

Issue 4, Series 16, 2007-8

Triple Celebration

On the 11th June, 2007, the English Folk Dance and Song Society held its 75th Anniversary Awards ceremony at Cecil Sharp House.

Pictured on the right is Gordon Ridgewell, who received an award, shaking hands with Ursula Vaughan Williams, President of the EFDSS and widow of Ralph Vaughan Williams. Congratulations, Gordon.

(Note: Ursula Vaughan Williams died on the 23rd October, 2007)

Photograph: Rupert Ridgewell



On the left are the Greensleeves Morris Men displaying the lock in the North Skelton Sword Dance. They were dancing in honour of Bert Cleaver (seen here playing his pipe and tabor), who was also presented with one of the 75th Anniversary Awards. Congratulations, then to Bert, and to the Society itself.

Photograph: Gordon Ridgewell

DETR 2008

The Dancing England Rapper Tournament: Liverpool, 9-11th March, 2008

Hosted by Southport Swords

It was fitting that DETR should go to Liverpool in that city's year as European Capital of Culture. Southport Swords did an admirable job, securing Lottery funding and basing the event in Liverpool University's Students' Guild (the students' social centre).

The format was subtly changed from that of recent years. The idea of being judged in a series of pubs was retained, and it was agreed in the light of experience that the only way to do this fairly and consistently was for all teams to be seen by all the judges. This has posed a problem for organisers in recent years as the number of teams taking part has grown. Southport's solution was much stricter scheduling – five minutes for each performance and, possibly more importantly, a five minute limit for judging each dance. Amazingly, it

worked, the only delay being caused by a hitch in the lunch arrangements for the judges.

One refinement this year was that each team was judged on five dances, rather than the usual four, with the lowest score being ignored in the final calculations. As a result, teams actually got more dancing as well as being seen by all judges, a real feat of organisation.

Another innovation was the announcement of results, given simultaneously in words by John Roberts and in mime by his brother Dave. It's not clear whether this aspect is ever likely to be repeated. Be that as it may, Southport Swords are to be congratulated on running an excellent weekend.

The Teams:

Listed in finishing order

Newcastle Kingsmen
Thrales Rapper
Black Swan 1
Black Swan 2
Gaorsach
Sallyport Sword Dancers
Smutt Rapper
Whip the Cat
Stone Monkey Sword
Silver Flame Rapper
Lamb & Flag Sword Dancers
Pengwyn Rapper
Mabel Gubbins
Durham University Rapper
Northgate
Triskele Tyzacks
Hexham Rapper
Castle Keep Rapper
Dark Horse Rapper

Exhibitors (dancing but not competing):
Lark Hill Sword Squad
Ryknild Rapper

The Trophies



Best musician: Black Swan 1

Best character: Thrales Rapper

Best Traditional Dance: Thrales Rapper (Beadnell)

Tyzack Shield ('buzz factor' – most exciting team) Thrales Rapper

Winners, Open class: Gaorsach

Winners, Premier class: Newcastle Kingsmen

Winners, Steve Marris Trophy (DETR overall champions): Newcastle Kingsmen

International Sword Spectacular Festival

York: 23-26 May, 2008

Website: <http://www.swordspec.org>

Such has been the success in attracting teams that the Festival is now closed to new bookings unless places become available because of cancellations. Confirmed teams include:

Overseas:

Bal da Sabre Fenestrelle (Italy)	Jack the Rapper (Norway)	Orion Longsword (USA)
Boerke Naas (Belgium)	Kezka (Basque Country)	St. Martin in Sulmtal (Austria)
Charles River Rapper (USA)	Komna (Czech)	St. Sebastiaansgilde Westerlo (Belgium)
Clownfish Rapper (USA)	Lange Wapper (Belgium)	Überlinger Schwerttanzkompanie (Germany)
Cutting Edge Rapper (USA)	Les Pas d'la Yau – Quevaucamps (Belgium)	

Great Britain

Black Rigg Rapper	Gift Rapper	Redcar Sword Dancers
Black Swan Rapper	Goathland Plough Stots	Rockingham Rapper & Step
Carlisle Clog & Sword	Grenoside Sword Dancers	Ryburn Longsword
Castleford Longsword	Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers	Ryknild Rapper
Claro Sword & Morris Men	Hoddesdon Crownsmen	Sallyport Sword Dancers
Coventry Morris Men	King Stone Rapper	Stone Monkey Sword Dancers
Coventry Mummers	Mabel Gubbins Rapper	Sullivan's Sword
Durham University Rapper Team	Pengwyn Rapper Sword Dancers	Triskele Sword
Flamborough Sword Dancers		Whip the Cat

Programme Highlights

Friday:	some British and American teams to visit local schools 5.00pm – festival reception and campsite open food available; bar until 1.00am
Saturday:	10.30am – parade through York City Centre 11am-4pm – dancing in City Centre 7.00pm – Huntington School opens for ceilidh (bar until 1.00am)
Sunday:	9-11am – workshops (including one by Orion Longsword) 12mid-3.30pm – dancing in City Centre 4-9pm – Gala Performance – Theatre Royal (food and bar available) 10pm-1am – international D.I.Y. ceilidh at Huntington School
Monday:	12mid - meet at Haxby Working Men's Club; informal dancing 1pm – performance of 4 local sword dances 2.30pm – Haxby workshop

The one piece of bad news is that 'Awards for All' have turned down the Festival's application for a grant, leaving a £9,606 hole in the budget. Adjustments have been made wherever possible, but one result is the cancellation of the planned community programme. Still, if it helps pay for the London Olympics.... Festival visitors can help by buying the merchandise and drinking in the festival bars.

Nevertheless, with a great programme and an unprecedented selection of teams, and with York as the backdrop, it looks set to be a truly spectacular event.

Midwinter Selection: dancing in Yorkshire

Photographs from Boz Davison

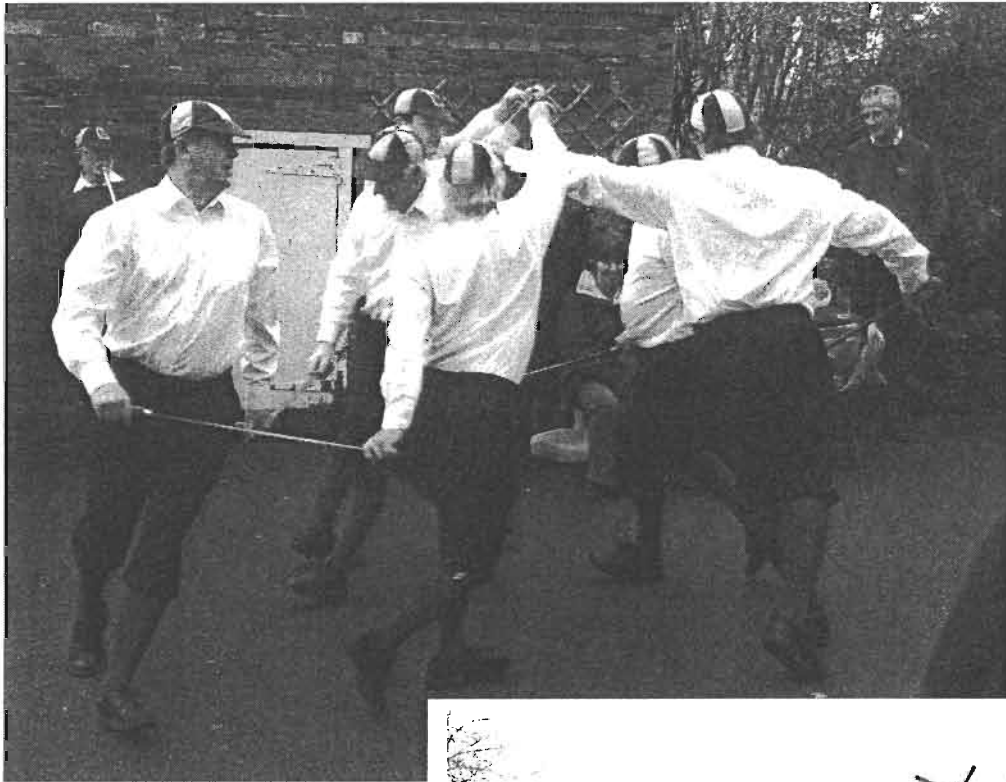
Right and below:
Handsworth Sword Dancers on
26th December, 2007.

*(There will be more about
Handsworth in the next issue)*



Right:
Kirkburton Rapier Dancers on the 1st January, 2008





Left and below:
Barnsley Longsword
Dancers on Sunday, 30th
December, 2007



Left:
Kirkburton Rapier Dancers,
1st January, 2008

In Their Own Words...

Continuing the series of profiles of teams who have announced their intention to attend the festival.

5. Boerke Naas

Founded in 1949, Boerke Naas remains an infectious-vital folk art group with a whole range of activities: folk dance, community singing, decorative craft, sword dance, traditional music and flag waving. Unusually, they have their own restaurant, **de Sevenster**, in their home town of Sint-Niklaas, in Flanders (Belgium). They dance with both humour and a passion for their tradition. Their traditional outing is at Half-Lent (Continental Mothering Sunday).
Website: www.boerkenaaas.be

Photograph (right) one of many at

<http://picasaweb.google.be:80/dirk.adriaenssens/20070316Halfvasten>



6. Orion

Orion Longsword, formed in 1986 near Boston, Massachusetts in the United States, is known for its innovative choreography, bringing together a wide variety of musical and artistic traditions. As important as the dances we perform is the music to which we dance. Our always live band - consisting of instruments from accordion and guitar to saxophone and banjo - plays everything from traditional tunes to jazz. This has given us the opportunity to perform dances of our own composition, which we have been doing since 1992.



Our dances range from interpretations of traditional dances, like "Salton" which is danced to "Masters in This Hall", to brand new creations like "Take 5", danced to Paul Desmond's jazz tune of the same name, and the Appalachian clog sword dance, "Sandy Boys". Falling somewhere in between, "North Shirley Volunteers" combines traditional sword figures with a Lancashire clog break. Two of our dances were the direct result of trips to England - "Dual Pelican, No Bleeper" was inspired by a road sign we came across in Yorkshire and "Mr. Hopkins" is our attempt to thank Mr. Brian Hopkins for the most astounding compliment we've ever received - namely the gift of ten beautiful mahogany-handled longswords.

Dansgroep Lange Wapper was founded in Antwerp in February 1958. The mission of the group was to concentrate on



traditional dances and music of the area covering Vlaams Brabant and De Kempen. Antwerp is situated in the middle of this area, which is to be found in the centre and North - North-East of the Flemish speaking part of Belgium.

As time went by and the knowledge of dance techniques

increased, Renaat Van Craenenbroeck, co-founder and late Dance Leader of the group, started to create a number of new dances based on the traditional techniques and traditional music. These were and are used in a still increasing number of dance courses very well appreciated within and outside Belgium. At the same time he got interested in Sword dances. This led him to get in contact with people with the same interests all over Europe and even in the USA. He became known in many places as an authority on Sword Dancing.

Over the years the group had ups and downs with numbers of members varying from 30 to 15 and up again. Today the group has about 50 members. The Traditionele Antwerpse Zwaarddans got its revival in 1970 when it was danced in front of the Cathedral in Antwerpen, for the first time in the previous century. Since then the dance has been performed every year on the Sunday of Half Lent (= 3 weeks before Easter). The dance is based on notifications found in city archives and on a drawing from a contemporary painter of Pieter Bruegel de Oude.

Traces go back to the 13th century. The dance represents the introduction of young men within the men's society in the Middle Ages and the following centuries. It also means a symbolic celebration of the end of the dark winter time and the start of Spring with the return of the Light (= more sun light).

The shape of the dance today is regarded as one of the most monumental examples of Sword dance. The dance consists of 9 main figures and lasts about 25 minutes. The recreation of the dance was a life achievement of Renaat Van Craenenbroeck. He spent most of his life researching for the origin and the source of sword dances, their significance, the spread all over Europe and the possible relationship of characteristics between dances in different countries.

The team also has what it calls "our small sword dance", danced by 6 people wearing clogs, and without music. Furthermore, Dansgroep Lange Wapper has a women's sword dance danced by 6 (or more) girls of the group. This dance includes characteristics and figures similar to the ones of British Sword Dances.

8. Die Überlinger Schwerttanzkompanie

Lake Constance, Germany



The sword dance is an age-old guild dance, whose roots are to be found in the Überlingen Shrovetide customs. The first documentary evidence of the dance occurs in the minutes of the council of the Imperial cities, dated 8th February 1646.

The true origin of the dance is unclear. The local tradition is that it was granted by the Holy Roman Emperor following a military encounter in the 15th or 16th century.

Within the sword dance a special role is played by the Hänsele, the central Shrovetide figure in Überlingen. The local tradition explains his appearance thus: the Imperial City of Überlingen had to supply the Emperor with 100 men for his war. Before they marched away they all went to Mass, all except for one, who went to the pub instead. After the war they all came safely home except for the one townsman who had fallen in battle. He is the one, the fool and apostate, who is commemorated by the Hänsele. The people of Überlingen also call him "den Töten", the dead man.

The dance was originally performed by all the unmarried young men on Shrove Tuesday, but the privilege was quickly taken over by the Vintners, the largest and most powerful of the guilds in Überlingen.

The custom gradually changed during the nineteenth century. The link with Shrovetide was loosened and it became a separate tradition, taking on new elements as it did so. It is now performed on special occasions, and in particular on the second Sunday in July for a local religious festival known as the Sweden procession (this commemorates the struggle against Sweden in the Thirty Years War of the seventeenth century).

In the sword dance the piper and drummer play a tune called the "Maidlintanz" (maidens' dance). Every sword dancer requests a dance from one of the women who are dressed in traditional costume, and while the pairs are dancing the Hänsele entertains the public with mime and practical jokes.

Published by: Andrew Kennedy, 88, Liverpool Road, Penwortham, near Preston, Lancashire. PR1 0HT. Tel: 01772 748976

E-mail: andrew@north-british.co.uk

Subscriptions and distribution: Jeff Lawson, 110 Park Road, Chorley, Lancashire. PR7 1QY. Tel: 01257 249686

E-mail: JeffL@lambflag.org.uk