

Dancing On



Spring 2015

Open Morris and Rag Morris are hosts to
the JMO Day of Dance in Bristol

April 2015



Interested in archiving?

I was pleased to represent Open Morris at the recent Ring ARM. I had a discussion with the Chairman of the Morris Ring Archive group who is keen to expand this to involve Open Morris. Archiving is a very particular interest and will require a very particular person. If that person is you please contact:- Phil Watson, Chair of Open Morris chair@open-morris.org

Many thanks, Kim Woodward,

Area Rep for the South West

Feel free to talk this through with me on greatcapermorris@yahoo.co.uk

Hello from the
editor!

W

elcome to another issue
of Dancing On!

I bring you a shorter than usual issue in time to celebrate Open Morris hosting the National JMO Day of Dance in Bristol. Which conveniently happens to be my new home town, how nice of them to welcome me in such a fashion.



If you have anything you would like to see in the next issue please send your missives to dancingon@open-morris.org before November.



Bristol Jack in the Green

The Bristol Jack in the Green will once again take to the streets of Bristol on the **first Saturday in May** and is well worth seeing.

If you can't make it on the day then how about visiting our exhibition upstairs at the M Shed, Bristol Harbourside

Website:

<http://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed/>

<http://home.freeuk.net/bristoljack/>

Open Morris welcomes a new Chair

Hello to you all, I took over from Bethan Holdridge at the last AGM in November. Those of you that have been members for a long time will be more familiar with me in the role of Treasurer, a post I held for 26 years, so you know that I have the best interests of Open Morris and its membership in my heart.

2015 is another important year for us, with our responsibility of hosting the JMO National Day of Dance in Bristol on 18th November. Its being organised by Rag Morris, and a recent meeting I had with them showed that its all going along pretty smoothly. Should be a good day out for everyone.

Your Officers are all working hard to help you. Nicky, the Membership Secretary has collated all your subscriptions, John, our Publicity Officer is working hard alongside Rag Morris on the JMO event, Brian, our Secretary keeps sending out missives to us all. Joe is producing this

edition of the Magazine, Craig the Web Officer is doing his magical stuff and working on a revision of the Website, and I am laying back taking it easy, still doing the Treasurers role as well as the handover to Ashley has been delayed.

Please do not be afraid to ask your Officers for help. In my case, rather than email me, call me on 01902 563126. I find we can get things sorted faster that way. We have a lot of experience of the Morris between us, and can help out if needed.

I have been unable to dance for a few months, first because of a dodgy knee, second because of an old cricket injury to my elbow. Both have now been operated on, and I have been cleared to dance from May 1st. Handy date that? I hope to see as many of you as possible over the summer, enjoying what we do. I shall be around with my local side, Bedcote, and will travel with the Bunnies

from Hell. And now that I have finally retired as a cricketer, there's more time for dance.

Have a great summer

Phil Watson
Open Morris Chair.

chair@open-morris.org

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A familiar face returns to the role of Publicity Officer

Hi Open, you thought I had gone but no..... after a year's rest, (we all needed that after the Olympic efforts)

I have come back after a hard fought hustings to make the contacts needed to be your Publicity Officer.

Straight in this year with Rag for the National JMO has been easier knowing all the planners and sorters in the side.

With luck we should have a full complement of Press attention for the National JMO starting with BCfm the local community radio.

Community radio has a small but loyal following for those that don't need the regular Radio 4 diet of Archers and Sandy Toxvig and so on. (I need both).

As an idea for your local do / festival / new members night give the local radio a chance.

See all Live radio on this even

expanding list: www.listenlive.eu/uk.html with many of them on the radio as well. Who'd have thought it.

I see it as a useful first to practice live radio techniques. They are used to first timers and always welcoming.

Don't forget to bring your sticks and bells, who knows why but they always want them!

John Clifford

Open Morris Publicity Officer & Life Member

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R

eadng through the exploits of morris sides last summer in the last edition of 'Dancing On' made me realise that it would be worth sharing the AMAZING morris escapade I was lucky enough to experience last year. I met Rant and Raven Morris, based in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1999 when they came to the UK and danced at Scarborough Fayre Morris Dance Festival hosted by Yorkshire Coast Morris. In 2013 they reciprocated by inviting Yorkshire Coast to their 20th anniversary celebrations in 2014. A group of dancers who were willing and able to go to the event, assembled by John Gorton of Yorkshire Coast, morphed into a new morris side - Ragged Robin Morris was born! Drawn from Locos in Motion, Yorkshire Coast, Mucky

Mountains, and Minster Strays (with the addition of an extra musician) the side had two practice weekends focussing on Border dances and designed and made new kits before flying out on June 20th to the west coast of North America to join the festivities.

This however, was no run of the mill weekend of dance – oh no! We flew out to either Seattle or Vancouver where we were met and wonderfully hosted by Vancouver Morris Men and Misty City Morris. We then travelled to Bellingham to embark on a ferry to travel for an amazing four and a half day voyage all the way up the Inside Passage of Alaska to Whittier. From Whittier we were met by a coach to take us through a tunnel under the mountains and along Turnagain Arm to Anchorage. At Anchorage all of the dancers from the three visiting sides were hosted by Rant

and Raven Morris and their friends and families for a wonderful weekend of dancing, singing, eating, drinking, sight-seeing and partying before tearful farewells were said at the end of the event on June 29th.

The scenery on the voyage and around Anchorage was unbelievable. It was mind-blowing to look out from the boat to endless slopes of temperate rainforest, mountains, islands, glaciers, whales and dolphins and to know that there were almost no humans in the landscapes we passed. But it wasn't all horizon gazing and whale watching; an amazing programme of workshops, dancing, crafts, singing, talks and other activities were organised for us on the boat as well as some dance displays.

The dancing started on the quay at Bellingham and continued throughout the time we spent together. We docked at Ketchikan, Juneau and Yakutat on our way up to Whittier. At each of the ports we alighted and were transported to dance spots and to meet local people – all arranged in advance by Rant and Raven. At Yakutat we were joined by native Alaskan Tinglit dancers. In Anchorage we danced in the city centre, at a huge Sunday market and also in Palmer.

I don't expect ever to do anything even similar to this amazing event.

We made friends, learnt new songs and dances and took away something that was much more than the sum of the individual elements of the event. I still find it hard to believe that such a small group of people in Anchorage managed to plan, organise and so successfully run the event. This is another chance to register our heartfelt thanks to them.

Ragged Robin Morris lives on. A number of us got together in September when Dawn and Chris Berg of Rant and Raven visited the UK, and we managed an evening's dancing in St Helens. We are now trying to plan a new adventure – but I think we all know it will not have the big WOW that we were treated to in Alaska in 2014!

Sally Edmondson
**Mucky Mountains
Morris**

www.muckymountains.org.uk/





Rapper Sword in Cardiff

Cardiff's finest (and only) sword dancing team, Taff Rapper, celebrate their first birthday in April this year.

Formed by Edwin Dyson after 4 years dancing with Bath's Northgate Rapper, Taff are a mixed team; both in gender and in height. The team first learnt a version of The Kingsmen Dance from Newcastle, as it's a relatively easy dance to learn for

complete beginners and novices.

Taff have crawled the pubs of Cardiff City centre, Pontcanna and City Road as well as crossing overseas to dance with Silver Flame and Northgate in Bristol. Just last week they had their first paid gig at a Headteachers conference, earning themselves £50 for team funds.

The team has now developed a certain style, and has put



together two other dances blended from old notations and YouTube videos; much as most rapper teams do.

Taff are ably played for by Charlotte the fiddler, who's found both old and new Welsh 6/8 jigs. She plays at a pretty brisk pace, making the dancers sweat.

The boys and girls from Taff are looking to recruit this both thick in t'head and robust in the knee. The team are currently

practicing hard for their exhibition dance at DERT in Bristol in April. After that there'll be workshops organised for those unafraid of moderate danger.

Edwin Dyson
Taff Rapper

swords@taffrapper.co.uk

www.taffrapper.co.uk



A fresh perspective on rapper

I joined Locksided just under three months ago, which doesn't seem nearly long enough for the eight practices, couple of dozen pubs, one house and a coffee shop I've danced at with them since.

My name is Oliver, and I'm not a folk dancer. Well, I wasn't anyway. I've been dancing since the turn of the millennium, across a dozen or so dances; but all strictly partner dances, in both senses of the word - ballroom, salsa, etc... I'd never heard of Rapper, but when my dance partner told me I was going along as it was only fair (I'd introduced/dragged her to some of my dances), I agreed - after all, a dance is a dance, right?

Turns out the answer is more no than yes. Locksided does not align with what I knew of as a dance club. Dance clubs are larger groups, where members turn up; learn some moves; improvise some dances then depart home. They don't tend to be great friends, or to socialise with each other outside of dancing. They don't work on improvement much beyond their own skills. Dance clubs tend to be clustered



around specific age groups – to see multiple generations of a family to turn up to most places would be so rare as to be almost unheard of.

If the club was a surprise, Rapper was more so. A called rather

than led dance, using curious sword-like 'rappers' that uses pre-arranged positions and sequences that strive for precision and technique. Rather than any of the dances I had learnt, it bore far more resemblance to the kata based martial art I used to do, one which used swords and preached accuracy and control. It blends a number of disparate elements - switching between sets of a conceptually simple, yet surprisingly difficult series of steps (or shuffles) that looked straight out of Ireland or tap. The figures, members weaving in and out of each other's way; tying the flexible swords through intricate sequences of knots, only to occasionally lift the lock above the dancers heads; but otherwise glued to their hands even not letting go seems impossible for the movements of their bodies. Or even the occasion spot of acrobatics as one dancer would tumble themselves over the swords of others. These elements, quite different, never the less flow from one to the other and back again, providing a pacing to the dance as it moves from one point of interest to another.

And yet this intricate dance is then displayed in the (typically) confined spaces of a pub. A partially drunk half-pint sitting on the side, a group of surprised and hopefully entertained patrons circled around us. Team members with unfamiliar titles abounded – The Foreman and the Squire running the side; the bag, preparing the routes of the tours, and the Tommy, strutting around while the others dance, making jokes about losing limbs while keeping any watchers from getting too close in case they did lose something.

I went (and danced) out on my first tour after two training sessions; Natasha, our foreman, believes in getting people out on tours as soon as they are fit for it, a viewpoint I'm grateful for and persuaded by. Even now, I suspect I've spent more time touring than practising – a fact I hope is not too obvious to those who have seen me dance! But even with my limited experience of Rapper, I can see that is how it is supposed to be done – the



the dance is a performance and should have an audience. Three months ago I had never danced in front of non-dancers (wedding receptions excluded); now I cannot walk into a bar without looking at the floor to see what the surface is like and whether there would be space to fit us in.

Many Rapper dancers also dance the Morris and/or other folk dances, so I've had a chance to see a little of them. In some respects they seem to show strong similarities - the performing aspect of the

dance and the strong community spirit; in others, the differences – the competitiveness. In time, I may take them up as well, but for now I shall be holding fast to this one that I was called for to see by chance. And should our paths cross on a tour, perhaps we shall give you a dance.

Oliver Matthews
Locksided Rapper

www.locksided.org.uk



Does your side have a fool or a bit of an animal?

The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts (Joint Member of all 3 Morris organisations) needs a host side(s) to base the 2015 Unconvention. To be truly Unconventional we need Indoor camping (M & F) from Friday Eve to Sunday Lunchtime one weekend late October/November.

Trigger and his trusty friend Robert Chisman will help with planning, paying and so on.

We've been sited in the past in Church Halls, Holiday Camps, Schools, Heritage Centres. So long as there is sufficient Straw to eat and Cider to drink I'll be happy anywhere. Dennis the Horse Dennisthehorse@yahoo.co.uk



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As always please send you copy, events, write-ups, pictures, doodles, dance notation workshops, one-liners and anything morris related for inclusion in the next Dancing On to:

dancingon@open-morris.org

The next issue is due to go out in Autumn 2015

New Teams

Old School Rapper &
Black Powder Morris