



American Morris Newsletter

March-April 1994 ◦ Volume 18, Number 1



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Editors of the Newsletter are Sally Lackman and Louise A. Neu. Curt Harpold is the Executive Computer Guru. Team News is coordinated by Martha Hayes. Publishing facilitator is Stan Fowler. Regional Editors include John Dexter (NY), Alisa Dodson (CA), John Mayberry (ON), Adam Moskowitz (MA), Jocelyn Reynolds (CA), and Ken Smith (WA). Thanks to Charlie Pilzer, Beartracks, for our internet connection. Cover redesign in 1992 was by Lisa Friedlander of Minneapolis, building on the original designs of Barbara Prentice-O'Rourke of Bampton, England.

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The American Morris Newsletter 1994 Directory

An annual feature of *The American Morris Newsletter* is a directory of all North American Morris, Sword, Border, Northwest, Ribbon, and Garland sides of which we are aware. The editors thank all the contact people for keeping the Newsletter up-to-date on changes and developments.

The editors have made a strong effort to contact all sides by every means possible, through questionnaires and e-mail. A few individuals have provided important information on old contacts that had not previously been forwarded to the Newsletter, and others made us aware of a handful of new teams.

If you are aware of any side that is NOT included in this year's directory, please send us contact names, addresses and telephone numbers.

Morris Dancing

karen hellgren

I dance,

I fly:

it starts here

not much like flying

thread handkerchiefs through your fingers,

over so, here, and under, there,

and back around

did I ever not know how to do this?

or pick up sticks, a child's game

(a man's weapon),

ax handles from the hardware store down the block

(a staff that is all you have

to defend yourself),

then settle into the set

tap tap to make music

jump and clash to fly

six together

I know them all

how they dance

one with energy enough for six

one who looks beautiful even when she's wrong

one sheer athlete

one who knows how to match strength with

partner's strength

one who likes to hit hard and shout for the

pleasure of it

and me

another time, another set, others to fly with

but this is now and these are the ones who will dance

wands in our hands and bells on our feet

if you all move together

jump together

clash together

tap together

if your partner is your other self

dancing down the long curve of hey

if the musicians are dancing with you

and you don't need them for the rhythm -

it's in your feet and your hands -

and the body makes its own music
in effort and in joy
a community of six
a living being: one

then, sometimes, behind the sweat and the clash
the efforts and the bells
the hankies waving and the caller proclaiming
I have heard another rhythm
the universe moving
the world's turning
the celebration of the pleasure of God in creation
the pleasure of man in being created
creating in turn
and offering back

our mirror of the Great Dance
in our dancing

Morris is a figure of the Dance
and echoes it as all true dances must
a human echo, lively, bawdy, joyous, and full of effort
solemn as an accordion
sacred as a roll in the hay
whose bells are nothing more than merry
but nothing less

and so we fly
a very charitable dance
when your partner helps if you forgot the sticking
holds back if your steps are shorter
a very gracious dance
submitting one to another for the sake of the set
and a dance to strengthen our hearts
the musicians will leave us to dance along a chorus
to show us we can do it without them
and so we can

and *all up*
and show
and walk around
and our feet still know and our hands still understand
that the world still turns in the Great Dance
and the pleasure of God is in creation
and the dwelling of God is with us

A NEWSLETTER DEBATE:

"American" versus "North American" Morris Newsletter **Sally Lackman and Louise A. Neu**

As many of our readers know, included on this year's *Directory* update questionnaire was an extra item asking folks to comment on whether this publication should be called *The American Morris Newsletter* or *The North American Morris Newsletter*. There were 102 questionnaires returned (94 U.S. and 8 Canadian). Only 43 responded to this issue, with 35 favoring or lobbying for North American, 6 advocates for American, and 3 who took the time and trouble to note that they did not care. The Canadian questionnaires showed 5 votes for North American, 1 for American, and 2 that didn't say one way or the other.

The founding editor, Fred Breunig, had these comments: "When I came up with the name, I did not intend "American" to be equivalent to "U.S." The AMN covered all "new world" activities from the start. However, if "North American" would make Canadian teams feel more included, I have no objection."

Having said all that, the current editors will, at least for the time being, exercise executive privilege to retain the existing moniker. We feel that *The American Morris Newsletter* is sufficiently comprehensive, and not particularly offensive to the Canadian sides. And of course there is always the argument on the side of maintaining tradition, bolstered by the fact that this publication has been cited by other publications as a resource, and finding and correcting these many listings could be rather daunting. We hope no one is terribly heartbroken by our choice, and will be open to any further comments from our readers, if anyone is so moved.

Abbots Bromley Horn Dance

Elaine Bradtke

Abbots Bromley is a medium-sized village northeast of Birmingham, more in the border morris region than the Cotswolds. This is a farming region dotted with coal-fired power plants billowing smoke into the already foggy atmosphere. The horn dance takes place on the first Monday following the first Sunday after September 4th, this year (1993) falling on September 5, in 1994, on September 12. In all respects the whole affair is rather uncommercial, partly because it is on a moveable date and always a Monday. (A couple of people told me they showed up on the wrong date at least once!) Cheap, tacky souvenirs and nasty food were at a minimum, and we really felt as though we were taking part in a local celebration.

The dancers' kits were somewhat threadbare, especially around the shoulders where they rest the horns when not actually dancing. They wore faded brown velvet berets, waistcoats, and shirts made of some rough linen-like weave. Depending on the position in the dance, the dancers wore either brown shirt and green waistcoat or the reverse. (All the dancers on one side matched.) There seemed to be an under-waistcoat in a red floral pattern. Knee britches were tan with a pattern reminiscent of wallpaper. Dark green knee socks and sturdy oxfords completed the kit. Some extra characters and musicians were dressed slightly differently.

The horns, which were quite large, were carried on a three-foot length of wooden pole topped by a wooden deer head on which the horns were mounted. A cross-brace near the top of the horns stabilized them and served as a rail from which they hung in the church. The boy archer (about eleven years old) carried a small bow and arrow (approximately 2½ feet long). The hobby horse (man) wore a green-trimmed brown cape which fell to his waist, and the horse's skirt, of the same fabric, fell to the ankles. The horse's head was small, only slightly larger than the deer heads, and bore

the coloring of a buckskin bay; he didn't appear to have a tail, but his mouth was hinged. The man/woman was dressed in an off-white skirt with blue bands, blue tunic, and white headscarf, and carried what looked like a very large wooden spoon. The fool sported a court jester's outfit with alternating blocks of red and pinkish tan, a pointed collar with bells, and a hood with a point which curved over to dangle in front of his forehead. He carried a bladder on a short stick.

The dancers were accompanied by several musicians who alternated. The youngest member, a tiny (age six?) triangle player who carried the triangle on a cord around his neck, is expected to grow into the role of the boy archer in a few years. The melody was provided by a piano accordion and a button accordion. The music was lively, usually played by one accordion and the triangle player while the spare musician helped in the collecting. Though several tunes were used, there wasn't a wide variety, the same few tunes were repeated all day. They were in duple meter and in major keys.

The dance was brisk and horns were not clashed together. (Is the clashing an American invention?) One of the basic figures was a crossing over, in which one side lifted the horns and the other dipped them in order to pass without colliding. There is also a rounds figure (which was really oblong), and a hey; these seemed to be interchangeable. The leader amused himself, and some of the audience members, by trying to trip up the other dancers. They did not perform solemnly, but talked to themselves during the dance, joked, and laughed at their colleagues who were fooled by the leader's random calls. The troupe was made up of local men and boys, and I often overheard audience members recognizing their friends and neighbors among the dancers.

There was an odd assortment of folks following the dancers, a few locals who drifted in and out as the dancers passed through their neighborhood and some out-of-towners who took the day off work. Neo-pagans were conspicuous by their costumes of flowing robes,

The Occasional AMN Center Pull-out Page

From time to time, we will be requesting information from our readers above and beyond the yearly survey of teams for the *Directory of Sides*. This is one of those times. And to make it easier for you, we are furnishing you with this page that can be pulled out without disrupting the integrity of the newsletter for those archivists among us. Some of these questions were asked on the survey sent to the sides, so if you've already answered, you needn't answer again, as we have your answer. When you're done, just fold over, affix a stamp, and mail it back! Thanks for your ideas and thoughts.

What does your team do for May Day?

Does your team have an annual event? Briefly describe it and give its time frame.

We would like to provide a listing of fall ales/events in the next newsletter. If you have not written about one on the previous page, let us know if there is a fall event you would like to list. Let us know if it is an invitation only event or whether folks can drop by.

What issues would you like to see addressed in the newsletter? On what areas would you like more information? What would you like to write about?

Over time, teams have developed traditions/rituals unique to themselves (rites of initiation, celebrations of births, marriages, birthdays, and the like). We are collecting information about these rituals for a future article. Are there any team traditions that you would like us to include?



The American Morris Newsletter
c/o Sally Lackman
10408 Inwood Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20902

capas, and even chain mail. For some unfathomable reason, they have adopted the horn dance even though it seems to have no apparent relation to other pagan seasonal celebrations. There were also a few morris dancers in civilian disguises and at least one pushy fellow with a big video camera.

The day began around 8:00 a.m. with a ceremony in St. Nicholas Church, Abbots Bromley, where the horns are kept. After leaving the church the dancers took a quick walk up the High Street for about a block, then turned back into the residential part of the village. They danced through the streets, stopping at appointed places to perform. Several of the householders offered the dancers, and sometimes the audience, refreshments to keep them going; these ranged from tea to wine and beer, sausage rolls, cakes, and other finger foods. The extra characters, spare dancers, and musicians chased about soliciting money from the residents and onlookers, collecting the money in padlocked metal tins. The dancers split the take at the end of the day.

At the end of the morning, the dancers performed at a manor house, including the owner and his wife in the dance. They also managed to cajole a member of the police force (helping to keep the traffic and the dancers from fatal interaction) into the dance. Joining in the horn dance is considered quite an honor, and only a select few are invited. After this stand and some mulled wine, the troupe climbed into cars and drove to some of the outlying regions, from whence they dance back into town.

In the evening, at about 8:00, they reappeared in town where there had been a small fête, mostly crafts and food stalls, set up on the village green. Lichfield Morris Men, Alfalfa (a women's northwest and garland), and Utoexter Hearts of Oak Morris Men had shown up to dance for the gathering crowds. The last performance of the horn dance took place in a car park, across the street from the butter cross. This finale was well attended as it was nearly dark and

everyone was home from school and work. After the last hey was finished, the dancers processed to the church for a short ceremony, after which they announced next year's date and hung up the horns; this took place around 9:00 p.m. Afterwards all the pubs were packed to capacity, with several jam sessions in back rooms. The village sponsored an invitation-only dance associated with the horn dancers, and also used the dancers as part of an advertising ploy to attract customers to various events elsewhere in town that evening. The men and boys involved enjoy something of the celebrity life for at least one night a year, although all they really want to do is relax, sit down, and rest their weary feet! The next morning the village was back to its sleepy self with only the bits of trash in the gutters as reminders of the crowd in the village square the night before.

The people of Abbots Bromley don't perform the annual horn dance to attract tourists or to please the members of EFDSS. Rather, they keep the custom alive because it means something to them. My experience in being a horn dance follower was rewarding not for any mystical reasons, but rather for the sense that this is a living, breathing tradition.

September 1993

Team News

Prairie Waves Morris (NE) invites "all who will" to attend the **1994 Midwest Morris Ale** to be held May 27-30, 1994 in Lincoln, NE. Anyone interested in attending can write to SuAnn Witt, 525 Cordes Drive, Papillion, NE 68046, or call Alice Love at 402/553-2562.

Bridgetown Morris Men (OR) is a solid concern after a year of formation. Although we have an active membership of about eight or nine (five of whom can play at least a few tunes on an instrument), we still have to concoct occasional morris dances for four when someone is busy, disabled, or sick. Following several local appearances, we danced in partial kit before other morris teams at Seattle's Folklife Festival last Memorial Day, as well as hosting some of the Seattle teams for the annual brewers' festival in Portland late in the summer.

We had our first paying gig in December, danced border morris in hastily made smocks for a Guy Fawkes party in November, and in tails on February 4 for an opening of *Henry IV, part 2*. We plan to be at the Folklife Festival again, expect to host Minnesota Traditional Morris when they come out this summer, and, of course, do the brewers' festival.

We always welcome visitors and permanent refugees to our moderate climate.

Pipe and Bowl Morris (CA) will be having its Annual Morris Ale Saturday night, October 1, 1994 at the Renaissance Pleasure Faire, Novato, CA. (No morris ale charge). Meals are available for purchase from the caterer. About 60 dancers, 10 musicians, and 100+ others attend this event. It is open to anyone who is interested. Call first for confirmation, gatelisting, directions, transportation, and on-site/off-site lodging information.

Contact: Gregory Hamburg
Pipe and Bowl Morris
PO Box 1350
Novato, CA 94948
415/892-7852

Vancouver Morris Men (BC) have had a busy winter (as usual!) with regular dance-outs on the last Saturday of the month on Granville Island. During the "dark" months (September - March) we expanded our Welsh border repertoire to include all the Pershore dances, and completed our fourth annual Mummers Play tour, now moved to the more traditional Boxing Day. On Plough Monday (January 9) we had our second annual Molly dance-out, complete with the Wooing Play from Bassingham.

With three sets of costumes throughout the year, we're starting to rival Victoria's Island Thyme Ladies for costume changes, except we don't do them all in one set! (Also, there's not as much interest in watching us change!)

At the same time, we have been frantically raising money for our upcoming Second England Tour in August 1994. One of our fundraisers has been our two cassette tapes, "A Rite Song and Dance" by the Vancouver Morris Men, and the self-titled cassette by the VMM spin-off cellidh band Jiggery Pokery. (If anyone's interest, there are still some available, at only US \$10 each!) The highlight of the coming summer will undoubtedly be our tour, the objective of which is to expand our knowledge of northwest, longsword, and rapper, as well as sampling a northern brew or two.

Morris Dancers to Predict Strength of Next Earthquake! The last two earthquakes felt in Mudville were predicted by dancers of the **Movers and Shakers Morris** (CA), who will be dancing in Epicenter Square on May 1. Past experience has led local emergency agencies to issue a standby notice.

This is still unofficial, but Madonna has asked **Bluemont Morris** (VA) (men only) to be the warm-up act on her next world tour. The tour theme has yet to be announced. Watch *Variety* for further details.

Who Are Those Belled Men?

In *Going to the Dogs*, Holly Winter, columnist for Dog's Life and malamute owner, meets morris men on Brattle Square in Cambridge, MA.

On page 170, Susan Conant give a portrayal of morris men through her heroine's eyes.

Does anyone recognize the team?

Twentieth Anniversaries

Greenwich Morris Men (NY) are finalizing their plans for their 20th anniversary reunion weekend, May 14 and 15. If any alumni do not know what is going to happen, please contact Peter Dunleavy, 35-06 88th Street, Apt 4D, Jackson Height, NY, 11372, 718/478-7743.

Ring o' Bells (NY) celebrated their 20th anniversary by dancing in the dawn on May Day with plenty of past and present members and friends from other teams.

Village Green Morris (MB) is celebrating its twentieth anniversary year quietly due to job pressures and individual travel. We still have a full schedule of club performances — including one for the local chapter of the English Speaking Union. It will be hard to resist introducing ourselves in French. Incidentally, one of our current members founded the team, and several of us joined early on.

Hats off to **Minnesota Traditional Morris** (MN), also celebrating 20 years!

Hollytree (BC) is 20 years old this year - the oldest team (in both senses of the word, probably!) both on the West Coast and across Canada. Hollytree got its start in early 1974 as a men's team, the Victoria Morris Men, and drifted through several years of taped music and inspired guesses about dance interpretation, punctuated by flurries of practice and enthusiasm due to performances in 1976 at the Montreal Olympics.

The name was changed to Hollytree Morris in 1980, the same year women, who had been dancing as "fill-ins," became "official" members of the team. Because the women danced in different kit in the same set, Hollytree gave new meaning to the phrase "mixed side!" It wasn't until 1984 that the women adopted the men's kit.

A breakaway occurred in 1987, creating Island Thyme Morris Dancers and Not for Joes. We all get together fairly regularly, including dancing the sun up every May Day.

Hollytree has bounced from tradition to tradition over the years, currently settling on Adderbury and Bampton with some garland dancing. The most amazing thing about our team (which currently boasts about 16 dancers and three musicians) is that several of the original members are still dancing with us, including David (our founder), Valin, Pauline, Bonnie, Christine, and the redoubtable Fred, who at 68 still cuts a graceful hook-leg, and whose stick clashing is truly terrifying!

We dance in the best climate in Canada. If any team out there needs a holiday, be in touch. We'll throw a party, work out a tour, and make you welcome. In the meantime, next time you have a party, raise a toast to Hollytree Morris, 20 years and counting!

Attention Mummers!

We have noticed a few teams listed in the American Morris Directory that do mumming as well as some sort of dance, and one other team of mummers first and foremost. The number of these mummers seems small enough that conducting a formal, in-depth, and rather impersonal survey seems a little extreme, but we're interested in knowing what is going on out there.

Here at the **Ritual Drama Team** (MN), we have a saying, "If you don't take it door-to-door, it isn't really mumming." We are curious to discover if there are mummers on this continent other than ourselves who take their plays from door to door, on seasonal house visits. If so, we would like to hear from you. Does your team go only where you are invited, or to people you know, or do you ring the door bells of total strangers as well? Whichever, we'd like to hear from you as well. What are the venues of your performances?

We'd also like to hear about details of your costumes or disguises, and rhymes or plays that you use. What dates, occasions, and events are graced by your appearance? We'd love to hear any stories or anecdotes that you'd like to share with us.

Please address any responses or questions about this inquiry to:

Rudd Rayfield
The Ritual Drama Team
3040 10th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55407
612/822-5477



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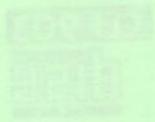
AMERICAN MORRIS

NEWSLETTER

c/o Sally Lackman
10408 Inwood Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20902



From left to right:
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Over the
weight

An exciting new
class of men's
and women's
clothing.

John Deery
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Tom Hinson
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Jim Morrison
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Robert Jago
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