even number of dancers. Straight heys can be danced with an odd number, so the fourth figure begins with the dancers moving into a line of five, as in the previous figure, but as they do so, releasing the points of their neighbour's swords and shouldering their own swords to move into a reel of five, reminiscent of, but unlike the straight reel of eight in the Flamborough dance. I was also keen to incorporate a poussette or 'plaiting' figure, but realised that the usual figure is impossible with only five dancers. The problem was solved by having one dancer (number 3) operating as a solo, while the other four pair up and behave as normal in this kind of figure. What emerged was a figure in which the pairs dance as normal in a poussette, changing places either with each other, or with the soloist. At the ends, when not changing places, the pairs execute a slow roll away from the set, and the soloist does a two bar slow turn on the spot. It's a bit strange at first, but it does seem to work. The penultimate figure is quite straightforward. The set turns inside out, to form a back ring. The ring circles clockwise for four bars then all turn in individually to enable the lock to be formed. The lock is displayed then passed around the dancers until returning to the leader.

The tune is not particularly distinguished, and many people have told me that it reminds them of other tunes that they know. So while it is quite unique, it is like the dance itself, and owes a great deal to other tunes. Somehow or other, it developed *three* four-bar phrases, rather than just two, so it has an A, a B and a C music. We decided that as we had been expected for so many years to come up with the Knaresborough dance, our new dance would *be* the Knaresborough Sword Dance, and as such, we have performed it every year since 2000 at the annual Plough Blessing on Plough Sunday in Knaresborough Parish Church, as well as anywhere else we have danced. With some idea of making the whole thing even more complete, a calling-on song was composed, but I have to confess that it has never been used, mainly because it required each dancer in turn to announce himself in song, and several of our members flatly

refused to do this in public. It would be possible, of course, for one singer to introduce the dancers instead of having them introduce themselves, but nobody (even the writer) has yet bothered to learn all the verses so up to press, the calling-on song remains unused.

For me, this represented an almost complete reversal of belief. This time I was not 'developing' or 'interpreting' a known recorded dance. This time I had composed a dance from scratch, admittedly using traditional dance-forms, but modifying them to fit the five-man format. I had, by now, become convinced that evolution of dance-forms sometimes takes place by deliberate invention, and there is evidence to support that view in the current repertoire of at least three of the Morris teams that claim an unbroken link with the past. The melodies used in ceremonial dance frequently have no great antiquity, and I am sure that dance-figures were sometimes invented to fit what was considered to be a good tune. It is also true to say the dances have been composed in the past to celebrate specific events, so evolution is not always a natural process of gradual development, and even when it is, the gradual process may need an occasional boost from a single source, such as a particularly creative foreman or teacher.

The Hampsthwaite Sword Dance

Hampsthwaite is a village about five miles from Harrogate and, as well as having an unlikely looking cluster of consonants in the middle of its name, it is listed in the Geographical Index (*Cawte et al. J.E.F.D.S.S. Vol IX No 1*) as having a Longsword tradition; information drawn from Sharp's manuscripts. As far as anyone is aware, no trace or record of the dance survives.

After we had developed the Knaresborough dance and achieved what we thought was performance standard, we realised that we were not much better off. In a situation where we were committed to dance and could raise only six dancers and a musician then had a last-minute illness or injury, we would only have a single dance to offer, so a 15 minute dance spot would consist of 3 or 4 repetitions of the same dance! Not a good idea. It was apparent that we needed at least one other dance, preferably providing a contrast to the Knaresborough dance. I had considered a few ideas during the development of the latter, so I consolidated my notes and we developed another five-man dance. The criteria I adopted were: the dance needed to be

In a different rhythm and it needed to have a completely different 'look'. The rhythm was straightforward – choose a tune that was in 2/4 or 4/4 and it would sound very different from the 9/8 rhythm of the other dance. We aimed for a dance that contained its own contrasts in speed and size of set. So the dance tends to alternate figures where dancers are close together with figures where the set is more widely spread, and to alternate slower moving with faster moving figures.

The march-on is performed with the dancers linked together. Dancers hold their swords shouldered, and each grasps the tip of the sword of the dancer in front, and in this way they lead onto the arena. The dancers circle and the circle is completed by the leader grasping the point of the last dancer's sword. The first figure is a 'one-turn-off' figure. As the set circles clockwise, each dancer in sequence turns to his left and circles counter-clockwise around the outside of the set back to place. When all have completed this movement, the swords are lowered to waist level and the set circles to the end of the phrase. It is worth pointing out here that one of the inherent difficulties of performing a five-man dance to tunes that are divided into an even number of phrases is that you sometimes end up with spare music (or it seems that there is not enough music) so some compromises have to be made. In the Knaresborough dance we use a whole phrase of music for each movement, so the problem hardly arises, but in the new dance we were finding that there were bits of music left over that we needed to do something with.

The stationary figures are simple 'over-your-neighbour's-sword' and 'over-your-own-sword' figures danced in turn while the set marks time on the spot. Each dancer makes a half-turn, then steps over the appropriate sword. After all five dancers have executed this manoeuvre, the set circles to the end of the phrase. These two figures are separated by a much livelier figure, which is similar to the 'double over and under' figure that I composed for our version of the Bellerby dance. Double over and double under figures of the kind found in the North Skelton dance are not really possible in a five-man dance, so a modification is adopted

here. Each sword is raised in turn. The dancer directly opposite the raised sword moves forward under the sword, followed by the other two men. All three turn to face the opposite way and the two holding the raised sword turn away and lower it, so that the other three can step over it, two followed by one, to return to original places. Each movement takes a total of sixteen steps, so the whole figure occupies eighty steps, or forty bars of a 2/4 tune. Next there is a more conventional double-under figure in which a pair, followed closely by a single dancer, pass under each sword in turn.

The penultimate figure is a 'thread-the-needle' figure. The dancers close up. The leader releases the point of his neighbour's sword and passes under an arch made by the two dancers in front of him raising the sword. The leader leads the whole team under the arch and grasps the sword previously released. This movement is repeated by each dancer in turn, then the circle opens out and swords are lowered into a low basket position. After a low clash, a shoulder lock is formed, as in the Askham Richard dance, and the dance concludes.

I am not entirely happy with this dance. There is at least one figure where I feel I have drifted away from the spirit of *English* sword dance. However, now that Claro has mastered it, the Hampsthwaite Sword Dance has become part of our repertoire and the men who have learned it, including me, seem to enjoy dancing it.

It was my original intention to write a tune for this dance, later modified into an intention to adapt a tune which I had in mind. This never happened. We started using another tune for practice and Bob Hart, our principal musician, developed versions of 'Bobby Shaftoe' and 'Yankee Doodle' to fit the dance. It is certain that these will become the preferred accompaniment. My thanks go to him, and to our Foreman, Mike Benson, who has worked hard to interpret my ideas into a danceable dance, and to the members of Claro Sword and Morris Men, who have made many valuable suggestions and helped with the development process.

The third and final part of this article will be in the next issue of RUMB.

Subscription Renewal

If you are reading this then it means that we have got to the end of series 15 (2006) and you should have received a subscription renewal form for series 16. Please remember that your contributions are always welcome, whether in written form or simply the occasional e-mailed photograph to show what your team has been up to.

News, Queries, Requests

A Query from Jeff Lawson

Driving out to Southport in the dark of a May Day morning I got to thinking about the origins of dancing at dawn. Is this a custom invented during the revival or are there historic precedents? Going on from this is it a "Cotswold Morris" custom or does it belong to the wider Morris world? I can only think of Southport Swords and Newcastle Kingsmen who currently dance sword at dawn.

I know you have well read and knowledgeable readership, perhaps someone can enlighten us on the origins of this custom.

[Is there indeed anybody out there with an informed answer to this? AK.]

Sword Dance Union

Longsword Tournament

This will take place in Derby, on Saturday, 13th October, 2007, as follows:

12.30 Meet and greet at the Guildhall

1-3pm **either** dancing in Osnabruck Square, St. Peter's Street, and St. James Street

or

Workshops: Grenoside on Grenoside (1-2pm) and Barnsley Longsword on Haxby: both in the Guildhall Rooms (2-3pm)

3.00pm Displays and competition; prizes include

- Traditional
- Own dance
- Youth
- Juniors
- Music

4.30pm Prizegiving and SDU AGM.

5.30 Refreshment break

6.30 SDU Dinner (tbc)

9.00 Rapper tour of pubs

For more information contact Phil Heaton at

pcheat@btinternet.com

Sword Dance Workshop

Tom Kruskal tells of a **Sword Workshop Extraordinaire** on March 31, 2007, at the International school of Boston, 40 Matignon Road, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Teachers included Judy Erickson, Tony Barrand, Steve Corrsin, Rhett Krause, Great Meadows Morris and Sword, Frank Attanasio, Jan Elliott, and Lily Leahy. Extraordinaire indeed. Is anybody able to send a report of this event?



Above: you get plenty of photographs of sword dancers in full flow, so here's one of a musician for once. This is Bert Cleaver, playing for Barnsley Longsword in Barnsley on St. George's Day, 23rd March, 2006.

Photograph taken by Chris Davison and sent by Mick Roberts.