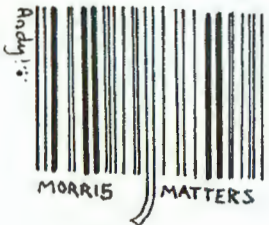


Morris Matters



MORRIS MATTERS PUBLICATIONS

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Another year over—weather could have been better but festivals were good in spite of poor weather. Our cover reflects a theme—Sidmouth and what will happen—what will the Phoenix be like in 2006 or afterwards?

Twelfth Night celebrations have been going on over an extended period...there seems to be a lot of wassailing around! I enjoyed seeing The Lions Part who were wassailing and mumming near the Globe Theatre - the mummers play mystified the tourists but was much enjoyed by the regular morris groupies.

Please spread the word—get your friends to read Morris Matters—to buy it and to write for it! Thanks as always to Jill Griffiths and Steve Poole for proofreading and technical help.

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Poynton Folk Festival

This will run from 25—27 March 2005 at Woodford Community Centre, Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport SK7 1PS—at a larger improved venue.

Artists include Fairport Acoustic Convention, Jacqui Mc Shee's Pentangle, Ben & Joe Broughton, McCalmans, Sad Pig etc.

Singarounds and dance displays plus childrens events. Camping available.

For details contact 01625 430149 (Dave Hughes) or 01625 872539 (Gordon Shields)

Web site also has all information and booking forms: www.poyntonfolkfestival.com

Mining the Sources: Morris Dance References of the Renaissance

A lecture by John Forrest given at Sidmouth 2004

I was unable to get into this talk, so Roy Dommett has kindly summarised it for us. That Unitarian Hall is not big enough for some of the lectures that were offered at Sidmouth.

The Origins

John is an anthropologist now working in the USA, who was a Morris Dancer in England, joint writer with Mike Heaney of the "Annals of Early Morris", 1991, published by Sheffield University in association with The Morris Ring, and author of a book analysing the material, "The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750", published by James Clarke, Cambridge, 1999, after some delay. It was very difficult to get any dance movements out of the surviving material. He was concerned with the context of the dance and how this affected the interpretation of the records of the dance. He had some profound insights. There is still a need to fully establish and understand the contexts of the existing references. It started with the Royal Morris which was very elaborate and whose cost was enormous. Henry VII paid for four performances. In 1514, at Epiphany, Twelfth Night, there was a single performance in an interlude, but the costumes were reusable. Organisers recycled morris costumes, hired them out, etc

In those days immense wealth had to be shown, involving enormously rich displays of costume, especially in front of foreign dignitaries, and also at weddings, the context being power. Royal weddings were the greatest opportunity to show off. So, elaborate performance equalled power. The dances were themed around fighting, courting, and other contemporary contexts. The wider tradition, the renaissance context, was romantic at all stages, with knights and women in towers being rescued. The Moresque, was a dance form from the same tournament context, and this became context for the morris. Pages were selected for being the best dancers. The problem of the time was how to get the previous masculine tournament-like aggressive things out of the court.

Peasants were all too busy in the fields. We should look at analogous forms in Europe. The earliest reference is 1408. We have to recognise that Europe exists and there are and were links. In those days there were many more. Moorish there usually meant bells. It indicated savagery, attached to arms and bodies, a form of bravoism. The dances were seen in Burgundy and other states. Italian Dancing widely imported, therefore it became the next fashion in Europe, a common ancestor for all the different European traditions. The different forms of the morris, but most commonly the processional, occur in all the different contexts. They were divergent in their form, more so in Europe, there never was only one form of the morris. There was then an interplay of European ideas, they were going back and

forward all the same.

There was a ship with morris to the USA in 16th century. But no record of the morris afterwards. There were only a few leaders available and they couldn't pass it on

The Tradition

Keith Chandler was the first to consider who were these people who did the morris. Was their activity the consequence of the effects of economics and seasonal jobs? The agricultural labourer had no independent income. Morris was not a leisure activity. In the 19th century it was customary to split the bag, so there were no spare dancers. Musicians were not part of the 19th century team and were paid separately before the bag was divided up. This was a very old concept in the morris. Each musician earned as much as the whole team in Tudor times in London. Socially the musician was a different order of person to the dancers, who were not professionals. Dancing masters put teams together, so dancers could be seasonal. Musicians could only have been professional, they were at all sorts of events. Early church records showed the cost was £4 per coat (up to £1,000 today); they were very costly and elaborate. Church Wardens got rid of the costumes or they were gradually lost, therefore dancers dressed up ordinary clothes to minimise overheads.

The 19th century idea was that the morris had trickled down from the pagan world, Typically an early statement of the idea was by Stubbes, a Puritan in the 16th century. Sunday performances and those in the churchyards were therefore called pagan by Protestants (meaning unreformed Catholic) and equated in their minds to old paganism, along with the lighting of candles and the ringing of bells. Morris was seen to support the old Catholic Church. There were protests against the morris as supported, although it had been used for raising funds for repairs, by having ales, selling beer. So the code word "pagan" equalled Catholic. The argument is persistent; we get it now from our own pagans!

The folk tradition as developed from the dancing masters became a great art.

Cecil Sharp was condescending, he assumed that peasants were basically stagnant and liked doing the same thing year after year. He thought that he was monitoring a form of Englishness, as did Rolf Gardner, a fervent nationalist. But every such historical analysis comes with an agenda.

The morris dance had formed in its present style by 1750. From 1750 onwards stick dances appeared in the south Midlands. A good morris stand needs a variety of dances. Morris in the late 18th century started to emulate their betters. Morris became more popular as depicted at the elite level, and a parody at the lower level. The "Ale" is a parody of formal functions, a form of protest. The Church Ale

developed Robin Hood as a functionary, a hero in the stories to all except the Sheriff, but in folklore he was in practice a great anti-hero appealing to peasants, and antagonistic to the aristocracy, a confusion of personal perceptions. Then there was the loss of the Church Ales, which became illegal. The Puritans technically banned morris. As the old context dried up, it still survived, but then it died almost completely. As a rule, if there were no references, it did not exist. Mostly it went because of economic decisions, but the story was complicated by the changes in the farming techniques of the time. We have to become our own context. The value of the processional was it allowed lots of noise, making it noticed from as far away as it could, as people were in the fields. The need was to attract people as disposable income is minimal, therefore the appeal of a variety of dances.

Today

The elite art world ignores the morris. There are no dialectics any more.

For 300 years morris evolved with creative force, and helped keep the cork of disturbances in the bottle. Dance and music is a powerful form of social comment. Often one can get away with it in dance in the right context. Unfortunately parodying power recognises the existence of power, thus it is self defeating. Morris is not a minor part of society.

What is the social mood today? We have exploited morris in a broader context in the last 30 years. There is a need to refer to this evolution. What social comment is today's morris making? We may be dominant socially in public but the morris itself is now introspective and only talking to itself. Can we take it out of that context? How many dancers really care? Tell them something that they should care about, just get out of the closed circle about yourselves. The dance potentially has a real contribution to make to our communities.

What is the future? Today's situation cannot last. Things do not take a long time to die, morris doesn't just potter on. We have different attitudes and have a different mind set from the "tradition". All things do change, there is no such thing as going on for time immemorial. All the time it is in the context of something else, it is only one of the dance forms available. Collecting has been part of the past of the morris. We don't need the money. What should we say about passing the hat? If we don't need it, then don't think about it.

Roy Dommett

November 2004

The First Week in August: Fifty Years of the Sidmouth Festival" by Derek Schofield

"Just one hundred folk dancers gathered in the beautiful East Devon town of Sidmouth in the first week in August in 1955. Their intention was to perform for the general public, and enjoy the friendship and fun of a week's holiday with dancing. Fifty years later, the motives are just the same. Only now, the Festival participants are numbered in their thousands, and the programme has been extended to include not only the folk dances of England, but also song, music, storytelling, dance and theatre from across the globe. The Sidmouth Festival has always reflected, and often led, the folk music and dance movement."

So runs the first few sentences of the press release for this landmark publication in the history of the Folk revival. Somehow 224 pages and 450 photographs only give a clue as to the colour, charm, liaisons, idiosyncrasies, idiocies and laughter – to say nothing about the music, song and dance that goes on, into what could variously be described as a mission, holiday, or just plain self-indulgence.

Derek sets the scene giving a little of the background into the folk dance movement of the 1950's. This was borne on the back of public interest when the young princesses Elizabeth and Margaret took part in a square dance in Canada. For comparison, the folk dance scene in Devon is appraised, leading to the agreement between the EFDSS and Sidmouth council into setting up town as a possible venue in its inaugural year. The impression given is that the festival participants then were young people, who saw themselves as apostles for this new enthusiasm – what Derek describes elsewhere as the 'shooting roots' of their generation. To enhance the pageantry, the dancers auditioned for and rehearsed to put on a show of English folk dance for public consumption – incredible now, but such was the fervour of the day.

The book traces year by year how the festival developed from 1955. In 1959 and 1960, it transferred to nearby Exmouth, returning in 1961 on the back of a folk song revival that was rapidly to become another facet added to the festival. 'Have a coffee and a song' reads the handbill inviting you up to the 'Folk Song Loft' at Trumps Lane between the two Fore Streets. No all-day licensing existed then; in fact the pubs actively discouraged music.

This was one of many new initiatives which have included separate song events, international dance and music groups, a Children's Festival, a workshop programme, world roots music, theatre productions, and the youth programme 'Shooting Roots' by the late 1980's.

From a Morris interest, this book helps to emphasise just how important Sidmouth was (and is) to the post-Morris On revival. Even in 1955, there were morris dancers present from Wiltshire and Birmingham. There is one glorious photograph of

the rapper team the Sheffield Cutlers performing with a young Dave Swarbrick playing fiddle for them. In 1964, links with the perceived tradition were forged when the Headington Quarry morris men arrived. In 1966, the Westminster morris men performed, presumably hard on the heels of their big screen appearance in the *Great St. Trinian's Train Robbery*. A boys' team from Chingford turned up for the first time in 1966, and the following year saw the Hammersmith morris men (including a young John Kirkpatrick) make their first appearance at the festival.

But the festival as we know it didn't progress until the procurement of the site now known to us as the Knowle Arena in 1970 – formerly an area of scrub land downhill from a former hilltop hotel, now the East Devon District Council offices. Previously, the main outdoor venue had been the Connaught Gardens, atop the west cliff overlooking the town. Even the 'international' aspect of the festival was yet to gather any kind of momentum. Derek himself first went to the Festival in 1971, and from then on the book starts to take on a more personable aspect, having taken part himself as dancer and an Arena MC and (later) Director.

From the morris revival viewpoint, Sidmouth in the 1970's was pivotal to its development. Workshops took place, notably led by Roy Dommett and Tubby Reynolds. There was the women's morris – sorry, 'ladies' ritual' controversy. There was the 'travesty' of a Bampton dancer turning up in brown shoes. But hidden among that was the great boom in style diversification. Garstang were booked in 1972, from which a new interest in north-west morris took flight. In 1974, both the Gloucestershire Old Spot and Great Western morris dancers first participated, building in new standards in athleticism (and humour in the latter's case) into Cotswold. The Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish took Sidmouth by storm in 1977, kindling the future boom in Welsh Border morris. In 1979, the Seven Champions molly dancers took part in the Silver Jubilee celebrations, which changed the life of this particular reviewer. The Mason's Arms in Chapel Place became a rendezvous for informal dancing after workshops, until it closed in 1982. From each of these roots, it could be said that hundreds of teams were to draw inspiration up and down the country.

Depending on the age of the reader, there are so many photographs that will spark the reaction: "Didn't we look young!" or "Look at him! I never knew he had hair!" Otherwise, it will be a case of 'spot the parent.' My favourites include the Marine morris in 1984 (now, who is the be-dungareed bearded dancer with the shaved armpits?), Windsor Morris in 1976 (spot the Morris Matters editor!), and Ken Langsbury geeing up for the Wilson, Keppel and Betty sand dance with camel, years before the Fabulous Fezheads had the idea. Add to that, a scene outside the Masons Arms with South Downs morris performing 'Young Collins' to the concertina playing of John Gasson blacked up in his Seven Champions kit. Oh yes – you even get to find out what one dancing Scotsman wore under his kilt!

If clairvoyant, Derek might have told how a new generation is taking an interested look at the world of Morris, judging by my family's reaction. Morris Offspring have

their admirers, and Black Swan rapper reached new heights with their energy and creative use of lighting in the Festival Dance House.

And that's just a snippet into how Sidmouth changed the face of the Morris. Similar stories could be told in the folk song revival, English country music, and West Gallery music in my own experience. To drop a few names, news of unheard of performers such as Roaring Jelly, the Dead Sea Surfers, the Kipper Family, R. Cajun, as well as the Shropshire Bedlams, spread from one end of the town to the other in hours, to become 'must book' properties at Clubs and festivals within the year. At that time, such acts were engaged for the week at the Festival, although this hasn't been the case for some years. Thus, Derek bequeaths us a litany of performers' names that this reviewer never got to see, since they were only booked for a few days and/or the reviewer was too busy in the Radway or elsewhere!

The First Week in August was commissioned six years ago, although obviously most contributions to it were received later rather than sooner, inundating Derek with more information than could be included. Doubtless, readers will find omissions in the book but, as said in the foreword: "I hope you will find your own stories here, but if not, then I hope you will recognise your own experiences in someone else's stories."

Criticisms? Yes, lots – but mainly frivolous! The book is far too short to please every reader, who will savour his or her own memories, but compromises had to be sought to make the effort affordable. However, counter to that, this book is a marvellous record of the festival's mojo and raison d'être for many people over several generations, to judge by comments reported in July's edition of *fRoots* and in a recent BBC Radio Two documentary narrated by Ralph McTell.

Hopefully, *First Week* will not be an obituary with the envisaged change of management. As I write, Sidmouth Festival is intended to re-appear in its full glory in 2006. Next year, it is imagined that the existing fringe will reign such as the Radway, Bedford and Anchor sessions, also informal morris dancing, plus who knows what else. There's even a hint that this might be coordinated. Handbills, message boards, internet sites and chat rooms reveal a changing picture since the first draft of this article. Whatever happens, it's up to us all to help continue Derek's story.

Reviewed by: George Frampton

September 2004

How to buy The First Week in August Price £25 inc. UK p&p (+44) 01629 827010 Fax (+44) 01629 821874. Leave full order, name, address, phone number, card number, valid from and expiry date. N.B. Please state Switch/Solo Issue number. Festival Office, PO Box 296, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3XU, UK

Sidmouth Folk Week 2005

On October 23 2004, a group of people who have a significant amount of experience in producing festivals got together to ensure that next year's event will go ahead and will assume a more traditional festival format. The people attending included Eddie Upton, Derek Schofield, John Dowell, Gordon Newton, Dick Stanger and several local personages.

What emerged from this meeting was that many of the traditional events were going to happen in any case - such as the playing and singing in the Radway, the Bedford, the Sailing Club, the New Inn, the Market Square and the Volunteer. Stuart Hughes confirmed the Caribbean Night organisers intend to put on an Arena event with the stage area, trade stalls, craft fair and entertainment throughout the week.

Camp sites are being planned—complete with a late night extra marquee and bar. A bus service to the sites will be available.

The children's festival marquee will be sponsored by Sidmouth Town Council—possibly in Blackmore Gardens; while a marquee will be erected in the Ham. The aim is to put much more of the festival back into the town as it was years ago and regain the atmosphere,

Colin Pyne, the owner of the Bedford, has agreed to arrange the funding of the firework display as he has done in years past. The landlord of the Anchor has also agreed to put up a stage for lunchtime ceilidhs.

Sidmouth Steppers have agreed to co-ordinate dance spots and liaise with Sidmouth Town Council. A stronger policy on street traders is likely to be enforced in order that dancers will not have to compete for space.

There is a long way to go but given the support and goodwill of dance teams, performers and anyone else willing to help make it work—Sidmouth Folk Week 2005 could be one of the best yet.

It is not envisaged that season tickets will be sold and camping will be available by direct booking at the sites. Tickets for specific events, publicised well in advance, will be available from the Sidmouth Tourist Information Centre.

Any teams or individuals who wish to help please contact Gordon Newton at:

sweeps@ukonline.co.uk or

01622 720066 (fax) or 01622 862330/726633 (phone)

Reeking Morris

Each winter Morris sides across the country face the same problem: which invitations to Festivals or Weekends of Dance do you accept? At times it seems there are so many that it's a wonder there are any sides left available to go to them. People have different criteria on which they select: have you been there before, what sort of reputation does it have, who else is likely to be there? There are also real problems to be faced, as any Squire will tell you.

- How far can you get through the weekend before you have to repeat a dance?
- How long can you keep the side out of the pub on Saturday?
- Will you still have enough fit (or at least uninjured) dancers for the Sunday lunchtime massed stand?

However, the real problem is personal hygiene: how do you keep clean? The washing facilities never match the demand or the need. Whether the accommodation is indoor or outdoor camping, the facilities could be a half dozen hand basins and a couple of lukewarm showers between 200.

Over the years I have made something of a study of this problem and the ways around it. So, for those facing these events for the first time or seeking a better solution than they found last year, here are Long Lankin's top personal hygiene survival strategies for folk festivals or weekends of dance.

Pre-Cleaning

This can be used alongside any of the following strategies since the emphasis is on preparation. The approach is to pre-empt the problems by bathing/showering thoroughly before you leave home. You thus arrive "extra clean" and can expect to make it a bit further through the event before you start to feel dirty.

Obsessive

This strategy involves maintaining domestic standards of personal hygiene whatever the circumstances. People using this approach are easy to spot because they are always in the queue for the few cold showers available. It does however also allow you to look immaculate no matter how small your tent or basic the hall you have been accommodated in. On the down side you are likely to be always late for meals and/or miss the main concert.

Muddling

This takes a more pragmatic approach. People following this strategy wash themselves down as best they can "muddling through" with the facilities easily available. They rely upon clean clothes, deodorants and perfumes to disguise any shortcomings and create a short-term impression of cleanliness. Such people can easily

be identified by the large quantity of luggage they have with them.

Hardies

These wash al fresco in, or outside, their tents. These can range from the “sophisticates” who heat up water on a camp burner to the “basics” who wash in cold water from a bowl on the ground. Your choice is obviously influenced by the size of your tent but it does at least save queuing. Indoors they will use a bowl or the kitchen sink, usually when others are trying to get breakfast.

Tokenism

This involves making a show of trying to keep clean but limiting yourself to “*throwing water*” over your face. Basically the idea is to go through the motions and hope that people won’t notice that the smell is coming from you. Lots of clean clothes and deodorants become even more important in this strategy, so again lots of luggage, perfumes and deodorants.

Smellies

This involves making no attempt to keep clean whatsoever. There is a theory that the human body can only carry a finite amount of dirt: once that level is reached you cannot get any dirtier. However you need to be particularly brazen to rely upon the logical extension of this argument that no matter how clean you get you will only get dirty again so there is no point in changing clothes either.

The Cop-out

This strategy is simply - go bed-and-breakfast or even (if the venue is close enough) just travel in each day. One way of covering yourself from any resultant criticism is to ensure your spouse/partner comes as well: that way you can blame him/her saying “*If it was just me I’d be more than pleased to spend the week-end reeking to high heaven and sleeping on a cold floor but my partner will insist on his/her creature comforts*”.

As Shakespeare said “*A rose by any other name would smell as sweet*” but there again he had never been to a folk festival.

Long Lankin

This article is based on one that appeared in The Unicorn Issue 66, April-June 1999

Morris Musings

Driving home after practice, I was musing on the names given to Morris dances. Both sides I dance with, Cotswold with Liddington in Swindon and Border with Rogue in Oxford have new dancers; and one of these with no previous experience of the tradition behind Morris had asked “Why on earth is it called that?”

In some cases I believe musical historians show that the name of the tune became the name of the dance. This continues with new dances today. Not without disagreement. Some people do not like a traditional Morris tune being used for a new dance in a new/different tradition that bears little relation to the traditional dance of that name.

I explained to the new dancer that traditional dances often are called after the place they were danced in, but that when that place had more than one dance further names would obviously be needed. Nowadays place names are more likely to be a venue than a village. Rogue had a new dance, so far nameless, that was to be danced out for the first time on our Day of Dance. That particular year a boat trip was included and in fact the dance was performed on the deck of the boat in a lock on the River Thames. It was suggested that this could be incorporated into its name. We were on a boat called the Lady Ethel so “Lady Ethel’s Interlock Knickers” was put forward as a name, but it was felt that this might lead people to believe that it came from the St Just-in-Trunch tradition or Sid Kipper, so it is more prosaically named after the Rogue who gave us the key figure in the dance.

Dancers’ names feature a lot. When another dance was evolving, a certain position was taken by Penny, so that position, which leads the dance, became “The Penny”, and the dance for 7 people became “7 Pence”.

Sometimes names indicate (as “Front Row” would have it) homage to other artists. Several Rogues went some years back to a great workshop led by the Seven Champions, where we tied our feet in knots trying to learn their dance in 5/4 time. Giving up on the time signature we incorporated some of the shapes and moves in the dance that became known as “5 Mushrooms” -the title perhaps paying homage to Molesworth and/or Franglais.

Another dance was inspired by Roy Dommett’s notations of a dance seen in Portsmouth, named I believe for a certain hostelry there. We Oxfordised this to “High Tea in the Covered Market”, a feature of the city centre. It is usually shortened to “High Tea”, but foxed a new dancer who could not see the “Tee” shape anywhere in the dance.

Liddington’s dance “Insomnia” or “Sleepless in Swindon” may get people thinking of Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan but in fact the figures were worked out by Janice one

night when she simply could not drop off. The name just seemed right. As did the newest Liddington dance which someone described as, "You know the one that is all swings and roundabouts". So "Magic Roundabout" it became. A very appropriate name for a dance composed in Swindon.

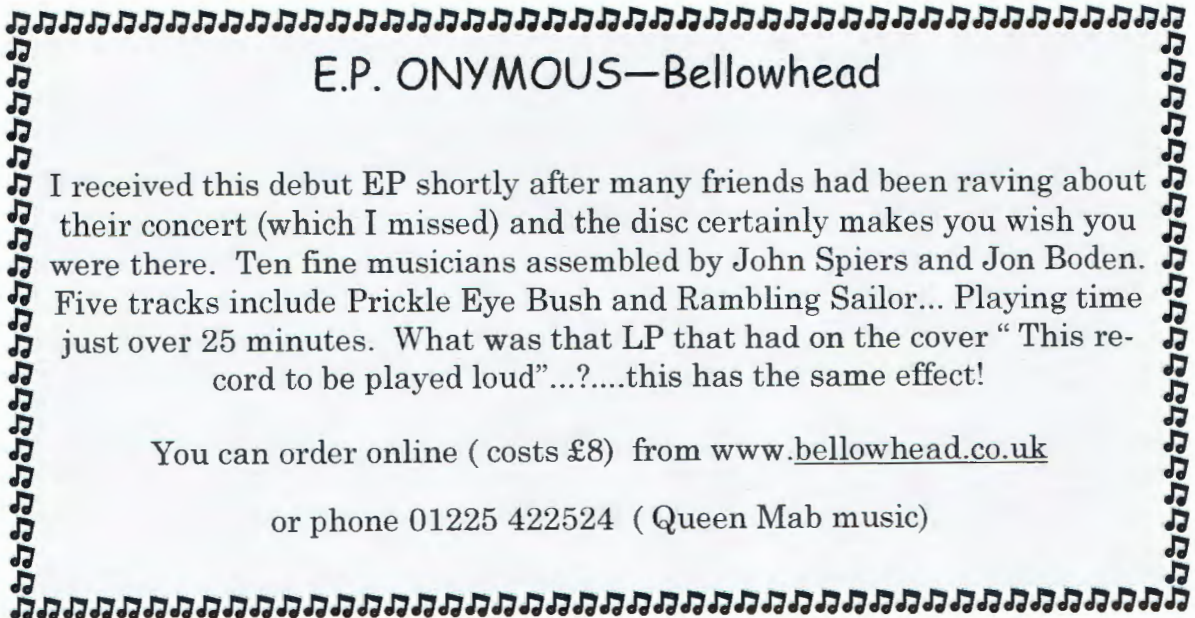
Attempts to deliberately come up with a name, apart from dedications to a particular person or event, like the Millennium, rarely seem to work. Usually something just spontaneously occurs. We had a great title "Four Candles/Fork Handles" from the Two Ronnies, but then we changed the way the sticks were held, so they were no longer in the Candle position. The dance is still nameless, but something will turn up. As I'm sure it did in the past. This leads one to reassess 19th century Morris practices and the "Old Woman Tossed up in a blanket" in an entirely new light. Just what were they doing?

"Is all this explained in the Archives?" asked the new member. "Oh no", I replied, "we have to leave something for the Keith Chandlers of the 21st and 22nd centuries to investigate. I don't believe in the Archives giving all the details".

"So what do you put in the Archives then?"

Now that's another whole area worth musing on.

Lynne Pointer, October 2004



E.P. ONYMOUS—Bellowhead

I received this debut EP shortly after many friends had been raving about their concert (which I missed) and the disc certainly makes you wish you were there. Ten fine musicians assembled by John Spiers and Jon Boden. Five tracks include Prickle Eye Bush and Rambling Sailor... Playing time just over 25 minutes. What was that LP that had on the cover "This record to be played loud"...?...this has the same effect!

You can order online (costs £8) from www.bellowhead.co.uk

or phone 01225 422524 (Queen Mab music)

"Life & Times"

Saturday 19th February 2005 10am-5pm

at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, London NW1 2AY

A chance to hear four people who have made significant contributions to the documenting of traditional culture in Britain and Ireland talking about their life and work. The day will include contributions from:

Tony Engle, long-time boss of Topic Records; **Tom Munnely**, veteran folklore collector from Dublin; **Keith Chandler**, researcher and writer on traditional music and dance; plus one other victim still to be confirmed.

Jointly organised by the Traditional Song Forum and the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Open to all, no booking necessary - a contribution of £6 per head will be charged to help cover expenses. We hope also to have a second-hand book sale on the day.

In the afternoon, we will also be attending the **Fred Jordan Memorial Unveiling**

The "Remembering Fred" event at Cecil Sharp House 22nd November 2003, celebrated the life of Shropshire singer Fred Jordan (1922-2002). Proceeds and donations for a fitting memorial to Fred were used to commission Forest of Dean sculptor John Wakefield to make a relief sculpture - Fred was fond of the grain of wood, as he was of horses, horse brasses and old songs.

The sculpture will be officially unveiled in the Foyer of Cecil Sharp House at 3pm.

For LIFE & TIMES, contact Steve Roud - sroud@btinternet.com or 01825 766751.

For the Fred Jordan Memorial, contact: Peta Webb, Assistant Librarian:
peta@efdss.org. Tel +44 (0)20 7485 2206 Ext 21 Fax +44 (0)20 7284 0534

Memories of Sidmouth, 1987

*When the book that became *The First Week in August* was commissioned, Derek Schofield asked for contributions along the theme of 'my favourite year', which was the thrust of this article which I took care to date for my own reference. Needless to say, its target readership wasn't that of *Morris Matters*, and its style is rather personalised as a result. My apologies go to Amy, who is now 17 years old and is threatening to join a border morris team somewhere in Kent!*

Sidmouth in 1987 will always be special to me for a number of reasons. One was that Flirby and myself very nearly decided not to go at all! In April that year, our first daughter Amy was born. We had supposed that she would not be up to this break in her routine – and we certainly didn't like the thought of camping! The decision came late in the day, and we were fortunate enough to hire a caravan at nearby Weston.

As a member of the Seven Champions Molly Dancers from Kent, I cannot even recall whether the thought about busking had even crossed our minds, either. This was something the team had always done since their inception in 1978. For a start, two or three of our regulars had been booked with the Mr. Jorrocks morris dancers who were to star at the Knowle arena that year, so it was going to be difficult to get a set together. What changed everybody's minds was when Windsor Morris announced they were going to enter the Ritual Dance competition, whose entry was closed to festival booked teams for the first time in its five year history to date.

In 1983, our relative merits had been judged alongside clog morris teams, Cotswold sides, the original Boughton Monchelsea team who danced an innovative south-eastern style of Morris (which was to have become a tableau at the nascent Rochester Sweeps Festival), and the immaculate rapper display of Monkseaton - who won the affair. With that in mind, and the high standards involved, Goudhurst village hall was booked on the Wednesday before the competition and troops were rallied. The aim was merely to 'give Windsor a run for their money!'

On the evening of Saturday 1st August, Flirby and myself, armed with Amy in her carrycot, were waiting outside the Radway Cinema for a concert featuring one of our favourite bands: Blowzabella, when Chris and Tracey Rose of the Champs hailed us from outside the Radway Inn opposite. "You obviously haven't heard the news." "What news?" "You'd better come inside for a drink – you're going to need it. John's dead!" "What? Oh, shit!" That was the first I had heard of John Gasson's death. The story goes that, in trying to avoid the Saturday morning holiday traffic, John had loaded up his MG Convertible and left before first light towards the south coast from his home in Cranbrook.

He drove across a railway bridge and was surprised to see a milk float straight in front of him, swerving to avoid it with disastrous consequences. "At least there was nobody else involved." "Well, that's it for the competition, then." "No", said Chris, "we're going to win it - for John."

Misgivings apart, we revamped our well-rehearsed routine from the previous Wednesday night, blacked up, and went down to the marquee on Knowle arena. I can't recall where we were in the order, although I think both Windsor and us were on fairly late. Our secret weapon was 'Spike' – a radio-controlled treacle rat, built by Andrew Jones: one of the members who danced both with Champs and Jorrocks. The aim was for the 'rat' to follow Chris the Molly onto the stage as he made his announcements.

Unfortunately, no one had accounted for the iron scaffolding beneath the stage, and Spike remained resolutely immobile! This was the only mistake I thought we made in an otherwise faultless display, to which Flos Headford of Stroud Morris commented: "No, I've seen you lot dance better." Perhaps it was the emotion getting the better of us. Windsor danced their usual immaculate performance, despite Cherry Simmons forgetting which dance she was announcing, leaving musician Alan Whear momentarily bemused. Champs won, then it was down to the Radway to celebrate. John Gasson's memorial at Sidmouth is the Morris Jig competition.

As noted, there were a number of the Seven Champions who also danced with Mr. Jorrocks, making it difficult for both teams to go out at the same time. Champs were also booked at the Warwick Festival on the Saturday following, so Flirby and myself took the opportunity to witness the Arena Finale on the Thursday night – at that time, the Finale took place on both Thursday and Friday nights. Jorrocks had been dancing above and beyond themselves all week. Their high-stepping Oddington Cotswold style is exhausting enough – even to watch – being accompanied by Helen Mitcham's pipe and tabor. *Trunkles* always seemed to go on and on; but their show dance was always one of their leapfrog dances.

Andrew Jones had practised this beyond all reasonable means, and was quite capable of leaping well above shoulder height. In the dance that night, he was partnered by Bob Piggott – not quite a six-footer himself, but tall enough. Talking to him afterwards, he knew that Andrew was 'up for it', and with the final drum beats accompanying the cross capers, Bob stood bolt upright for the leapfrog – which Andrew completed with inches to spare. An amazing show of athleticism! I ran round the back of the stage straight afterwards to congratulate them all, where I found the team drinking champagne – what else? An extraordinary end to an extraordinary week – and Amy fell asleep in her cot at the right time during all the dances and concerts we went to.

George Frampton,

19th November, 1998



Photo: George Frampton
Andrew Jones of Mr. Jorrocks Morris Dancers entering orbit over the head of Mick Lynn outside the Bell & Jorrocks, Frittenden, April 1988

Leap At Sidmouth

The enthusiasm for the special morris arena show FLAME at Sidmouth in 2003 was a response to a novel production built on morris groups with a running link from a pair of presenters, one ancient, one modern. This year's LEAP had a similar audience response, but a comparison of both performances as captured on the JKL produced videos, which eliminates the infectious impact of the surrounding audience, shows that LEAP was superior in content and structure. The stroke of genius was the bringing in of the icon Sid Kipper as presenter, whose explanations of the morris had just the right amount of truly English humour. Unfortunately for viewers his two typical songs are deleted from the video on copyright grounds.

The show opened with the **Stackstead Silver Band** who play for the **Bacup Co-conutters**.

Sid : How d'you do? Welcome to LEAP the morris show with punctuation. Full stop! We're here to celebrate a very special number, 49. It's exactly 49 years since the first Sidmouth Festival. For all those years there has been morris dancing, and no one knows why. Well actually as a matter of fact I've made a bit of a discovery, but I'll come to that in a little bit. Now our first side is starting it because they are well known for starting things, fights, arguments, you name it. They've been coming here for years, guess what, they're back again, the inimitable Great Western Morris

Great Western, the local side to Sidmouth, were in force, with 6 musicians. They used "Swaggering Boney" for their entry dance, followed by "Leapfrog" with inspired clowning and ending with a cumulative leapfrog, the last man leaping over all five in a huddle! They finished with a "Nine Men's Morris" with up and down and across and back heys. As always the pace was very steady, the spring in the stepping magnificent, and the arm movements and handkerchief dancing a lesson for all.

Sid : Now this evening I'm going to put the dancers on and try not to put them off, but first I've been asked to tell you a story. The story of Morris Dancing at Sidmouth Festival. Because this Festival goes back a long way, and just think what it could have been if it had only gone forwards. But this is the story. Once upon a time there was a brand new Festival at the mouth of the river Sid in Devon, and it wasn't going very well, because that first year, they had marvellous weather.

So they had all these concerts arranged in top venues like the ARP wardens' hut and the novelty rock emporium, but nobody wanted to be indoors. And the organisers wondered what to do, and what they did was to get hold of a passing morris side, and they sent them dancing all around the streets of Sidmouth. Well that drew people into the concerts all right, and it was so successful they decided to do it every year.

Now of course you might not be lucky enough to find a passing morris side just when you want one, more often it's quite the opposite, so they started inviting teams to come and be on stand-by. So that meant they always had those Morris dancers hanging around getting into trouble, and the organisers wondered what to do. And what they did was to start dance displays like this one, to keep 'em busy. That's how it went for some years until the 1960's. The time when people wore bells, beards, strange clothes and flowers in their hair. Morris dancers fitted right into that didn't they, and they could dance for ever, due to drugs, particularly the drug that helps you morris the night away, EF'D'Cy.

And that's how it went on for more years, until in the 1970's there was a strange disease, some dancers were made ill by Cotswold Morris, they got ringing in their ears and an analogy to flowers, it was Shepherd's Hay fever, and the organisers wondered what to do. And what they did was to start up different sorts of dancing, like Norfolk/Suffolk border morris, more fighting than dancing really, and Nor by North West Morris, all you have to be able to do is form a straight line in the right direction.

And of course that meant they had workshops for people to learn all the new skills like how to shred clothes to tatters, and the use of a compass. And that led to even more and more morris dancing, and that went on for even more years into the 1980's. By then everybody at Sidmouth Festival was morris dancing, They ran out of space in town. Some people had to dance in the sea or the ford, that was all they could get.

There were competitions for poor and wealthy alike, for the wealthy, there was the Rich'all dance, and for the poor there was the So'Low jig, a mixture of morris and limbo dancing. It was a Golden Age, and the organisers wondered what to do, and what they did was to bring in the modern era. Which is where we are today.

But I have missed a bit of the story out. Because I have skipped over women and they don't like that, especially if you are wearing clogs. You see at start of the story women were only allowed on stage for country dancing, the sort where you always have to keep one foot on the floor. Morris dancing was men only. It was also the name of the magazine a lot of them subscribed to. So in those days the men danced and the women were grateful, and washed and ironed their kit.

But then some of the women said they might like to try morris dancing and the men were sore afraid. See they were afraid that if the women danced the men would have to do the washing and ironing. We know the truth about that now, but that was then. And some of the men were afraid that if some of the women danced there would be no excuse to dress up in women's clothes anymore.

The organisers wondered what to do. The EFDCC came down firmly on the fence. There was a lot said, quite a bit shouted, you know what they say, most said, slow-

est mended. Some women even started illegal morris dancing in the ladies toilets and still the organisers wondered what to do. Until, there came a statement from on high, from Norris Ring, he said that he would never ever come again to Sidmouth Festival if they had women morris dancing. Well that instantly settled it, they had women the very next year. Of course all those who said it would only lead to doom and disaster, well they've been proved right haven't they, instead of Morris Dancing quietly dying out as the dancers got older, they interbred.

Now we've got loads of young dancers, who think they know everything. It's worse than that, when you talk to them you find out they do. And that's the story of how we got here. Which only leaves one question unanswered. Is that the end of the story? We don't know, we'll see.

We're going to start it over again with some proper country dancing with ladies, the indispensable, and I've tried to dispense with them, Stroud Ladies

Stroud Ladies and Stroud Men. They started with a very sedate 4 couple longways to "Rose Tree", then the men started to dance "The Rose" in Stroud style when broken up by youngsters going into "Willow Tree" in four sets forming a cross. Both country dances were effective but went on a turn too long. The spot continued with two men singing "Over The Hills and Far Away" whilst the women danced, and ended with another of their handkerchief dances which reminded me of Ilmington's "Lively Jig". It was a joy to watch, it made one think that that was probably what we had expected women's morris to develop to be when they started in the 1970's, although most women find leaping and stick banging more to their satisfaction.

Sid : I'll tell you something actually about this festival, if you do well, they ask you back, otherwise you have to be like me and hope they forget, but the next lot we have coming on have never been here before - so we can't be sure about them, the jury's still rigged. They're young, they're gifted and unmistakably female. They are the insurmountable, and I should know, Black Adder

Black Adder. This was a classic comedy item with a morris twist to it. A rotund ballerina in full "Swan Lake" kit was followed by a chain of cloggies in white shifts, all with fiddles, of which at least two were amplified and actually played the ballet music. The swan died, and was restored by electric shock treatment, the five awkward squad cygnets danced, and there was a screen /window with the mirroring movement gag. The audience was in continual uproar and the parting applause was immense.

Sid : Lot of people say to me, Sid, Why is morris dancing? Where does it come from? and I'd say I'm bugged if I know. Well, I used to. But there is a lot of theories about, some say it comes from the word Moreish. Well you've seen it, haven't you. You wouldn't say that it's moreish, would you? Then they say they don't mean

moreish but moorish. It's why they have black faces sometimes. I know why they have black faces when they come to Sidmouth, because they have to, with all the people that they have upset over the years.

Morris dancing has got nothing to do with moors, Ilkeley or Bobby. I've done a bit of research. I've discovered that the word morris comes from two Old English words, "Ma" and "Ist", meaning to spoil it, Ma Ist is also where the word marriage comes from. It all makes sense once you know that. It's more than you can say about it otherwise. Morris dancing is actually marriage dancing. Where do you get dancing: at weddings. Where do you get bells : at weddings. Where do you get people dressing up in daft clothes : at weddings. Where do you get handkerchiefs for people to cry into : at weddings.

I'll tell you what gave it all away to me when I found this old song and dance, which may well be the original song and dance that started the English Folk Dance and Song Society. There is something I can't put a finger on. Make up your own mind about it. It's about a young woman getting married next day, called "On Wedlock Edge". (song deleted from the video).

Well time flies while you are enjoying yourself, I feel like I've been here for hours already. Because a pleasure shared is a pleasure halved and there's plenty more pleasures to halve yet.

Get to the interval with another pleasure. Some are fast, and some of them are nefarious. Their musicians are electrocuted. So brace yourself for the inexplicable, the Albion Morris.

Albion Morris opened with a rapid paced solo clog dance to a 6 piece band, The team then came on to "British Grenadiers" and danced a Knutsford NW morris for 8 in clogs, filling the stage, but with a Cotswold spring in the step! The Albion band and morris have done much for folk in the wider world and their appearance was very much appreciated.

The second half of the show started with some of **Seven Champions** towing Sid onto stage in a wheelbarrow whilst the "Entry of Gladiators" was played. The eight of the Champions performed another very disciplined and stylised show of some of their own modern idiom Molly dances. Starting with a reel that grew from 3 to 6 dancers, then the dance to solo voice, "Wraggle Taggle Gypsies" and ending with the dance for 5 to rather plaintive music. The Champions are a very distinctive part of the Festival circuit whose influence has spread wide, although no others are as smart.

Sid : As you've seen by now, morris dancing is pretty easy, I know some of them make it look hard but it takes years of practice. The truth is that you can have all your workshops and rehearsals, but all you need is basic training. We can demonstrate that right now. Ignore what your mother said and answer back, you can join

in if you want, and you respond.

The "Barrack Square-Dance" - song by Sid with responses from audience and marching by the Seven Champions.

They were conceived at this very Festival in 1977. I'd like to have seen that!

Now the team that grew up they say with the Festival, can't have grown up very much at one week a year, the irrepressible Morris Offspring.

Morris Offspring, more good theatrical morris with well organised and rehearsed mass movements. The highlights were sequences based on the tunes "Princess Royal" and "Gooseberry Tree" played by two musicians. The jig showed the house style of dance very well. Aesthetically I did not like the snatch sideways, the near vertical, or the dip sidestep arm movements, although they work en masse. It looks so much better when, as Douglas Kennedy used to say, the movements involved all the body, particularly the shoulders and torso. He would always point out that workmen spread the effort around their muscles. The large numbers involved led to a sameness through all the varieties of stepping. It suggests that the Morris Offspring still have further heights to achieve.

Sid : Brings out the sweat, don't it. We don't do morris dancing in my little village of St Justice Trunch in Norfolk. We used to do it on Boxing Day, that and Fox Hunting, that was the other thing. But well you see nowadays Fox Hunting is a little bit ... Morris dancing has always been a little bit... So what we've done now is to combine the two, so we have Hunting the Morris Dancer, keeps everybody happy but one, he doesn't usually hang about to complain.

But the reason I mention it, is some people are made of sterner stuff and some people have kept their dance tradition come what may. Which is all the better for us. So it's why we still have the chance to admire our next guests, from Lancashire, we present the incorruptible Britannia Coconut Dancers, accompanied by members of the Stackstead Silver Band.

Britannia Coconutters from Bacup - with a nine piece silver band. They are heirs of a tradition traced back to the mid 19th century. A very good JKL video of all their dances is available from their previous visit to Sidmouth when they were interviewed in a Meet the Team event. This very special side did a garland dance and then danced the nutts. How do you praise such superb uniqueness? Long may they continue.

Sid : As I was saying, you sometimes get dancing after Christmas, but in Winterton, they dance on New Year's Eve. They do "Whatsupping". They go round and tell all the incomers how dreadful they are. They knock on their door at midnight and when they all come to their door and say "What's Up?", they do the Rimington "Whatsup" dance, a sort of stick dance with banging, you know the sort of thing.

And I thought we'd have it tonight. So for a performance for you,, here and now, at least one of them, please welcome the individual, me! Thank you. This is the only known solo stick dance in the country. You'll see why when I give the song and the dance, and a hat. (song deleted)

I'm going off now for a rub down with a copy of Morris Monthly, and then we're going to go into the big finish. I know that at the interval I got a bit confused. I did mention it, but you probably didn't notice. So I'm going to go off and come on with the final lead. To build up to that climax, I feel I short-changed them slightly in the first half. So will you give extra large welcome to Albion Morris

Albion Morris: They started with "Shooting" from Adderbury along with a hobby horse and a seven piece band, followed by "The Rose" from Fieldtown with handkerchiefs and ended with the "Upton-on-Severn" stick dance. Although obviously elderly and having to dance to the loud band, they performed very well with excellent hand movements and good lift and gave full value in the sticking; they even broke a stick!

Finale : To the old "Morisco" tune, the entire company led by Sid Kipper danced on. team by team and zig-zagged across the stage to fill the stage and dance wildly. The show ended with a bow from all the musicians.

The impression was given that "stage" or "theatrical" morris is coming of age with impressive big set displays drawing on the mechanics of the normal street morris. But the big bands lose the musician-dancer relationship and unfortunately degrade the Cotswold form to the level of the rest.

Roy Dommett, November 2004

With many, many thanks to Sid Kipper who has allowed his script to be reproduced here



On Standards

I cannot get to festivals of other meetings now so I rely on kind friends who bring me videos.

Maybe it's my age (91) that makes me critical but I can see no point whatsoever in people dancing bad morris in public.

I am at present watching a side dance "Queen's Delight". The worst I've ever seen — no two men doing the same steps — I only recognised the dance by the tune.

I know what children are capable of but here again have seen (on video) some exceedingly sloppy dancing—pointless. I know there is a fine line between "choking them off" and insisting on good stepping, lines, arms and things that make a dance look good.

Ah Well...
Norris Winstone
August 2004

Do you agree—some people seem to think so long as you enjoy yourself it's OK—but do the public enjoy it?

Whittlesey Straw Bear 2005

"Why don't we quickly fill our tankards at the 'Good Beer Guide'-listed pub just around the corner?" was, with the benefit of hindsight, perhaps not the most prudent suggestion to kick-start my first & eagerly anticipated visit to Fenland's famous Whittlesey Straw Bear celebrations. After the dehydrating journey from deepest Berkshire to discover that The Hero Of Aliwal was hosting a mini beer festival boasting 12 casks of interesting ales, it seemed unduly hasty to depart after sampling just one. A quick phone call rearranged our meeting point with a number of friends. Eventually we were prized away from the bar to venture into the delightfully picturesque little old town in search of the Bear. There were complaints of a biting icy wind but the chill barely registered thanks to a warm glow from the effects of the first 4 pints, and the clear crisp blue sky served to assist the distinctly blurred vision.

We crossed town & arrived at The Ram to find that we'd just missed the indoor sword and rapper. Fortunately the Straw Beer from Elgoods Brewery was available to help numb the disappointment & we then repaired to the adjoining chippy for a welcome and good lunchtime takeaway (even though there was no sign of the legendary bright orange batter that I'd been led to expect).

In need of plumbing facilities, further refreshment and the opportunity to actually see some dancing, we returned to The Hero, overtaking the illustrious Straw Bear & bear cub, struggling to make progress through the modest throng of well-wishers. I'd feared that the town would be overrun with heaving masses of tourists and their buses from near and far, but the ease with which we'd parked allayed these reservations and the gentle hubbub made for pleasant ambience. Side after side of enthusiastic Mollys, Rappers, Swords, Mummies, Borderers, North West-erners & even some fellow Cotswoldy types kept us entertained with a variety of impressive, interesting and unusual styles, as, for that matter, did the beer festival. All too soon however, it was time to leave the fine ale for the finale in the Market Place.

We took up position at the Luxecabs End and between the dances enjoyed the splendid old stone architecture that forms an elegant amphitheatre around the Market Place. The sun slowly withdrew its services, and at the seemingly premature close of daytime proceedings, Pig Dyke Molly headed my 'troupe of the day' menu for going the extra mile or seven with their sensational detailed monochrome costumes. But then I missed so much. Where were my old White Rose friends and was that Persephone wielding the lovely antique industrial loom bobbins over at the Buttercross End of the Market Place? I must wait until next year to find out. Saturday Jan 14th 2006 has already been noted in my diary.

And I'll try to leave the tankard at home.

Chris Tunnicliffe (Kennet Morris)

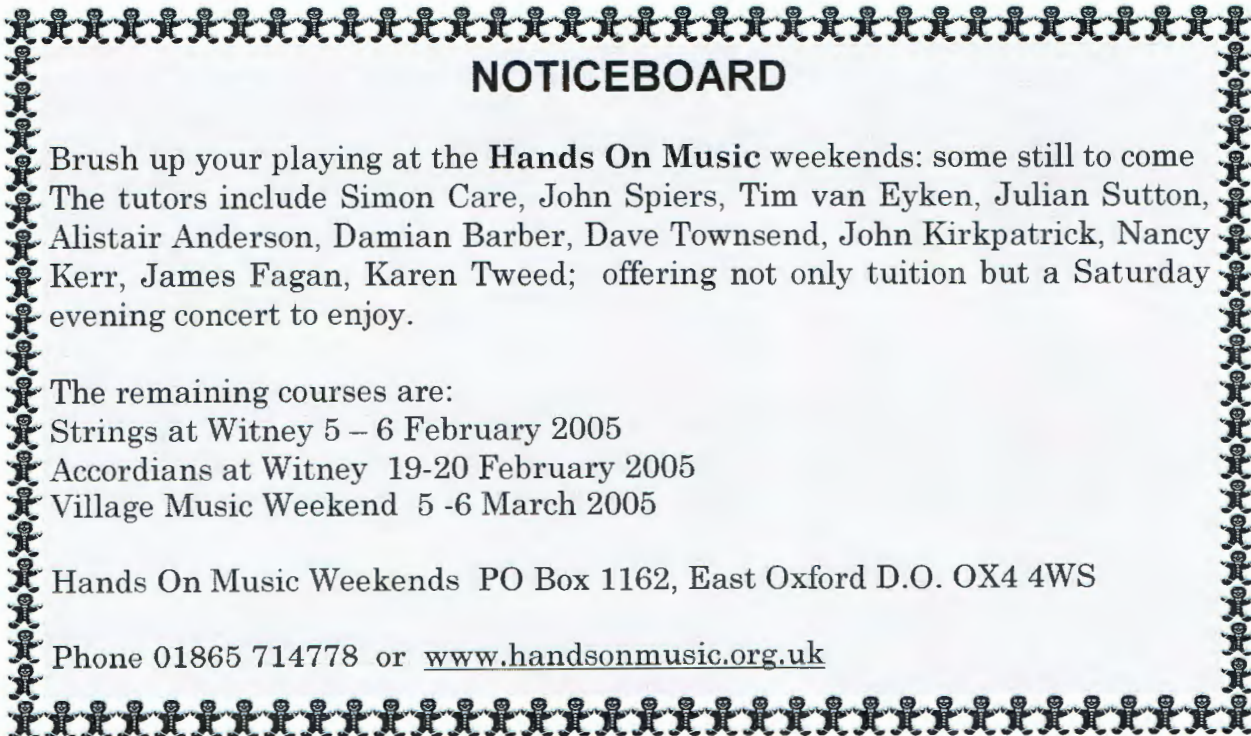
Advice For Entering Sidmouth Jig Competition

In 2004 timescale pressure on the day prevented detailed debate between the judges or the offering of informed comment to the audience. Hence these notes.

1. Attention to detail: During the competition the audience is excited and supportive, and the atmosphere helps the dancers to do their best. But the judges have to take all the performance details seriously and suggest marks which are collated in some manner. In 2004 the standards were high and most of the dancers were considered to be very close, but no one approached a near perfect score because of insufficient attention to detail.
2. Posture - A matter of body language. Good posture is healthy posture, and some acquaintance with the Alexander technique is desirable. The messages given by body language are complex and unavoidable, so a little study of some of the books available will bring ample reward, particularly in the presence of women judges, who are naturally much more sensitive to such things.
3. Some male dancers have the advantage of height plus strength, but height alone seems to inhibit lift off the ground, and power often comes out as jerkiness, not control. Women can bring lightness and grace and sometimes even a feeling of flying.
4. Lightness is a matter of technique, avoiding a banging of the floor, requiring a proper use of the ankles and instep, otherwise the dancers are heading for cartilage troubles. It should be important to hear the bells.
5. Feet - little thought seems to go into their relative positions. The judges look at the total picture, which is not the dancer's perception of themselves. Some turn out of the feet looks good, other angles often attract rude comment.
6. Travel - this is distracting when continually used, especially in double jigs. It is often an excuse for a poor dance technique with less lift, coming out more like running.
7. Handkerchiefs - too often too small and too light, thus becoming mere appendages. Pocket handkerchiefs have become smaller and of finer material through the 20th century, to avoid appearing bulky in pockets, so that dancers hardly make the handkerchiefs "dance" at all. With no handkerchiefs, as in Bampton style, often the hands are more expressive. Dancers must practice with suitable handkerchiefs, 18" square rather than 12".
8. Jerky arm movements and "dip" hands - movements that emphasise "downness" are not really part of the tradition, and in practice limit the lift that is achievable in the stepping because the downward acceleration lowers the reaction onto the ground.

9. Transitions - Too often a competition dance is learnt or created as a series of sequences rather than by mimicking a good role model, without the necessary attention given to smooth transitions from one type of stepping to another, suggesting that there is not enough practice nor a proper thinking through of the dance.
10. Traditionally, the music told the dancer which steps to use. Each step has subtle shades that can be reflected in the strength and length of each note. It is not just an opportunity for the musician to shine - they must work with the dancer. The music must follow the stresses and efforts of the dancer; an evenness of playing flattens the dance. You can not speed up gravity, so the higher the step or caper the longer it must take. It also takes longer to accelerate into or decelerate from travelling.
11. Bells - no one seems to "dance" them; do they need to be of better quality? Do men ever listen to them? Do they even wear them during practice? Really good bells have always been expensive but they do not jangle and have a clear ring. Old dancers used to select them so that the pads were tuned.
12. Skirts can hide the legs, and remembering that costume influences the movements, a woman may need to do something to compensate for what may be lost, such as emphasising the movement of the skirt. Practising the dance in front of a mirror, or being videoed to get the total image, are suggested.

Roy Dommett, November 2004



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Ghosts _ English Acoustic Collective

The **English Acoustic Collective** was conceived in 1998 as an umbrella for Chris Wood's teaching activities, encapsulating his approach to teaching, composition and performance. The collective now includes Robert Harbron and John Dipper. All are seriously good musicians with well-developed solo careers and have also worked with other talented musicians, but this is the debut album of this particular combination, and very interesting it is too. The album features a variety of memorable tunes and songs both home-penned and traditional, inspiration for the former ranging widely from Copernicus, the sixteenth century Polish astronomer, through the enclosure acts, railway journeys and cats, and St George's Day, to the sad tale of the Mari Lwyd and finally a very fine and delicate waltz created by John Dipper at one of EAC's summer schools. All have echoes of traditional tunes and styling and fit seamlessly with the traditional pieces, while Chris Woods' familiar vocal style delivers both new and traditional songs well. I particularly enjoyed Copernicus, and the musical texture of the Waterloo-bound train working through the countryside and picking up speed, while I loved the delicacy of St George's Day, and the Ruskin Mill Waltz.

"Swap your Love" is the first song of traditional origin although Chris has, I think, fleshed out the original words to complete the story satisfyingly, while Robert Harbron's music fits the mood well. The Voice of the People CD set is the source for "The Colour of Amber", another delightful version of a familiar theme. Social dance and morris tunes of traditional origin are represented by Hare's Maggot and Mr Isaac's Maggot, versions of Cuckoo's Nest, Bonnets of Blue, Baccapipes and Greensleeves, played on this occasion however for listening to and appreciating, not dancing.

The title of the album, Ghosts, is explained in the notes on the insert. "As the musician plays, standing behind them is the ghost of the person they learnt the music from. Standing behind that ghost is the ghost of the player they learn from, and so on back to the beginning of the music." The role of present day musicians is to build on the music passed down to them and continually develop it and keep it alive and interesting while remaining true to the inheritance of the past. As a very part-time and amateur musician myself, I am rather struck by this idea. It reminds us of the earlier musicians and the very different lives they must have led, while still making wonderful music, which survived the centuries despite the privations many of them must have suffered. It is our responsibility to them to look after it, nurture it to the best of our individual abilities and, most important of all, keep performing it! And of course, adding to the repertoire.

Ian E.D. Carter

Ghosts - English Acoustic Collective (RUFCD09) is available from:
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