



The roots of Morris dancing

Since prehistoric times, dancing has played an important role in those rituals designed to celebrate the rebirth of spring, and ensure the fertility of flock and field. We like to think that English Morris dancing has its roots in such pagan practices, though the earliest documentary evidence dates back only to the time of the first Tudor kings. The origin of the word "Morris" is subject to much debate. There is an 11th century church with a depiction of what is thought to be a Morris dancer.

During later centuries, the Morris became an integral part of the seasonal round, with many villages, especially in the Cotswolds, having their own side with its unique tradition. By the end of the 19th century, however, the custom had largely died out and been forgotten.

The present revival may be traced back to this period, when collectors such as Cecil Sharp were inspired to gather information from surviving dancers and musicians. Their work forms the basis of much of the dancing seen today. Some teams, such as Bampton in Oxfordshire, have a tradition unbroken for centuries.

The Chingford Morrismen

Our own tradition is less ancient. The Chingford Morrismen first danced out in 1962. Our own dances began to be developed soon after that, and we perform these almost exclusively. They are in the Cotswold style - six dancers to a set, using wooden sticks or handkerchiefs.

In addition to the dancers, you may see two further characters: The Fool, who adds an element of fun and encourages audience participation, whilst the ram "Goldenballs" is our symbolic beast, personifying the fertility aspect of the dance.

We also perform mixed and ladies clog dances from the north-west of England. These are based on dances from Gala Days and Rushbearing ceremonies in the cotton-mill towns, where clogs were worn for work.

The Chingford dancers can be recognised by the colours of red, yellow and green. Our badge is adapted from the old Chingford Borough arms, with elements representing Epping Forest, the "mighty" River Ching, and the county of Essex.

Most of our performances take place during the summer, at public houses, fetes and festivals. We are also to be seen at other times, notably every Boxing Day - where you can experience an original and topical "Mummers" play in Waltham Abbey, and High Beech in Epping Forest.

How you can help

You may participate in this tradition, and ensure your own good luck by contributing to our collecting tin.

We hope that you have enjoyed watching us, and if you would like to know more about "Morris", or would like to see us again, please contact our "Bagman" (details below).

We especially welcome new musicians and dancers, whether experienced or beginner, to help us to keep this unique English tradition alive.

We practise on Monday evenings during school terms at:- All Saints Church Hall, Church Avenue, Highams Park, E.4.

CONTACT:- The Bagman (Club Secretary)
Andrew Walton
3 Willow Path
Waltham Abbey
Essex
EN9 3ER
07957 372755

Please visit our web site at
<http://chingfordmorris.org.uk>

If you are interested in joining in please pass on your contact details to any member of the team.

Name: _____
Telephone: _____
Email: _____

Where to see us in 2010

These are where we are booked to appear

Some of them may change, so do please check before travelling.

For the latest information please see our website:
<http://chingfordmorris.org.uk>

Friday 23rd April, St George's Day

The George, Woodford, 8:30pm

The Angel, Waltham Abbey, 9:30pm

Saturday 1st May, May Day Tour

The Mole Trap, Tawney Common, Epping, 12 noon

Theydon Oak, Stonards Hill, Epping, 1pm

The Forest Gate Inn, Bell Common, Epping, 2pm

Monday 3rd May, Bank Holiday Tour

Crown & Crooked Billet, Woodford Green, 1pm

Merry Fiddlers, Fiddlers Hamlet, Epping, 2:30pm

Monday 24th May, Woodford Green

The Travellers Friend, High Road, 8:30pm

Monday 14th June, Chingford

The Queen Elizabeth, Forest Side, 8:30pm

Friday 18th - Sunday 20th June

Grenoside weekend, Yorkshire

Monday 28th June, Chingford

The Station House, Station Road, 8:30pm

Monday 12th July, Woodford Green

The Cricketers, High Road, 8:30pm

Thursday 15th - Monday 19th July

Castellans Folk Sommer, Germany

Sunday 3rd October, Tenterden, Kent

Tenterden Folk Festival, 10am

Sunday 26th December, Boxing Day Tour

The Angel, Waltham Abbey, 12 noon

The Welsh Harp, Waltham Abbey, 12:45pm

The Duke of Wellington, High Beach, 1:30pm



Chingford Morrismen



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