

Raggle Taggle

AUSTRALIAN MORRIS



December 2011

Contents



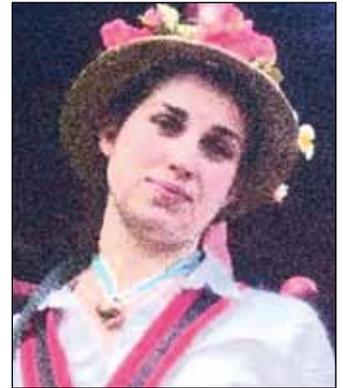
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SQUIRE'S REPORT

Finally 2011 is over!

Of the many projects that were started this year, perhaps the one that gave me the most pleasure was this newsletter. Now we have completed a full cycle, I look forward to welcoming new volunteers Emma, Lisa and Ken to the editorial team in 2012 and seeing this humble publication continue to flourish. This last edition of 2011 is short, perfect for reading on your holidays. (I am sure you all read every edition end to end!)



In other news, our group application has once again been accepted by the NFF and we're continuing work on updating the Constitution and the website.

Thank you all for a fantastic year, expect our next missive early March 2012!

Keep safe, have fun

Stephanie Swanson
Squire, AMR

GENERAL NOTICE

The Squire will be studying overseas for the duration of January. This is an official notice that all duties have been delegated to the Bag for this month.



Editors • Steph Swanson, scutarius et scholastics • Nat Rolfe, the Lady Bag • Kim Brown, Champion • **Layout** • Kim Brown, AMAZING • **Cover Image** • Kim Brown • **Contributors** • Christian 'Wandering' Reynolds • Nat James, the First Dragon • Justin Presser, Brandragon Historian • Sean Arthur, Morris Philosopher • Cimi, trickster • John Milce, AMR Historian • Roger Bux, Poet Laureate • **Side Reports** • Lisa Kenny, Belswagger • Kim Brown, Hedgemonkey • Rachael Neild, Hot For Joe • Justin Presser & Di James, Brandragon • Steven Mansfield, Perth Morris Men •

BAGMAN'S REPORT

I still can't believe 2011 is nearly over! Since my last report I've been busy with quite a few things - continuing the constitution review, ensuring our public liability insurance will continue for the next year, clarifying insurance questions and looking at bank account options for the AMR. Thank you very much to all of the Bags who have responded, I very much appreciate it!

Of course Brandragon also had their Ale and celebrated their 10th birthday, which also kept me on my toes! But it was a great success, and it was great to see so many different faces. I especially enjoyed having some of the Lancashire Witches there - massed Lancaster for what I think was 18 was so much fun to watch, and massed Aldgate Rant for 16 was a blast! More massed North-West, I say!

On the agenda for the next little while is preparations for the NFF and finalising the constitution for the AGM - if you haven't mosed over to take a look and comment, please do! The address is <http://aumorris.wordpress.com/2011/07/21/introduction/>

That's all from me for now!
Have a safe and fun summer!



Natalie Rolfe
Bag, AMR

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Belswagger, after 17 years, has a new Squire!
Congratulations to Lisa Kennedy for taking on this position.

The Lancashire Witches are dancing again! The Exec was very pleased to confirm their membership of the AMR in late November.

Di Davies of the Jolley Hatters has gone sailing around the Southern Ocean to the Kerguelen Islands with a French expedition. You can follow her adventures and see a nice picture of her by going to:
www.climatefutures.mq.edu.au/keops2-mission/
and then following the appropriate links

BIRTHS...

Gwendolyn Coraline Alcorn, was born 10:30am 14th October weighing 3kg. Born to Angela Alcorn, formerly of the Lancashire Witches.



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ABBOTS BROMLEY

THE HORN DANCE

On the eleventh of September, 2011, I found myself at my uncle's house in Bridgport, Shropshire, UK. My uncle (well second cousin to be precise) knew that I (like him) had a bit of a fascination with the Morris and folk dance. Over dinner he and his partner surprised me by telling me that the next day the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance was going to be danced, and if I would like to go with them to this once a year event. Needless to say I jumped at the chance!

So waking up at 5am and after stuffing two pieces of hot toast into my mouth, I was lodged myself into the back of a full Volvo for the two and a half hour drive to Abbots Bromley. By 7:45am the sun had risen and the storm from the night had ceased, we parked and made our way to the local church for the blessing and the beginning of the dance at 8am. There was a moments silence for a member of the dance side who had passed during the year from cancer and then the all moved outside to dance. The music struck up (one piano accordion and one melodeon) and they were off. Such a simple dance, but done with passion and very tight and hypnotic- though if it was not done on this one day with no context it could be seen as quite dreary, as (in my humble opinion) it did not have the flash or crowd pleasing nature of Cotswold, Border or Northwest, but then again the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance is not trying to be these things.

There were six horns; three white, three dark. Carried on the shoulders (all but the youngest bearer – who was – late teens had a particular method of holding them with a bit of a jaunt slinging action, one shoulder preferred over the other. The two lines of the set were split along the white/ dark lines (symbolism?). It was interesting to note that the white bearers were the younger and the dark the older dancers, this could also be for the practical reason that the whites went about the dark horns in the 'clash'/crossing/by the right, Thus the younger dancers had more work to do. The set of eight was



completed by a hobby hoss and a page boy (aged 7 or 8) with a bow/arrow which he struck/fired on the beat, They were the last in the set.

You could observe that there were blood relationships amongst the dancers and also they had danced for a long time together... they had that groove. One funny instance was the oldest dancer commenting to the youngest horn bearer mid dance "don't look so stressed and intense, you will survive!" in a patronly tone.

The dancers were all in a kit of flat caps n greenish yellow; doublets in either a faded red or green with sleeves in the contrasting colour; breeches of green with oak leaf pattern; green football socks and black school shoes. Simple but effective. Some wore a small badge or ribbon on their doublet but I could not make out what they were for besides the "Abbots Bromley Horn Dance" badge. They were also accompanied by fund collectors in kit also, and fool in faded red and yellow kit. This personalisation went a bit further with one of the dancers as he had a broken finger in a blue plaster splint, along with the digital watches on the arms this provided anachronistic element. By 10 am (the first stop of the walk around the route), we were faltering and so repaired back to the centre of AB for a cup of tea and a sandwich at the church hall. After awhile longer in Abbots Bromley with the dancers (we chickened out before they danced to the great hall) we headed off.

In the car on the way home we managed to name the tunes played as: Merrily danced the Quakers wife; Isle of Capri, the Runaway Train; with a Napsack on my Back; Cock of the North and possibly



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



the Teddy Bears Picnic featured also. An interesting tune selection. My aunt started to sing the words to cock of the north "We keep chickens in our back garden, and feed them on Indian corn. Some lay Bricks (Chicks?-CR) some lay eggs, and some lay nothin' at all.



Cock a doodle, I'm the cock of the north, cock a doodle, that's what they sing in the north"...

This ditty was stuck in my head the entire ride home.

Christain Reynolds

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Uppa da Grand Canal
VENEZIA

Caro Snr Gerram

I hear that a the Morris Ringo has the lydies to play a for them I am writing to ask a you if my band of lovely lydies can come to the jig a jig workshop As you can see we have all our own traditionale instrumentoes As we are all much younger than your morris men I hope you will treat us with favore

Con affetto

Donatella



SIDE REPORTS

QUEENSLAND

Belswagger

Lisa Kenny, Squire

Belwagger has had a busy few months! On 24 September 2011 we held our 21st birthday Ale in Brisbane and Toowoomba. We had a great turn out and has some of the original side members come along. I also jiggged for my patch, doing Bampton Princess Royal. Shortly after, on the same evening, obtaining the honour of Squire. Gerry Amos was our previous Squire and had done the job well for 17 years! I want to thank him for all of his years of hard work and time and effort he's put into making Belswagger what it is today.

A couple of weeks after that, we held a micro ale and farewell for one of best dancers, Delia Hamwood is leaving us to dance with the morris in England! She will be sorely missed and hopefully she'll return to us in a few years and be able to show us all some new tricks from the old country.

The micro ale saw two of our other long term members jiggging for their patch, Barney Bishop, doing a Glorishears Jig and Tasha Erker doing Bucknell Bonnets so Blue. Congratulations to Barney & Tash!

Now we're preparing ourselves for another year of Woodford, cleaning off the wellies and practicing hard and looking forward to some fun gigs in 2012.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Hedgemonkey

Kim Brown, Foreman

A busy time for the Hedgies this time round. Our three newbies, Ati, Christian and Paul, after the hard slog of training (which they managed to complete in record time!) finally made their debut footup at the The Port Festival in Port Adelaide. We gave them a pre-debut footup at the Rob Roy pub a couple of nights before just to get them used to dancing out. Lisa, from The Hofers, has also joined our musos as drummer and is doing really well. And they're all good fun.

Nervous as they were, on the day, they did amazingly well for the relatively short time since they started practice. They danced like old hands! We were all so impressed at how well they've come along ...we shouted them a drink. The pic tells it like it was. We shared the day with The Hofers, as we like to do, even though we have a few cross-siders which makes for a bit of fun planning the sets. And the crowd cheered for more!

Then came the Fleurieu Folk Festival, a great weekend with the Adelaide Men dancing in the Saturday and us lot and Hofers on the



Sunday. Again the new kids excelled themselves. Welcome to the side, guys, you've done very well! It's a great side to be in.

But alas, the sad news is that Cherie has left us, and the state, to take up a teaching job in country Victoria. Though she's only been with us for almost 3 years, she's managed to bring so much to the side. We'll miss Cherie but wish her well on her new path and hopefully she'll spread her new-found Morris ethic further afield.

Christian is going to Sydney on a study transfer for some months and we'll miss his cheery demeanour ...but he'll be back! Lookout Sydney!

SIDE REPORTS

Hot For Joe

Rachael Neild

It's been a big year for Hot for Joe, and it isn't over yet, with our final foot-up for the year at the Lobethal Christmas Pageant in the Adelaide Hills on 23 December. This year has seen big changes, with a new Squire and Foreman, new dancers, great foot-ups and lots of plans for the future.

We have done several busking spots around Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills (quite successful they were too!). In October we joined Hedgemonkey Morris and danced at the Port Festival in Port Adelaide and also at the Fleurieu Folk Festival, a great South Australian festival that we are proud to have performed at for the past several years. A small contingent of us managed to make it to the recent Brandragon Steam Ale, which we thoroughly enjoyed.

This year we have had to say goodbye or au revoir to a number of dancers who have travelled overseas or have been significantly injured – though we hope we will see them back when they are better! We have been lucky enough to welcome Julia to the team, who has a ridiculously good memory for dance figures. Evie, our youngest ever dancer, did a marvellous job at her first official foot-up at the recent Spiral Dance Midsummer Fey Ball.



We are looking forward to lots more dancing in the New Year, especially the English Ale, which will be held in May. Planning is already underway, and further information will be provided to the morris community shortly – it would be fantastic to see lots of you there in 2012.

VICTORIA

Brandragon North-West Clog Morris

Justin Presser, Squire

Since our last update in July the Dragons have been keeping busy. In our extended hibernation period we have been focusing on learning new dances and getting more of the side up to speed with the stepping routine.

Euroa

Our first foot-up after winter was the Euroa's wool week celebrations. After "entertaining" the locals the night before with ukulele playing and singing we arose bright and early to join the locals in their yearly parade. Although a quieter affair this year without the Star Wars cosplayers we put on a good show and were appreciated by the town. We had great pleasure dancing Churchtown to '100 pipers' played by the Benalla Caledonian Pipe Band and the mild weather made it a pleasant gig.

Beechworth Celtic Festival

A week later we were heading up the Hume again, this time heading for Beechworth. It can be hard to find a place where you can hear your own musos when you are surrounded by pipe bands although, when it got too much, many of the band were obliging to requests for '100 pipers' for Churchtown or 'The Barren Rocks of Aden', which we found fits Black Rod quite nicely. Many of the punters seemed to be drawn to this peculiarly non-celtic part of the festival. We were

greeted with stories from those who had seen the Morris before and many questions from those who had not. We ran into an old muso of the Sydney Morris men and a gentleman whose relative wrote a short history on Morris dancing. Although we were all exhausted by the end of the two days I think we had a great time.

The highlights for me were: discovering that Black Rod fits to the tune of The Barren Rocks of Aden; watching drum-offs between the various pipe band members in the pubs on Saturday night; doing an impromptu foot-up of Black Rod to The Barren Rocks of Aden in the wee hours of the morn with few members of the City of Melbourne Highland Pipe Band accompanying and the rest of band trying to dance along (or just laugh); dancing Black Rod to the full forces of City of Melbourne Highland Pipe Band the next morning; dancing Church Town to the full forces of the Golden City Pipe Band from Bendigo; meeting Lindsay's children in Scottie dog form.

Thanks to all the Raven who came along and made sure that the gig was possible and special thanks go to Grahame for teaching Chook Chasing to the locals on Sunday.

Mansfield Folk Dancing Festival

2 weeks later we were all heading up to Mansfield for the Mansfield Folk Dancing Festival. This festival was in fact a single stage performance made up of dances performed by a number of folk dance

SIDE REPORTS

groups around Melbourne. We performed a 7 minute spot consisting of Gisbourne followed by Derby Garland which went of well despite the limitations of the stage. One of the daughters of the Ukrainian dancers, they do something not dissimilar to Cossack dancing, said she really liked our performance which I took as a great compliment. The performance concluded with a dance made up from steps from all the dance traditions in the performance. After all the rehearsal we put in we had most of the group ranting like pros. It being a staged performance we regreffully did not have an opportunity to see the other groups perform. We hope to rectify this in the coming year.

Brandragon's 10th Birthday Steam Ale

Friday night.... Before the Ale started, the car carrying the bulk of the catering broke down and - shock, horror - the car carrying the beer kegs went into a ditch on a very narrow road. In typical Dragon fashion, the food was fine, the beer was rescued (never mind the car) and the musos

were playing while everyone settled in to the accommodation and settled down to socializing, drinking and dancing. Oh, and it started to rain - heavily.

Saturday.... We danced on the platform at Belgrave in the rain while waiting for Puffing Billy, then thoroughly enjoyed the steam train ride, in the rain. Singing, laughter and music in the little open carriages, dancing on the platform at several stops and stunning rainforest views,

more than made up for the dampness. Lunch was served and cleared at the Paradise Hotel just in time for a long break in the clouds and we danced for 2 hours on the deck, cheered on by an appreciative audience. Several past Dragons had joined us for the train ride and it was grand to have them back in a set, dancing again. The rain started again as we waited for our little steam engine to take us back to Belgrave, where we said goodbye to 2 of the past Dragons and their families and returned to our camp site for more food, music and dancing.

The Dragon Catering Corp provided a great feast as usual and there was way too much booze, but undaunted, the dancing got underway again and our tenth birthday went off with much stomping clashing and jingling, and quite a bit of drinking singing and story telling. It rained all night.

Sunday.... More great food for breakfast, followed by Rapper and Cotswold workshops before most of the group headed to Belgrave for lunch and farewells. It stopped raining. Over 50 people attended from 4 states representing 8 sides. Those who rate Ale success by the amount of dancing were satisfied and said so, no-one complained about the singing, the food or accommodation and everyone said the rain had not spoiled their fun. Our thanks to everyone who attended and made our birthday a great celebration



SIDE REPORTS

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Perth Morris Men

Steven Mansfield, Squire

We have danced out a further six times since the Ale weekend back in August. We have done a couple of "Little Creatures" appearances, a private party, Kalamunda Farmers Markets, Government House and Subiaco. Whilst at Kalamunda we also enlisted the services of visiting Kennet Morris man Brian Jones who was on holiday at the time (see attached.). Colleen Talbot and Rosie Fleay also helped out with the music. It was also great to return to Government House (see also attached). The Perth Morris Men normally dance there twice a year at their open days. This year with a change of Governor, CHOGM and other issues, the Open Day (& associated invite) didn't happen until November. This time of year it is tempting to think back on the calendar year that is drawing to an end. Yes I know it is not the end of the Morris year but anyway, 2011 has been a good one for Perth Morris. It has been even busier than last year and the highlight for us has got to be the visit by the Adelaide Morris Men and the associated events of that particular weekend.

It was also great to have a number, albeit small, of Perth Morris Men in Canberra for the National Folk Festival this year.

We have also had a net increase in numbers, not so many as first thought since a number of newcomers haven't stayed for one reason or another but Dan Bowes (ex Somerset – Wyvern Jubilee) keeps on coming back for more and ex Adelaide Morris man Brian Smith assures me he will make a return in the new year.



The future looks reasonably rosy with three (paid) bookings for next year already. We are also planning a Morris gathering down South in the Dunsborough – Margaret River area early in the New Year that will entail some dancing at various boutique breweries etc. Anyway, on behalf of the Perth Morris Men I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Did You Know...?

That when the AMR was founded, there was no Bag? This position was added in later years.

A WORD

FROM BRANDRAGON'S FOUNDER

I founded Brandragon because I wanted to dance. Having started out in Adelaide with the Lancashire Witches I was disappointed to hear that Plenty had just wrapped up when I arrived in Melbourne. 6 frustrated years later I form Brandragon and asked a few fiends if they'd have a go at Morris dancing. Those 3 who answered the call danced out with Tylers Oz at Kellybrook winery before they'd ever seen Morris live. 2 went on to be Squires of Brandragon, 2 have been Fore, and 2 have been AMR execs.

We had our first Dragons practice straight after that Kellybrook weekend, and with the help of Britannia and the Brandon Hotel (who we are named after) and a bunch of Melbourne dancers who appeared out of the woodwork (Marilla, Kathy, Kath B, Kirsty I'm thinking of you) we started learning dances, deciding on Kit, naming the side and all that stuff.

I said I wanted a committee based side, where everyone contributed ideas, opinions and made decisions together. Well the first 2 decisions the side ever made over kit and name they all voted against me. Now Brandragon's wilfulness is now quite well known. Careful what you wish for...

Over the last 10 years Brandragon has taken on it's own character, dance style and social life, and I couldn't be happier or prouder of

what we've become. We not only dance Morris but members of the Dragon do so many varieties of dance it's going to take me another 10 years to learn them all. We love cooking and eating and are damn good at both, and outside of dance I think its the most talked about topic at practise.

It's the community aspect of Brandragon that I never expected when I decided to form a side. I've heard Dragons say that Brandragon is their family, community and exercise all in one. We have members sharing houses, offices and of course recipes! When you connect us up to the

larger Australian Morris community it can be quite overwhelming (and LOUD!), as our Steam Ale and 10th birthday celebration just proved.

Nat James,
Brandragon Founder



NEWS FROM THE MOTHER COUNTRY

IT'S GOT BELLS ON

'Strictly'; 'Britain 's Got Talent'; 'So You Think You Can Dance'... there is extraordinary enthusiasm for dance in many forms. But there's one dance that never gets featured, and its England's own - the Morris.

Stewart Lee puts this to rights in 'It's Got Bells On' and the usual scornful jibes (such as, "There's a morris side crossing the road; which do you run over, the dancers or the accordion player? The accordionist, because you should always put business before pleasure") won't appear because though he's a comedian Stewart is an enthusiast for English traditional music and dance. This is the stand up who had the Black Swan Rappers (dancers not MCs) open for him at a gig in Yorkshire, and the Forest of Dean Morris Men at his wedding reception.

A couple of years back even The Morris Ring said the tradition would have come to an end in 20 years because no young people were joining. But Stewart discovers that the best young

folk musicians, such as Jim Moray, Tim van Eyken and Laurel Swift all dance and all develop the form, that hip hop and morris merge in the work of The Demon Barbers and that contemporary choreographers are turning to the tradition. When danced by athletic young men, or women such as the Belles of London City (in their corsets) the morris becomes as sexy as salsa, as fearsome as flamenco.



Stewart hears from Ashley Hutchings and John Kirkpatrick, who gave a boost to the revival in the 1970s with classic albums 'Morris On' and 'Battle of the Field', when morris went electric. There is lots of fantastic music, including some from William Kimber, from whom Cecil Sharp collected his first morris tunes in 1899. All this, and a quick glance at rapper and clog dancing, too.

ANOTHER REASON NOT TO DANCE FLUFFY MORRIS?

ALL IN STEP MORRIS MUMS! How seven women from one troupe all got pregnant at the same time.

Some say morris dancing has its origins in a pagan fertility rite.

There's no evidence for this, but doubters might want to take a look at the Hagfold Morris troupe.

In a curious coincidence, half the senior members all became pregnant within weeks of each other. Even more curiouser, when the babies came along, they were all girls. Now the youngest has been born, the new mothers are planning a toddler troupe.

All the babies have been issued with bibs proclaiming 'Hagfold Baby Troupe 2015, born to be a winner'.

Wendy Lewis, founder member of the group in Atherton, Greater Manchester, said: 'We have 32 girls over the age of 18 and it's inevitable girls will get pregnant, but never have I had seven pregnant at the same time and then to have seven baby girls born is incredible.'

Morris dancing is thought to date back to medieval Spain, where it was performed to celebrate driving the Moors out, hence the term 'Moorish dancing'. It is said to have arrived in England in the late 15th century and is now enjoyed worldwide by both men and women.

Mrs Lewis added: 'This year has been a hard journey with seven young ladies all pregnant at the same time, each having a girl. We christened them the "Yummy Mummies".'

'All the girls have been back at dancing within six weeks, and can't wait for the little ones to dance in the future.'

The group consists of more than 100 girls who practise every Monday and Wednesday at the local community centre.



Mrs Lewis said: 'It's a great, disciplined, healthy hobby and keeps the youngsters off the streets and out of trouble.'

'We've had a successful season taking just short of a 100 wins, the under-sixes and under-nines never lost a competition and we all won numerous championships.'

'The girls over 18 entered two teams to compete at a seniors challenge held in the Tower Ballroom Blackpool and came away with a silver and bronze medal, competing with 35 other teams from the North.'



NEWS FROM THE MOTHER COUNTRY

FROM THE DAILY MAIL - UK

UNLIKELY ANARCHISTS: Morris-dancing 'flash mobs' to protest against Olympics snub... but won't we hear them coming with all those bells?

Olympics chiefs are spending millions to combat international terrorists, anti-capitalist activists and eco-warriors at next year's London Games.

But there's one group of troublemakers they have not prepared for: irate morris dancers.

Practitioners of the centuries-old folk tradition are furious they have been overlooked for the opening ceremony, and are planning direct action to showcase their talents.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2072583/Unlikely-anarchists-Morris-dancing-flash-mobs-protest-Olympics-snob.html>

They intend to organise 'flash mobs', who will mingle with crowds at the Games and, on cue, launch into apparently spontaneous demonstrations of their skills. They also plan similar stunts along the procession route of the Olympic torch.

The morris men say they feel angry and betrayed by ceremony organisers who want to present a more contemporary image of Britain to the worldwide TV audience of up to four billion.

Barry Goodman, president of the Morris Federation, said: 'The feeling among morris dancers is fury.'

'It's appalling. Those running the Olympics don't want to be involved in morris dance. Although making encouraging noises, there has been no word from Olympic organisers inviting morris teams to take part.'

'There are some very fine young teams whose talent and spectacle would amaze any audience, particularly a worldwide TV one. The opening ceremonies should celebrate the diversity of cultures in this wonderfully multicultural country of ours – but a place should be reserved for our national dance.'

The Olympics have traditionally been an opportunity for the host nation to showcase its national culture, with the opening ceremony of the Beijing Games featuring traditional dragon dancers.

But Britain's Olympics chiefs seem to regard morris dancing as a joke. When Sebastian Coe was asked in 2008 what London's opening ceremony could possibly offer to compete with the awesome spectacle in Beijing, he quipped: 'Five thousand morris dancers.'

The opening ceremony will be masterminded by Danny Boyle, director of *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Trainspotting*. He has said he wants to 're-think' tradition using British pop and rock culture and 'bits of British films'.

When asked by *The Mail on Sunday* whether morris dances would be included in the ceremony, an Olympics spokesman simply laughed. He added: 'The artistic content of the ceremony is decided



by the artistic director. That's why we have taken on an Oscar-winning director who is one of the UK's leading creatives. We will talk about some of the themes of the ceremony next year.'

Peter Halfpenny, squire of the Morris Ring, has written: 'They appear to be looking for youth involvement in particular, with a Hollywood shine on proceedings.'

'There seems to be little interest in indigenous folk culture for the first time ever in the history of the Olympics. Morris leaders have attended every national meeting of perceived worth and been given no indication of interest. Lord Coe's "5,000 morris dancers" was froth and spin with no expectation of fruition.'

He held out little hope of morris dancing making the closing ceremony, either, saying of the directors of that event: 'Their background is generally pop music, having produced Take That's comeback shows, Pet Shop Boys and Lady Gaga. We will be on their list of who to call but I suspect we shall be standing by a silent phone.'

Olympics programme adviser Francesca Canty did meet morris-dancing representatives in January 2010, when she told them it was too soon to give any assurances. However, the morris men say they have had no response to subsequent letters and emails.

Paul Reece, Olympics liaison officer for Britain's morris dancers, has now suggested the flash mobs. He told *The Mail on Sunday*: 'We will get together and launch these impromptu events. We want to put our indigenous culture on the map.'

Flash mobbing would entail dancers secreting themselves in a crowd, then converging into a band and doing a jig, he said.

Olympic rules stipulate that the opening ceremony must include welcoming of the head of state, a parade of athletes, speeches and the playing of oaths and raising of flags and lighting of the Olympic torch. But beyond that Mr Boyle can showcase UK culture however he sees fit.

Morris dancing began in England about 600 years ago, though its exact origins are surrounded in mystery.

NOW WE ARE 10

BRANDRAGON

It has been a busy 10 years. We have danced at ales, weddings, namegivings, hand fastings, house warmings, festivals, fairs and fetes. We also have managed to dance at one memorable 21st.

Many people have made Brandragon the fun and brilliant group to dance

with over these last 10 years.

- 2001** Amy Dixon
Carl Rawson
Claire Marks Fore 2006-2007
David Purdue (AMR Squire 2006-2008)
Di James Bag 2003-2007, 2008-2009
Joint Fore 2009-2011 (AMR Bag 2004-2007)
Gail Miller Bag 2002-2003 Squire 2003-2004
(AMR Squire 2004-2006)
Jan Mattingley
Justin Presser Squire 2009-incumbent
Kath Brophy (AMR Bag 2008-2009)
Kathy Gausden Bag 2001-2002 Squire 2002-2003
Katrina Mattingley
Kirsty Greenwood Joint Fore 2007-2009
Lorrilee Ivamy
Marilla Cooper Fore 2001-2005
Mimi Farrar-Dixon
Nat James Squire 2001-2002
Joint Fore 2007-2009
Neil Barker
Nigel Edwards
Norm Ellis (Official Groupie)
Penny Burt
Richard Greenwood
Sean Jennings Squire 2004-2006
Joint Fore 2009- (AMR Bag 2007-2008)
Tania Seigemund Squire 2006-2008
Bag 2011-incumbent
- 2003** George Meirosu
Andrew Pass
- 2004** Nigel Williams
Barbara Rankenhohn
Wayne Burt
- 2005** Lindsay Hamilton
- 2006** Danika Hadgraft Joint Fore 2011-incumbent

Nikki Roberts

Stephanie Swanson Baggette 2006-07, Bag 2007-2008,
Squire 2008-2010 (AMR Squire
2010-incumbent)

Daniel Smith

Barry Simpson

2007 Bree Hoffrichter

Rachel Beck

2008 Nat Rolfe Bag 2009-2011
(AMR Bag 2011-incumbent)

2009 Vivien Lowe

Bill Singleton

2010 Julie McKay

2011 Tim Morrissey

Thanks to you all. Without you the last 10 years would not have been possible.

Thanks to all those who have invited us to a gig, an ale or a festival, who have stepped in to fill a gap in a set and who have given us an opportunity to do what we like best, to dance.

And a big thank you to all the musos too numerous to list here who have put down pints, interrupted conversations, or stopped a tune to an entreating dragon's request of "Can we have bright and camp?" or "Do you know Portsmouth?" or "Do you know the one that goes um ..." and all those who have joined in the merry morris orchestra to help us lift our knees and stomp our feet. Without you we would not have had half as much fun.

Justin Presser, Brandragon Squire



MORRIS SPIRIT

When I was a young morris dancer and still a bit wet behind the ball pads, I used to hear quite a lot about a concept known as “Morris Spirit” (MS). You don’t hear much about MS nowadays, and little wonder. It was always a vaporous construct. Although once mentioned frequently, it was usually heard both in the pejorative and in the negative. One did not boast of having MS oneself, one complained that others possibly DID not have it. Or sometimes when a MS situation demanded it, MS might be found lacking. So what is MS? To paraphrase the lawyer, Dennis Denuto, from the movie “The Castle”, Morris Spirit is a vibe... its Mabo... its the constitution, etc... That is the closest one could ever come to grips with the bastard.

Years pass and now in my morris dotage, I still struggle with MS as an idea. I recognise that this is probably a pointless exercise given that the entire morris world seems to chug along just nicely without even being aware of MS. Or, if they are aware of the idea, its like being aware of electrons, protons and neutrons as a valid scientific theory, but accepting that the coffee table seems solid enough without the little blighters making themselves visible buzzing about to and fro.

Morris spirit, huh? As a good (former) catholic I understand that morris spirit is just as impenetrable as the Holy Spirit. No tongues of flame hovering over the Perth Morris Men. No bursts of joyous rapture erupting from Hedgemonkey - well, not without the aid of a whole lot of alcoholic spirit. What does it all mean anyway? This is a question I used to ask a lot, mostly of myself. With close examination what happens is that one soon begins to disappear down the rabbit hole of fractured definitions. Whoever, for instance, has pondered about the meaning of “mateship” or what it means to be “Australian”, will begin to get the idea. Like MS, these concepts are sometimes easier to define in the negative. As in, “punching ethnics on Sydney beaches” is so “un-Australian”. That’s good to know! So is being Australian should be defined as one who does not criminally assault minorities? Kinda limiting, ain’t it?

For a while I settled on a wishy-washy, yet, non-threatening set of



Is the Morris Spirit here?



Could it be here?

definitions. MS meant tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion - you know - the Hawk-Keating coda as it applied to multiculturalism. But this is Morris Dancing, not Buddhism (or the centre-left faction of the Labor party). Morris Dancers are individuals, sometimes obnoxious, often self-centred, frequently inebriated and usually display a tendency towards the cynical. In short, typical Morris Dancers – nope, not strong enough - GOOD Morris Dancers are a complex bag of conflicting positive and negative emotive qualities, particularly about their art. The Dalai Lama would never make a good Morris dancer, or perhaps, if he wanted to, he should lose the robe and learn to drink cider. Actually, the Dalai Lama has got a bit of Morris attitude going for him, so maybe he’s not a complete write-off just yet?

So, is “Morris Spirit” an actual thingamee, or not? Does the absence of Morris Spirit mean anything, or is all a cuddly new-age wank? The thing is... I can actually feel it! I really feel Morris Spirit, man, and it’s something. This bums me out no end and has confused me now for a couple of decades. Every nerve, every fibre in my body tells me that it is pure unadulterated codswallop... yet it’s there. I’ve seen it out of the periphery of my vision for years like an old Victorian ghost. If you strain to see it, it vanishes, or your rational self gives you a face palm. Also, you’ve seen it too, dear reader, we all have! You might not have a name for it, that inspired “something”, but you’ve felt it too. In the year of Our Lord, 2009, I’m pretty sure I at last got to the bottom of that wispy vaporous bastard, this Morris Spirit. And its not what I imagined it to be.

In 2009, my wife, Andrea and I visited the UK and I had the good fortune to hook up with an English Morris side and dance a few dances with them. Nothing startling in that, Australians have been doing this for years. It wasn’t the fact that I danced with an English side that gave me insight into this Morris Spirit thing, well not in and/or of itself. As dancers, the English side were not particularly outstanding - not that I am one to judge, I’m not particularly outstanding either. But what struck me later, very forcefully, is that in England I was an alien in an alien land yet performing a familiar and much-loved English ritual. It wasn’t my heritage that I was celebrating, and whatever English blood remaining in my

MORRIS SPIRIT



I'm sure it's not here...



Though it may be here...

veins has now been diluted into meaninglessness. English beer is still a mystery to me, and believe me, I have tried so very hard to like it. I don't see Pommies as "family" and while I absolutely love England and the English, they don't see me as kin either. Yet, we are Australian Morris Dancers dancing English traditional folk dances. And that's not even it. What it is - you see - is we are Australian Morris dancers who just fucking gets it! It could be you, it could be an American, it could be a New Zealander - shit, it could be that Vietnamese Morrisor we saw in Rochester. Here it is, I hope that you are ready for it: Morris Spirit is a universal life force that has evolved to protect and grow Morris Dancing. Yep, friends, we are all - every single dancer - is plugged into the Morris Matrix. Humans are merely a host, but not an accidental host. We are not harbouring any flu virus. We are a chosen host. Morris Dancing has chosen us. Freaky!

Its a bit like Gaia theory, but deeply embedded inside a cultural context. A human context. You and I know plenty of morris folk who are complete cynics, people who are over the top, logical, sensible people. People who are well-grounded, insightful, intelligent and pretty much a force to be reckoned with. You are probably one yourself? Don't you find it a bit odd that you feel so passionate about donning a ridiculous getup and seriously prancing about to a folk tradition that is locked onto a foreign culture? If you haven't thought about it before, perhaps you should bust a few neurons on the subject? Why should you care about perfecting a certain figure, step or movement in morris? And when I mean "care" I am not referring to, say, having a preference for one brand of shampoo over another. I mean care in the sense

that you practice and practice and practice and get frustrated when it doesn't come off and feel inordinately chuffed when it does. It's morris dancing, for God's sake? You neither get paid for it, nor does it particularly impress the general community one single iota. Just what is that annoying drive that has hacked your very soul? I'll tell you; it's the Morris Spirit! It transcends national boundaries, language, cultural limitations, and plain common sense. It forces you to adopt the seriously annoying morris office bearer duties such as foreman, squire, bagperson, etc. Don't even let me get started

on the national office bearer positions. Nobody actually ever wants those jobs, they are about as rewarding and fulfilling as the head unclogger at a sewage depot. One takes on those jobs because you care enough about morris that you need to push it forward. And "forward" isn't a definite or set direction, it's a dimension. The side I was in a score of years ago is eerily familiar to my current side, and yet every possible combination of factors associated to those two sides are completely different. How does that work? It defies time and space.

Those of us who attended our first foot-up and kept coming back drank the poisoned Kool-Aid. We imbibed the Morris Spirit up to our gills. That's why we do the things that we do. Our DNA has irrevocably mutated. Morris



It must be in here somewhere!

Spirit is all about the dance, and the dance makes us (mostly) behave with respect and tolerance towards each other (and all that other crap). We are all in the embrace of a happy little symbiotic relationship. The dance wants us to prosper, it needs us, and apparently all evidence suggests that we need it too!

Sean Arthur

A MORRIS DANCER'S DAY

AT THE FOLK FESTIVAL

Can you find all these words in the grid? The words can read forward, backward, up, down and diagonally, but never skipping letters and always in a straight line. Make a ring around each word you find in the grid, and mark it off the list. A letter in the grid may be used more than once, as some words may overlap each other. Some letters won't

be used at all. Words separated by a / may not be together in the grid. To make it more interesting, one of the words below is not in the grid. Can you find it?

Enjoy!

Morris on... and Beyond!

The mischievous trickster from Black Joak Morris.

Baldrick	Grog	Ribbons
Bampton	Hanky	Rosette
Beer	Hey	Snotta
Bells	Jig	Stick
Bledington	Lichfield	Straw / Hat
Border	Loo	Tin / Whistle
Caper	Mandolin	Toes
Clash	Morris / Dancer	Tune
Cotswolds	Music	Up / The / Guts
Drinking	Muso	Violin
Funny	North / West / Clog	Wine
Garlands	Poo (especially for Henry)	Yell
Gin	Pub / Sing	

Y	E	L	L	S	D	N	A	L	R	A	G	S	P	D
N	U	R	I	B	B	O	N	S	L	R	N	J	R	L
N	W	M	E	K	L	R	J	Y	O	O	K	I	E	E
U	I	A	V	C	M	T	E	G	T	C	N	B	P	I
F	N	D	R	I	N	H	U	T	I	K	E	O	A	F
E	E	B	P	T	T	A	A	R	I	L	N	P	C	H
L	R	O	T	S	S	V	D	N	L	M	U	S	I	C
T	O	E	S	K	B	L	G	S	J	S	T	U	L	I
S	S	M	E	H	A	T	T	I	I	I	V	A	W	L
I	E	C	W	B	M	S	B	N	N	R	S	E	O	A
H	T	H	A	G	P	O	G	H	B	H	R	O	N	V
W	T	S	C	O	T	S	W	O	L	D	S	O	L	I
U	E	L	N	B	O	R	D	E	R	P	S	L	M	O
P	O	V	J	H	N	K	B	E	G	U	T	S	P	L
G	W	N	I	L	O	D	N	A	M	R	Y	U	J	I
N	O	T	G	N	I	D	E	L	B	I	B	D	O	N

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS

OF MORRIS DANCING IN AUSTRALIA

Morris dancing was introduced into Australia (at least in modern times) in Perth in 1973 when some ex patriot pommies formed the Perth Morris Men – who are still active to-day. They were followed in 1975 by the formation of The Sydney Morris Men. Over the next few years they were joined by the following sides, all dancing Cotswold Morris:- The Adelaide Morris Men, Plenty Folk (a Melbourne mixed side), Maids of the Mill (Sydney, female Cotswold side), Canberra Morris Men, and The Fair Maids of Perth (Australia's first North West Clog dancing side).

The Australian Morris Ring (initially Australasian, until the New Zealand sides formed their own organisation) - <http://www.morris.org.au/> was formed in 1978 at The National Folk Festival in Freemantle. The founding sides were Sydney, Perth

and Adelaide. The founding Squire (Morris speak for President) was John Milce of the Sydney Men. The original constitution was based on that of the U.K. Morris Ring (www.themorrisring.org) Membership was initially open to male sides only but was subsequently broadened to encompass firstly female sides and then all sides regardless of gender composition.

Morris dancing in Australia has come a long way from it's 'novelty act' beginnings in the early 70's. Today there are over 20 Morris sides in Australia encompassing all aspects of the English Morris tradition. Morris sides can be seen at all major Folk Festivals and in all the capital cities of Australia.

John Milce

MAURICE DANCING

If you haven't felt blood coursing through your arteries and veins
From the heys, half-gyps and capers 'til your arms and legs complain
If you haven't felt connection with the dancers in your set
If you haven't felt that feeling then you ain't felt nothing yet!
I've danced with old Methuselah, I've danced with kids of six
I've danced with soldiers, sailors and used cricket bats for sticks
I'll dance until hell freezes and I'll dance until I'm frail
If dancing's made illegal then I'll bloody dance in gaol
I've morrised on with old King Kong and busked at Peyton Place

I've backed to back with Mr Spock in the final frontier – space!
I've picked out lots of dancing spots on high in Biggles' plane
And if HG fixes his time machine I'll do it all again!
And when my time is over and my feet no longer fly
When the time has come to parley with the big squire in the sky
When she brings to bear that awful stare on a certain ne'er-do-well
I'll flourish my hankies with my friends and process down to hell!

Roger Bux
on Friday, August 21, 2009 at 11:54pm



ROGUES GALLERY



Now, how does this dance go?



The Joakers at Brandragon's Steam Ale



All good fun despite the weather.



Room Room I pray, give me some room!



Brandragon at the Steam Ale ▲

Lancashire Witches ▼



The night time ale ▲

Boys having problems with ribbons ▼



ROGUES GALLERY



Laughing at the foreman while his back is turned?



Up we go... 'Banana Splits' at Fleurieu



Hoffers dancing 'Bonfire'



Hedgies and Hoffers at Fleurieu Folk Festival



What is wrong with this pic?

ROGUES GALLERY



Did the Squire say free beer?



Well, what can one say?



Emma, Kevan and Daniel - Belswagger



Room Room give me some room!



Julia and Rachel - Port Festival - Port Adelaide



We're on the train!



MORRIS