



The Morris



Federation

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 1997



Important Information

TO ALL BAG(WOMEN), SECRETARIES AND SUCHLIKE

One of the common complaints we get from the average Morris dancer in the street is that they know nothing about the Federation and what it is doing. Some don't even know if their side belongs. This usually turns out to be because the person in their club who received the MF communication doesn't pass any of it on.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE don't be guilty of this. There is no excuse now that we have included a SUMMARY SHEET. You can photocopy this and distribute it to all your members. This can save you the time and hassle of verbally telling everyone what is in the Newsletter. However it is not a substitute for handing the Newsletter around or making it available during practice. Remember DON'T KEEP THE INFORMATION TO YOURSELF.

MEMBERS' MANUAL

All members of the Federation should have a copy of the MF Members' Manual. This contains a lot of material that members may need to refer to from time to time. If you have misplaced the free copy sent to you when you joined, a replacement (or additional copies) can be purchased from the MF Secretary at the cost of 3.50 (+ 50p p&p) each.

Cheques payable to The Morris Federation, please.

ADVERTISING

The Morris Federation will distribute enclosures with the Newsletter or other circulars and items of advertising relevant to commercial products. A fee is charged to the advertiser for this service. However, this should not be taken to mean that The Morris Federation necessarily endorses the product.

Enquiries concerning any form of advertising through the Morris Federation should be addressed to the MF Publicity Officer.

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Enclosures

Blood, Booze & Bedlam Insert.
Mumming Workshop Insert.
Shinfield Shambles Ladies Morris Insert.
Diary Sheet.

President's Prologue

It's that time again as we approach the AGM in the Autumn. Each of the Morris Federation Committee asks themselves - do I really want to do this again for another year. Well four and two halves of us have said yes and we await the AGM to see if we will be returned in post. Not that there is a lot of competition for the posts. And with Steve standing down as events officer, we are hoping that some one will be offering to take on what can be an exciting and challenging post (and certainly can get you around a lot.) The difficulty is how long can you let the nomination stay empty, before you start whispering in several peoples ear to see if they might be interested with some encouragement? The problem with that is two fold. Firstly if you start talking to Billy-Jane Bloggs about whether they might be interested, the word goes around that the Committee want Billy-Jane. This reinforces the second problem, that some members see the Committee as being drawn from a small circle of friends, and if you are not in the cliché, then there is no point trying. And you can only whisper to people who you know, or who have been recommended by people you know.

So its a cleft stick whatever you do .

And incidently, the committee is not made up of a cliché. We do come from different backgrounds, and if some of us knew each other before we came onto the committee, its because weve been in the morris a long time and have met a lot of people over the years. And it is important that membership of the committee comes from as wide a range as possible both in style, geography, age, gender and experience in order to reflect the diversity of its membership.

So think about it! Because the Morris Federation needs you!

But finding people to do the job is a task facing every club every year at their AGM. What does motivate any of us to take on role in the team. Probably the same thing that gets us started in the Morris - a love of the dance, the social aspects and a desire to keep it going. And at the end of the day it is the commitment from all members of all teams to the different contributions they bring, to maintaining the spirit of the dance.

In this issue is a piece on Stony Staffords last stand. It was originally published on the Internet, and I was sufficently moved to ask the author if it could be reprinted here. The team may have folded, but their contribution to the dancing will be remembered, and their final stand seems to have said it all. Even if the individual team is no longer dancing, the dance goes on!

See you at the AGM in Hastings.

Janet Dowling

Editorial

Having survived the ravages of Sidmouth, inspite of which, some wonderful performances took place, it's back to the newsletter.

Thanks for the contributions which have been received, some on a rather sad note, but good news too, about the BBC videos and arts grants which have been received.

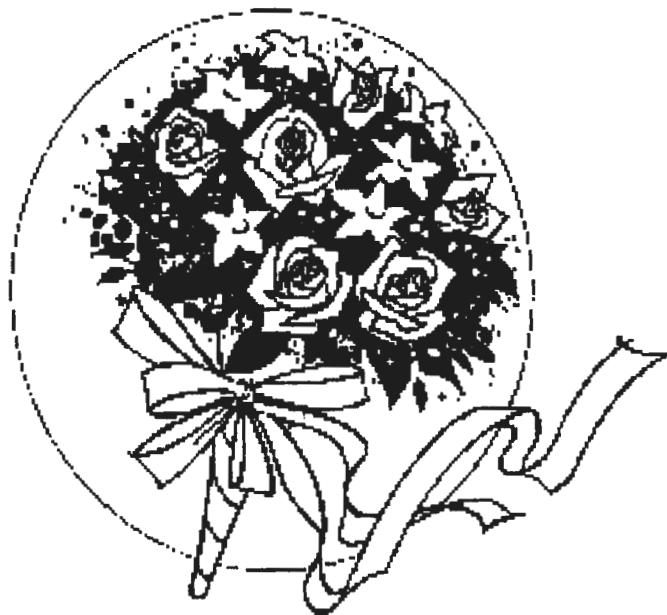
Onwards then, to the AGM, and hopes for better weather !

Don't forget to let us know your places for the autumn/winter season - for the next issue due out the first week of December - Christmas and New Year events.

Meanwhile, enjoy the many events still to take place during the rest of the summer season. Keep up the good dancing !

(Greeting from Maurice who is off on holiday !)

Judi Nancarrow



General

What can I say this year as we approach the AGM - that hasn't been said before? It sounds like a good event from the social side; the Hastings crew have a good track record in organising dance events.

The business side of things on the Sunday will focus on the usual aspects - elections (we still need nominations for an Events Officer as I write), officers reports - and some new faces this year. Three new ones! But also, we have laboured long and hard during the last two or three committee meetings to try to thrash out what we - and others - may see as anomalies or just complicated bits in the standing orders and constitution - they were fine when they were first drawn up many years ago but the Federation has grown and other things have also changed a little since then - like the number of individuals who belong to more than one team, the number of individual members etc. So please, retrieve your bumper bundle which you should by now have received with provisional agenda etc. from wherever you filed it, pass it round the team and come to the AGM prepared to talk about it!

Long term plans - there will probably need to be changes in the Members Manual in the next year or so - irrespective of how many items are resolved at the AGM - if you have any feedback on any aspect of it - please let me know now. It was first compiled almost ten years ago - I inherited it with the role of Secretary and have made minor changes. Do you like the format? Is it useful? Do you use it at all? Should anything be in it which isn't there at present?

See you at the AGM

Beth Neill



Technical Officer (Notation)

Here I am on a hot Wednesday evening trying to complete all the tasks on the list before going to Sidmouth on Saturday; this is just one of many. The last three months have been full of team commitments with not a lot of time for sitting at home doing paperwork. However the travelling has given me the opportunity to see a lot of teams, which is an important part of keeping up-to-date with the wider morris world.

There have been a number of important morris birthdays in recent years. This year I was pleased to be at the 21st celebrations of Iron Men and Severn Guilders in Shropshire and more recently Redbournestoke in Bedfordshire

Shropshire was incredibly wet so teams kept dry by dancing on station platforms and in archways, to name but a few. On Sunday there was a large procession through Ironbridge on which the sun shined fitfully, coming out properly in time for the massed birthday photo on the Iron Bridge itself.

Redbournestoke were blessed with excellent weather and a rare sighting of a Ring team making up its numbers with a female dancer, from South Sea Belles, who rendered an extremely creditable version of Oddington. Who knows how much the photos will sell for in Ring circles.

I also spent one day at the Ely Folk Weekend at which I was pleased to see a Longsword team. Not something one gets to see very often in the south-east of England.

I look forward to seeing lots more good morris next week at Sidmouth, not least at the John Gasson Solo Jig Competition. If you have never been fortunate enough to be there you can't know what a feast of excellent dancing that you have missed. Jigs seem to be the one form of Cotswold dancing that I see little of in my travels. Usually they only seem to get done when a team is short of numbers which is probably why the Competition has many dancers keen to present a rare showing of their talents.

And then there will be the AGM weekend. Maybe I will see you there.

Rhian Collinson

Technical Services (Archive)

MAGNet progress: The MF Archive group met on June 29th to review the new indexing system. We came up with a number of concerns and suggestions for possible changes, which I will be feeding back to the system developers.

New additions to the archive:

Sword Dancing in Europe: A History by Stephen D Corrsin

Sidmouth 1997 Solo Jig Competition video

Sidmouth 1997 English Folk and Morris Video

Newspaper cuttings: If you spot any articles which mention Morris dancing in newspapers or magazines please can you send me a photocopy so that I can put it into the archive. Anything from a mention of your team's appearance at a local fete to an article in the national press about the future of Morris dancing is of interest, along with any press release your side has sent that has generated press coverage. Please can you make sure that the name of the publication and the date is included.

Dance Programmes: If your team produces a programme please could you let me have a copy. The types of event we dance at could be of interest to people researching Morris in the future. I am also interested in any other Morris related material you produce such as team newsletters.



Stony Stratford's Last Stand

Ascot-under-Wychwood, Saturday, July 26: The celebrated Stony Stratford Morris Dancers have capered up for the last time, in the village from which they took their dances.

It had been raining heavily when the team arrived at the village, along with several other sides on the Ducklington Morris day of dance. Fortune, however, can be charitable: the sun came out for the final stand on "home" ground.

As if in a gesture of defiance against fate, the team bowed out with a new dance. The announcer joked that even impending demise could not crush the side's creative energy: the dance had been devised but two days earlier. It was an adaptation of the most impressive item from the Stony Stratford repertoire - the four-man jig that clinched victory for the team in the 1994 ritual dance competition at Sidmouth. By then, members were already acknowledging difficulties, but on that day of triumph, no one voiced the thought that the final parting could be just three years away.

The dance began. Six men danced in turn, three abreast, first stepping and then leap-frogging, line over line. They came into line together and then swung round, side-stepping, into a long diagonal. Throughout the dance, Julian Drury, the side's last foreman and the powerful winner of the 1993 solo jig contest, stood poised at the edge of the set. The line stopped moving, the music reached the end of the phrase, and the six dancers turned their backs to Julian and bowed their heads. The crowd fell quiet and Julian began leap-frogging down the line, leaping higher each time. The music slowed for longer than usual to enable him to leap the final two men, including David Thompsett - around 6' 2" and standing upright. A cheer went up as Julian cleared the final dancer and all seven men capered round to salute the audience.

Members of the impressive Juggler Meadow Morris, visiting from America and seeing Stony for the first time, said they couldn't believe such an accomplished side was folding. There were ten dancers present in Stony kit, plus the team's steadfast musician, Don Allison. Several, though, had come back solely for this final fling.

It was right to finish. For the past three or four years, numbers had been falling critically. Several times, the team had turned out to bookings with fewer than six dancers. As members aged, they found they could no longer manage the high, slow style on which the team prided itself, and on which it chose not to compromise.

Regrettably, Stony Stratford's powerful dancing failed to attract new and younger dancers. Bold attempts at recruitment were made, including staging a morris-from-scratch competition for a number of teams from local schools and community organisations. The competition was a great success and did indeed draw new people to the morris - but mostly women, to neighbouring teams.

Stony Stratford abandoned its regular practices earlier this year.

At the end of that final stand, the dancers walked away, leaving their ribbons and rosettes lying on the ground. The team had strived to achieve the highest standards. It enjoyed success four times in a row in the team and solo competitions at Sidmouth, between 1992 and 1995. With one final grand effort, it had maintained those standards to the last. Everyone seemed in buoyant mood.

Julian briefly paid tribute to Bob Shakeshaft, a past foreman and the only person who had been with the team from start to finish, barring a break along the way. The cry went up: "Speech! Speech!"

Bob reluctantly stepped forward.

"It's been 18 or 19 years," he said. "We wanted to finish on a high, rather than just get old and decrepid. I think we've done that."

No one disagreed.

"It's been great," he added. "That's it."

(As observed by an onlooker)

Public Image Working Group - Feedback

1. Morris Dancing and Younger People

Much concern has been expressed that the Morris is getting older, and the survey last year indicated that the average age was 39.5. It will be useful to do the survey in five years to see if the average age changes. If it goes up - will it mean that we are all getting older,? If it stays the same perhaps it means that the Morris has found its own level, and if it goes down will it mean that there are more younger people - or that more of us over 40's have dropped out!

Whatever the hypothesis, the outcome will depend on what the current members do now. We have the opportunity with the BBC School Curriculum Film to make contacts in schools, clubs and youth centres. Some teams are already doing work in such places and have been very successful. Although not all younger people will continue with the morris, they will have a better understanding of it, and may well come back to it in later years. Using the BBC programme as a focus for doing some work with schools, may be one way teams can become more involved.

The video on Morris dancing, to be shown on BBC TV in May 1998, was completed in July 1997. There were several adult teams involved, but it proved difficult to find teams with younger people, and on the day there was only one girls team (although two other teams had younger people dancing in the set). If we are to encourage younger people to dance we must be able to point to role models, where younger people can be seen to be dancing. There are also requests now coming in for teams of younger people to dance at festivals both in the UK and abroad.

AND WE DONT KNOW WHERE TO FIND THEM!

A survey has been jointly agreed by all three Morris Organisations in order to :-

A. Identify what work is being done by any morris or sword teams in schools, youth clubs etc

B. Identify teams of younger people, or where there is an adult team that can field a team of mainly younger people. We are aware that there are teams in schools, brownies, scouts etc who are not members of any of the morris organisations, but who are dancing morris on a regular basis.

A survey form is enclosed with this newsletter. Please complete it for your team, and copy it for any team you know that may be attached to a school or club, and that may not otherwise receive it.

But finding the teams to act as role models is only the first step. Each team, either individually or in collaboration with other teams locally, needs to look at ways that they may consider taking this forward. There are several options to consider

Teams could :

- run a days workshop in a school
- run a series of workshops with one school eg Saturday mornings, or after school
- collaborate with other teams in an area to put on workshop events with a group of schools
- in collaboration with the schools, issue a challenge to local schools/ guides etc to perform a morris dance
- organise a day of dance focusing on the involvement of younger people in and with the morris

There are many variations on the same theme, but the key one is for teams to decide whether this is an area they want to be involved in, and if so whether it should be just one or two or all the team. The next step (if you are going that far!) is to start talking with the schools / clubs/ organisations about what they might like, and how you could work with them to achieve that. Some of this can be done by individuals (and there are a lot of teachers who already do this), but it makes more impact if a whole team are able to take part, or if several teams collaborate.

In the next news letter we hope to feature some teams who are already doing some work in schools (and also see the item on DERT and DERTY)

Janet Dowling (for PIWG)

Dancing England Rapper Tournament - DERT 98

Details of the 1998 DERT will soon be available from the joint organisers the High Spen Blue Diamonds and Short Circuit Rapper Dancers. It will take place in the Borough of Gateshead on 21st and 22nd February 1998. The main tournament will be in Ryton CIU Club and a youngsters event in nearby Blaydon.

The weekend will include social gatherings in suitable watering holes, warm up dances for those who need it and an evening do with supper. Bus trips are promised for those who want to visit ye old rapper haunts.

Ricky Forster, from High Spen, is particularly pleased to announce the youth tournament for teams of people under age 16. This follows his successful rapper workshops in local schools. The young teams will have an opportunity to exhibit on the morning of the main competition and will receive a DERT award, a certificate of merit and a comments sheet. The aim is to encourage new younger teams.

Teams are invited to register their interest in either event as soon as possible. Send a stamped addressed envelope to

DERT 98, 1 Greenfield Place, Ryton, Tyne & Wear NE40 3LY

Tel/fax 0191 413 4633

E-mail Bobwilsonuk@compuserve.com

Teams based overseas ie off the British Isles, can also take part - by video!! Send in a video of your team dancing and a panel of judges will assess your prowess and award a video winner .

The entry should be on British VHS format, with return postage if you want it back. Include a few notes on the dance you are doing, and send to

Ricky Forster, High Spen Blue Diamonds, 12 Northumberland Place, Barley Mow, Birtley Co. Durham DH3 2AP. Closing date 30th November 1997.

(Acknowledgments to The NUT)



Morris and the National Curriculum

The long awaited Morris Video is now in the can, and will be shown by the BBC On May 5th 1998 at 11am and repeated in July.

Teams taking part from the Federation were Ditchling, Kintbury May Maids and Long Itchington, with a girls team from Merrylands Junior School in Basildon. Teams from the Ring were Ripley, Bow Street Rappers and Headington. There was supposed to be a boys team but they had to pull out at short notice.

All teams were Cotswold, and if the programme is successful it may be possible to discuss further programmes featuring other style (but wait for it!)

The format will be Headington teaching their dance Blue eyed Stranger to camera, with a massed display of all teams dancing the same dance, with each team then doing a display dance, finishing with a mass Bonny Green Off.

Both Ditchling and Ripley featured younger people in their sets.

Reports from the teams involved will be in the next issue. Suffice to say that the day started at 4pm and finished exactly at 7pm as planned. Ron Smedley, a morris dancer, was the producer and managed to get the best from every one. All teams danced to a very high standard, and a good day was had by all.

In Jig Nation 1998

Sitting in the Dove at Sidmouth, while the skies opened above us, and the clouds torn asunder by the lightening, Brian Mander with his dancing partner (in the Outside Capering Crew) Simon Pipe (overall winner of the Sidmouth Jig Competition 1995 and 1997) and Mary Jo Searle (one half of the Bee team and winner of the Sidmouth Jig - Innovation Award 1997) proposed putting some thing together next year for jig dancers , or jig teams of less than four people. Not sure what, not sure when but any one potentially interested contact Brian Mander

(And as I have lost his address just as we go to print, if you dont know Brian, and are interested let me know and I will pass it on when I find the scrap of paper with his address on! Janet Dowling)

And by the way, the winner of the Sidmouth Jig Competition - Audience Appeal Award was Harriet Vale from Ditchling Morris. All of 11 years old- and the second time she has entered the competition.

ARTS 4 EVERYONE - Grants winners

Were you one of the many small groups who applied for funding for activities in the arts, from the Lottery Funded Arts Council Grants. (Details were in the Newsletter earlier this year.) The closing dates for the grants of up to 5,000 have now gone, and several morris teams applied

Three of the successful ones were -

Hammersmith Morris - who got 1,500 towards the London Day of Dance in September (details for the event from Jeff Dent 0181 737 7307)

Dacre Morris - funded for a day of workshops entitled Dances from British Roots on October 4th in Blackheath, South London. It includes workshops on Scottish stepping, Cotswold Morris, Long sword and Rapper. Details from Sarah Crofts at 7 Northbrook Rd, SE13 5QT

Ashley Rise - a younger peoples team ie all under 18! - who recieved 1,500 to fund the team to attend Chippenham Folk Festival, to fund workshops for the team in different dance traditions, and to replace their kit and confirm the team identity with matching sweatshirts.

It is still possible to apply for funding, but the main emphasis is now on larger groups for up to 500,000. I understand that they are pleased that the fast track procedure for small groups has been so successful, that they are considering repeating it again. So start planning now!

And if you were successful in gaining funding in A4E, let us know in the next newsletter.



Three publicity tips from Mark Rogers of Stroud Morris Dancers.

1). **Send out regular Press Releases.** I send out a one page release summarising our monthly programme to every local paper, radio station, local TV and tourist information office in the area we will be dancing in. I make up a headline for the top of the release (eye catching to get the attention of the journalist, so they don't just bin it), and set out any major events I want covering. I then list other performances or notable things (such as the Gloucestershire Inter Morris "Obbley Onker" Conker Championships "A Smashing Event!") - with enough information so the paper can just take what I've written and publish without having to do too much work.

Don't forget to give a couple of daytime contacts for further information. If we have a really important event coming up, I'll mention it in the monthly Press Release and then send a separate one out later in the month. Always get the release out in plenty of time. Rather than posting my monthly set of releases (19 in the current recipient list) I use the fax facility on my computer at home. I've got a Stroud Morris Dancers Fax Cover Page set up with the team logo, and just type in the details, press a couple of buttons, and off it goes to everybody on my list. The cost of a local 2 minute 'phone call at night is probably cheaper than a second class stamp.

2). **At the beginning of each morris season, I send out copies of our Programme to every B&B, Hotel and Guest House in the area.** You can get a list of them from your local Tourist Information Office, detailing how many rooms they have - so I send a programme for every room (asking the proprietors to put them in the information folders that these places seem to have) and a few for the entrance desk. I also send a covering letter, pointing out that we are interested in promoting our area, that Cotswold Morris has a special place in the area, we want to help their businesses grow by encouraging tourists to come back again - and if they've seen Stroud Morris outside a pub giving a good, free show, they may well do (well, that's what I like to think!). Again, setting up a mailing list on a computer makes this quicker than addressing envelopes by hand, and it will cost a few stamps, but it increases audiences, local awareness and goodwill.

3). **Get to know your local media.** One way of doing this is by applying to join your BBC Local Radio Advisory Council. These meet 6 times a year to offer advice and comments on programme content to the Managing Editor of the local station. You should listen to and have an interest in the station, but you do get to meet the journalists & presenters. Alternatively, write in and ask for a station tour, or offer to perform at events they are arranging. Why not invite journalists to a practice to try their hand at dancing?

Events

Workshops Mumming 1-2nd November 1997

Yeovil This workshop will be led by Thomas and Nicky Dommett and Richard Farmer. Thomas and Richard have been involved with the Crookham Mummers since they were teenagers. Thomas and Nicky have since moved to Wells, where they founded the Mendip Mummers. They have also performed at the Sidmouth Folk Festival. The workshop is aimed at both experienced mummers and complete beginners. It will cover all aspects of mumming, from the history, through the selection of scripts, costumes and so on, to the actual performance. As an added bonus, there will be a session on historical material given by Pete Robson (who is in Babylon, Wessex Morris Men and Bourne River MM) who has a collection of mumming related material, including some old BBC recordings of traditional plays. The event will be held in Corscombe, which is a small village just south of Yeovil, and will cost 20 for the weekend including all meals on Saturday, and Sunday breakfast. We will probably end up in a pub on Sunday lunchtime. There will be indoor camping available from the Friday night.

Doc Rowe 15th November 1997 Bristol If you have any interest in traditional customs at all, you should be at this event. Doc has been attending, photographing and recording traditional customs for many years. He revisits certain customs each year, to record the way they change and alter. His collection of recordings and slides is enormous, and he will be sharing some of these with us. If you have ever wanted to see what a traditional football game looks like from the inside of the scrum, this is your chance! The event, which is being hosted by Pigsty Morris, will be held in the Bristol Flyer public house, Bishopston, Bristol. The cost will be 10, which will include lunch. There will be a bar open for most of the day. There are booking forms for these workshops included in with this newsletter. If you have any further questions, just give me a call. In the Summer newsletter, a North West workshop, led by Chinewrde was mentioned. It has been impossible to find a suitable venue for that event on the original date. We are hoping to be able to run it sometime next year instead.

Steve Cunio



Diary - Autumn 1997

OCTOBER

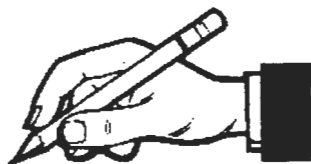
- 4 Headcorn Morris, St. Clement's Clogs - Tenterden Folk Day
Daisy Roots - "Dancing in" the Winter Ale, Harvey's Brewery, Lewes
Three Shires - Matlock Bath Illuminations - dancing in "Derwent Gardens"
- 7 Thrale's Rapper - Visit to Harvey's Brewery, Lewes, followed by tour of Lewis pubs.
- 10-12 Victory Morris Men - Amsterdam Tour 11 Kennet Morris Men - end of season day of dance, Reading
- 18 Daisy Roots - Apple day, Middle Farm, Firle, E. Sussex
Southsea Belles - Michalemas Fair, Methodist Church, Drayton
Three Shires - Matlock Bath Illuminations - dancing in "Derwent Gardens"

NOVEMBER

- 1-2 MORRIS FEDERATION MUMMING WORKSHOP - Yeovil
- 7-9 Thrale's Rapper - Dance Weekend, Various Sword dancing guests dancing in London pubs
- 8 Fleur de Lys - Combined Charities Fair, Godalming Borough Hall
St. Clement's Clogs - Lord Mayor's Show, London
- 15 MORRIS FEDERATION TRADITIONAL EVENTS WORKSHOP - with Doc Rowe - Bristol
- 28 Fleur de Lys - Christmas Lights Ceremony, Godalming High Street
- 31-1 Victory Morris Men - 21st Birthday weekend of dance, Portsmouth

DECEMBER

- 19 Ragged and Old Mummers - Ram, Woodchester, Ram, Bursage and Bell, Avening.
- 26 BOXING DAY
Daisy Roots - Winkle Island, Hastings, E. Sussex
Three Shires - The Bluebell and The Beehive, Harthill, near Sheffield, with Harthill Morris Men, Chingford Morris Men - The Angel and the Market Place, Waltham Abbey and the Duke of Wellington, High Beach



BBC Morris Video

At long last, after many years of meetings and very many occasions when it looked like it would never happen, the video has been made. Under the laid back direction of Ron Smedley, eight sides danced among the dreaming sires of Oxford. All kinds of Cotswold sides were represented, from the Ring and the Federation - women's sides, men's sides, mixed and children. They were Long Itchington, Headington, Ripley, bow Street Rapper, Ditchling, Kintbury May Maids and Maryland Junior Morris.

The finished video will be broadcast on the BBC, after two others on country dancing, for schools to teach a dance as demonstrated by Headington. Watch as they all patiently and reatedly caper around for the camera, under the bemused gaze of wedding guests at a nearby college. It was a great feeling after so many hours of talking, to see a project completed. That is except for the booklet of support matrials that the publication group are still working on..... But that's another story.

Mandy Wearing - Phoenix Morris + Morris Publications Group.

In Rememberance Of Ken Taylor

Ken Taylor

Sadly passed away on 16th May 1997.

He Started dancing with Barnstaple Morris Men in the 1970's, and then in 1989 Bideford Phoenix Morris was formed of which he continued to dance right up to his illness got worse from June 1996. Then sadly he died in May 1997.

A very talented man who will be missed a lot in Folk circles in N. Devon.

Jackie.

Blacked Morris Faces And The Media

There have been two reports this year where the media have been reported as declining to film morris teams with blacked faces. The first was in May at Rochester, where it was reported that the childrens magazine programme Blue Peter had agreed to film the child sweeps in the procession, until they realised that the faces were blacked up and not smudgey. The second incident happened when the Britannia CoConut dancers were due to be filmed by Granada TV and were allegedly asked to remove their make up. For Bacup no black faces meant no dance. In both cases the camera crew felt that the blacked up faces may give offence.

This is a really tricky issue, and one that has been discussed at some of the border workshops. For some people this feels like political correctness gone mad, and point to individuals who are black and asian who find the blacked up dancers acceptable. However, it is important to be sensitive to the issue, and to be aware that in some parts of this country people are living in a racist environment where blacking up of white people is experienced as offensive and as a threat.

What we need to do as morris dancers, is to be clear about the context of blacking up as a disguise in morris dancing. The three Morris organisations are aware that this has the potential to become a moral panic and have agreed on the following position statement.

1. There is a historical tradition in Europe and this country of blacking up while dancing. Steve Corrsin (author of Sword dancing in Europe - A History) came across references from central European sword and morris sources, to dancers with blacked faces in the 15th-17th centuries for example Strasbourg (then part of the Holy Roman Empire rather than France), and Zurich (a picture from the Zurich city archives, 1578). Whilst historical precedent is no justification for current practice, teams have developed their style in this context, not with the intention of being offensive.

2. It is current day practice in other Countries for dancers to blacken or colour their faces as part of the atmosphere of the dance - and in some instances to whiten up

3. Flag Crackers of Craven (a blacked up border team) have been featured in a national advertising campaign for NFU Mutual, where they are clearly seen as a morris team dancing with blacked faces. The campaign has been running since October 1996, and was most recently featured in the Radio Times. At the 1st August 1997 the Advertising Standards Authority have received no complaints of people experiencing the photos as offensive.

Who To Contact

WHO TO CONTACT

ADDRESS - CHANGE OF BETH NEILL
ADDRESSES - NOT IN MFBETH NEILL
AGM - HOSTING STEVE CUNIO
AGM - ORGANISATION STEVE CUNIO
AGM BETH NEILL
ARCHIVE GROUP LYNN ROGERS
BOOK LOANS LYNN ROGERS
CIOFF LYNN ROGERS
(Dancing at overseas folk festivals)
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Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. To help these are some guidelines to make your contribution easier to produce and the Editors life easier.

Contributions on disk or in hard copy are welcome. Hand-written MUST be legible.
ALL CONTRIBUTIONS MUST REACH THE EDITOR BY THE COPY DATE

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OPERATING SYSTEM DOS format
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STYLE Times Roman 12
No indents to paragraphs
No tabs or indents if possible
Headings in capitals and bold
Sub headings in lower case,
underlined 2 spaces after a full
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with a capital letter
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If in doubt please just send the text. It is much easier for me to put the house style onto your text than have to undo your style before doing this.

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