



Newsletter - April 2015

Welcome to Issue 10 of the Rose & Castle Morris Newsletter. We are now coming to the official beginning of our summer dancing season although as you will see from some of the stories here we get involved in dance-outs throughout the year A few future events include:

- 23 April October -The Boat Inn, Stoke Bruerne
- 3 May - Guests of Old Mother Redcaps at The Boat
- 10-12 July - Ely Folk Festival

Below are just a couple of these winter events that we would like to share with you.

BIRMINGHAM BASH BREAKS IN THE NEW YEAR

Having danced the New Year in in our traditional way on New Year's Day in our home pub *The Boat*, Stoke Bruerne, Rose and Castle Morris opened 2015 ten days later in splendid style with an adventure beyond our normal winter haunts to Birmingham.



“The Blessing of the Jockey Morris Men’s Magnificent Plough”

Here we had been invited by our friends of Jockey Morris Men to take part in their ancient rite of Blessing the Plough followed by a day of dancing around the Victorian magnificence at the heart of England’s Second City.

Arriving by train around ten o’clock on a Saturday morning we clattered in our clogs through the shopping streets to a city centre church where the said ancient rite was being enacted, with a magnificent Plough. We then accompanied the now duly blessed agricultural implement to the Bull Ring Market where

our hosts and their guest Sides, including ourselves, disported themselves before the assembled shoppers. The public houses by now being open we proceeded to one such place of refreshment, our next dance spot. Sadly the surface was not suitable for dancing in clogs so we were obliged to imbibe invigorating herbal decoctions of the barley and the hop instead. However the next spot being outside a historic place of worship boasted a splendid surface on which we were able to give of our best.

After lunch we perambulated through the imposing neo-Classical municipal monuments to Brum’s former prosperity to the City library. Outside which we demonstrated to a suitably literate and erudite audience our part of England’s industrial tradition, North-West Clog Morris, surrounded by many fascinating architectural and industrial reminders of other aspects of this aspect of our heritage.

Although the sun shone brightly on our efforts less than three weeks after the Winter Solstice it did not shine for long, and the afternoon was not that far advanced before the shades of evening drew our dancing to a close. So we repaired to a splendid hostelry under the City Post Office to enjoy an evening of convivial merriment with Morris friends old and new from around the middle part of England. Conviviality and merriment enhanced by the interesting collection of single malt whiskies which one of our hosts had been sharing with us all throughout the day. And so back on the train home, politely declining an invitation from some young female fellow-passengers to go clubbing with them in Coventry.



“Women love wearing our hats”

A most enjoyable day out with friends in perhaps surprisingly pleasant surroundings. No doubt we will be back next year - when you could be enjoying it with us!



BEEF AND BEER IN BIRSTALL

Outside the dancing season, Rose and Castle Morris still find plenty to do. We practice in Stoke Bruerne Village Hall every week of course, followed by a pint down *The Boat*. But we also socialise with our friends in other Morris Sides, especially at their traditional annual Ale Feasts, normally held in the winter months.

For example, on February 7th we repaired to the village of Birstall, just north of Leicester, as guests of Leicester Morris Men at their annual Ale Feast. After rolling out our sleeping bags in the warm and comfortable Scout hall near the Feast venue, the Rose and Castle delegation sampled what the village had to offer in the way of good real ale pubs. Then we joined Morris men from all over England in the Church Hall. Proceedings opened with some fine displays of massed Cotswold Morris dancing by all the Sides present from that Morris Tradition.



“Massed Cotswold Morris Dancers”

We North Westers could not reciprocate as our steel-shod clogs would have bashed the hall floor to splinters in short order. So, sadly, we were left with no option but to enjoy the splendid barrels of ale laid on by our hosts as we played wallflower on the stage. Then all fell to doing justice to the lavish viands set before us, good old-fashioned English cooking. Followed by the customary toasts and – short! – speeches, rounded off with renditions of old traditional songs. Then the tables and chairs were cleared away for more massed Cotswold dancing. After a while Rose and Castle, Saddleworth and other North-West men, whose clogs debarred them from likewise dancing in the hall, slipped away to a fine local hostelry to enjoy some convivial and jovial company and the odd additional pint. Only to return after closing time to imbibe more of the Feast Ale and join in the singing that had now commenced, repairing merrily across the road to our beds at a late hour. Next morning after being set up by a cup of tea and a solid English breakfast laid on by our hosts Rose and



Castle set off home with more fine memories of good times with the Morris. For Morris isn't just about dancing – it's also socialising in good company, making new friends and having a good time. Why not join in and be part of it?

Steve Brady

MEET THE SIDE

Each issue, we like to feature a different member of the side. Meet Bob who has been with the side for about 3 years.



I was at Stony Lights and watched the side dance and thought how great they all looked and really enjoyed the dancing. Following this I saw the side again at Stoke Bruerne on the following New Year's Day and had a leaflet thrust into my hand whilst watching from the bridge. Unsure of it being the right thing for me I turned up outside the pub and waited for the side to arrive and after nearly leaving on more than one occasion I ended up in the village hall having a go.

Unfortunately, due to injuries and various ailments my progress as a dancer has been delayed but they are a really nice bunch of guys who I feel are very supportive and understanding. I really enjoy the camaraderie and as I am very patriotic I feel that we should all do our bit to keep English tradition alive.

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