

Newsletter Summer 2008



**QUESTION TIME WITH LIAM ROBINSON
AGM SURVEY RESULTS
MORRIS DAY ON THE RIVIERA
PREMIER LEAGUE OR SUNDAY LEAGUE
MORRIS VERSUS FESTIVALS**



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NEWSLETTER COPY DATE

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Saturday 23rd August 2008

newsletter@morrised.org.uk

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

I've just finished converting the autumn 2004 edition of the Newsletter into a format to go up on the web. Which incidentally completes the conversion of all the editions for which I have electronic data files. One thing that is noticeable from the conversions I have done is that over the years the content of the Newsletter has shrunk. Where there was a steady flow of team based articles there is now a diminishing trickle.

As editor of the Newsletter I welcome any and all content that is sent in to me for publication. Reports on foreign trips, UK festivals and team tours have been the staff of life for much of the time that I have been editor. However items on other topics are always welcome. Paul White has done sterling work with his regular column on all things dance related. Janet Dowling was a regular contributor of reports and interviews until recently. And I own up to generating a certain volume of text myself.

But where are the new voices out there? Or the old voices with something to say. Is your sides history worth a few words or even a page or two? Is there a dancer or musician you know who would be a good subject for a question and answer article? Has anything at a dance event got your blood racing for good or ill to the point where you want to write about it? If the answer to any of the above is "Yes" then you know where I am. Oh and I just love photos particularly good front cover shots!

Doug

Printing
Next Issue
Front Cover Photograph

Outline Print Service Ltd, Colne, Lancashire
Autumn 2008 (Copy date Saturday 23rd August 2008)
The opening ceremony of the Fig and Date Fayre 2008
Photo :Contributed by your very humble Editor (Again!)

President's Prologue

As there has been both praise and abuse as a result of the last Prologue, I assume it was actually read by a number of members!

Fascinatingly the same thread of discussion and similar comment came up on the Morris Dance Discussion List on the web (only those with a desperate need to email a very select and eclectic group on the most esoteric of 'almost on morris' topics should sign up to this particular list!!!), with I think I would be correct in, saying, a 'not best pleased with how teams are treated' majority but also some sound argument from those who book Morris et al teams at such events.

More often than not these folk are themselves dancers, so hopefully 'Constructive Criticism' is being heard in the proper ears for it to be effective....

As one festivals dance advisor said, and quite rightly, if you don't like what a festival is offering, don't go! Certainly don't go then whinge afterwards!

An offer to festival booking advisors has been made ... a sort of right of reply... so if it's not in this issue, hopefully their side of the discussion should get aired in the near future.

St George has been and gone, how was it for you? It seems some local councils (or at least tourist departments within some councils) do acknowledge that Traditional Dance has a place.

Paignton hosted a 'Morris Day', with a good number of sides attending. The Events officer was at pains to encourage teams to attend and is already planning a larger do next year – a report lurks within these pages from said council officer.....

As always, New Laws seem to try to sneak up on us ...

A new amendment to the Criminal Justice Act is bound to affect some of us... as a result of a murder with a Samurai sword the other year, it is about to be an offence to possess a "Curved Blade of 50cms (about 20inches) or over"...if you use such an implement (as Captain in a calling on song, as part of a "cake-bearer" tradition etc.) you may well be in breach of this new amendment.

One hope is that the concept enshrined in para 4 of the amendment, pertaining to Historical Re-enactments, covers us, but we will need to investigate it more thoroughly and then wait and see what, if any, problems it causes the Dance World.

The Federation AGM is set for early October in beautiful Skipton but before then, the long summer of Events and Festivals looms on the horizon. So enough from me; get out there and show to all and sundry what we are all about: The Dance, and its passion and its joy!

Trefor

Morris Matters



The journal of all things related to Morris - tunes, pictures, notation, historical stuff, views, reviews - published twice a year. Contributions always welcomed. Subscribe now to the address shown:

Morris Matters
27 Nortoft Road
Chalfont St Peter
Bucks SL9 0LA

Annual subscription for 2 issues is £6.

COMMITTEE NEWS

NEWSLETTER – Doug Bradshaw

In between editions of the Newsletter I have pressed on with converting the electronic versions of the past Newsletters into a format to go up onto the world-wide web at mfnewsletter.info. So all the editions from 2004 to the present day are now there for you to trip down memory lane, or for newer readers to find out what has occupied the great and good of the Federation over the past few years.

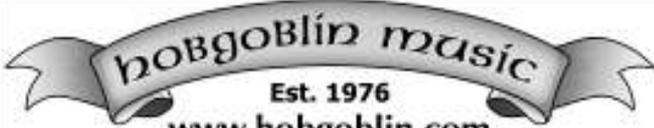
You may have noticed that the Spring 2008 edition on the web featured colour as a startling new innovation. Which I think is a really neat thing to have as colour makes up so much of the spectacle of a dance display. Though with the current trend towards monochrome or indeed simple black in

some sides I could be wrong there. However the introduction of full colour for the printed version of the Newsletter remains a no starter simply on the grounds of cost.

I have a working plan to backtrack through the on-line editions and introduce colour where possible. This may take a while, as there is the small matter of a summer season of dancing to be done. However come the dog days of autumn and I'll be back hunched over the keyboard and taking the benefit of my "time rich" status to do some colouring in.

If any past editors out there have editions prior to 2004 that they feel could be loaded up to the on-line archive you know where to find me. Electronic media preferred but I can deal with good copy on old fashioned paper if necessary.

Well that's me done and as there is a distinct lack of stuff from the other committee members that's "Committee News" done for this issue!



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AN OLD FAVOURITE COMES ROUND AGAIN

Hi,

I wonder if you can help, can you tell me the origins of why some morris dancers black up, only I've been making some paintings of dancers and I have had objections to my work around the idea of blacking up. Some of my colleagues are finding it offensive.

I would like to be able to defend my work but I'm unable to until I have some facts I have been muttering things about crows and mythical figures and I know its a Welsh borders phenomenon, but that's all the information I have.

I'd be really grateful if you could offer a more substantial explanation!

Thank You.

Anne Brierley.

P.S. I will be taking my paintings to the Two Rivers Festival so look out for them.

Editors Note: Anyone out there willing to do a piece on how to best answer this hardy perennial?

DANCERS IN YOUR DAHLIAS ANYONE?

Hi,

I frequently visit garden centres; yes, I know, sad.

Over the years, I've noticed large shelves and display areas appearing all sorts of strange ornaments to adorn your garden: - Buddha's fat and thin, gnomes, large, small, engaged in an occupation, animals including life sized herons....the list goes ever on. But why, I ask, why no Morris Dancers. Wouldn't we indeed make the perfect garden ornament? We could be built in sets of 'sides', with individual characters in each side....fat, thin, tall, short, gorgeous, sober, thus causing the general punter to collect the whole set.....then bring out another side, in different kit.

That would indeed be my second best choice of garden ornament:- the wife won't let me have a concrete naked lady.

Yours,

Phil Edwards:-

*Musician for Cardiff Morris and Cardiff ladies Morris
Groeswen, - The Village of No Return.*

Ed- Not sure why your first choice is blocked - seems harmless to me. Or am I thinking of the Venus De Milo?

OLYMPICS 2012 – DEAL OR NO DEAL?

To the Editor,

I have seen more than one enthusiastic mention of the 2012 Olympics in the magazine that somehow imply this is a great opportunity. I strongly disagree.

Firstly if any members think they'd be let within a mile of any ceremony or pageant they are naive. These things are choreographed for the cameras with split second timing to give a spectacle, not to show the thing as it is. Perhaps people were thinking that there might be some time when viewers round the world will gaze at hook-legs, galleys and heys for as long as err.. 15 seconds maximum... and will be enthused, uplifted, educated and entertained. Yeh right! And you can imagine that with just six dancers can you? Any show will be robots doing aerobics on a Nuremberg scale and any 'Morris' nothing whatsoever to do with traditional dance as we know it.

Secondly, as well as the games sucking hundreds of millions of pounds from local communities - something that is bad enough in itself to earn the contempt of all dancers - there is a more insidious leaching going on: Erosion of the complete independence from officialdom. George Orwell pointed out in his essay 'England your England'(1941): "*We are a nation of flower-lovers, but also a nation of stamp-collectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, coupon-snippers, darts-players, crossword-puzzle fans*".

All the culture which is most truly native centres around things which even when they are communal are not official - the pub, the football match, the back garden, the fireside and the "nice cup of tea". The struggle still goes on in some places to convince officialdom that you don't need an official licence to go Morris dancing. Local councils are looking for 'partners' and 'stakeholders' to 'deliver' cultural activities. By all means apply for Lottery money to take dance to a wider audience and encourage participation but be prepared to be enmeshed in ticking boxes for bureaucrats: Can they see your written anti-discrimination policy? Explain why you haven't got 'your quota' of disabled and underprivileged. How scary is it when the current Culture Secretary has some unspecified, hastily denied, 'inclusiveness' agenda for the Proms? Can you imagine what she thinks of the Morris! Last month "*Five hours a week of culture for every child*" was launched by the Government (I for one welcome our new Ministry of Culture overlords - Not!) but what side in their right minds would get involved with teaching Morris to children as part of this? A good idea spoilt by the incubus of officialdom.

Finally there will be alternative media opportunities caused by the need for background packages to go with international games coverage. Production companies will be desperate for rustic echoes and telly-friendly novelty items. Some will inevitably go for corn dollies and thatched cottages but others may, just, if there's something interesting to show on the screen, spend a few minutes with a side, show up to a whole minute of dancing and possibly another of the 'English at play'. It might be worth the Federation considering how the media can be encouraged in this way.

Peter Fox - Member of Maldon Greenjackets

Happy to Help

Doug

I wondered if you could use the attached photo for the Morris Federation newsletter showing Tæppa's Tump North West Morris dancers from Maidenhead in Berkshire dancing at Oxford Folk Festival the second weekend in April. It just proves we can keep a straight line and dance with our knees up sometimes!!.

Thank you for putting our programme in the Spring issue. We seem to have taken over half the page!!.

We are off to Pilgrim Morris Men's "Summer Pole" in Guildford next weekend. Hopefully the weather will be as kind to us as it was today when we danced in Maidenhead town centre for our charity in 2008.

<http://www.rosiesrainbowfund.co.uk>

Have a good dance season.

Viv - Tæppa's Tump NW Morris Dancers

Publicity Officer

<http://www.taepastump.freeseve.co.uk>



MUMMERS, THAT ACT - AND A MASSACRE

Hi,

With a new review of the licensing laws having just been published, now seems a good time to mention that an article on the implications of the Licensing Act 2003 for folk play performers has been added to the Master Mummings web site at www.mastermummings.org/faq/licensing_act_2003.htm. This includes opinion from a serving Licensing Officer, for which I am grateful to the Morris Dancing Discussion List.

There's also photographic evidence of the unprecedented massacre perpetrated this year among the Marshfield Mummings, courtesy of Mike Pearson, at <http://www.mastermummings.org/articles/marshfield2007.htm>.

And of course all the usual Master Mummings' databases and FAQs are accessible from the Home Page at <http://www.mastermummings.org/>.

Best wishes

Peter - peter.millington@mastermummings.org

EPITAPH TO CONWY MORRIS, **NORTH WALES**

Sadly in October 2006 Conwy Morris succumbed to poor numbers and hung up its clogs. Richard and Anna Scott, who spent many years actively involved in the side, and are now proprietors of the Tal-y-Cafn Country Inn, have dedicated a room to the History of Conwy Morris and the Morris Dance in general.

Whilst they have quite a wide variety of paraphernalia, photos and mementoes they are continually on the look out for any other suitable material.

The Tal-y-Cafn is situated on the A470 close to Bodnant Gardens and the walled town of Conwy, on the edge of Snowdonia. Anyone in the vicinity is more than welcome to come and enjoy a jar, reminisce and pay homage to the Morris in "The Conwy Morris Room".

The History of Conwy Morris **May 1979 - October 2006**

Originally formed as a Morris Ring – and therefore an all-male team – the side first danced in public on May Day 1979. Formed by a former member of Leyland Morris Men who had moved to the area, Brian Gregson, the side performed dances from the North West, Border and Cotswold, traditions wearing trim on their kit of red, white and green to reflect the colours of the Welsh National flag.

A separate ladies team first danced in July 1981, as members of the then Women's Morris Organisation and whilst dancing jointly, each side performed its own dances. Eventually a lack of men willing to dance in weird clothes and potentially make a fool of themselves in public caused the crumbling of chauvinism and the merging of the two sides and the beginning of mixed dancing and the team became members of Open Morris.

This significant move not only dragged us kicking and screaming in to the 20th. Century but broadened our repertoire and strengthened the team base. This

strength enabled us not only to preserve the tradition of Morris Dancing in the area, but also with the advantage of living in a tourist area we were lucky in being able to dance and entertain crowds of people from all over the UK and Overseas. We were also able to enjoy dancing tours to Ireland, Holland, France, Norfolk Broads and River Thames.

Over the years we danced not only traditional dances but choreographed a number of dances of our own. One of which, Conwy Tunnel, was written to commemorate the opening of the new tunnel and was performed for the first time in the presence of H.M. the Queen, who in return asked to meet us – a very memorable moment for the team.

In its' time Conwy Morris danced over fifty-one different dances in its eighteen years of existence and collected nearly £20,000 for charity. It also had over one-hundred and fifty members from May 1979 to October 2006. So that is the history of Conwy Morris now consigned to the pages of history - but never say never!

For anyone wanting to visit Conwy as a dance side we have plenty of car parking and a separate car park, ideal for a dance spot at The Tal-y-Cafn Inn. We would also be willing to contact local authorities to arrange permits / licenses to dance in the local area, such as Conwy Quay and Llandudno Promenade; for any teams willing in return to camp, drink or dine at The Tal-y-Cafn during their weekend.

Anna Scott

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NEW YEAR IN TASMANIA ANYONE?

Roaring Jelly used to tell us that "Christmas in Australia is basically bloody Nice" but what about New Year in Tasmania? The Inbox on the editorial computer received this fascinating invitation in early May.

"Hi all,

OPEN INVITATION to Attend "The (Tassie) Devil Made Me Do It" Tour.



In December 2008, the Longford Morris Dancers are privileged to be the hosts of the Annual New Zealand Morris Dance Tour, to be held outside of New Zealand for the first time in its nearly thirty year history. We take pleasure in inviting all Morris dancers throughout the world to this event.

The Tour will consist of a week of fellowship and dancing with Morris dancers already booked to attend from throughout New Zealand and Australia. The days will

be spent dancing out at various beautiful locations in the North of Tasmania, where each team will take turn to display its dancing skills. Later in the afternoons, back at camp, and in the evenings, there will be time for work-shopping new dances and exchanging ideas. As always, two dances will be taught at the beginning of the Tour to enable displays of Massed Morris dancing at suitable venues.

We will also be hoping to raise money for the Save the Tassie Devil Fund. You may be aware that our beautiful Tasmanian Devil is suffering from a rare facial tumour disease, and money is needed for research, as well as the setting up of quarantined areas for "insurance populations" of healthy Devils.

I have attached a flier giving contact details of the Tour.

We look forward to seeing you all at the end of the year.

Yours sincerely,

Angela de Reus - angelavc@ozemail.com.au - Tour Convenor - Longford Morris Dancers."

Searching for a bit more information I contacted Liz McLean the co-squire of Longford who had sent in the invitation and got this reply:

"Hi Doug,

Sorry - I should have told you more about our side - Longford Morris is a mixed side, based in the North of Tasmania. We are coming up to our 30th anniversary in Jan next year, hence a double reason for celebration - the first time the NZ tour has been held outside NZ!!!

Many thanks for putting us in the Newsletter - that's great! And - I do regularly read the newsletters - have been printing them off for a while now. If you ever fancy a trip down to Oz - let us know.

Cheers

Liz"

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angelavc@ozemail.com.au

Phone: (03) 6327 1782



Editorial Thinks – “Longford live on the other side of the planet and read the Newsletter if only the dancers on my side of the globe would read it!”

A Questions and Answer Session with Liam Robinson.



Liam Robinson can be seen in many guises in the traditional dance world. Whether it's as a musician for Rattle-Jag morris, as a caller at a ceilidh near you or as the organiser of

the Lincoln BIG Morris festival he seems to crop up more and more frequently. And if all that was not enough he also runs The Mini Morris Company which takes English traditions into schools and community groups (www.minimorris.co.uk). So here's an opportunity to find out a little more about this young and enthusiastic personality.

What first got you interested in traditional dance?

I've always been interested in the past and history. I first got into folk music around the age of fourteen. It felt like a living link to the past. I started playing guitar and mandolin until somebody lent me a concertina. So I really got into dance through my interest in the music.

When did you first start playing for the morris and calling for ceilidhs?

I joined the musicians of Barley Break North West Clog in Grimsby when I was about 16. A friend at college told me her dad played for them and she suggested I go along. This led to me joining Grimsby Morris Men. As I played more, I got invited to play with various ceilidh bands around Lincolnshire. All the time I was learning from the people around me. I didn't start calling until fairly recently (maybe 2004). A close friend of mine who was a caller passed away and his radio microphone made its way to me. I just kind of picked up the baton and decided it

was my turn to run with it. With everything I do, I feel like I'm just looking after it for while, taking it from the people who gave it to me and looking after it until somebody else can carry on.

As a musician do you have a preference for any particular dance tradition?

I'd love to play for more Cotswold Morris – the tunes are so beautiful and there is a real art to playing the music in perfect harmony with the dancers. I've been really lucky to be around the two musicians from Grimsby Morris Men (Steve Fuller and Ken Watson) who have a great feel for playing for Morris. There is so much subtlety involved in getting it right. I'd also like to dance more Cotswold Morris and really get a better knowledge of it.

What has been the high spot of your involvement with dance so far?

For me the most precious moments are the smaller ones. Dancing outside village pubs, singing songs in the pub afterwards and the friendship and company involved or the hundreds of small village ceilidhs I have played in village halls and barns around rural Lincolnshire, where people have come for a good night out within their community and always have lots of fun.

And the low spot?

The closure and subsequent demolition of Cleethorpes Winter Gardens which has ultimately led to the demise of Cleethorpes Folk Festival. Not only has this taken a great folk event away from the area, which always attracted some great dance sides but it has also removed a venue from the local community, which had always been a focus for music, dancing and socialising of many different types. Three generations of my family had used the Winter Gardens to dance, drink, get into fights and listen to live music.

When I played there it sent a shiver through me when I thought about the fact that it was the same stage that folk acts that I loved had played on. My dad had

danced to Geno Washington and The Ram Jam Band there and my grand parents had spun around the dance floor to the sounds of the best big bands that Grimsby and Cleethorpes had to offer. It's now a piece of derelict waste ground and the entire area is missing a link in its social chain.

What or where do you consider the strangest dance spot or dance you have been involved with?

I recently played and called at a Science Fiction convention that was a lot more normal than I thought it would be although there was a man dressed as a wolf. I once played for a ceilidh in the main shopping street in Leicester on a Saturday afternoon, which was a little odd. I also ran a ceilidh in Rampton secure hospital, which was actually a fantastic experience and taught me a lot about not going into things with pre-conceptions.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to get into calling social dances?

People come to a ceilidh to have a good time – they have a good time if you help them to do dances that they can achieve. Dance calling is not about callers showing off or elitism amongst a handful of experienced dancers. Social Dance needs to be both social and a dance.....so, make it sociable and make sure that what they're doing is dancing and not just trying to trace out a number of complex patterns. My advice to anybody who asks me about anything really is – love what you are doing, your love and enthusiasm will show to the people around you. Never stop learning about what you do and why you do it.

Is there one aspect of the traditional dance world today you would gladly see consigned to the scrap heap?

There are a couple of things I'd chuck – both of them are more about opinions and human nature rather than the practical process of dance. I would gladly consign over inflated egos within the dance scene to the scrap heap. What we do is about

sharing and passing on skills. Modern society is unfortunately based around creating hierarchy, consuming and the slightly unhelpful aspirations which go along with these. So people are sometimes sadly more concerned with trying to prove that they are "better" than others, that their instruments are more expensive or that their group is better than others. Traditional music and dance isn't a competition as far as I'm concerned.

My other major bugbear is the fact that in my work, I come into contact regularly with journalists, who always take the easiest and laziest approach to a piece on Morris dancing. i.e. the "do you think it's a bit silly all this leaping around in funny costumes?" type of questions. I always point out that if they were interviewing a Gambian dance troupe performing traditional dances or a group or North Indian folk dancers, they would never dream of asking a question like that because it would cause a moral outcry of racism and insulting world culture. Is it ok to insult my indigenous culture because I am a white English man? If we morally respect other cultures folk dance, why don't we respect our own?

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

I'm just about to do a major piece of research into social dance events in rural communities. I feel really strongly that the type of small ceilidhs for school PTA's, Village Hall Committees and local events are massively important to maintaining traditional music and dance and also bringing communities together. At the average ceilidh you can see people of all ages and abilities mixing together and having a great time. It's this sort of event that helps maintain a sense of community within a group or place and also maintain knowledge of folk traditions within the minds of people.

As a festival organiser what can dance sides do to make your life easier?

(Continued overleaf)

It's always helpful if sides can confirm their attendance in advance, as it helps stop me worrying that nobody will be coming but I know sides don't do that deliberately, it's really hard to get ten or twelve people to all commit to something a long time in advance....the most important thing they can do is have a great time, be friendly, dance well and be good ambassadors for what we do.

And what do they do that makes life really awkward for you?

Erm....some sides don't always get on, some sides fell out before I was born but still won't let it lie. Some sides have strong personalities in them. Morris politics...I can do without it but I always try to do my best to make sure everybody is happy.

What other interests do you have out side dancing – keep it legal decent and honest!

I am a long-suffering fan of Grimsby Town FC. I also enjoy drinking tea and eating pork pie – I had a 3 tier pork pie at

my wedding instead of a wedding cake! I love people watching....people are mad...they're all different but all the same and never fail to confound, amuse and bemuse in equal measures! I love listening to the way people speak and what they have to say to each other – obviously I'm not some kind of voyeuristic pervert though!!!!

OK if this was a TV celebrity interview you'd get a chance to plug your book or album. Is there anything you want to plug?

This years Lincoln BIG Morris Festival is on Saturday 6th September. As usual, it is sponsored by Lincoln Business Improvement Group (BIG). The festival has dance spots around historic Lincoln with a long lunch break to take in the many real ale pubs. The day culminates with a massed dance display in front of Lincoln Cathedral. If you are interested in coming to dance and haven't been invited, just get in touch.



AWARD WINNING FAMILY FRIENDLY FOLK WEEKEND

JULY 4th 5th 6th 2008



JESTER MARQUEE IN MEMORY OF THE LATE JOHN BUTLER OYSTERBAND. THE BAGHDADDIES. TORETH. STEAMCHICKEN with DAVE HUNT. WILCOX AND BROOKS. KEITH DONNELLY. SONS OF THE SOD. SWANVESTA SOCIAL CLUB. JAMES HOLLINGSWORTH. FESTIVAL BLUES JAM. YAP. TOM BLISS. NAOMI BEDFORD. BANSHEE. ... COUNTRY DANCE CEILIDH. FOLK CLUB. FULLY

EQUIPPED CAMPSITE WITH CONCERT MARQUEE. BEER FESTIVAL. MUSIC SESSIONS. CHEPSTOW CASTLE CONCERT. KIDS ENTERTAINMENT WITH DR SUNSHINE. 25 MORRIS TEAMS. SUNDAY RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL. more bands and performers to be announced. keep your eye on the website

Box office 07870 611 979

or online tickets at our website www.tworiversfolkfestival.com

Adult Weekend £50.00 12 to 16 £25.00 Under 12 accompanied by an adult FREE
Day tickets and single Concert Tickets also available camping £5 per pitch

PREMIER LEAGUE OR SUNDAY LEAGUE?

In the Winter 2007 edition I ran a short piece on a tremendous presentation of traditional dance as seen at the Fairport Cropredy Convention 2007. The dancing was an integral part of the "Demon Barbers Road Show"; a stage presentation that has gone from strength to strength since I first saw it at Warwick Festival a few years ago. In the Spring 2008 issue Trefor our president mentioned the "Morris Shows" as presented by "Morris Off-Spring" and "The Big Caper".

But this presentation of traditional dance in a carefully choreographed way is the exception rather than the rule. The more usual presentation of traditional dance is the ad-hoc displays from the hundreds of teams around the country. If we were honest we would have to say that this could mean that the public sees some wonderful displays but also some which are less than wonderful. But every team out there must be enjoying what they do or else why do it? Thinking about this it struck me that that there are parallels between traditional dance and the "beautiful game", or soccer if you prefer. Let me try and explain.

The pub we use after a practice session has a large television that seems to be permanently tuned to the football coverage and the big matches draw big crowds. But the pub also sports a host of trophies won by the pub's own Sunday League side. So on the big screen we see the stars of the game who represent the pinnacle of skill whilst around us at the bar are the Sunday morning players. The youngsters who watch the screen and dream of being on the pitch playing "Big Time" and the veterans who dream of the days, now lost to fond memory, when they could run as fast and far as the players on the TV.

Come Sunday morning they'll be out on the pitch playing for their team with the same enthusiasm as the Premiership

players, just not for the same financial rewards! Some sides will be fielding scratch players who are needed to make up the eleven. Some will be carrying veterans out of a sense of loyalty built up over the years. Does any of this sound familiar?

Take it a step further. Some of the Sunday league teams will be living on past dreams of the season they won the cup, but now they struggle to get a side out. Actually the same can be said of some major league teams except it's the crowd they struggle to get rather than the team. Other teams will be the new kids on the block carving their way to the top of their league on a wave of enthusiastic young players who regard training and exercise as being equally as important as the socialising down the pub. Some of these youngsters are so enthusiastic they actually play for more than one team. And let's not forget that that in some youth leagues the argument about letting girls play is rumbling along nicely.

Team colours are a vital part of the game of soccer and worn by players and fans alike. It establishes a sense of belonging and shows a membership of the group. The first team replica strip covered with logos, the scarf and cap combo in team colours is a norm, and for the dedicated fan there is the option of face painting. Once at the match they might get to watch the club mascot caper about in an animal costume; and these people think morris dancers look funny!

So there's my case, football and traditional dance share a lot of common ground. Enjoyed by thousands, skill levels variable, a great social activity enjoyed by those who participate. So why is one a national treasure and the other treated all too often as a national joke? That's football and traditional dance in that order, although on a bad night for "Engerlaand!" it might be reversed. Answers on a postcard please to the editor.

Doug Bradshaw

Morris Federation – AGM a One Day Event - Adoption of Postal Ballot ?

By May 2008 twenty sides had responded to the survey on the future of the AGM and voting formats. Whilst not a huge sample of the membership it does at least exceed the 15 member sides required to make an AGM quorate. The results are outlined below. Note that due to abstentions on some items the results do not always come to a perfect 100%.

AGM FORMAT

A) Weekend of Dance fully run by a host side. Only 70% rated this option at all and of those 36% rated it as third choice with the rest split equally across first second and fourth choice. Only one side suggested they would host the event whilst thirteen gave definite “No’s”. Attendance indications were split equally between “Yes” and “No”.

B) Weekend of Dance with self catering food and accommodation. 80% of responses ticked this option. Of those 37% rated it as third choice with 31% going for this as first choice, 19% as fourth and 12% as second. Again only one side indicated they would host an event on these lines and thirteen sides said they would not. The split of attendance indications was as above for the fully hosted option.

C) Single day event combining dance displays the AGM and a social element. This attracted nineteen responses. Of these 37% rated this as their first choice and 42% rated it as their second. The remaining options split equally between third and fourth at 10% each. Five sides indicated they might host this type of event and nine said they would not. A startling fifteen sides said they might attend dependent on location whilst only one side said they would not attend.

D) Single day event dedicated to the AGM. This attracted sixteen responses of which 37% rated this as first choice but equally 37% rated it as fourth!. For the rest 19% put this as a second option and 6% as a third. The indication of hosting were as for the other single day option above. Possible attendance was split ten “Yes” and three “No”, again with riders on location!

Of the first choice options expressed 39% went to option C, 33% option D, 28% option B and 17% option A. For second choice option the figures were 57% option C, 21% each for options A and D and 14% for option B.

Voting Options

A) Retain the current system Of the responses to this 21% were strongly for and 16% strongly against. 21% were neutral. The split for and against was 37% for and 42% against

B) Retain the current system with a reduced AGM quorum. Of the responses to this 12% were strongly for and 29% strongly against. 18% were neutral. The split for and against was 18% for and 65% against

C) Postal Voting allowed before the AGM. Of the responses to this 41% were strongly for and 5% strongly against. 5% were neutral. The split for and against was 82% for and 12% against

D) A web based forum to determine policy. Of the responses to this 18% were strongly for and 6% strongly against. 18% were neutral. The split for and against was 41% for 41% against

E) Regional system channelling into the AGM. Of the responses to this 17% were strongly for and 39% strongly against. 11% were neutral. The split for and against was 33% for 56% against

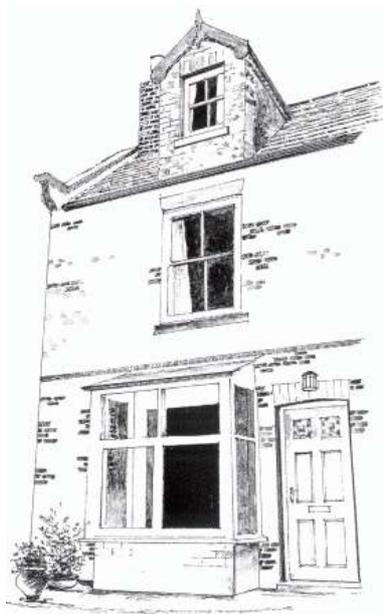
Based on these results the committee will draw up proposals to amend the Members Manual, Standing Orders and Constitution where necessary to show that the Annual General Meeting format will be a one day event combining dance displays during the day, the AGM and a social gathering in the evening. The amendments will also introduce postal voting as the standard method for all AGM elections and motions. Present voting rules allow ten votes per Group Member and it is suggested that this continue. The standing orders, which currently allow for much amending, counter amending and challenging from the floor seem more suited to a political pressure group than an essentially social organisation. Accordingly it will be proposed that they are re-written to make them more reflective of the Federation's diverse and wide spread membership. Remember the last AGM failed to achieve a quorum!

OVERHEARINGS

At a recent festival where the main concert was flagged as "House Full" performers tickets would it was intimated only be allowed in if there were empty seats. A dancer had gone out for what our American cousins call a "comfort break". On her return the steward pointed to the "House Full" notice and was adamant that the dancer could not return

to her empty seat. Pointing out many other empty seats in the hall which had been empty all night the dancer persevered. Then the chap next to her piped up "It's no use love they won't let me in – and I'm the MC!"

Collapse of stout party and entry of dancer and MC!



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Refrigerator, ceramic hob with separate electric grill/oven, microwave, washing machine, dishwasher. Flat screen TV with DVD and freeview, radio/CD player. Gas central heating - no charge for gas or electricity. Bed linen is provided. Non-smokers only. One well behaved dog by arrangement. Small patio at the front of the house. Council car park opposite the property. Weekly tickets available from the Tourist Information Office. Free parking between 6pm and 9am.

Image courtesy of Ingrid Flute Holiday Cottages.

Contact John and Sheila Garner tel **01773 605641** or email johngarner12@hotmail.com

Morris versus Folk Festivals.

I was at the Association of Festival Organisers (AFO) conference to which Trefor referred in last issue's prologue. I have been a Morris Dancer for twenty years, involved in Folk Festivals on and off for about twelve years, of which six of those have been (and are) on the organising committee. These, however, are my personal views, not necessarily those of either of the organisations of which I'm a member. From my position with one foot in each camp, I feel uncomfortable in two situations:

(i) At an AFO meeting, for instance, when Organisers denigrate Morris sides, charging them with inflating the size of their sides in order to get tickets for non-performers.

(ii) On a forum like the Morris Dancing Discussion List (MDDL), for instance, when Morris Dancers charge Festival Organisers with treating Morris Dancers badly.

Both of these points are both unfair and partly true. To address (i)-Defending Morris: Morris/Street Performance is the public face of the Festival. But for it, the general public would not be aware that there was anything special going on. Whilst the Morris Federations aim may be to promote quality dancing, I'm not convinced the general public sees past the colourful spectacle. As a festival organiser (not the Morris co-ordinator, I hasten to add) I'd be more concerned about bad behaviour than less than perfect performance. I think that having Morris sides at a festival is more than just the dancing. It's the colour, it's the extra people in the pubs swelling the ranks of the local folk clubs, and it's creating a holiday atmosphere in the town. It's this special atmosphere that year on year filters through to local people who, hopefully, will eventually be interested enough to want to come and see what else is on offer in terms of concerts, ceilidhs and workshops. In this way, year by year, the festival becomes a fixture not

just in the town calendar, but in local people's minds.

To address (ii) Defending Festival Organisers: Sometimes there's a misunderstanding about whether Morris sides are being booked to appear, or are being offered a performance opportunity. My own feeling is that in the first case, some payment (in the form of tickets and/or money is in order) whereas in the second, it may be that the Festival has arranged for a performance license which normally a side would need to apply (and maybe pay) for. This could be seen to be similar to a folk club giving a performer a floor spot. I believe it is incumbent on the Festival Organisers to make it clear, which of these two is on offer. Indeed, both systems may operate within the same festival. Sidmouth is (was?) an example of this, where anyone can go and dance on the promenade, but only certain sides are (were?) booked to appear in the arena.

It seems to me that the Morris Revival and the growth of Festivals are quite closely linked. I imagine that many festivals would not have come about without the support of their local Morris sides and folk clubs, who provide the backbone of the organisation. Many festivals grow organically from the folk clubs wanting to book bigger and better acts, thereby needing to sell more and more tickets to non-regulars in order to fund the bigger venue. A bigger venue needs more stewards. I doubt many festivals pay their stewards or organisers - most of these work for the love of it, because they enjoy the events and because they want to be part of something they consider worthwhile. Festival budgets - another interesting point. It's easy to think that as a festival gets bigger and better it must make more profit, which inevitably goes into the pockets of the organisers. I would be very interested to find out what proportion of Folk Festivals are in this position. My guess would be that it's a very small proportion. What I see is that the bigger a festival gets, the more infrastructure has

to be put in place, the more it attracts health and safety regulations, the more security it needs to put in place. As a result of this it has to, again, sell more tickets, attract more funding, find more stewards. The outcome is, if you're lucky, break-even, or a small profit. Even if you do make a profit, you'd be well advised to build up a contingency fund against losses in bad weather or other unforeseen expenditure.

On the subject of paying artists: I don't see any difference between folk clubs and Morris sides. For the most part, both of these are clubs of interested amateurs. All performers have to learn their trade. They do this in the folk clubs/on the street and when they're good enough they will impress someone who wants to pay them to perform. Everyone has their price, and everyone has the right to turn down a bad deal.

In conclusion, I think both parties have responsibilities:

Festival Organisers:

- (i) State clearly what the deal is;
- (ii) Realise the importance of Morris to the public perception of the festival.
- (iii) Don't assume that Morris sides are only out to rip off the festival by asking for extra tickets.

Morris sides:

- (i) Don't accept the deal if you don't think it's fair;
- (ii) Do your best. Be ambassadors for the festival.
- (iii) Be aware that the organisers are similarly doing their best and that the Morris is only one of their worries!.

Lynne Cooke

Hereburgh Morris and Warwick Folk

Editors Note : This is a topic that I'm sure will run and run. I look forward to the reactions for the next issue!

Trefor Owen, a Traditional Clogmaker

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The workshop is **open to the public** at reasonable hours, unless we are away at a festival/event – suggest you ring first to check!

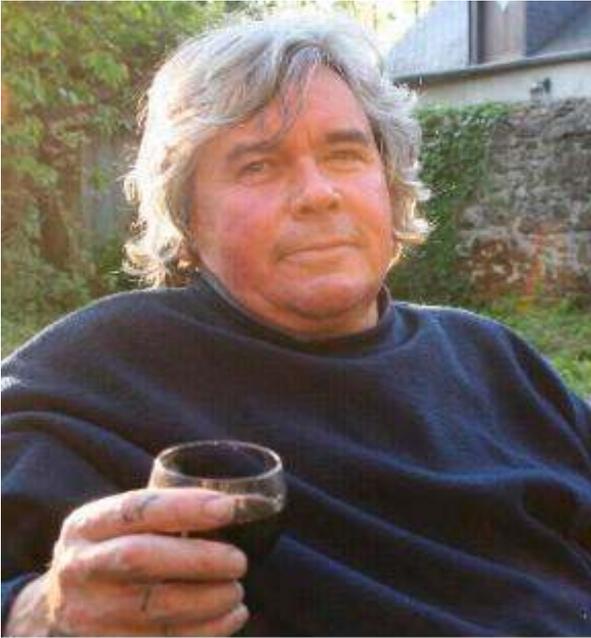
There are full clogmaking and repairing services on site, some while you wait (or get you ice cream, visit the castle, a tea shop, a pub) including a **Fitting Service** for orders previously taken

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Remember: Often copied, never bettered!!



Paul White

Festivals are fun!

That's if the sun shines, if the music, song and dance are all enjoyable and if the beer is tasty and reasonably priced. And the reason we all turn up at festivals year after year is that sometimes, everything turns out right in all three categories. Even if things go wrong, we still start looking forward to the next event after a few dreary winter months have passed.

A couple of years ago we decided to go to Cropredy to enjoy the Fairport Convention festival. We had both been independently before, in our former lives, but never together. Such tales of frivolity and fantasy we told each other. So it was inevitable we should make this pilgrimage together at some time.

In the event, the weather was chilly, the skies overcast and the music, well, indifferent. But the toilets were brilliant. I mean, they were still festival toilets – with all the images that they evoke – but there were plenty of them, they were clean and they were looked after by a team of people who took obvious pride in their

job. Visiting those toilets and finding them actually presentable and useable was one of the highlights of the festival for me.

The other picture that sticks in the mind from that long weekend is of a family in the middle of the crowd parked peacefully on a picnic blanket, surrounded by bottles, streamers, pies, twirly-coloured things on a bendy stick and a goat on a string.

I remember my mate Paul who decided to move his young family out of the London rat race to live the rural life in Devon. Nice garden with a pond on which paddled about a clutch of full grown ducks. So when the family of four went back to the capital to visit friends and relatives, the ducks went too, all fenced into the back of the estate car. The ducks always seemed contented enough with the arrangement, although following drivers could be forgiven for being a little surprised. Come to think of it, the goat seemed satisfied with his lot as well. In fact, I think he enjoyed the music more than I did.

What Cropredy lacks, of course, is dancing, apart from the impromptu jiggling about that happens at the front of the stage. There's certainly no morris in evidence. Well, that's OK. It's a music festival and we've got plenty of other events where dance rules OK.

When our side first started life, I managed to arrange sponsorship (in the form of ale) by a local brewery. Very generous they were too. It became my responsibility to arrange and collect the beer every time we went away en masse to any kind of festival.

With two poly barrels of beer on board we would head off to another weekend bash and the keenest amongst us would insist on testing the brew whatever time of day we were travelling, all in the interests of their fellow performers of course. They wanted to be sure the brew was fit to drink.

What to do with the beer once camped? Now that presented a problem. Drink it, of course, is the obvious solution. Well, that's OK on the campsite. But how do we partake of it when we are in town dancing?

The answer came in the form of my trusty haversack. We squeezed the barrel into the bag, slung it on to my back and made sure the tap was protruding from the zipped opening. And there we had it, a walking beer dispenser, much appreciated by all our dancers and musicians and anyone else passing by. My only difficulty was in having to rely on the good will of others when my own tankard was in need of replenishment!

Camping brings its own joys - and woes. The woes, of course, are the best fun, but only when they happen to other people. There was Jim the novice camper who arrived late at one gig and had difficulty putting up his simple little tent in the failing light. Why he had no help, I can't remember. Perhaps we were enjoying the beer or perhaps he refused all offers.

Anyway, he finally announced the job done and was rightly proud of his first solo erection. The night wandered on and we danced and sang as you do before wandering back to our tents for a good night's sleep. Just about then, the weather turned rather nasty but no worries, we all had our shelter.

Like everyone else, Jim slept through the night but woke up afloat on his lilo in the confines of his tent, which was awash. It turned out he had put it up inside out in the dark, for which feat he earned our unending praise. "I thought the fastenings were a bit difficult," he told us, as the wringing out process began. Dear Jim. He kept us entertained for ages.

We have now advanced to a small camper-van but the trials of camping return to haunt us when we have to get to grips with the awning. Its underlying structure is a lattice work of bendy poles, each in six or eight sections. And in each of these lengthy poles (three in number),

the elastic has gone. Inevitably, the poles disintegrate just at the point where the whole edifice is about to take shape and collapse ensues.

Never mind. We shall overcome. We have a couple of festivals lined up this summer, one a biker's weekend, which should be a hoot. I feel a morris workshop coming on. We will no doubt end up at more than the two and enjoy the unique and highly pleasurable sound of massed bells tinkling at walking pace as dancers move to and from their performances.

Whichever festivals you choose this summer have fun! I wonder who's on at Cropredy this year?

Paul White

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6) Standard Model A 4 strands/3 rows	£ 24. 75
7) Standard Model B 5 strand/4 rows	£ 32. 75
8) Standard Model C 5 strand/5rows	£ 37. 75
9) Standard Bell Band	£ 8.95
10) Wide Bell Band, 2 straps with bells	£ 19.95
11) Wrist or Ankle Bell Band 2 straps with bells	£ 18.95
Bonking Stick,	£ 12.50
Drum, rope tensioned	£ 185
420mm x 320mm or 17" x 13"	
Bass Drum, rope tensioned	£245

NEWSLETTER COPY DATE
For the Autumn Newsletter is
Saturday 23rd August 2008

**Morris Day part of the English
Riviera Cream Tea Festival!**
Saturday 19th April 2008

The English Riviera Cream Tea Festival is about celebrating our local heritage and showcasing some of our wonderfully quirky English customs on the aptly named English Riviera.

The festival ran over 5 days starting with Fish and Chip day on Friday 18th April and finishing on Wednesday 23rd April - St. Georges day where Torbay businesses dressed their shops with English flags and celebrated our nations Saint!

Morris Day was held on the Saturday and the concept behind the event was to create a traditional English Fete feel. We planned for one of the largest meetings of Morris Dancers to demonstrate this traditional form of folk dancing on two stages was still alive and definitely kicking! The day also included an impressive rally of Morris Minor cars, conveniently celebrating 60 years as one of the nations favourite motors, and second only to the Mini! A fantastic variety of stalls selling the very best of locally produced arts and crafts also pitched up, not to mention local brewery Bays selling its popular locally brewed beer (we had heard that Morris dancers apparently had quite a thirst!). Live music from local folk band Swashbuckle was also part of what we would hope to be an entertaining days of all things morris!

As Morris Day drew near we could tell that the weather was going to follow the Cream Tea Festival mantra and be 'Quintessentially English'! The prevailing easterly winds and torrential rain was not part of our original plans and forced us to put together a wet weather contingency plan that involved the whole event (albeit apart from the Morris Minor cars) was brought inside and a massive marquee was erected on Paignton Green. The typically English Dunkirk spirit prevailed and this huge indoor garden party turned out to be a roaring success!

The Morris Dancing started at 11am with the Red Petticoats and Exmoor Border Morris sides kicking off what was to be a magnificent showcase of the traditional English dance. Plymouth Morris Men were next up to dance and in their true comic style accosted one of the tourist boards staff and then proceeded to do a 'fertility dance' around her – according to the Plymouth Morris men we should expect a new addition to the team in 9 months time....so watch this space! By lunchtime the marquee was almost full to capacity and the Morris sides were wowing the visitors with amazing routines and fabulous music, the atmosphere was electric!

The dancing was non-stop throughout the day and the aim to raise the profile of this wonderful English tradition, in my opinion was wholeheartedly achieved! Sidmouth Steppers brought Morris Day to a fabulous close with simply beautiful dances and they even managed to get the watching crowd involved, including myself who now knows just how fit you actually need to be to do this – I've only just caught my breath!

All the sides involved in the day were extremely professional and simply fantastic and I cannot thank them enough in helping the English Riviera Tourist Board make the event such a success despite the dismal weather! We hope that next year they will get involved again as well as any other Morris sides who are interested in attending to make this event even bigger and better!!

Next year Morris Day will be held on Saturday 25th April 2008 and if you are interested in joining us and taking part then please do not hesitate to contact me at michelle.dowell@torbay.gov.uk or on 01803 296296.

Thanks again to everyone involved and hope to see you all there again next year!

Best wishes
Michelle Dowell

Calendar

June

10th

Taeppas Tump - Pub night with guests Datchet Morris Men at Fifield Inn pub Fifield, Nr Maidenhead 8.00pm
TBC

14th

Three Sires at Carsington Water - Ripley Green
Garters day of Dance

Taeppas Tump - Wimborne Folk Festival

25th

Taeppas Tump Pub night with guests Ellington Morris at The Bounty, Bourne End 8.00pm

27th-29th

Newburgh Morris Weekend of Dance and 'Traditions' Festival. Contact Barbara Barclay at Badgers Rake Vale Lane Lathom Lancashire L40 6JH Tel: 01257 463942

27th - 28th

Chinewrde Weekend of dance

28th

Three Shires at Newburgh Morris Weekend, Chorley

July

3rd

Guests Taeppas Tump of Kennet Morris Men. Falaise Square, Henley-On-Thames 8.00pm

4th - 6th

Cleckheaton Folk Festival

5th

Taeppas Tump Winton House Care Home Garden Party Dedworth Road, Windsor 2.30 pm

7th

The Gate to Southwell Festival

8th

Taeppas Tump Pub night with guests Fleet Morris & Basing Clog The Bull at Sonning 8.00 pm

11th - 13th

Clogfest! 2008 - The National Gathering for the Step-Clog Community. Skipton, North Yorkshire
<http://www.clogfest.org>

<http://uk.youtube.com/clogfest>

12th

"Chip off the Old" Ladies 30th anniversary. A Day of Dance in the lovely Derbyshire Countryside. For more details on this event please contact either Lesley.marshall@derby-college.ac.uk or andy@newbold9565.freeserve.co.

13th

Wakefield Morris at the Liquorice Festival, Pontefract

15th

Taeppas Tump The Flower Pot, Aston, with our guests Old Speckled Hen, 8pm pub TBC.

25th - 28th

Taeppas Tump "The English Tea Party", Viry, France

August

2nd-3rd

Innocent Village Fete in Regent's Park.

22-25th

Greensleeves Morris Men Weekend of dance, Hastings

23rd Autumn Newsletter Deadline

September

6th

Taeppas Tump - Windsor as guests of Windsor Morris.

Windsor Station? Eton & Windsor Bridge? 10.00am - 4.00pm Times and places TBC

October

25th

City Clickers clog stepping workshop in Bristol

2009

June

19th -21st

Scarborough Fayre 's 20th Morris Festival and Yorkshire Coast's 30th Birthday celebrations.

For more details contact Shirley Doyle at Northfield, Middle Lane, Hutton Buscel, Scarborough, YO13 9LP.or email sadoyle04@yahoo.co.uk

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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.

£3.25 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

Hinton: Traditional and creative Morris by Sue Swift.

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

Abram Circle: Provides background, complete notation, pictures and music for the Abram Circle dance. The dance originates from the North West but has a different structure to most North West dances.

£3.00 + £1.75 UK, £3.50 OVERSEAS (p&p)

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

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⅞"	£9.00	£17.00	£33.00	£10.00	£19.00	£36.50
1"	£11.00	£20.00	£39.00	£12.50	£22.00	£43.00
1⅛"	£12.00	£23.00	£45.00	£13.50	£25.50	£49.50
1¼"	£16.00	£32.00	£62.00	£18.00	£35.50	£68.50
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⅞"	£9.00	£17.00	£33.00	£10.00	£19.00	£36.50
1"	£11.00	£20.00	£39.00	£12.50	£22.00	£43.00
1⅛"	£12.00	£23.00	£45.00	£13.50	£25.50	£50.00
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