

Newsletter Winter 2006



The AGM – Time for a Change?

10 Questions with Jameson Wooders

15 Years of Hook Eagle

25 Years of Crook



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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

To all Secretaries, Squires, Bag people, etc.

NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter is the quarterly publication of the Morris Federation. The aim is to provide a platform for news, views and announcements relating to the world of traditional dance and associated activities. The Newsletter goes out to each member group and individual member of the Morris Federation. Additional copies can be ordered by group members at an additional cost per copy of £10 for one year's issues. To be a living publication the Newsletter must be read so PLEASE PLEASE make sure that your copy gets circulated as widely as possible.

MEMBERS' MANUAL

All members of the MF should have a copy of the 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 £6.50 (inc.p&p) each. Please make cheques payable to 'The Morris Federation'.

ADVERTISING

The MF 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 MF should be addressed to the Newsletter Editor.

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EDITORIAL

So another edition goes to press and I feel slightly guilty that having nagged away in issue after issue about getting material for the Newsletter I find myself now leaving material out! Or to be more exact deferring articles to the next issue. It's actually a weight issue. Yes it's strange but true. My reading of the new postal rules suggests that we can keep A4 format of the Newsletter provided we keep below 100gm per packet. And my scales suggest that a 28-page issue is just on the limit. So if your contribution is not in this issue take solace in the idea that your offering will brighten the Spring issue.

I'm still going to nag about circulation though. Please pass the Newsletter round your team. OK I take the point that if each team member takes the Newsletter home to read and you only meet once a week it's going to take time to circulate. But there are ways round this conundrum. Most of the material is not date sensitive so even after a couple of months I hope it still makes a good read. But some stuff has a "sell by date" so please make a point of extracting the details of workshops etc. and pushing these loud and clear and most importantly TIMELY!

OK end of moan. Happy Christmas and see you all next year.

Doug

Printing
Next Issue
Front Cover Photograph

Outline Print Service Ltd, Colne, Lancashire
Spring 2007 (Copy date 17th February 2007)
Tracy Seelig leapfrogs The Outside Capering Crew at Banbury Hobby Horse Festival 2006
Photo :Contributed by Pete Thomas

COMMITTEE NEWS

PRESIDENTS PROLOGUE?

No the editor has not forgotten this vital element of the quarterly Newsletter. When last seen Trefor was about to put himself in the tender care of the NHS for a little bodyshop work and also planning to move house. Given that either one of these experiences is a major disruption to the smooth flow of daily life I'm not going to nag.

However repaired, re-settled and refreshed after Christmas I feel sure normal service will be resumed. I'm sure we all wish Trefor and Rhiannon a peaceful and painless move to Wales.

FINANCE – Rachel

As mentioned in the last Newsletter Rachel is standing down as treasurer after many years of pursuing late subscriptions and squeezing past the shop stock to get through her home. At the AGM in Sheffield Jenny Slade 'volunteered' to take up the vacant post. Jenny is we believe one of the very few if not the only person to have served on the committee in two separate roles. I'm sure we all wish her well and will be extra vigilant in our dealings with money matters to welcome her in her new role.

Meanwhile I feel we all owe Rachel a vote of thanks for her work in looking after the finances of the Morris Federation. To quote a recent South Riding Folk Network item "trying to organise Morris dancers makes herding cats look easy".

The shop order form usually inserted as a loose leaf into the Newsletter has been dropped as an economy measure. Each insert does cost the Federation money and the committee feels that a download version from the Federation web site will be acceptable. Any team who is not computer wired contact the treasurer.

NEWSLETTER – Doug

It's either feast or famine when it comes to copy for the Newsletter. Obviously the drawing in of the autumn nights gives time for the memory to spin back over the dance season just gone and to generate a welcome piece on what you did and where you went. Interesting and I hope inspirational to our readers these pieces are always valued. However space considerations mean that I have held over a couple of pieces for inclusion in the Spring 2007 edition.

The AGM in Sheffield gets some coverage in this issue. Ron Day has opened up a line of discussion on the future of the Federation AGM that should set minds in motion and already has since I have some comments to hand from those who attended the AGM "proper" on the Sunday morning. Again I am holding this topic over until the next edition.

Basically there are two issues confronting the Federation. First the format of the weekend as a whole for which Ron's item provides a cogent view. The second issue is the running of the business side of the AGM and the possibility of a very small attendance at the AGM being able to vote into being changes to the constitution which the membership as a whole have no chance react to or comment on.

One item that did come up at the AGM was the possibility of publishing the Newsletter on the Internet as a PDF document. I've now experimented with a method of doing this and will be working on the practicalities making this a reality in the future. As a humble scribe the niceties of copyright and legal ramifications are I feel better left to those who actually know that of which they speak. I will ignore any muttered comments of the "Never stopped you before" type.

EVENTS – Jean

In an effort to keep costs down we have cut back on workshop booking forms inserted as loose leaf pages for the last few issues. The alternative approach has

been to include "adverts" in the Newsletter together with details in this column and also in the diary section. If anyone has strong views on the loss of the booking forms please let us know.

Two workshops coming up in the new year are detailed below.

Rapper Workshop 27th January

Sallyport Swords are the current DERT champions based in Newcastle upon Tyne. They will be holding a full day Rapper workshop in St Cuthbert's Hall in Darlington on Saturday 27th January 2007 from 11.00am to 5.00pm.

This workshop is open to individuals and teams of all abilities from complete beginners to the most experienced. It could be a great opportunity for your team to come and get some valuable tips prior to this year's DERT competition. Else come along and learn some new figures in the company of other rapper dancers.

The workshop event is being hosted by Pengwyn Rapper. The venue is in the town centre within easy walking distance of the railway station and with a large car park close by.

The price of the workshop is £10 per head and includes refreshments through the day and a lunch of home made soup and sandwiches. Map and directions, along with details of local accommodation will be provided with booking confirmation. Booking forms available on the Federation web site.

NW Workshop 24th February

This event, for all abilities, is being hosted by Ripley Green Garters in Swanwick, near Ripley Derbyshire. The day will run from 10am to 4pm. Cost will be £10 per head, which includes drinks (tea/coffee/squash) and lunch.

The joint dance masters of Wakefield Morris, Doug Bradshaw and John Earnshaw will lead the workshop. The objective is to try and find a basic dance that can be used as a joint performance item when NW sides meet and are

confronted with a massed "Bonny Green" from the Cotswold teams!

More details from and bookings to :

Stella Roddis
43 North End ,
Wirksworth,
Matlock,
Derbyshire,
DE4 4 FG
Telephone : 01629 822380

email stella.roddis@btopenworld.com

Gloucestershire's County Show Morris Dance World Record

In September 2007 the organisers of the show would like to stage a World Record bid by gathering a large number of Morris Dancers, dancing to one tune in one place. Success to be measured by counting personnel on exit from the enclosure. The aims are to encourage a traditional dance form with local connections and providing publicity. To this end they would be grateful for any assistance from dancers from the Morris Federation. Any interested groups would be welcome to contact them.

The e-mail address to contact is secretary@moreton-show.org.uk

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5) Childrens model	£ 18-20	Colours: natural, black, green, red	
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New Address!



On 11th November I attended, with my mum, a clog-step workshop run by Inclognito. As a total newcomer to clog-stepping I was worried that I wouldn't be able to keep up with the other members of the class as it was actually an intermediate level workshop. Luckily for me the workshop was run by friendly welcoming people whose clear instructions made it possible for me to feel happy and comfortable in learning a new dance. I felt that I could get really involved at the workshop because I didn't feel rushed to move on, so I was able to learn the steps and go over them until I was happy with them. The workshop ran from 12.00 to around 5.30 with a break in the middle for a delicious lunch of hot soup, bread, cake, fruit and of course, tea. During the course of the workshop we learnt a whole dance routine, which originated from America and contained 12 different figures!

I had been trying to find somewhere that I could have a go at clog-stepping for a really long time so when my mum told me about this workshop I jumped at the chance to go, and I'm glad I did. I enjoyed myself so much and am now looking to find somewhere a bit more local where I can carry on with it. (I live in Sussex!) I've even bought a pair of stepping clogs so that I have something to wear.

Being at the workshop gave me such a buzz and I haven't stopped thinking about it and can't wait to try it out again. So far I've been practising the routine we learnt at home in the kitchen!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped organise and took part in the workshop. I had a really amazing time and I'm sure that everybody else that attended did as well. Thank-you!

Rachel Watkins via E-mail

And this by E-mail from Doc Rowe on 19th November 2006

I awoke this morning to a phone call with sad news. Doug Fowell leader of the Abbots Bromley Horn Dancers, long time dancer and musician, died in hospital around 1.00 a.m. this morning. The family were with him and it was all very peaceful.

He has been very ill for a few weeks now but the family did not want it publicised. They already knew last month that he had advance stages of cancer and that it was terminal. Doug was only told a couple of weeks ago after he had fallen out of bed and was returned to hospital where he had been previously. I'm very sad as he was a lovely man and he'll be missed greatly.

Although not really well he was out playing for the dancers last September on the annual perambulations at his 71st Horn Dance! I've sent a piece off to Rod Stradling at Musical Traditions and cited the EDS Winter 2005 piece on Doug's 70th outing.

Sorry to be bearer of such sad news - as ever

AGM Bradfield School, Sheffield, September 22nd to 24th 2005

My thanks go to Triskele Sword for organising the AGM in Sheffield this year. It is never an easy task and Triskele worked hard to find a suitable venue and arrange interesting dance tours.



The weather was reasonably kind, a little foggy first thing on Saturday but for those on the Derbyshire Peak District tour bright sunshine and very pleasant temperatures for dancing outside followed it. Other tours were not quite so lucky, those sides dancing in Sheffield city Centre or around North Sheffield Villages had to accept slightly poorer conditions. Consequently audiences were a little sparse at times though there were some interested observers in the Derbyshire Peaks who voiced their appreciation of the dancing.

The day's dancing culminated with a massed stand back at Bradfield and it was a welcome opportunity to watch sides who had been on other tours. The evening meal was delicious and plentiful and this was followed by a ceilidh with Hekety and caller Jenny Langridge. Many people still managed to dance the night away despite being on their feet all day.



The business part of the weekend took place at Kelham Island Industrial Museum who catered well for our needs. Both in terms of arranging a meeting room and providing a delicious lunch.



Those who attended the AGM would admit that the attendance was a little disappointing and with this in mind there may be some changes to the running of the AGM in future. Watch this space for 2007!

Jean Smith – Events Officer

Food for Thought AGM 2006 **The Organisers Viewpoint.**

It seemed like a good idea at the time. Trefor Owen slipped into the seat beside me on the coach between Kendal and Windermere – we were enjoying the Lakeland scenery on offer as part of the AGM weekend organised by Westmoreland Clog. “How would you like to do the AGM in 2006 he crooned” We were flattered; as Triskele Sword is a relatively new team, freshly 'quarried' in late 2000. Not that we were strangers to organising events, having been involved with the South Riding Folk Network and divers other teams for nigh on 20 years. Easy peasy, we thought, a two-year run in – great! A quick straw poll round the team dozing on the coach and we agreed.

You can all stop smiling now – assuming you have been – because this piece is going to turn serious because our experience threw up some fundamental questions that you – the members – need to address for the future.

Drawing up a framework for the weekend was straightforward, and with still a year in hand we ran it past Events Officer, Jean Smith pronounced herself happy with it; and so to the detail.

We set ourselves high standards for the accommodation, indoor and outdoor camping facilities, good toilets and showers, catering facilities and easy access to suitable areas for the dance tours. As was often the case in the past, it looked like a job for a co-operative school, but with one new criteria – that of good security. The sad experiences of this past summer put security much higher on the agenda. City Centre Schools are probably always going to be a bit shaky on this point. It took much longer to find a school that met our criteria and in fact we were in negotiation with two which eventually pulled out because ‘the project seemed too difficult’.

We finally found our ideal school – and let me say this at this point – THEY WERE HELPFUL AND WONDERFUL IN

EVERY WAY. However it is a harsh reality of the litigious, 'not my fault', cover your back, society we have created, that the old style relationships of helping each other because it's a jolly good idea, have gone, for ever!

The result was that every step of the way was formally recorded, with agreements made in writing. Every meeting was attended by two representatives from the City Council Licensing Dept. brackets - Health and Safety – close brackets! I won't bore you with the nitti gritti, but a requirement for a 12 page risk assessment gives you the flavour.

Then there was the money! Schools are more than ever thrown on their own resources, and have to make ends meet. The cost of hiring the school was set by the School Governors at £2500. We would have needed 300 participants paying a full weekend ticket to cover the overall cost. To their eternal credit, in the end, they reduced this substantially or we would have in been dire trouble. The a fore mentioned Health and Safety assessment imposed on us a requirement to hire a specified number of Portaloos and fire extinguishers and to install emergency lighting in parts of the school not normally used at night. We were required to have security patrols around the campus throughout the night and day. We also had to have a qualified electrician supervise all electrical installation – including the bands' P.A! Thank goodness we had a 'sparky' who dances!

And finally, only a caterer approved by the local authority was permitted to use the school kitchens – you see the kitchens are not owned by the school anymore.....?

All these un-anticipated hoops obliged us to make commitments to suppliers and contractors well in advance of the event, and how the costs mounted!

The information went to Federation HQ for circulation - a little later than we would have wished - in early May, but we didn't

worry too much, after all the date and host/venue had been published for 18 months. In fact the papers were circulated with the summer newsletter in July. The anticipated flood of enquiries didn't happen. We kept our nerve because we understand concepts like 'Morris time' and 'Team communication' and 'Team availability' and knew that come September everyone would get round to organising themselves. Nope!!

In the end, there were 4 teams in residence, and 8 teams were either non-resident or came for the Saturday. Three teams made reservations but were not able to attend. In addition there were some individuals and the Federation officers. There were actually more hosts than participants sleeping in the school.

"It's an ill wind that blows no good" and indeed with lashings of space in the school, we had no trouble in persuading the handful of outdoor campers to come inside on what proved to be a very wet and unpleasant Friday evening. Saturday and Sunday were lovely days. The dance tours went well, the massed dance was spectacular and the ceilidh with Hekety was well received. The AGM was held at Kelham Island Museum on Sunday with around 50 people in attendance. Two teams took the opportunity to dance at the Museum, and this shift of venue allowed us to return the school to normal for Monday morning.

We had a great weekend, and I hope those who came along did too. The letters and emails from participants were very positive. In the end, the Federation - you, the members - picked up the bill for the unavoidable losses. We only needed 40 more people to break even, however our experience raises a number of questions which the members need to address:-

i)Has this residential style, weekend AGM, lost its appeal? Should we look at an alternative format for the AGM?

ii)Are the present day costs/security implications for a weekend, such that

they are prohibitive? (We ended up paying for Portaloos, tram tickets and almost a coach that we didn't need as the number of participants fell)

iii)How is it that teams report not knowing about the weekend, when certainly a dozen or more can testify to receiving the details and acting upon them?

iv)Is the cost per head an issue, if so how much is reasonable?

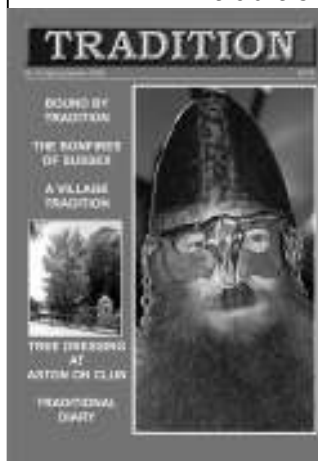
Perhaps we should have an AGM to discuss these matters

Ron Day – Triskele Sword

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NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Please send any contributions for
the Spring Newsletter to the
Newsletter editor by
Saturday 17th February 2007

The Magic of the Dance in France



Paul White

There's a very heartening tale I wish to relate. We have been away. Two months in France in a small (and I mean small) village in a bit of the Loire region surrounded by Normandy.

Couptrain has a resident population of around 160 people. The majority are of course French, but there is a small sprinkling of English folk, some Australians and, I hear tell, an American. In surrounding villages the pattern is much the same, with the foreign contingent including Scots, Germans and other Europeans.

In Couptrain there are two bars. One very French. One more English in style, due to the fact that it is run by a couple of expats who also run a local brewery. The two bars (next door to each other) coexist very well, meeting the needs of very different markets.

When we arrived this time, our stay coincided with a beer festival, which took place in late October. With four weeks to go, I asked if they fancied having a morris side at the festival and the response was a huge 'yes please.'

So we asked for recruits and got 16 dancers – both English and French - (who, barring one, had never danced the morris before and none of who had danced border morris). For the performances we had a brilliant band of

two melodeons, one guitar and occasional tambourine.

One of our members succeeded in sourcing a supply of morris bells, another brought along a bolt of blue material from which we created sashes and Steve the brewer provided tunics which had previously been used as the kit in a quidditch match. Don't ask! With black trousers, black shoes, a hat of choice and optional face-art, the kit was born.

We set ourselves the task of teaching this new side the rudiments of border morris and two dances to perform. And in the space of just six practices, we did it! By 'we' I mean the whole lot of us. For although I taught and Sally played, without the massive enthusiasm of the dancers we could not have achieved what we did. Sally wrote a dance and tune (Couptrain) and we taught an existing dance and come the festival the excitement was tangible.

We performed on both days of the festival (on day one they were so excited we did two performances) and by day two we were dancing to a standard many long-established sides would be proud of.

Now I am not saying we were perfect. Far from it. But we certainly were able to put on a show and attract an appreciative and fair-sized audience. Members of La Troupe de Danseurs de la Morris de Couptrain want it to continue. To them it is not just a flash in the pan. It's a lot more magic than that.

It is a multi-national group of people, which has gelled, into something with a life of its own. People who hardly knew each other before have made new friends. They sing, dance and play together as never before. And it's not going to die.

What is the magic ingredient? It's the dance. And specifically the morris. We have all experienced it before and for many of us that's the reason we do it.

So, what's next?

We'll be back in Couptrain in the spring and I have little doubt the morris side will be eager to perform again then.

They want to get away to festivals both in England and France so, looking ahead, if you fancy something a bit different at your event, get in touch. You can do that by visiting the web site which you will find at www.danseurs.hey42.co.uk

You might also fancy joining us at the 2007 Couptrain beer festival. This could be the start of something big!

Footnote: the face-art on my picture is a puzzle. Can you solve it? Clue: the answer is not in English. First correct answer will receive a genuine morris stick cut from French hazel. Send answers via the web site.

The Ten Commandments of Sessions:

I. Thou shalt not ever forsake the beat.

II. Thou shalt arrange thyself in a small circle so that thou mayest hear and see the other musicians. Thou shalt listen with thine ears to the songs and attempt to play in accord with the group; also, open thine eyes betimes to look about thee, lest there be some visual sign someone is endeavouring to send thee. Thou shalt play softly when someone lifteth his voice in song, when playing harmony, and when thou knowest not what thou is doing.

III. Thou shalt play in tune. Tune thine instrument well, and tune it often with thine electric tuner, lest the sounds emanating from thine instrument be unclean.

IV. Thou shalt commence and cease playing each tune together as one, so that the noise ye make be a joyful noise, and not a heinous tinkling that goeth in fits and starts, for that is unclean, and is an abomination. Whensoever a musician sticketh forth his foot as though he were afflicted with a cramp in the fatted calf,

thou must complete the rest of that verse, and then cease.

V. Thou shalt stick out thine own foot or else lift up thy voice crying "This is it !", or "Last time !" or "Out !" if thou hast been the one to begin the song, and it has been played sufficient times over. If the one who began a tune endeth it not by one of these signs, then the tune will just go on and on, like the Old Testament, until the listeners say, "Hark ! It the same" and "Will it never endeth?"

VI. Thou shalt concentrate and thou shalt not confound the music by mixing up the A part and the B part. Most songs, but not all, proceedeth according to the ancient law "AABB". But if thou sinneth in this regard, or make any mistake that is unclean, thou may atone - not by ceasing to play - but by re-entering the tune in the proper place and playing on.

VII. Thou shalt be ever mindful of the key the banjo and melodeons are tuned in, and play many tunes in that key, for they are but lowly instruments, the banjo which must needs be retuned each time there is a key change, and the melodeon which cannot be retuned at all..

VIII. Thou shalt not speed up or slow down accidentally when playing a tune, for it is an abomination. (See commandment I)

IX. Thou shalt not, by thine own self, commence noodling off on a tune the other musicians know not, unless asked or unless thou art teaching that tune, for it is an abomination, and the other musicians will not hold thee guiltless, and shall take thee off their computer lists, yea, even unto the third and the fourth generation.

X. Thou shalt have fun and play well.

Angi -Mabel Gubbins Rapper

Ed's Note: This came to Angi as an e-mail and I include it here mainly for those oft neglected heroes - the musicians.

Hook Eagle Morris Men



"Is it fifteen, Love?" - "Yes, and they are still so strong and virile!"

No one involved in the creation of Hook Eagle Morris Men would ever have imagined that we would

still be performing 15 years later. The outcome of an "auction of promises" to perform at one Church Fete to raise money for an ambitious building project to extend St John's Church in Hook has certainly had legs! The auction idea was proposed by a member of nearby Yateley Morris Men, who formed the core of the side at the fete along with the then Vicar, Stuart Foster, local all round renaissance man and plumber John Lambert, members of the choir and various dragooned villagers and plumber's mates! As the story goes, they all had such a good time they wanted to carry on dancing (it may have been the beer talking!).

The nice men of Yateley decided that another Cotswold side nearby might prove contentious (or maybe they were afraid of the competition?), so somebody suggested Border. What a good idea! With music from the ubiquitous Gareth Kiddier and other renegades from Yateley who were just having so much fun, Hook Eagle Morris Men were duly inaugurated.

The original Foreman, Richard Walton, set the style - to have fun, entertain the audience and to get the dances right. A formula that has worked very well for us. Black faces crept in slowly with the band being late converts. Piano accordions made way for melodeons. Amazingly "real Morris Dancers" wanted to join us to the extent that some even moved to Hook! Not only did the dancing improve

but the legendary "Hook Wall of Sound" came into being. The music, the dances and the side's style have all evolved and may be traced on our web site. Believing Morris to be a "living tradition" we now have wonderful dances to celebrate landmarks in and around Hook; Crooked Billet (something to do with our local!), Hook Tandoori (well there's a surprise!), Rotherwick Lead Miners Dance (a celebration of the descendants of the wee, small men with black faces who used to toil in the said lead mines and nothing at all to do with diminutive plumbers!), The Far Canal (homage to the Great St Laurence Seaway, inspired by the Basingstoke Canal and with no connection at all to the Far Carp!) and from a more distant source Le Fresne Porret (a tiny and obscure village in Normandy who's signpost was outside a particularly wonderful bar!). Our musical repertoire also contains original tunes, mostly from the precociously talented (mines a pint Derek) DTN aka "Derek The Nutter" Tarrant.

We were once blessed with most of the "Nutter" family in the side DTN, Nick the Nutter's Brother and Anne the Nutter's Sister-in-law. All now variously involved with our "house" ceilidh band Tarrantella. In addition to a family of Nutter's we can also lay claim to having a whole Race of Rob's in the side - so numerous are they that they are only referred to only by number Rob1, Rob2, Rob3 etc. a serious hazard when calling a complicated dance!

Rob1, an almost original member (with some almost original members of his own - use the finger-guard Rob!) has single handedly made the Hook Programme a much sought after collectors item and educational tome. The current programme examines Hook Eagle's influence on world events over the past 15 years. 2005 charted the evolution of Morris from the pre-Cambrian to modern day Morris Man. 2004 was our 13th year and offered sound advice to all Triskaidekaphobics. For any that might

be interested all our programmes are archived as PDF's on our web site.

In our first three years we raised over £6,000 for St John's Church - just how many fetes can you do in one weekend! Our fund raising efforts eventually found wider recipients in the Hook area, youth clubs, football clubs, gardening clubs, nurseries and play schools. Today we mostly support a local hospice who have offered wonderful care to a number of local Morris Dancers. We have travelled far and wide - not just to Basingstoke but Normandy (Normandy, France, not the one near Aldershot!), the USA and even Yorkshire. We are regularly seen at UK festivals and local pubs and events. Our web site is now blessed with "live action" movies for any who just can't get enough Morris.....and we have recently held a very successful recruitment workshop as, in common with so many sides, finding new members is a continual problem.



*Hook Eagle human pyramid at Winchester
(I think there's a trick in there somewhere Ed)*

Our 2006, 15th year, dance programme included some memorable events. May Day Dawn in Old Basing (and the interesting correspondence with one

Councillor Mullet!). A hugely successful Day of Dance with some 10 guest sides dancing in Winchester before dinner and a ceilidh in Hook. The first ever Hook Summer Festival (will there ever be a second?), great fun at Rochester Sweeps as always and a brilliant time at Dartmoor, thank you Gordon and Annie. But the highlight may well have been St George's Day. On the back of last year's Saturday event, we had an even bigger and better dance out in Odiham this year with some seven other sides and yes - Hook Eagle Morris men won the EFDSS/Musicians Insurance £500 prize for the best publicity of a St George's Day event.

And it's not over yet, we will end the year with some great Winter events. The Hook Christmas Cracker is on December 1st, in Hartley Wintney. We have Carols on the Common on December 20th and the awesome Wassail on January 12th between which we will be dancing out in Old Basing on Boxing Day and continuing our traditional Hair of the Dog Cycling Tour of North Warnborough, Greywell and Hook on January 1st.

May we thank all our friends who helped get this great Morris Side started, all members past, present and departed who played their important parts, and everyone who has danced with us or just watched. We couldn't have done it without you.

Everything you always wanted to know about Hook Eagle Morris Men (and much you didn't) is available on our web site www.hookeagle.org.uk. New members, invitations to dance and comments (of a positive and caring kind) are always welcome.

John Ellis - Hook Eagle Morris Men

Banbury Hobby Horse Festival

1st and 2nd July 2006

Photos by Pete and Margery Thomas



The Sailors Horse from Minehead arrives in Banbury with a riot of colour and a barrage of drumming. Frightening the children - and some of the adults. It was part of the annual Hobby Horse Festival organised in the town.



Dragons from the US meet the elephants from Bloxham and the Mari Lwyd, the skull horse from Llantrissant. (We remember the Mari Lwyd from the Autumn 2005 edition don't we folks? – Ed)

Rabble's Hooden Horse causes trouble for his rider



Even the support of Trigger (alias Rob Chisman the convenor of the Order of Fools and Beasts) did not help with the football





Hob Nob a replica of the horse that accompanies Salisbury's Giant watches Sarum



The Adlington Morris perform the Alderley Mummers Play assisted by their horse Young Ball with a black painted horse's skull



Pecseatan Morris from Sheffield showing how to get off the ground together watched by their own Tup "Harry RAMsden



Outside Capering Crew performing a Bacca Pipes triple jig in the sun.



The Beasts Dance on the Sunday afternoon with from l to r: Trigger from Trigg Morris, Buzzard from Cry Havoc, Wickham Morris's Dragon, Fergie, Cobb's Horse from Adderbury, Dragon from Jugglers Meadow.



Cobb's Horse a modern representation of the Padstow 'Oss put in an appearance

A great weekend with a lot of organisation from Verna, Sandy, Rob and a host of others
 There are some more images on the Rich Tradition web site at <http://richtradition.co.uk> and details of the festival can be found at <http://www.hobbyhorsefestival.co.uk/>

CROOK MORRIS 25th BIRTHDAY WEEKEND 21st-23rd JULY 2006

When you've got a major anniversary coming up you start the planning early. Well you do if you have even a modicum of sense and Suzanne our Squire has buckets of it, thankfully. So invitations to our special weekend were sent out before we had even sent the invitations to our twenty-fourth! We sent eight invitations - and received eight acceptances. We didn't even have room for a wild card entry. Apologies to all the sides we couldn't ask. It's even harder when we've announced that we're taking a break from this weekend for a while, but watch this space!

So now it was down to some serious planning. We obviously wanted to keep the key elements from our normal, very popular event but to add highlights that would make it memorable for not just our guests, but for ourselves as well. Twelve months of ideas and teamwork building ensued, all leading to the knowledge that we were going to give our guests an absolutely cracking weekend.

Schools broke up on the Wednesday, so Crook members were at the school in Coniston in force from the Thursday night. The starkness of the John Ruskin School hall was transformed with two thousand square feet of silver foil, massive silver 25s and Crook symbols, hundreds of silver balloons and enough streamers to launch the QE2. Juliet had done an amazing job.

Guests arrived to be greeted with very attractive 25th badges made by Maggy and Gary and a commemorative, recycled plastic mug with all the necessary bits to make a cocktail and even two vouchers for the two free drinks. Nice one Squire. The t-shirts, designed by Chris Malkin, were very smart and carried on the strong identity of the weekend.

Soon everyone was tucking into excellent food, home made as is always the way

with Crook. At last the start of the cocktail party was announced and served by two of the most stunning cocktail waitresses you are ever likely to see, plus their minders! Crook Morris isn't daft when they know their guests so well!



In no time at all we were ready for the entertainment to kick off. Crook started it with all thirty-eight members of the side in black and silver (there's a surprise) absolutely raising the roof with their version of Les Barker's "I'm in the Morris Team". Hot on our heels were the "Cheeky Girls" - you had to see them to believe it! This was followed by a touch of normality with a splendid twenty minutes of join-in French dancing with Mortimers and their fine musicians. No time for a rest as all two hundred and fifty of us tramped outside to be entertained by Technopire and Smiffy the pyrotechnic pensioner, as regularly seen at Whitby Folk Week. Back in the hall and all was set up for Rique (give me an excuse and I'll dress up!) and Claire with their woad enactment. Hardly any hitches so far, but next up were Ryknild Rabble, oh dear! We had asked for detail of any PA or other requirements. Rabble had asked for two microphones. As they were about to go on ... Can we have all the lights off? ... Is it all right if we dance with sparklers? They won't damage anything, honest, they're strapped to our sticks,

honest!!! Imagine the scene, a pitch black hall, lit sparklers flying through the air as the strapping loosens and screams of anguish as the sparks land on unprotected flesh!! Will we ever forgive them? ... Yes, of course we have, we're Crook Morris!

Surprisingly, a short break was needed and we were running to schedule - it's easy if you don't bother with one, but Dave, as well as being in two acts himself, had compered with aplomb and that always helps. Glasses replenished, we hoped for a touch of decorum, then realised that next act was Silhill Morris with a join-in horse race game. No, we didn't understand it either, but what a hoot. Gaffer controlled the starts and the rest of Silhill did what they do best they stood around drinking and laughing at the representatives of the other sides making total fools of themselves. Truly magnificent! Thank heaven for Sheffield City Morris. They brought an air of normality, almost, back into the night with some stunningly well sung songs, though some of the lyrics were a little dubious!



The final act was back with Crook Morris and the Big Hats routine. It needed to be an item of stunning simplicity, well choreographed and with exceptional timing. And at the rehearsal it was, indeed, all of that. On the night it was perhaps a different matter. OK, we couldn't hear the music so we came on at

the wrong time. OK the paint hadn't dried on one of the hats. OK, the stuck-on eyes and noses worked on dry skin, how was I to know that we would be hot and bothered and they would fall off during the performance. OK, it wasn't in the plan that one guy would collide with another and snap a big chunk of his brim off. OK, my dinner jacket kept sliding down and the audience witnessed the sight of an arm descending from inside the hat to yank the garment back up! Well, what we reckoned was that we got away with it and that no one noticed the odd glitch as they were all so p-ss-d that they thought it was deliberate. Cool or what! Crook Morris rules OK?

I believe that there was a fair bit more drinking and that somewhere about 3:30am the last of the stragglers staggered off to bed. That was one hell of a cracking good night.

Thanks to Bob the Saturday tours were a total delight. The timings were spot on, the coaches were on time and the drivers a really cheerful bunch. Every side danced with vigour and panache. We all showed the public that traditional dance is fun, colourful and spectacular. It was really good to meet up with every other side during the day and with good crowds we all enjoyed each other's dances. Even the packed lunches carried a surprise with special bags of sweets (jelly babies, fried eggs, sherbet space ships). The steamer on the lake saw lots of playing and dancing and included just about the best ever performance by Crook Rapper. We must practice sometime!

We can honestly say that the effort and creativity that our guests put into their costume for the Saturday evening meal stunned us. There were hats in the shape of birthday cakes, one whole side had individually worked out a "twenty five" theme with costumes decorated with, for example, twenty five crooks, corks, party poppers, etc. One side insisted on wearing burglar masks and kept stealing the microphone! Yes, there were

speeches of thanks and all that stuff and Squire Suzanne got her tankard for two years of hard graft. She has been brill. Of special note was that the truly sumptuous, two hundred portions of locally farmed, free-range chicken that had been cooked by our most ardent vegetarian. It was hats off to Jenny. Even Judy had her gorgeous salads all ready on time. There were rumours that, with emotions running high, I almost couldn't speak. I said almost!!



The weather was stinking hot and we were so happy that we had chosen our side's favourite ceilidh band, This Way Up. We've run eighteen of these weekends and they've been the chosen band on four occasions and have absolutely always given us a brilliant night. Our traditional mid-dance break of a reverse bingo has always been good. This year we had over £500 worth of prizes on show and the woman who won third, I think, couldn't believe that she had won not one prize but about a dozen items, all of excellent quality. The singing and dancing continued as ever, almost to the dawn chorus. It will have been a relief to Simon and Mark that the cocktails had been brilliant, the bar had run smoothly and that we even had chilled white wine and ice for those who wanted it. Job well-done guys.

Sunday - our third day of stunning summer weather. The procession in Kirkby Lonsdale delivers a powerful

message to the English public that we have our own culture and we are proud of it. We had laid on a PA so that, with the help of Richard and Dick, we could let the audience know who they were watching and where they were from. It does give a more professional delivery.

It helped that Anne had produced a special weekend leaflet with information for our audiences. The day was exactly what we had wanted it to be. Crook Morris danced first and later on quite a few past members, whom we were delighted to see, joined us. To be able to dance four sets is a rarity for most Morris sides. We were so pleased to be joined by Carreg Las, Chiltern Hundreds, Loose Women, Mortimers Morris, Ryknild Rabble, Sheffield City Morris and Silhill Morris. They made our twenty-fifth just about the best weekend we could have hoped for. The final Dorset Four-Hand Reel was splendid and the beautiful singing from Sheffield City of John Tams' "Rolling Home" left the whole of Crook with tears running down our faces but great bit smiles as well and a sense of belonging which is hard to explain.

*Martyn Harvey
Foreman & Founder Crook Morris*

Editors Note: A wealth of photos of the event can be found at www.crookmorris.org.uk



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SPRING EDITION DEADLINE

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Three Morris Organisations Workshop on Public Relations and Presentation

The workshop took place on Sat. October 14th 2006 at Rickmansworth and was hosted by the Morris Federation team Phoenix Morris. Eighteen representatives of a broad spectrum of sides in the three Morris organisations took part.

Presenters for the day were Gavin Atkin, free-lance journalist and ex member of many sides on public relations; Chris Pitt, teacher and presenter and a member of Newcastle Kingsmen on presentation and last but not least Steve Rowley organiser of the Pipe & Tabor festival and also a member of Gloucestershire Morris Men on marketing.

Gavin opened proceedings with a very comprehensive presentation; invaluable notes on the art of public relations and ways and means of working with/using the media to best advantage. There was a strong practical element, as we learned to apply theory by writing press releases specifically for our own situations.

Any thoughts of sitting back to listen to a cosy chat were quickly dispelled as Chris introduced the subject of "presentation." He used video and "live" examples of

effective and not-so-effective ways of communicating with the audience both as the "front man" and as a performer. He then threw the ball in our court with the challenge of announcing an "act" at an event. Having been given a short resumé and time to prepare a "spiel"!

After a welcome pub lunch to revive flagging brains it was over to Steve to lead us through the "marketing maze." Steve had prepared a really useful PR Strategy and Plan specifically for the Morris world addressing all the key areas of marketing which, by answering the questions would enable each side to develop their own "tailor-made" plan.

The workshop was very stimulating, thought-provoking and of immense interest. It was also great to have the opportunity to meet and work closely with members of the other Morris organisations on subjects of mutual interest. Maybe the three Morris organisations could consider running similar workshops in different regions to make them more accessible to far-flung sides.

Ann Bacon

Something for the dark evenings or to while away a moment or two down the pub. Each of the items below should reveal a Morris side when arranged correctly. No prizes no kudos just that warm glow of satisfaction that comes with being a smart Alec .

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. New Mitch | 2. Pitch Wheat | 3. Aw Use Shoes |
| 4. In Words | 5. Wern't Gas Tree | 6. Mal Kerb Side Herb |
| 7. Leaf Strewed | 8. Bang Leaf | 9. Ye Ark Rabble |
| 10. Lo His Rages | 11. Hot Words Sprout | 12. Last Proly |
| 13. Wow So Dark | 14. Pen PE Horse | 15. Do Lewd Strikes |
| 16. Rams A Glee | 17. Stunt Bet Ploy | 18. We Cider Hen |
| 19. Me Sham Mirth | 20. Back Brew – Joy | 21. Paper 'N Crab Walks |
| 22. EG Slack Men Win Nest | 23. Mire Storm | 24. An Goggle Band Fan |
| 25. Our BR Cheese Board | 26. Third Lunches Nerd | 27. Ate Past Pump |

TEN QUESTIONS TO JAMESON WOODERS



The Wooders brothers first popped up on my radar when I was dancing at the Rochester Sweeps a lot of years ago. Every time Wakefield Morris, danced

there were these two chaps in the front row of the audience. By the Monday we were actually delaying display starts until the guys showed up and including them in team photos. Since then the brothers have been appearing in multiple teams and become award winning exponents of the solo and dual jig. Now Jameson Wooders gives an insight into just what has kept him dancing over the years. That's in between doing the PhD and appearing on "University Challenge".

Doug Bradshaw -Editor

1. Was it just Wakefield's dancing that got your attention at Rochester that year?

I remember it well! Simon and I were still relatively new to the Morris world and it was the first time that I'd been to the Sweeps' Festival. I remember running up and down the High Street (in an admittedly train-spotterish kind of way) to see as many of the teams as possible on the Saturday, but by the Monday we'd decided that only Wakefield, Windsor and the Witchmen were worth watching.

2. What first got you interested in the Morris?

I'm not entirely sure. I seem to recall that I always had a surplus amount of energy as a teenager, and someone joked that I should join the Morris dancers when they danced at a local craft fair back in 1983. I went along and something just seemed to click. With hindsight I know that they (Kennet and Yateley Morris Men) must

have finished their set with Bonny Green Garters as they capered off in a big circle around the audience. It felt strangely powerful!

3. When did you start dancing and who with?

I didn't immediately rush out and join a Morris team after the craft fair. However, I did note that the Whiteknights Morris Men were listed in the Students' Union handbook when I went to Reading University in the autumn of 1985. I initially made some very tentative enquiries at Freshers' Fayre but eventually plucked up the courage to pay the joining fee. I went along to my first practice the following Monday and was hooked! A year later I'd also joined Berkshire Bedlam and was dancing North-West with Yateley.

4. Is there any tradition you have not tried yet? And if not why not?

I've done Cotswold, North-West, Molly and Border, but haven't really done any Longsword or Rapper beyond the occasional workshop. There aren't any teams to join in Berkshire, and Handsworth and Black Swan are too far away!

5. What has been the high spot of your dancing life?

Walking past the Anchor at Sidmouth in 1995 dressed in Berkshire Bedlam kit and getting booed and heckled by Hammersmith! It was extremely satisfying for Bedlams to be recognised as rivals. I thought, 'Yes! We've arrived!'

Seriously, I've been very fortunate to have enjoyed so many high spots over the years. If I have to choose something, then I'd say the whole of Berkshire Bedlam's 2000 season, when we were an arena side at Sidmouth for the first time. We practised really hard all winter and it paid dividends for the whole summer – at Hastings, Guernsey and Warwick as well as at Sidmouth itself. But the good thing about being in performance-oriented sides is that we are always looking

forward to the next high spots. This season I've really enjoyed dancing at IVFDF, Great Western, Four Fools and Warwick with Bedlam, at Holmfirth with Rumworth, and at the Smiffs' Ale and Sidmouth with Hammersmith.

6. And the low spot?

Calling the wrong figure in the Upton-upon-Severn Stick Dance for Whiteknights Morris in their show spot at Hatfield House at the Cottonmill Weekend of Dance in 1987 still haunts me. It was one of those moments when half the team did what I'd called and the other half did what they were supposed to be doing, and it all ended up being a bit of a mess.

And going into a fighting chorus when I should have been doing the second half of a figure on the arena stage at Sidmouth 2000 was awful. It still makes me cringe, thinking of some idiot at the front of the stage trying to punch the lights out of another dancer whilst everyone else was happily doing the second half of the whole gyp behind them. Basically I hate letting my teams down.

7. What or where do you consider the strangest dance spot/dance out you ever took part in?

Berkshire Bedlam were asked to appear as Bavarian dancers in an episode of CBBC's 'Chucklevision' last year. It was very surreal, teaching one of the Chuckle Brothers how to stick whilst wearing a pair of ill-fitting PVC lederhosen! At least mine weren't as bad as my brother's. His were bright green, exceedingly small and with the braces sown on the wrong way so that the zip was up the back. It looked like the kind of outfit you might see in a dodgy club in Brighton!

8. What advice would you give to a newly formed dance team?

It might well have been a bit train-spotterish, but I learnt so much from going to watch so much Morris when I first started. It gave me a much better

idea of the things I wanted to do with my teams and – just as important – the things I didn't want to do. So my advice would be to get out there and watch your other local teams at pub spots, go to festivals, go to workshops, and at least once go to Bampton on Whit Monday and Bacup on Easter Saturday to see what it's really all about. And never think you've learnt all there is to know about Morris.

9. Is there one aspect of the morris world today you would gladly see consigned to the scrap heap?

That's a really difficult question as I probably risk upsetting a large part of the Morris world with any answer I give. I guess I've always had an issue with teams that do it just for 'fun'. Fun for whom exactly? Fun for the dancers certainly, but what about the audience? We shouldn't just assume that an audience will enjoy watching us have fun! Morris shouldn't be self-indulgent. All of my teams achieve a tremendous amount of enjoyment, but as soon as the kit goes on and we appear in public something more is expected. A good performance transcends 'fun'; it is about pride, hard work, practice, satisfaction and lots of other intangible things that are hard to describe unless you've been there. But even so, I don't think I would consign any bit of the Morris to the scrap heap as I know how much it means to the people who do it at whatever level. I just wish that the better teams could be more widely recognised and not lumped together with everything else in the public consciousness.

10. Is there one aspect you would fight to keep above all others?

Last year Hammersmith did a TV show about what it means to be British. The presenter was, if I remember correctly, a Sikh from Glasgow who'd interviewed a member of the BNP just before he came to see us. We got him into kit, did a dance and he joined us in a game of crib. I think he was really impressed at how accepting we all were after his previous

experiences. I would therefore keep the Morris world's tolerance of people who may be slightly 'different'. I guess you can't take yourself too seriously if you dress up in ribbons and bells and flowery hats, and if you are more accepting of yourself then you are going to be more tolerant of other people.

11. (OK its one more than 10; who's counting) What other interest do you have out side dancing – keep it legal decent and honest!

The Morris still means an awful lot to me, but I've been getting a little jaded with other bits of the folk world (such as ceilidhs) recently. Indeed, when Sidmouth looked like it wasn't going to happen last year, I took the opportunity to book myself on an archaeological excavation for a couple of weeks instead. I really enjoyed it, and I've been back again this year. I've also started a part-time PhD in history, which is taking up a lot of my spare time. In fact, going to an academic conference is a bit like going to a festival; it's just that instead of going to workshops and dances, you go to lectures and seminars. Funnily enough, however, one thing they have in common is that everyone ends up in the bar at the end of the evening!

Thanks to Jameson for taking the time to answer the questions – and I promise to steer clear of the subject of nouvelle cuisine when we next meet.

Doug Bradshaw Editor

NEED NEW MEMBERS – TRY THIS

Three Shires and Harthill Morris are in need of new members – dancers and musicians, so what did we do? Well we got together (in a local pub of course) and arranged a workshop day in Harthill. We devised a poster and leaflets incorporating both sides advertising the day and distributed these around districts of Sheffield, Rotherham, Worksop. We invited anyone interested to join us, we would teach them a few steps and a simple dance, treat them to lunch and a sing around at the local pub and hopefully get them interested enough to join us.

The day was a great success Harthill Morris taught us "Beaux of London City", Adderbury and Three Shires taught North West a stick dance "Lancashire". We had lots of fun and laughs learning each other's dances, as did our guests. Amongst the guests was a group who were part of an African choir based in Sheffield. They sang and danced for us, a fabulous contrast to our traditional dancing.

Both teams put up a display table showing photo's, kit, etc. and notes of where to see us next. Out of the day the Morris got two new members and we have a musician who has joined us for practices and is getting on very well too. All in all well worth our efforts.

Three Shires still NEED dancers and musicians and Harthill Morris are still on the look out.

Contact

Lesley – Three Shires 01909 770129

Pete - Harthill Morris 01909 560059

Morris Matters



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Lincoln Morris Festival a BIG Success!

Saturday 9th September 2006 saw the first BIG Morris Festival burst onto the streets of the Lincoln, drawing big crowds of shoppers and tourists. The event was organised by Liam Robinson of The Mini Morris Company, in conjunction with the Lincoln Business Improvement Group.

The festival featured nine Morris teams from across the East Midlands and Yorkshire, who demonstrated a fantastic variety of Morris styles and traditions, the highlight of which was a massed Morris display outside Lincoln's famous Cathedral. The days dancing was complemented by a lunch time concert in the Drill Hall Arts Centre and sessions and singing in some of the city's finest real ale pubs after the dancing had finished.



Trevor Mayfield squire of Kesteven Morris helps fill the collecting buckets.

The festival raised over £340 for the NOMAD Trust - a local charity supporting home-less and vulnerable people - thanks to the overwhelming donations of a generous public and the hard work of all of the dancers. Michael Armstrong,

Events and Promotions Manager of Lincoln BIG said *"This has been a fantastic event, which has put Lincoln on the map as a great location for events of this kind."*

The Lincoln BIG Morris Festival is already being planned for next year and will be held on Saturday September 8th 2007. Next year the festival will expand to include a grand evening Ceilidh and become a massive celebration of all forms of English Traditional Dance. If you're interested in being involved, please contact Liam@porkpiemusic.co.uk

The Mini Morris Company promotes English Traditional Folk culture, through school and community workshops and events. It also organises a regular monthly Ceilidh in Lincoln, brings national and international traditional music artists to Lincoln Drill Hall and organises the Bailgate Busking Festival every July in Lincoln's Cathedral quarter.

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NINE DAIES VENTURE FORTH

It's been six years since the Nine Daies Morris completed their amazing dance from London to Norwich to celebrate Will Kemp undertaking the same venture in 1600.

Each year we have a reunion to meet and celebrate the occasion and our friendship. This year we took the Morris to Prague. This is a brief account of what we got up to.

We stayed in an interesting converted monastery that was basic. Seventeen of us with 110 beds, 3 light bulbs and 1 cup. The plumbing was a challenge and it was pot -luck if you were given the room with a scrap of a curtain or not. But hey, we were so zonked out at the end of the day that a pipe extending from the wall for a shower and a trough to stand instead of a shower cubicle was all part of the adventure. And at the end of a very busy day who cared if the bed was a throw out from Centre Parks (written all over the mattress).

The first evening we went to the closest bar and asked if they served food. There we all sat in the lounge, which was a cupboard, which just about seated 12 people. The food was different I must say. Beef in mustard sauce with cream and jam with a slice of lemon. Dumplings came as well, which seems to be a favourite dish. The dumplings were rather like big wedges of bread. You either loved them or hated them. And how about Avocado pear with whipped Roquefort and marzipan. Couldn't have been that bad as we had breakfast there every morning. Then on to a brewery which was family run, a bit expensive by Prague standards but very atmospheric. We stayed till chucking out time. We were introduced to the delights of cannabis vodka (really just hemp seeds).

The public transport system is a delight. On time and regular trams that buzz around the city, and so cheap. Many bums must have sat on the seats because they were so slippery. Every

time we went round a corner I slid off my seat so I learned to plant my feet very firmly on the floor as we were getting strange looks from fellow travellers to begin with let alone have the pleasure of a Morris Dancer land in your lap.

Toilets have some getting used to. Mostly they have the keyhole bunged up with loo roll and no lock. So it is a swift prayer that no one else wants to have a pee the same time as you or if you are lucky enough the door is close enough so you can hold it shut. But the worst loos of the trip were the ones in Prague train station. 10 Koruna which was expensive. They smelled of urine and smoke and you were handed 3 sheets of toilet paper on entry. The best loos were the palatial ones at the British Embassy. Bethan drooled over the door handles they were so ornate.

First stop was St Nicholas Church in the Little Quarter. Wow, really scrumptious Baroque architecture from the 17 century. We just walked about with our mouths open for half an hour, which is all we could spare out of our busy schedule. Then off to pay a visit to Ambassador Linda Duffield at the British Embassy. Trudging up the grand staircase to be welcomed in the gardens by Linda and her staff was an event never to be forgotten. In the middle of the wonderful gardens is a small pond with a wood nymph sitting in the middle with cupped hands. To ensure good weather the Ambassador has to wade into the pool waist deep and place a glass of whisky in the nymph's hands. As we had glorious weather the entire time we were in Prague I reckon the superstition works. We danced with all our might for the small team of British members of staff and were rewarded with superb refreshments set out in a marquee on the lawns for us. It was very hard to tear ourselves away from such splendour.

Now on to the 9th century Palace via 500 steps. The Princess of Denmark drove past and smiled and waved to us. Wherever we stopped to dance huge crowds gathered round. I am sure most of

the tourists thought we were in traditional Czech costume, performing the national dance. They were so enthusiastic to have photographs taken with us. We were pushed and pulled from one camera to the next.



Now to the pub, "The Black Ram". The beer was very cheap and smacked down on the table in huge glasses. This is a pub charity pub, all the profits go to blind children. We spent a lot of drinking time in this particular pub.

I suppose everyone who visits Prague finds their way to Charles Bridge. We did the same and were moved on by the Police who had big pointy guns. Hmmm, no arguing with them! We met a couple of Morris Dancers who were on holiday and were drawn to the sound of the bells and they were very excited about seeing us there. A wedding party walked past so of course we had to dance for the bride. She was bewildered and bemused but had a very big smile. This was a good crowd puller and no mistake. It was evening and the weekend. Stalls had been set up at the side of the bridge selling jewellery and paintings. Buskers were playing and beggars folded over in a prostrate position, paper cups extended towards the pedestrians in hope of a few

coins. The birds never seemed to rest. They flew round and round in the flood lighting and looked very eerie.

Now Wenceslas Square named after the famous king was a bit samey as other city squares all over the world. A stonking great statue of King Wenceslas and modern shops. But what was interesting were the alleyways leading off from the square. The people of the revolution used these narrow alleys in the 1960's; to hide in and to print propaganda leaflets in small rooms. They were never found in this labyrinth of rabbit warrens.

Onwards, past the theatre where Mozart performed for the first time Don Giovanni and stop at the Powder Gate. This is one of 13 entrances to the Old Town and was built in 1475. Named the Powder Gate because funnily enough that is where the gunpowder was stored in the 17 century. Here a Morris Dancer stops to watch and asks if he can dance with us. He was on his honeymoon and said that it made the trip for him!

We hung around the Old Town Square waiting for the Town Hall Clock to strike the hour. A skeleton pulls a rope and strikes the hour while a parade of 13 apostles appear gliding between two doors, very unusual. Apparently Jan Z Ruze, the poor chap who designed the clock was blinded after completion to make sure that he did not design another for anyone else. Shortly afterwards the clock went wrong. He could remember how it was put together though which was a bit of luck for them but personally I would have told them to stick it where the sun don't shine.

Just time for a swift look around the Jewish quarter. As it was Saturday there was hardly any body about. The graveyard stuffed full of old stones was gob smacking.

On Sunday we decided to cross the River Vltava and take a ride on the funicular to the observatory tower. We danced in the Petrin Park, which was named after the Slavonic God Perun who had sacrifices

made to him on the hill. Did we want to climb the 299 steps up the tower to get a better view of Prague? No way. It was very hot so we climbed even further up the hill and strolled through the gardens and orchards to find another beer garden. Couldn't resist a visit to the loos on the way, which were in a 12C-monastery wine cellar.

At the end of Sunday the bells were worn again to take the sticks down to the riverbank to be set free. They floated gently away amongst the ducks and we could see them as we stood on Charles Bridge. This was the end of the official dancing tour. A slap-up meal and emptying a bottle of hemp vodka between us. Unusual taste. It sure hits the sides on the way down.

On Monday we visited the castle in Karlstejn. This was a short train journey out of Prague. The castle and village was shut. But we had a relaxing day eating, drinking, putting the world to rights and

collecting conkers. A Prague tradition – place a conker in your pocket and you receive vitality. Strolled back via a street market and this time we couldn't resist purchasing a few Bohemian glass trinkets. We rounded the day off with a boat trip on the river and fell into the Centre Park beds exhausted.

The trip was magical. All thanks to Eva and Tim. Our hosts and guides throughout the trip and gosh they worked so hard trying to keep us in order, show us the sights and make sure it was a reunion never to be forgotten.

Home again loaded down with Beckarovka.

Roddy & Julie – Nine Daies Morris

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1976 - 2006 30th Anniversary Year!



December

Tue 19th

Knaresborough Mummers evening Blue Stots
Tour of Harrogate Contact John Burrell 01423
566112 for itinerary

Wed 20th

Hook Eagle Morris. Carols on the Common at
Hartley Wintney, 7pm Meet outside the Wagon
and Horses pub

Fri 22nd

Knaresborough Mummers evening Blue Stots
Tour of Knaresborough. Contact John Burrell
01423 566112 for itinerary

Tue 26th (Boxing Day)

Three Shires (With Harthill Morris)
Blue Bell Harthill 11am
Bee Hive Harthill Noon

Hook Eagle Dancing out in Old Basing.

Fri 29th

Knaresborough Mummers evening Blue Stots
Tour of Nidderdale Contact John Burrell 01423
566112 for itinerary

Sat 30th

Knaresborough Mummers evening Blue Stots
Tour of Easingwold & Helperby area Contact John
Burrell 01423 566112 for itinerary

January 2007

Mon 1st

Tæppa's Tump
The Black Horse, Fulmer, Slough 1.00 pm

Hook Eagle "Hair of the Dog" Cycling Tour of
North Warnborough, Greywell and Hook

Sat 6th

Knaresborough Mummers evening Blue Stots
Tour of Marton area Contact John Burrell 01423
566112 for itinerary

Fri 12th

Hook Eagle Morris Wassail at Hartley Wintney.
6.30pm Meet outside the Wagon and Horses pub.
A torchlight procession to Millennium Orchard for
wassail singing, hot mulled cider and BBQ.

Sat 27th

Sallyport Swords full day Rapper workshop in St
Cuthbert's Hall in Darlington hosted by Pengwyn
Rapper
Information from : Isabelle Fremont, 65 Bishops
Road, Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. NE15 6RY'
Tel 0191 272 2046
Email enquiries to svrutland@onetel.com

February

Sat 24th NW workshop hosted by Ripley Green
Garters. Swanick near Ripley contact
Stella:01629 822380

March

Sat 24th

The Fabulous Fezheads TEN YEARS AFTER Fig
& Date Fayre. The Greyhound Inn, North St,
Winterbourne Kingston, Blandford, Dorset DT11
9AZ –

May

Fri 4th – Mon 7th

Hastings Jack in the Green

June

Sat 9th The Gate to Southwell.

A traditional procession from Nottingham to
Southwell. More information can be found on
www.dolphin-morris.co.uk and click on the Gate to
Southwell link.

A little gem from the web.

Sent to Doris Mancing - Morris Agony Aunt by helen@wrigley1981.wanadoo.co.uk

Doris@MainlyMorrisDancing.org.uk

Hi Doris,

Myself and my mum were members of a disbanded group of ladies clog dancers called the Birch Bells who met in Herefordshire. We have several pairs of clogs and enough artificial flower garlands and ribbon covered sticks with bells on for a troupe (not sure how many exactly). Do you know anyone who might like them, payment would be nice (so the Birch Bells could have a reunion drink or two) but a good home would be considered if collection could be arranged. I eagerly await your reply

Thank you yours with clogs on Helen.

MORRIS FEDERATION SHOP

PUBLICATIONS:

Cotswold Glossary: An invaluable reference book including definitions of steps and figures found in two or more traditions; a cross-reference to all Cotswold traditions and types; terms used by different authors for the same movements; Morris musicianship and much more.

£4.00 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Adderbury: Produced jointly by Tim Radford and The Morris Federation, this book contains the history of the tradition, copies of original notation from the Blunt manuscript and modern notation with easy-to-follow diagrams for 13 stick and 13 hanky dances. Includes photographs and music.

£4.50 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

North West Morris: This book contains notations, illustrated with figures and diagrams for ten of the best North West Morris dances, originally researched by Trefor Owen.

£4.00 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Wheatley: Wheatley is a very pleasing tradition to dance and yet one of the most straightforward. This book was produced from a complete review of source material and includes current practice and innovation.

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Hinton: Traditional and creative Morris by Sue Swift.

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Molly: Dancing into the Twenty First Century, by Tony Forster

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