



# Newsletter - September 2014

Welcome to Issue 9 of the Rose & Castle Morris Newsletter. We are now coming to the end of our summer dancing season with just one or two established winter events still to come:

- 31 October - The Royal Oak, Cogenhoe NN7 1NJ
- 29 November - Stony Lights Switch-on Day
- 1 January 2015 - The Boat, Stoke Bruerne

We have had a very enjoyable summer dancing even though we were not able to fulfil all our commitments due to lack of numbers and injury. Below are just a couple of these events that we would like to share with you.

## OH WE DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE...

The first weekend of August saw Rose and Castle accepting an invitation to take part in the internationally renowned Sidmouth Folk Festival, celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.



*"A Display Dance in the Blackmore Gardens Marquee"*

After a lengthy journey across England, taking full advantage of the design of the A303 which affords passing motorists ample time to contemplate the ancient trilithons of Stonehenge as they enjoy the permanent traffic jam beside it, we set up our tents, caravans and campervans on the Festival site and availed ourselves of the frequent bus service into the pleasant Devon seaside resort to enjoy a well-earned pint.

Saturday morning saw us dancing in the summer sunshine with other Morris Sides beside the promenade. Then processing through appreciative crowds along the seafront and through the town. Before giving a virtuoso dance display in the Blackmore Gardens Marquee,

albeit dancing in clogs with rubbers in place of our normal clog irons. As usual on such occasions, the day ended in pleasant socialising with old friends from Morris Sides around the country.



*"Processing along the Esplanade"*

On Sunday we enjoyed more dance spots around the town before rounding off the weekend's display in the Market Square. Our Squire was sufficiently pleased with our performance throughout the Festival to stand us all a pint after we finished! The weekend was rounded off with a splendid Side Curry in a local Indian restaurant.

Most of us went home next day, but a few of us took advantage of our concessionary performers' tickets to enjoy the rest of the Festival. Next time you could do the same...

*Steve Brady*

## MEET OUR NEW MEMBER

Rob joined us just less than 2 years ago and has been dancing out with us for the last 18 months and is now an integral part of the team. Although he has no previous experience of morris dancing he was able to pick up the dances very quickly and thoroughly enjoys it.



*"I wish that I had discovered morris dancing earlier as it is such good fun with a great camaraderie within the team."*



## GREEN GROW THE RUSHES-O!

When our North-West Clog Morris Tradition developed over 200 years ago in the new industrial towns of Lancashire, North Cheshire and SW Yorkshire, it rapidly became linked with an older local tradition, rushbearing. In which the rushes that, before the invention of the Fitted Carpet, used to cover the floor of churches were replaced at the end of each summer. The local parishioners would climb up the nearest Pennine to cut suitable sedges, pile them on a cart, known as a Rushcart, and process their load around the parish to the church, on the floor of which they would duly be strewn.

Ere long the Morris lads and the Rushbearers had joined forces. In many a North-West town come late August or early September the Rushcart would be pulled by man, horse or donkey around the area accompanied by the town Morris Side, pausing to dance and refresh themselves at suitable points en route (normally public houses!).



*“The first sight of this year’s Rushcart”*

Like many other good things, and people, this tradition largely perished in the First World War. But in 1974 the folk of Saddleworth, part of the West Riding of Yorkshire which had just been placed under Mancunian rule, decided to revive it. Aided by the last survivor of the pre-WWI Rushcart Lads they reconstructed a Rushcart and one late August weekend the newly formed Saddleworth Morris Men pulled it around the local villages, dancing in each one, before delivering their load to St Chad’s Church, high in the hills overlooking Uppermill. On top of the Rushcart, 20 feet above the lads pulling the stangs, sat the traditional Jockey, a Morris Man chosen for the occasion (now it’s the longest serving Saddleworth dancer who hasn’t yet done it), kept supplied with ale via a copper kettle on a pulley. They never looked back, and before long Rushcart Weekend was a traditional highlight of the local calendar.

This year was the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Revived Rushcart, and Rose and Castle Morris were proud to join over 200 Morris Men from all over England, pulling on the stangs on the August Bank Holiday

Saturday morning. Applauded by enthusiastic crowds of locals we helped pull the two-ton cart seven miles up hill and down dale amid the superb hill scenery of Yorkshire’s Mancunian-Occupied West Flank of the Pennines. Stopping at fine old village pubs to dance and make merry. This year a bride in full fig ascended a ladder when the Cart stopped at the Top House pub in Dobb Cross to steal a kiss from the Rushcart jockey, ensuring, according to tradition, wedded bliss and many bonny children, and certainly putting a smile on the lucky Morris Man’s face. Amazingly, her bridal dress and train survived intact.

The following day we pulled the Cart up to the Church to fulfil its purpose, whereupon we joined Morris Sides from around the country in dancing outside the Church Inn and the Cross Keys, pubs happily adjacent to the ecclesiastical premises. On the Sunday evening, tired but happy Morris Men and their ladies foregathered in the Church Inn for an evening of music and jollity, much enlivened by contributions from our Squire and our Music Master, the inimitable Mr Clive Wood. Another weekend of convivial company in jovial surroundings upholding a proud tradition. Next year you could join us on the stangs.....



*“ The Rushcart advances pulled by over 200 morris men ”*

### Interested?

We are always looking for new members (dancers, musicians & helpers) so if you think you might like to have a go, why not come to one of our practice nights every Wednesday evening from 8.30pm at Stoke Bruerne Village Hall. You will be made very welcome

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For more information about Rose & Castle Morris see:

[www.rose-castlemorris.org.uk](http://www.rose-castlemorris.org.uk)