Old English May Festival
PRESENTED BY THE FRESHMAN CLASS

May 18, 1923
Elmira College

American Morris Newsletter
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This issue finds us at the end of a very busy summer. I attended an excellent English Dance Week at the Mendocino Woodlands, in Northern California, and then almost immediately flew to Washington, DC, for the Dancing in the Millennium conference. Towards the end of this issue you will find my description of it.

Steve Corrsin has also been busy, but over in the UK; his description of the World Millennium Sword Spectacular is also in this issue. Julia Schult sent us an intriguing article detailing her research into the old May Day celebrations at her new workplace, Elmira College. It was exciting to hear that her work may have spurred the students to try to reestablish this custom at the college!

We regret that this issue won't contain the third typescript from "Border Morris—Roots and Revival," due to technical problems over in England. Hopefully it will arrive in time for inclusion in the winter issue, along with our 1999 interview with John Kirkpatrick. What we do have for you in the Border theme is a part of a letter from John regarding his thoughts on women in morris.

We received Tony Barraclough's eulogy for Anna Marly just in time for publication. A number of you have probably heard of Anna; she became very well known in the American and English clog world during the last 10 years.

In the envelope with this AMN is our first contribution to the Reprint Series: a piece which appeared in The Morris Dancer earlier this year. It is the transcript of a tape recording by Lionel Bacon, who not only created the Cotswold morris world's "bible," but was deeply involved in the morris in England for over 50 years. I found that the footnotes were as interesting as the text.

As always, if you have any interest in submitting an article for a future American Morris Newsletter, please contact us, and meanwhile, have an enjoyable Autumn!

Jocelyn & Peter

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May Days at Elmira College

By Julia E. Schult
Access/Electronic Services Librarian, Elmira College

The Sunbeams dance from yonder skies,
And on the lake the ripples play;
The world assumes its sweetest guise,
To greet the coming of the May

Then on Elmira's campus green
Behold a pageant wondrous fair!
We go to place our chosen Queen
Upon a throne erected there.

—May Day Song (1st verse only)
by Josephine J. Bailey, Class of 1911

In the early 1900s, many schools and colleges in the United States celebrated May Day with song, dance, and pageantry. The details varied greatly, but generally women or children performed a May pole dance, and many participants wore white or costumes with a Medieval theme. Sometimes a pageant was held, usually with a Greek or "Merrie Olde England" theme. Books were published containing suggestions for "May Day exercises," including plays and dances. Many women's colleges, particularly in New England, participated.

Elmira College was founded in 1855 as a women's college, and was the first women's college in the States "with a course of study and degree requirements comparable to those at contemporary men's colleges" (quoted from the Elmira College Bulletin, Academic Year 1952-53). It is located in the Finger Lakes region of Upstate New York, not far from Seneca Falls, where the Women's Suffrage movement was born a few years before Elmira College's founding.

Elmira College's May Days, which were held from 1902-1967, were among the most beautiful and renowned of these celebrations. In 1932 or '33, the New York Times published a "where are they now" article about Elmira College May Queens of the past. Elmira College prides itself on many traditions, often based on class esprit de corps.

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tion includes a Candlelight Ceremony and Procession, which is re-created four years later on the eve of their graduation. While many colleges have candlelight processions, an example of a unique Elmira College tradition is Mountain Day, held since 1917. Each fall the students serenade the College President at his house with college songs for several nights in a row, until the President declares Mountain Day, with all classes excused, many offices closed, and food and games for the entire College. May Days fit right into this atmosphere, involving class loyalties, school colors, and music.

I found a brief compilation of facts about "May Day at Elmira College" in the College Archives, compiled in 1985 by the former College Archivist, H.A. Wisbey, Jr.:

May Day at Elmira College was introduced by Dean Anstice Harris. The first May Day Queen recorded was Florence Montgomery, chosen in 1902. The first May Days were held on the college campus and included dancing around the May Pole and an outdoor theatrical entertainment for the May Queen and her court. When the audience of parents and friends became too large, the festivities were moved to Watkins Glen (a nearby State Park), prior to 1910. The college made the trip (about 20 miles) on the trolley. The 1910 Iris has a picture of a trolley with the caption, "Starting on our Watkins Trip."

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May Days continued to be celebrated at Watkins Glen until 1942 when transportation difficulties prevented the trip in World War II. May Day was held at Watkins Glen at least once after the war, but when the College acquired Strathmont (a local mansion) in 1961, May Day celebrations were held on the grounds there.

This somewhat dry compilation of facts and dates gives the merest glimpse of what must have been quite a magical experience. Deeper in the archives I found programs and notes from the organizers of various years' events which give a much fuller picture of what they were like.

The freshmen, having had more than half a year in which to get to know each other, picked the May Days committee members around Easter. Costumes for the Court and performers were prepared, usually in white, and orders for elaborate flower crowns, baskets, garlands, and arrangements were placed with the local florist. A pageboy to carry the crown and two flower girls were chosen to join the Procession. The College dance troupe, Orchesis, rehearsed their special performance number, sometimes related to the day's theme, sometimes performing an original dance drama or modern dance. Special keepsake tickets were designed, ordered, and then sold to pay for the event and to raise money for the class. The tickets were generally cardboard in school colors, alternating gold on purple or purple on gold, and could be hung from a wrist or button by a small cord.
Each year’s May Day had a title or theme. The archives do not reflect whether each year’s committee selected the theme, or if it was chosen by the Department of Hygiene and Physical Education or the Theatre Department, which sometimes were listed as sponsoring the event. Themes ranged from Roman or Greek, to Southwest Indian, to Cinderella or Alice in Wonderland; and of course a recurring theme was “Merrie Olde England” or “English May Day Festival.”

Two weeks before May Days weekend (which could be any weekend in May) a class meeting was held at which the freshmen nominated candidates for May Queen from among the sophomore women. Nominations were kept secret, and an election was held three days later. The results of the election were kept in strict confidence: only the organizers and the Queen-elect’s mother were notified (so the mother could attend to surprise her daughter). On the morning of the event, the organizers were still the only ones in the world who knew which lucky sophomore would be the new May Queen. A photograph and brief bio were secretly sent to the local papers just before the entire campus community and their visitors set out for the performance site. Attendance was usually quite large, reaching 600 or 800 people in some years. Once everyone except those who were in the Procession were seated, the Procession began.

First came the Senior Queen, crowned two years before, with her Junior Attendants. Then the Junior Queen with her Sophomore Attendants. These members of the Court arranged themselves on the dais around the Queen’s Throne, which was elaborately decked out in garlands or flowers.

Once the former Queens were seated, the Queen’s Guard came forward. These were women dressed as soldiers, and had been informed of the Queen’s identity that morning by the May Days General Chairman. They made a great show of trying to find the Queen-elect in the crowd, on the dais, in the bushes, and finally, they knelt before her, lifted her up, and carried her off to the “Pavilion” to be clothed in royal purple and white. She then processed to the dais with the Freshman Attendants carrying her train, two flower girls bearing baskets of flowers, and a page boy carrying a floral crown on a white satin pillow. Then followed the Queen’s Guard and all the freshmen not otherwise involved in the proceedings, dressed in white, and singing The May Song. She was greeted by her mother and the other Queens, seated on the Throne, and crowned by the Junior Queen.

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Then the music, dancing, and dramas began, presented as entertainment for the Court. Many years, but not always, a May pole dance was performed. The other entertainment originally followed the theme of the day. In 1928, the theme was "May Festivals in England" and the entertainment included Robin Hood and Maid Marion, tilting, morris dances, and a May pole dance. In 1932, the major entertainment was "Cupid and Psyche, adapted from The Golden Age" by Katharine Linder Chapman. 1935 featured an Alice in Wonderland theme, and in 1937 the freshmen presented an Elizabethan Court with May pole, morris dancers, Robin Hood and Maid Marion, a macabre's play, English country dancing, a Foresters' Dance, and a Court Dance. Later years follow the theme idea less closely; in 1939 Orchesis presented an original dance-drama: Pictures at an Exhibit," and in 1940, a modern dance to Symphony Number 4 in F minor by Tschaikovsky.

Such a production obviously took a lot of work. The organizers of the 1929 pageant (from the class of 1932) attempted to record all the preparations for the benefit of future committees. At that time, they had a General Chairman, a Chairman of Food, Chairman of Transportation, Chairman of Properties, Chairman of Costumes, Chairman of Settings, Chairman of Tickets and Programs (who acted as business manager), and a Chairman of the May Queen Arrangements who was responsible for arrangements for the Throne, Guards, Attendants, and so forth. The committee was assisted by a faculty advisor, and it seems the General Chairman and the Faculty Advisor were the ones primarily responsible for the all-important election of the Queen and the secrecy surrounding it.

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As the years went on and the cultural revolution of the 1960s touched the College, May Days became less of a ceremony and more of a performance, primarily a chance for Orchesis to shine. With the advent of the Women's Liberation movement, beauty contests came to be frowned on, and while the May Queen's election was really a popularity contest, she was usually chosen for her looks at least as much as for her other qualities. Moving with the times, the college took the difficult and controversial decision to admit men starting with the 1969 freshmen. In the words of College Archivist H.A. Wisbey, Jr: "The last May Day Queen was Nancy Townsend, crowned in 1967 in the midst of Vietnam War protests and on the eve of coeducation. Thus ended a 65-year-old tradition."

The May Days celebration was replaced by Spring Weekend, which was mostly an outdoor party on a Saturday, with beer and rock bands, although a formal Spring Ball held the night before provided some refinement to the weekend. Eventually the drinking age went up to 21, and by 1997, the College was seriously concerned that the event promoted illegal drinking and even centered around it. The administration declared that Spring Weekend was no more, and instructed the Student Activities Board to rename and completely revise the event. The Student Activities Board picked the name May Days for the new festival, apparently without any knowledge of the history of that phrase at Elmira College. According to one Board member, "it sounded good, had a nice ring to it."

Currently May Days has little to do with the old traditions of Elmira College. The only remnant is the continuation of the Spring Ball. On the Saturday following the Ball, the Student Activities Board turns the College’s soccer field into a carnival, with free food, games, and recorded music. No alcohol is allowed except in a separate building, with many restrictions designed to prevent underage students from acquiring alcohol. Most students and staff who attend say it is great fun, and I agree. But there are some on campus, perhaps prompted by my research, who are interested in reviving some of the old Elmira College May Days traditions. This year (2000) some student clubs staged a small event, called The Old Elmira May Fest, featuring Heartwood Morris of Ithaca, a Maypole, a bagpiper, and a student choral group singing The May Day Song. Tradition is important to Elmira College students. While we may never re-create the full Sophomore May Queen and her Court, perhaps we can reclaim some of the May Day traditions of Elmira College’s past.
Special thanks to Mark Woodhouse, Elmira College Archivist, for his assistance in researching this article.

Maye Daye Feste
Elmira College
Ye Classe of 1948

Mayhemes Grote, Fodeye, Maye 26, 1937
at half after nine

Direction of

Department of Aggie and Physical Education

About the Author: Julia Schult has been morris dancing on May Day since 1985, in Illinois, Minnesota, California, and now in New York. She is currently the Fore for Heartwood Morris of Ithaca, NY. She has been Access/Electronic Services Librarian, Elmira College at Elmira College since August of 1998.

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At the “Border Morris—Roots and Revival” presentation, there was a dis-
cussion during which it became apparent that John Kirkpatrick’s feelings about
women morris dancers had been misinterpreted. When I wrote him about
setting up an interview, to take place while we were at the Sidmouth Festi-
vale, he responded enthusiastically, partly because he wanted the opportunity
to set the record straight. He went on to write the following, which we all
agreed to print, rather than discuss during the interview. -Editors

July 16th, 1999

Dear Jocelyn & Peter,

... In the discussions that followed the talks (there was one on historical
stuff by Gordon Ashman, and one on what had been collected in the 20th
century by Roy Dommett) I was taken to task for being sexist in what
I’d said. I felt greatly burnt (?) and annoyed about that, and would be
pleased to have the chance to put on record what I really think. In case
I forget [during our interview]:

1) I ran, spontaneously, the first ever workshop for women’s morris at
Sidmouth Festival. It was in a pub garden, mid 1970s.

2) The relationship between the Bedlams and Martha Rhoden’s was, as
far as I know, unique when it started, and continues to be greatly cher-
ished by all concerned as a happy, healthy, mutually supportive way to
carry on.

3) I said that I thought that men should dance like men and that women
should dance like women. Some of the women present jumped down
my throat because they interpreted that to mean that I thought women
danced in a weaker way than men, and that I was intending (?) that women
should be kept in their place and just dance pretty handkerchief dances.

What I did, and do, believe is that each sex has something unique
between that they can present in their dancing. Obviously male and fe-
male bodies are different, and some movements suit one sex more than
the other. Each has qualities that the other doesn’t have. A good com-
parison is with singing—the unique combination of women’s voices in
the Bulgarian tradition, for example, creates something utterly powerful
and hair-raising, and is the sole result of that same-sex singing, which is
something you would just not experience in a choir of mixed voices.

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Equally, a male voice choir has its own magic, whether it’s from Wales or Georgia.

I believe you can get the same power and thrill in same-sex dancing—each sex has something unique they bring to dancing, and for one to dance like the other is to deny a massive opportunity to celebrate our differences and explore the creative avenues that lie before us. For me to say that I think women should dance like women is intended as a shared excitement at the infinite possibilities that that allows. Men’s morris dancing is much more inhibited by a history of mainly male participation and an agenda of restrictive practices that still pervades the Morris Ring. Women’s morris dancing can, and has, liberated itself from that weight of history and go forward uninhibited (sic). For women to dance exactly like men is as much a denial of our nature as for men to dance like women. We are just different—not unequal, just different—and every traditional dance culture in the world supports that by having dances each sex does on its own, as well as others that they do together.

The basic building blocks of morris dancing can create any number of different architectures, and the more fully and completely each sex can glorify itself through an exploration of its own unique qualities, the more wonderful and fulfilling the results will be.

Blimey! Pause for breath.

Hope that makes sense, and is readable!

Cheers

John
Several years ago, I began my report for the American Morris Newsletter on the First International Sword Dance Gathering in Scarborough, England, 1996, as follows:

One of the most remarkable developments in the world of sword dancing in the last ten or fifteen years has been the growth in international contacts among dancers, teams, researchers, and enthusiasts. American teams have danced in England, English teams have come to America or gone to the European Continent, and continental teams have visited one another or even (occasionally) Britain. Alas, no continental teams have reached North American shores.

The three international sword dance festivals held in Scarborough and Whitby in 1996-2000 have gone a great way to furthering this growth in international contacts. But it is still true that no European continental teams have come to the U.S. or Canada, nor do there appear to be any prospects.

Unfortunately, I missed the 1998 event. I was therefore particularly eager to attend the 2000 festival, and happy when I received an invitation to speak at the associated conference—this gave me a good excuse to travel that I could use with my family, boss, etc. Also, I had visited Whitby several times already and was looking forward to seeing once more that historically fascinating town.

In all, about thirty U.K. teams attended, including a number of well known "traditional" and "revival" teams, such as Flamborough, Goathland Plough Stots, Handsworth, Newcastle Kingsmen, Sallyport, and Stone Monkey. (Let me add here that we should be grateful to the U.K. sides, who paid more in registration fees so that foreign teams, including the ones from the U.S., did not have to.) Renaat van Craenenbroeck, leader of Antwerp's Lange Wapper team and an outstanding...
ing figure in promoting international contacts and research, was in charge of putting together the continental teams. The following attended:

Spain: Kemen Dantza Taldea, from Guipuzkoa province; and Text Marki aza Zerutxu, from Markina, Biscay province (both of these are from the Basque region);

Czech Republic: Podstable, from Koman; and Bobkovnici from Bystrice pod Lopenikem;

Belgium: Volkshuskunst Gruppe Boerke Naas; and Dansgroep Lange Wapper;

Italy: Bal do Sabre, from Bagnasco;

Norway: Jack the Rapper (sic), who can be described as "Norway's national rapper side" (also evidently the only one, but never mind);

Austria: Volkstanzgruppe Sankt Martin im Sulmtal;

Germany: Schwerttanzgruppe der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Sing-, Tanz- und Spielkreise in Baden Wurttemberg.

While the program tended to refer to all non-U.K. sides as "overseas," two U.S. teams matched that term best. Both were from the greater Boston area: Orion Sword, who had also attended in 1996, and a newer, and younger group, Velocirapper. Let me start by saying that, in my personal and professional opinion, the U.S. performers were truly among the hits of the festival. Orion is well known for its ability to innovate within the Yorkshire longsword style as well as for the dancers' and musicians' skills. Their dance, North Shirley Volunteers, created a sensation some years ago when it was first performed at the Half Moon (New York) sword ale. (One remarkable note: an English side borrowed and per-
formed this dance, with Orion’s permission, at Whitby. It’s believed that
this is a first in terms of longsword borrowings going from east to west
instead of the other direction.) Their next novel composition, Dual
Pelican No Bleep—allegedly named after a road sign they saw in North-
ern England on their 1996 visit, though doubts have been expressed about
this ruse—took them a step further from the wisdom of longsword.
And now their latest, Take Five, using the music of jazz
composer Dave Brubeck, held the rapt and hushed attention of the other
performers at this event. It’s doubtful that any other team would be
capable of taking sword dancing in the exciting and innovative directions
that Orion has. We can also be proud of the other U.S. representatives
at the event, Velocirapper, from Sudbury, Massachusetts.

They danced with great energy and style, and were very well received.
It’s interesting that their team name was not as well understood as here
in the States. (Perhaps English children aren’t fascinated with dinosaurs
to the same degree as U.S. kids?)

Speaking of kids, one of the most positive and encouraging themes
of the event proved to be the presence of children and youth teams. It’s
no secret that the growth in interest in sword and morris dancing, in
both North America and England, has been closely tied to the “baby
boom” generation, conventionally defined as those of us born between
1945 and 1964. One has to wonder, as we boomers turn gray, our knees
creak, and we pay ever increasing attention to the progress of our 401-
K plans, how many dance sides will still be functioning in 2020 or there-
abouts. It was therefore particularly encouraging that Velocirapper was one of the U.S. sides, since all the dancers were teenagers (granted, the musician, Tom Kruskal, and the chaperones, the Marcuses, were a little older). But even more encouraging was the presence of English school sides: from Lockwood Primary School, in Boosbeck (the Boosbeck dance was originally performed by iron miners in the area, and published in the 1930s); and Ryburn Longsword. There were also "junior workshops" on both Saturday and Sunday mornings, focusing on teaching kids' teams. Those concerned about the future of sword dancing in the U.S. as elsewhere would do well to encourage such activities.

Another key theme of the event, speaking especially as someone who had attended in 1996 but had missed 1998, was the increased role of women in the performances. The British have, generally, been slower to accept women dance teams than the North Americans have; the impression made by Half Moon Sword and Toronto Women's in 1996, as well as the mixed Orion and Longwood sides, was, I suspect, important in furthering the greater positive acceptance by continental as well as British dancers. In the words to me of one well known and respected, if rather traditionalist, continental dancer: "You Americans are to blame." In any case, there were many British women's and some mixed sword and rapier sides in Whitby.

But more remarkable were certain continental developments, in that dancers from the European continent have been far more conservative in this area than the British. I'm not sure if many present at Whitby understood the significance of the following, but, believe me, these were revolutionary developments: the Baden-Wurttemberg team used a female fool; the Austrian team had women musicians; and when the Bystrice pod Lopenikem dancers performed on Sunday night, in the Whitby Pavilion—and thus before an audience chiefly consisting of their peers, the other dancers—at one point the women dancers took the men's swords and performed the actual sword dance, as the men stood to the side and sang in the traditional women's role. (Another noteworthy moment came during the conference. Richard Traves, leader of Flamborough Longsword, showed a photo of his mother perhaps 70 years ago, with a group of girl guides in the Flamborough kit. He said that he hadn't known till this photo turned up that his mother had been on the local girls' side during the interwar years.)

Most of the dancing took place in the town of Whitby itself, with teams circulating among selected locations. Some enthusiasts and observers figured out early that the most clever thing to do would be to stay in one place and let the teams come to them. I spent a great deal of
time at two of the best locations: the Captain Cook monument over-
looking the North Sea; and the band shell, down below in the harbor
(or harbour, if you prefer). There were also tours to other historic sword
dance locales, Robin Hood's Bay and Goathland.

The conference, chaired by Trevor Stone, was planned as two sessions of
three papers each on the Saturday and Sunday mornings. Both the level
of attendance and of audience interest was very gratifying. The first
Saturday speaker was Steve Corrin, with a paper meant to be provoca-
tive, entitled: "Traditions, Revivals, Traditional Revivals, and Revivals
of Traditions." My theme was that we are all children of the "revival,"
and that differentiating between "traditional" and "revival" sides no longer
makes any sense, if indeed it ever did. The next speaker was Renaat van
Craenenbroeck, who spoke on "Sword Dancing in Europe: History and
Actual Situation." He described some of his findings and views on the
history and spread of linked styles of sword dances. The third Saturday
speaker, Chris Metherell, had planned to discuss the Winlaton tradition
but was unable to attend.

Sunday's session began with Phil Heaton speaking on, "Rapper from
Coalface to Chalkface: From Miners to Schoolteachers." He was fol-

Volkstanzgruppe Sankt Martin im Sulmtal (Austria) in Whitby

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Sunday's session began with Phil Heaton speaking on, "Rapper from
Coalface to Chalkface: From Miners to Schoolteachers." He was fol-
lowed by Ivor Allsop, with the theme, "Cecil Sharp: Genius or What!" (the answer which Ivor supplied was "genius," in healthy opposition to the recent tendency to downgrade Sharp's legacy). Richard Traves of Flamborough concluded the session with, "The Comings and Goings of a Traditional Team: Flamborough Sword Dancers." It was particularly interesting because despite the fact that the Flamborough dance is well known and widely taught, the team and local traditions themselves have been less well known than other longsword sides such as Goathland or the Sheffield teams, perhaps because Flamborough is simply more isolated and harder to reach.

The conference sessions were followed by workshops on both days. Chris Cartridge and Phil Heaton taught rapper, Ryburn Longsword members led "junior workshops," and Ivor Allsop taught the Nether Poppleton longsword dance. This was announced as Ivor's last "workshop, as he plans to retire, finally, from teaching sword; it was an occasion not to be missed, especially for those who recall his teaching at Pinewoods English Weeks. Other special events in the weekend included a late night Ceilidh on Saturday and a concert with dance displays on Sunday, both at the Pavilion; and a parade through Whitby of all the sword dance teams.

Whitby is a fascinating place to visit, even for non-dancers. The town is huddled around its harbor, on the edge of the North Sea; far above it looms the medieval church and abbey, the origins of which go back to the 7th century AD. It was a great seafaring center, as shown by the Captain Cook statue—this is where the great explorer set out from, in the eighteenth century—and the nearby whalebone arches. The town is also well known to readers of Bram Stoker's great novel, Dracula; Whitby is where Dracula comes ashore in England, in the shape of a giant black dog. We were reminded of this through the weekend because, besides the dancers, there was also a gathering of "Goths," young people in gloomy outfits. I took as much time as I could to look around the town and climb up to the church and abbey. For me personally, the trip was also notable for culinary high points: I had my first fish and chips; and I had tea with the Allsops.

I concluded my 1996 report by writing:

This was a remarkable event—the first of its kind, but let us hope by no means the last. Trevor Stone and his colleagues on the organizing committee deserve a great deal of appreciation and praise. They achieved something wonderful indeed, which should prove a milestone in the long history of sword dancing.

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First of all, the 2000 committee deserves the same level of appreciation and praise. As to my hope that there will be more such events, it appears to be uncertain; the committee looked thoroughly exhausted even at the beginning of the weekend.

The Committee consisted of Sal Atkinson, Ian Davies, Stuart Higson, Jeff Lawson, Vince Rutland, Mike Smith, Keith Thompson, and Vin Wynne, with Renaat van Craenenbroeck as a liaison for continental teams. (I would also like to extend my personal thanks to Trevor Stone and Maureen Tinker.)

Volkstanzgruppe Sankt Martin im Sulmtal (Austria) in Whitby

All photos in this article by Steve Corrsin

About the Author: Stephen D. Corrsin has a Ph.D. in European history from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is the author of numerous articles, papers, and bibliographies on the history of linked styles of sword dancing in Europe and North America. Dr. Corrsin’s major work, Sword Dancing in Europe: A History, was published in 1997. His next major work has the working title: Ideology and Myth in the European Folk Dance Revival, '1870-1945. Dr. Corrsin has been a sword and morris dancer in New York, Ontario, and Michigan.

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Anna Mae Marky, born in Rockville, Connecticut, March 13th, 1936, died on July 31st, 2000, of complications from lung cancer. Miss Marky taught her family’s wooden shoe dances to Tony Barrand, Kari Smith, and Margaret Dale Barrand between 1989 and 1996. They have now been taught all over the U.S. and in England and many dancers have come from England to America specifically to visit Anna in Rockville and dance for her. She had planned to attend the major international dance conference, “Dancing in the Millennium,” in Washington, D.C., a week before she died. Her family dances were to be honored in a paper by Tony Barrand on “The Variety of Wooden Shoe Dancing.” Her dances were performed by “The New Dancing Markys” with Kari Smith, Margaret Dale Barrand, Meg Ryan, and Margaret Keller with Paul Eric Smith on button accordion. They were received with a mixture of great enthusiasm and great sadness at Anna’s illness. Anna received many cards and letters from fans on both sides of the Atlantic. Her legacy as a teacher and performer of the dances is assured.

The history of her family dances is told in the eulogy given by Tony at her funeral service and which is reprinted here. Everyone in Anna’s family performed, except for the oldest girl, Marge and Kay, who were teenagers during the early era (1920s) of the family act. She taught thousands of Connecticut children over her more than 40-year teaching career, including many of her nieces and great-nieces.

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Eulogy for Anna Mae Marley
3/13/1916—7/31/00

Tony Barrand
Rockville, CT 8/4/00

I saw my friend and teacher Anna last Friday and she said, “Have you written your speech yet?” I said, “Do you want to hear it? Not many people get to hear their own eulogy.” She didn’t want to either though she had perhaps heard most of it already in the talk I read to her which was given at a big dance conference in Washington just last week. But instead we talked about some of the English clog dancers who had visited her home on Main Street in the past twelve years, one of whom, Chris Brady, had come to see her at Vernon Manor a couple of weeks ago. He danced for her when she was persuaded to play piano one last time. He knew that nobody played piano for dog dancing as well as Anna. I read her a poem that had been written as a tribute to a Lancashire dancer, Sam Sherry, now 87, who had suggested he and Anna form a dance team up in heaven when they both got there. The poem’s title was Sam’s stage name, “Old Clever Clogs.” Anna liked it a lot and phrases for a similar tribute to her began popping into my mind. This wouldn’t be the first poem written for Anna. I found one in the Rockville Leader of June 24th, 1936, composed by a Betty Armstrong after Anna and her brother, Jim, achieved prominence while dancing on the national radio broadcast of Major Bowes’ “Amateur Hour”:

THREE CHEERS

Three cheers for the Marleys with their dancing feet,
For those dancing ‘Marleys’ they can’t be beat.
They danced in minstrels and all our shows,
They danced their way into the heart of Major Bowes,
He sent them west, with unit number one,
They earned it alright, as their dancing was well done,
So here’s wishing them luck, and give them a hand,
For they’re the best dancing team in this part of the land.

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I learned my recitations from my dad who was an admirer of Stanley Holloway, so the cadences of any poem I wrote would probably sound like *Albert and the Lion* or another of his quite well-known monologues. In picking a title, I went back and forth between two sayings I heard while learning the dances. I was reminded of one of them by the speed with which she made her exit, especially over the last few days. Anna couldn’t stand the waiting, the going-more-slowly. When we were working on a difficult step and she was asked to play more slowly so we could try to get the component parts, she'd snap, “It’s easier faster.” As with her dancing, she took her final exit faster than we would have liked. I suspect Anna thought dying and the Buck-and-Wing had this in common: they’re both easier faster. I settled, however, on something she said on those few occasions when we danced as well and as quickly as she wanted. On those moments, she’d nod approvingly and say, “Now that’s the Marley Clog!”
"NOW THAT'S THE MARLEY CLOG!"

Anna was born a Dancing Marley
In 1916 on Rockville's East Main Street
The seventh of eight children she came out dancing
"First Step" and "brake" with clogs on her feet

Father William had danced in the 1890s
In Taunton Mass he clogged a few rounds
With Professor Farley a barber by trade
Farley and Marley were vaudeville bound

But William married Margaret Donovan
Of East Windsor CT she had come
From Taunton MA they moved to Rockville
A mill town with plenty of work to be done

Son Bill was pilot and banjo player
And Jim as a dancer would soon make a name
And when Matty, Anna and Gert joined the act in the Twenties
The Dancing Marleys set local hearts aflame

Anna told how the girls would rehearse
At lunch hour after ten minutes walk home from school
30 minutes dancing, ten to walk back
And ten minutes more to eat was the rule

Bill played banjo and Dan mandolin,
Mother Margaret on piano delighted to play
William, Jim and the young girls stepped out in their clogs
Much to teenagers Kay and Margie's dismay

Anna and Jim kept the old dances alive
Buck-and-Wing, clog on the Pedestals too
While jazz tap took over the screen and the stage
They added Drum Roll and the clog softshoe

In 1936 they reached for the stars
And for Major Bowes they went to audition
They won with the Major and toured 9000 miles
With the "All Star Unit Number One"

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But married man Jim had his fill of touring
While young Anna would have liked one more chance
But after one stint on the Ted Mack show
She started the Ann Marley School of dance

She taught all kinds of dance in Rockville and Vernon
To hundreds of young ones for 40 years and more
Girls became mothers and sent their children
To "take" from Anna as they had before

Recitals were held at Sykes Auditorium
Modern and tap and ballet and clog
Anna made costumes and played the piano
And her family helped out with the rest of the jobs

In 1983 eight nieces and great-nieces
Of the Irish and Buck-and-Wing made display
So wish her dancing passed on to family and all
Anna retired and thought she had taught her last day

But Anna and Jim's daughter Eleanor kept trying
To remember details of the old dance routines
And in '88 brother Dan's neighbor Rhett Kraus
Brought Tony, Margaret Dale and Kari onto the scene

Anna offered to teach them but said from the start
"It has to be right if you're going to learn."
So for ten years each week she played and she bullied
As Buck-and-Wing, Clog, and softshoe took its turn

Then Waltz Clog, and Military Drum Roll, and Stairs
Major Bowes sequence, Jump Rope Waltz clog, Straight Buck
And old dancers from England, Pat Tracey, Sam Sherry,
Alex Woodcock

All came to meet Anna and wish her good luck
For the Marley dances now are known far and wide
In England and Canada and throughout the nation
And in Washington DC not two weeks ago
The New Dancing Marleys got a standing ovation
And Anna was cheered for preserving these treasures
That once filled the stage before tap had its day
The Queen of American Clog said, “well done”
“Now that’s the Marley Clog that you’ve learned the right way”

So Anna has gone to join William and Jim
And all the great clog dancers there in the sky
And her much-beloved mother was waiting to greet her
While we who are left wish her the fondest “goodbye”
In July, I attended the "Dancing in the Millennium" conference. I thought it should be written up mainly to encourage AMN readers to attend the next one, should there be a next one. I feel that anyone who reads the American Morris Newsletter would probably find plenty to interest them at such a conference.

The only academic dance conference I had ever attended before was the one on which Tony Barrand and I collaborated, way back in 1991, the "Conference on Morris in America." But being at a conference as an attendee was a much different experience than being a co-organizer/MC/presenter. "Dancing in the Millenium" was very exciting, and it was wonderful to be there. It was also grand to see a bunch of people that I rarely or never see these days: Tony & Margaret Dale Barrand, Kari Smith, Paul Eric Smith, Brad Foster, Kate Keller, etc. And to make it even better, I joined forces with long-time friends Alisa Dodson (former co-editor of the AMN), and Jody McGeen (founder of Mayfield Morris & Sword).

THE SESSIONS

The sessions represented a wide range of dance scholarship, covering everything from health issues (The Biomechanical, Neuromuscular, and Behavioral Components of Turn-Out), to the sort of thing I personally wouldn't go near (Deconstruction and Bricolage: Discussing Issues in Postmodern Dance Training), and from choreography and notation, to the uses of computer technology, censorship, etc. There were "tracks" which one could follow, although they were not labeled as such. For instance, I mostly went to sessions dealing with ethnology or ethnography. Jody and Alisa hit all the sessions having to do with Baroque dance; and sometimes our interests landed us in the same sessions.

One of our favorite sessions was Dance in the Clubs: The Politics and Aesthetics of Goth, New York Underground Club Dancing, Jamaican Dancehall, and Swing. This was a very powerful session. There were four presenters, one addressing each type of dance mentioned in the title, with
excellent slides and videos to illustrate the talks. The woman who presented on the Goths (Bela Lugosi’s Dead & I’m Not Feeling Too Good Either: The Politics and Aesthetics of Gothic Club Dancing) had a terrific sense of drama. She did her slide show early on in the talk, and just left the last slide up: a close-up of a person’s open mouth, with fangs, and a painted (I assume!) trickle of blood coming down from the corner. She also had some fascinating video footage. The second talk, Check Your Body at the Door, on New York Underground dancing, was very good; and the third presentation, Lady Saw Can’t Lose: Female Persisitry Rituals in Jamaican Dancehall Culture, given by a speaker from Jamaica, was full of raw energy while still being thought-provoking:

Jamaican dancehall culture is commonly disparaged as a misogynist space in which women are reduced to mindless bodies. As both spectacle and spectator, the female dancehall fan seems complicit in the objectification of her person. Even more implicated is the female deejay who, having assumed the power to represent herself verbally, often speaks the very same body language as the male. Arguing transgressively for the freedom of women to claim a self-pleasuring sexual identity, the paper proposes that the flamboyant exhibitionist deejay Lady Saw epitomizes the liberation of African-Jamaican working-class women from the restraints of demure respectability...

The presenter spoke on her theme both passionately and convincingly; her use of video tape footage, including a short segment showing the deejay, Lady Saw, talking to a hostile interviewer, was extremely effective. We were left feeling rather breathless.

Finally, there was a session addressing swing dancing (Is Swing Dancing Back?). Although I think the presenter felt rather intimidated by the previous three talks, the audience was right with him, and he also did a fine job. This was one of the first sessions I attended, and it was so powerful that the others had a hard act to follow.

The session on Dance Ethnography: Where Do We Go From Here? was comprised of four official speakers who spoke for 15 minutes each, and then the floor was opened for discussion. And I have to say that, while I couldn’t tell you if the question in the title was answered, it was certainly fascinating to hear people talk about it! Also, there were a couple people present whose names I’ve known for a long time: i.e., Joann Kealiinohomoku, who is one of the grandmothers of the field of dance ethnography; and Judith Lynn Hanna, whose books are written in such

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pure academic jargon that they are impossible, at least for me, to read! It was reassuring to find out that she talks "just like folks" (at least when it's off the top of her head).

Tony Barrand’s session was entitled The Variety of Wooden Shoe Dancing: Another Piece of the Story of American Vernacular Dance. He had the New Dancing Marleys with him (Kari Smith, Margaret Dale Barrand, Margaret Keller, and Meg Ryan, with Paul Eric Smith providing music—and and this was the only session I attended which used live music—and not many of them actually included live dance). They danced eight pieces to illustrate Tony’s talk (actually, what Tony told me was that his talk illustrated the dancing). He also showed us fascinating slides, and played an audio tape of the Dancing Marleys on the Major Bowes Amateur Hour, a radio show which existed from 1935 until 1946. It was an excellent session; certainly it was the only one I attended which received a standing ovation!

(During the course of the conference, I found that sessions with visual aides were much easier to concentrate on—at least for me! We did a lot of sitting over the course of five days, so anything that helped to keep our brains engaged not only made the session more interesting, but helped ensure that the audience would stay awake.)

I won’t go into detail about any of the other sessions; I could go on and on. But a few other sessions we really enjoyed included Coquetry & Masculinity in 18th c. England, Mime & Pantomime in the 19th Century, Native American Dance, and the one-woman show which was based on Agnes DeMille’s autobiography, Dance to the Piper.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

We had the option of attending dance concerts every night. Alisa and I went to a special performance put on for the conference goers by students of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. It was excellent and exciting. These were high school kids, and seeing what they could do stunned me. The pieces included modern dances, dances and songs out of Broadway musicals, and a couple spoken poems.

The Saturday night banquet was a treat—and I almost didn’t go! But the CDSS/morris contingent were planning on sitting together, and Brad Foster was anxious that we all at least be there for the dance afterwards. He called a “community” dance rather than contras and/or English. It was the perfect thing for this crowd. He used a fun and silly mixer, also a couple of very simple longways dances, a square “visiting” dance, and some circle dances. Perhaps the most amusing part was when he got
everybody doing the *Hokey-Pokey*. Lots of people participated in the dancing, which I suppose is not surprising, but you never know, especially with a room full of academics. An interesting element to the dance was a small horde of Black kids, who started out by looking like their moms had made them come, but ended up really enjoying themselves. I found out eventually that they had been the demo team for one of the sessions.

All in all, a very worthwhile trip to DC, even in the summer heat. I would strongly recommend attending, should the organizers sponsor another such event.
Time hanging heavy?
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