



**English
Folk**
DANCE & SONG SOCIETY

**Vaughan Williams
Memorial Library**



Folk Dance: Grappling with Tradition

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library Conference

Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 November 2023

Cecil Sharp House, London NW1 7AY

Organising Committee for VWML

Tiffany Hore, Library and Archives Director

Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, Archivist

Elaine Bradtke, Cataloguer

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Programme Committee

The VWML staff (as above)

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Mike Heaney

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Photographs

From the archives of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.





GENERAL INFORMATION

Recording and photographs

The conference organisers may take photographs during the conference for publicity purposes.

Please let us know if you do not wish to be photographed.

The conference will be videoed and the recording will be available to consult in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in perpetuity. It will also be retained on a private, passworded link and made available to all ticket bookers for a month after the conference. This will enable people to revisit presentations.

It is possible we may wish to make small sections of the day available on the library website or on VWML/ EFDSS social media in the future, with the permission of speakers. If you do not wish to appear in such videos, please make yourself known to one of the library staff.

Refreshments

Refreshments will be available throughout the day in Kennedy Hall. Lunch is provided downstairs in Trefusis. Catering is by Pink Foods.

BOOK AND RECORD SALE

Head down to Storrow (off the café, in the basement) and snap up a bargain at the VWML's Book and Record Sale, which runs throughout the weekend.

Most of the items for sale have either been withdrawn from library stock, or have come to us in donations when we already have sufficient copies. There is a huge range of books, pamphlets, sheet music, journal issues, CDs, cassettes and records, covering everything from folk dance to song, calendar customs and folklore.

We can take cash or cards.

PROGRAMME: SATURDAY

9.30	Registration, tea and coffee
9.55	WELCOME (Tiffany Hore, Library and Archives Director)
10.00	SESSION 1: A Question of History (Chair: Professor Theresa Buckland) Mike Heaney Morris dance in theatre and community Sue Allan 'Whorray! here th' Maskers cumman'!: Re-visiting the evidence for Cumbrian sword dancing Phil Heaton Rapper as a multi-generational beacon of change
11.30	Coffee break
12.00	SESSION 2: Refashioning (Chair: Elaine Bradtke, VWML) Bryony May Kummer-Seddon Maypole dancing in England: Revivals past, revivals present Derek Schofield Folk dance and the new Northumbrians
13.00	Lunch
14.00	SESSION 3: Re-enactment (Chair: Malcolm Barr-Hamilton, VWML) Chloe Middleton-Metcalf How do we strip back the willow? Traditionality, familiarity, and the 'living tradition' in English social folk dance Grace Redpath 'The magic was still in my heart like an old sweet pain': Revisiting longsword in East Cleveland and prospects of revival Sean Goddard Tunes and dances: Is there a risk to introducing alternative tunes for folk dances?
15.30	Coffee break
16.00 -17.30	SESSION 4: Participation (Chair: Alex Burton, VWML) Lisa Heywood Queering social dances: The case for an evolving tradition Kerry Fletcher and Natasha Khamjani Folk Dance Remixed: playing, weaving and connecting with tradition Wendy Timmons and Iliyana Nedkova Pomegranates – sowing the seeds of international traditional dance across Edinburgh: Thriving not surviving

PROGRAMME: SUNDAY

9.30	Registration, tea and coffee
9.55	WELCOME (Tiffany Hore, Library and Archives Director)
10.00	SESSION 5: The 21st Century Dancer (Chair: Mike Heaney) Peter Harrop Dancing with tradition: Grappling with ‘folk’ Liz Scholey/JMO EDI group An examination of the songs used in morris dance
11.00	Coffee break
11.30	SESSION 6: Performance (Chair: Nick Wall, VWML) Lally Macbeth The Mock Morris: Explorations of automatonism in the landscape Clare Bowyer What is authentic folk costume? Categorising authenticities Deborah Ward From Elva Hill to Loch Sunart: Adapting folk tales into folk ballets whilst exploring the traditional balletic and folk dance language
13.00	Lunch
14.00	SESSION 7: Boss Morris: performance and discussion Alex Merry and Stephen Rowley Boss Morris – From a Cotswold village hall to the Brits
15.00	Coffee break
15.30	SESSION 8: Reinvention, reconstruction (Chair: Martin Nail) Simon Harmer The sailor and the paramedic – my step dance heroes: Reconstruction and reimagination in action Lisa Sture What is a tradition? Examining Devon stepdance from a personal perspective Elaine Bradtke Reinventing tradition: Molly dancing in the late 20th century (and beyond)
17.00	FINAL REMARKS (Tiffany Hore)

Sue Allan

‘Whorray! here th’ Maskers cumman’!: Re-visiting the evidence for Cumbrian sword dancing

It is popularly believed that English sword dance originated in the North East of England, probably in the later eighteenth century. However, a handful of Scottish and Lancashire references to sword dancing pre-date that period and, in addition, there are quite a number of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century reports of sword dances and/or sword plays being performed in Cumberland and Westmorland (now Cumbria).

After reviewing published research on sword dance and sword plays Sue explores in more detail the evidence for sword dancing in Cumbria, from antiquarians’ descriptions, newspaper reports of Cumberland sword dancers performing at London’s Pantheon, and a remarkable 40-verse dialect poem, ‘The Upshot, or Orton Merry Night’, dating from c.1800.

‘The Upshot’ was written by Carlisle-born Mark Lonsdale (1758-1815) and purports to be ‘a free sketch ad vivum’ of an uproarious party that Lonsdale had attended some twenty years earlier in the village of Great Orton, near Carlisle. During the evening’s festivities a pistol shot outside alerts the revellers to the fact that a party of ‘maskers’ have arrived with their sword dance and play, which they proceed to perform.

As Lonsdale had already moved to London when he wrote the poem and was working at Sadler’s Wells, writing spectacular pantomimes and songs, how true to life was the poem really? Was there an element of dramatization? And given that Lonsdale was working in London theatres when the Cumberland dancers visited the Pantheon, was it possible that he had some involvement in that performance? We may be left with more questions than answers...

Born and bred in Cumbria, Sue Allan’s career has included work in local radio and TV, with Cumbrian arts organisations and feature-writing for Cumbria Life magazine, for which she is still a regular contributor. Sue has been involved in performing and researching traditional songs, dances, tunes and folk customs of her native county for many decades, in 2017 completing a PhD on its distinctive corpus of folk songs. Her dance performance experience includes playing for Carlisle Sword and Morris, founding and dancing with Throstles Nest Morris and step dancing with Carlisle Cloggies. In recent years she has presented and published papers and book chapters on Cumbrian fiddlers, ‘staged authenticity’ in folk song, ballad sellers, morris dancing in Cumbria, early tourists’ observations on local folk customs and, in 2020, a book on dialect poet and song writer Robert Anderson. Her current research focuses on sword dance and mummers’ plays in Cumbria.

Clare Bowyer

What is authentic folk costume? Categorising authenticities

Authenticity is a hotly debated topic, linked as it is with a sense of having a ‘genuine’ or ‘traditional’ experience. It was a crucial area to examine during my PhD research; the role of costume in Folk festivals, 1660 to the present day. Rubidge (2005) wrote that “authenticity is not... an inherent quality of an object or experience but something ascribed to it”. The perceived origins of a dance, its longevity, and its reimagining can all influence what is expected of a costume.

Historically many dancers wore ordinary clothes, sometimes turned inside out or borrowed, with added decorations and properties like bells, bladders, or sticks. The nineteenth century saw new types of costumes (re)appearing and reflect the period in which they were introduced or revived. Past writers have considered that non-representational costumes were original and therefore superior to those that dressed in character. My research investigated the military, theatrical and historical inspirations of costumes. I wanted to avoid hierarchical judgements but consider the costumes in practical terms of construction and, importantly, evolution.

Some dancers wish to see their costumes preserved without change while others are happy for adaptations to be made. New dance groups will make careful choices as to the design of their new costumes. These opinions, personal connections, made by the dancers themselves, all contribute to a sense of authenticity in folk costumes.

This presentation will use examples from my recent research into historical, theatrical and military costume sources to illustrate the framework I created to negotiate the differing ways that the notion of authenticity has been and is used in folk costume creation. I will illustrate that there is not one type of authenticity but a range of authenticities depending on who dances, where and when.

Clare Bowyer is currently a research student at De Montfort University (DMU), Leicester, and an Additional Learning Support Assistant at Leicester College. Clare has recently concluded a short-term role as Programme Manager for the Costume Society. She has held several roles at DMU, most recently as a lecturer in Design Studies. Clare has worked as a curator at Kettering Museum and Art Gallery, Snibston Discovery Park and Charnwood Museum, Leicestershire, and the Gallery of Costume, Manchester. She was awarded an MA in History of Dress, by the Courtauld Institute, London, and BA Hons. in History of the Fine and Decorative Arts, by Leeds University. She learnt English Country dancing at school and as a student she enjoyed Scottish Country, Irish Set and Cajun dancing. She even learnt Provençal dancing when living in France. Sadly, her last try at a Strathspey left her with a torn Achilles tendon and so she has avoided this dangerous pastime ever since.

Elaine Bradtke

Reinventing tradition: Molly dancing in the late 20th century (and beyond)

In the early twentieth century, East Anglian Molly dances were neglected by collectors as at best degenerate versions of the social dances from which they derived, at worst merely ‘jigging about’. It was not until the 1930s that there was much interest in collecting these dances, and by this time there was little left but the memories of an older generation. The result is a rather sparse repertoire, a meagre foundation on which to build a revival. In the late 1970s, the Seven Champions agreed that the traditional Molly repertoire was uninteresting, but felt that it could be developed into something worth watching. They indulged in creative interpretation of the sketchy notations available; devising their own style in the process. This presentation will discuss the stylistic and choreographic elements used by the Seven Champions in their performances, and their influence on the subsequent growth and spread of late twentieth century Molly dancing.

Elaine Bradtke is an ethnomusicologist, librarian, and Honorary Research Fellow at the Elphinstone Institute of the University of Aberdeen. She has spent many years working on the James Madison Carpenter project, based at the Elphinstone, and for the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. When not in a library, she may be found singing, dancing, and playing the fiddle and mandolin with a variety of groups in the Pacific Northwest, USA.

Folk Dance Remixed: playing, weaving and connecting with tradition

Folk Dance Remixed takes its inspiration from generating a creative playground to grow new and innovative ideas of mixing folk dance and music of many cultures with contemporary and street dance styles. We are excited by the similarities and differences in hip hop and folk dance; essentially, they have both come from the street and from the people; they both have social aspects and room for self-expression. The resulting synergy has creative impact and power.

As innovators, do we destroy tradition or ensure its survival? We will look at its unstoppable nature; how we feel we are speeding up an organic process; how reimagining tradition helps make folk dance relevant and engaging to today's society, and why we think this is important.

Our artists reflect contemporary society, and we explore fusions, challenge stereotypes, and create new, relevant performance and participation. We see street dance as the folk of the day, developed by the people, for the people.

Whilst we fuse dance styles, we strive to maintain a true sense of each tradition, demonstrated to a high standard. A section of morris dance might be fused with locking street dance, but it is important that audiences can see these styles in their distinctiveness. This provides them with something they recognise as well as something new, making it relevant in contemporary society, and inspiring joy in participation.

Folk Dance Remixed are a dance theatre company that create a sense of joy through performance and participation. Fusing traditional folk with contemporary Hip Hop dance and live music, they work across generations and cultures.

The company was born of a collaboration with the English Folk Dance and Song Society and East London Dance in 2010 and has been flourishing with their support ever since.

*Their specialist fusion engages old and new street dance, connects people to their recent and older histories and celebrates the diversity of styles in the company and in audiences. Led by Artistic Directors **Kerry Fletcher** (folk dance artist, member of Instep Research Team and EFDSS' Folk Education Network Co-ordinator) and **Natasha Khamjani** (street dance artist / Mass Movement (Olympics, Rugby League World Cup, Big Dance Bus, Commonwealth Games), they rediscover and reimagine old traditions through contemporary forms, and take it out on the streets through performances, Street Dance the Maypole workshops and participatory Ceilidh Jams. Performances and workshops are nearly always free, such as at town councils outdoor festivals, and are easily accessible to both watch and join in.*

Diversity is the heart of Folk Dance Remixed, with artists reflecting the makeup of today's society – creating stimulating collaborations, exploring fusions, challenging stereotypical preconceptions and creating new, contemporary, relevant performance and participation. Their work fosters social cohesion by bringing people of varied backgrounds and ages together and the workshops bring people together, strangers holding hands, laughing within minutes!

They are proud to be an Associate Company of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Sean Goddard

Tunes and dances: Is there a risk to introducing alternative tunes for folk dances?

Since Cecil Sharp first published his transcription of Playford's country dances during the first part of the twentieth century, there has developed a direct connection between the associated tune and dance of English folk dances. Many dancers are unable to comprehend dances being performed to anything other than the tune they know and recognise. If an alternative tune is used, they are bewildered.

The first part of the presentation will look at dances where a different tune has become firmly associated with the dance rather than its original collected or published tune and the effect this has on the dance. Amongst others, Cecil Sharp replaced the original tunes of Jacob Hall's 'Jig' and 'Picking Up Sticks' with the tunes 'Under and Over', and 'Lavena'. Likewise, many dances published in the Apted Collection in the 1930s also had tune changes.

— Are the replacement tunes better?

— What factors influenced the change the tunes?

Secondly, traditional dances such as ‘Cumberland Square Eight’, ‘Circassian Circle’, ‘Steamboat’ and ‘La Russe’ were collected during the twentieth century by collectors such as Maud Karpeles and Peter Kennedy. When the dance was first published, a suitable tune (sometimes it was the tune collected with the dance) was identified, subsequently recorded, and then it firmly became associated with the dance. Tunes include ‘My Love is But a Lassie Yet’, ‘Bonnie Dundee’, ‘Irish Washerwoman’ and ‘La Russe’.

— Why have these tunes been used for the same dance for nearly one-hundred years?

— Alternative tunes were and are available, why were they not used? Would a tune change improve the dance?

— Is there resistance to using or introducing alternative tunes?

This presentation will consider tune and dance association. It tries to answer the questions:

— Does the continual use of set or associate tunes inhibit dance innovation?

— Does the introduction of alternative tunes produce risk and reduce acceptance?

— Are the tunes used perpetuated by the published and recorded media?

Sean Goddard is currently studying for a PhD at the University of Sussex. His working title is: ‘Under the auspices of the English Folk Dance and Song Society: What was the role of 78 rpm records in the development of the Anglo-English dance repertoire?’

Sean is the Chair and Leader of the Keymer Folk Dance Club, where he is encouraging ten club members to call dances. Emphasis is on calling dances appropriate to a folk dance club and selecting suitable tunes, not always using standard tunes and recordings.

Earlier this summer, Sean was awarded the Gold Badge of the EFDSS. The ‘badge pinning-on’ ceremony will take place at Keymer, Sussex on 9th March, 2024.

Sean has a day-job. He is the Collection Services Librarian at the University of Sussex Library.

Simon Harmer

The Sailor and the Paramedic – my step dance heroes

This paper will examine how exploring popular dance from the past can act as a catalyst to promote the further creative evolution of dance forms with reference to the hornpipe and dancing sailors.

Simon Harmer’s interest in step dancing began through learning English clog steps when at university. More recently he has researched and promoted the informal, improvised step dancing of the southern counties. Simon also has an interest in what sailors may have danced on board ship. Another area of research is dance evolution, working in collaboration with street dance educator and choreographer Sasha Biloshisky. Simon has taught step dance virtually for festivals in the USA and Canada and during the pandemic collaborated with Ottawa Valley step dancer and musician April Verch on Steps From The Heart. Simon currently performs alongside clog dancer Toby Bennett in Lewis Wood’s Footwork show. Based in Hampshire, Simon is a Trustee of the Instep Research Team.

Peter Harrop

Dancing with tradition: grappling with ‘folk’

Our conference title presupposes folk as a straightforward term while recognising that the idea of tradition remains variously and enjoyably problematic for contemporary dancers. This paper references morris, sword and northern soul to ask whether grappling with the idea of folk might illuminate the ways in which contemporary dancers choose to engage with tradition?

The paper breaks that broad question down into a number of discussion points. Firstly, a reminder that folk and tradition are not consistently interchangeable terms. Secondly, while many dance forms acknowledge tradition only a few carry the label folk; does this separate us from a wider dance discourse? Thirdly, to acknowledge folk as a nineteenth century designation that was loosely based on dancers' cultural location; does this designation have contemporary application? Fourthly, detailed historical research has made clear that morris and sword dances existed 'pre-folk' for four centuries before being classified as folk; have since enjoyed simultaneous folk and non-folk status at various periods of their existence; and have arguably entered a 'post-folk' phase. How does this impact on conceptions of authenticity? Fifthly, while morris and sword dances have not been consistently folk dances they nevertheless continue to accumulate folklore and that remains a particular point of attraction. How is this incorporated into contemporary performance?

Peter Harrop is Professor Emeritus in Drama at the University of Chester, formerly Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor. During the late 60s and early 70s he danced and acted with Monkseaton Morrismen and Folk Dance Club which sparked a lifelong interest in customary performance. He went on to study drama and folklore gaining a PhD from the Institute of Dialect and Folklife Studies of Leeds University before going on to teach both practice and theory of drama. He has published in a range of folklore, theatre and performance studies journals. Recent books for Routledge include 'Mummers' Plays Revisited' (2020) and, with Steve Roud, 'The Routledge Companion to English Folk Performance' (2021). He also edited and introduced 'Staging, Playing, Pyrotechnics and Magic: Performance Conventions in Early English Theatre', a collection of essays by the theatre historian Philip Butterworth (2022).

Michael Heaney

Morris dance in theatre and community

The history of morris dancing has often been presented as its survival in lower-class communities disregarded by and uninfluenced by the wider elements of society, until its 'discovery' and revival at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, there is evidence to undermine this view, particularly in the north-west of England during the nineteenth century. Morris dancers from the community appeared on stage, and stage productions sought and incorporated local input to their performances. There are also other instances in which the worlds of 'traditional' morris and professional entertainment collided.

The paper will examine the circumstances of such interactions, particularly in the north-west of England, and draw some conclusions about their implications for the development of the dance.

The paper will draw primarily on material from my book 'The Ancient English Morris Dance' (2023).

Michael Heaney is musician for Eynsham Morris. He has conducted extensive research into and published widely on the history of morris dancing, culminating in the first comprehensive history of the subject, 'The Ancient English Morris Dance', published in March of this year.

Phil Heaton

Rapper as a multi-generational beacon of change

Before Cecil Sharp began looking at Sword Dancing in the North of England (DERT) he had been working within his EFDS circles to make the morris a skilled and worthy occupation. The influence of Mary Neal who was looking to give hope and joy to her lower class girls through a sort of reconstructed rural idyll seemed to Sharp to be missing the point of the morris. He perceived it as a working man's activity complete with standards and attainment. When he ventured North, the Sword Dance fulfilled this very ideal.

Moving from Yorkshire into Durham and Newcastle, Sharp ventured into a seam of activity based on the coal industry that was beyond his imagining. He recorded and published a few dances. Inadvertently naming it Rapper, Sharp unleashed a wave of activity that today is showing the potential to carry contemporary dance forward.

Phil Heaton moved south for work to Derby in the early 70s, following the reverse trail of many Midlands and Southern workers who had trekked north for work. The fact that a set of Rapper swords went to Derby with him was a signpost for the future.

Heaton became something of a missionary and was an originator of a sword dance team that was unbounded by the limits of the village traditions in Durham and Northumberland. He was also the originator of Dancing England, an annual event held in Derby where only English traditional dance forms and teams were on show. It became massively successful. However, the poor state of rapper worldwide was becoming a problem. Although originated in Derby, the Dancing England Rapper Tournament rapidly began to encourage rapper teams from the UK and Europe to improve their performances to match the newly sharply honed skills and dances of the winners. DERT is now an annual Event and attracts the best of the best to compete. DART is the American equivalent and is a direct offshoot of DERT which itself is an offshoot of the miner's competitive sword dances.

In 2006, Phil Heaton was awarded the EFDSS Gold Badge.

The book 'Rapper: The miner's sword dance of North East England' was published in 2012.

Lisa Heywood

Queering the dancefloor: The case for an evolving tradition

Imagine Cecil Sharp House's Kennedy Hall on a Saturday night. You walk through the entrance hall, past signs to the closest gender-neutral toilet. In the hall a dance is in full swing and it is packed with around 200 people in attendance. The majority are under 30 and have never been to a folk dance event before. People who identify as queer are the majority, but everyone is welcome. The dances are simple and fun, and joy radiates from the band, dancers and caller. In the interval everyone gathers to watch a drag performance, ranging from a circus themed drag king to a five piece drag boy band belting out 90s Boyzone classics.

As a queer person who grew up in the folk scene, it is almost hard to believe that the above scenario has actually taken place. However, far from being an optimistic daydream, I have been privileged to see this played out first hand as one of the callers for Queer Folk's Queer Ceilidh nights at Cecil Sharp House.

Drawing on my experiences of growing up attending folk dance events, calling for Queer Ceilidhs and many years of promoting gender free calling, I will be addressing the question 'Do invention and innovation destroy tradition or ensure its survival?'. I will argue that invention and innovation are key, if not essential, to the survival of tradition. In my experience dancers and callers are always modifying and adapting dances to create a tradition that suits their own individual preferences, as well as reflecting wider societal trends.

This is not to say we should not document and preserve the memory of how dances were done in the past. Rather to say that we should not be limited by this, and that we should consider modification and innovation as valid parts of a tradition that has never been static.

Lisa Heywood is a social folk dance caller with over ten years' experience of leading dances at public and private events. As the daughter of two dance musicians, she has been immersed in the modern English ceilidh/barn dance tradition from a young age. After finding fun and friendship at folk festivals through the youth folk arts project Shooting Roots, she discovered an interest in calling through Cat McGill's Calling Academy workshops. As a member of the Sheffield University Ceilidh Society, she developed further as a caller with guidance from caller John Brown. She also learned the skills of a dance organiser – holding committee roles from president to equipment officer.

Since her ceilidh society days, Lisa has been particularly interested in developing more inclusive calling techniques. She has written two articles for EDS magazine on the subject, as well as appearing on Radio 4's arts programme Front Row talking about gender-free dance calling.

She is also passionate about sharing knowledge and resources between callers. Through a regular online 'Callers Chat' group she has connected callers across the UK and beyond, as well as publishing dance resources through her blog.

Lisa now lives in the Midlands, working as a freelance caller as well as project managing an artist development programme for the arts charity Drake Music. You can find out more about her work at lisaheywood.net and on Facebook and Instagram at @LisaH.Dance

Maypole dancing in England: Revivals past, revivals present

Maypole dancing has long been a significant part of the English folk dancing landscape. This paper details and discusses the development of maypole dancing in England with a specific focus on key periods in the form's history when it was revived, reimagined and/or refashioned to suit changing tastes and values. After decades of repression, maypole dancing experienced a significant revival due in part to the restoration of the monarchy in the 17th century, however, there is very little research examining why the people of the mid-1600s felt this dance was worth reviving. Though aspects of the dance have changed there is a consistency in intention – regarding nostalgia, an imagined past, and hopeful future.

To provide necessary contextualisation, this paper discusses the technical specifics of both Early Modern and Modern maypole dances as well as their social contexts. It questions how attitudes towards revivals have changed and what might be learnt by studying past approaches. Discussion will also cover how having multiple versions of this folk dance, all arguably historical and/or traditional, could affect approaches to revival. This paper challenges modern approaches to folk dance revival by applying contemporary approaches to historical events and historical approaches to modern events. Its aim is to contribute to discussions surrounding the revival, reimagining and/or reconstruction of folk dances and to highlight that they are not only matters for the present but the past as well.

Bryony May Kummer-Seddon is a lecturer, artist, and theatre practitioner. She is currently undertaking a PhD in Performing Arts at the University of Lincoln. Beginning her academic journey with a degree in Scenography and Theatre Design at Aberystwyth University, Wales, she continued to London where she attained her Masters in Contemporary Performance Making at Brunel University. In 2016 she joined the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston, Jamaica, as the Senior Lecturer in Scenic Design, ultimately becoming the Head of the Technical Theatre Department. While in Jamaica she designed and/or otherwise contributed to numerous major productions including nationally recognised performances both inside and outside the tertiary education context. In 2017 she helped arrange the Rex Nettleford International Conference.

Coming from a foundation of design and experimental performance, her practice has expanded into the areas of history, heritage, and dance. Building on her personal experience of dancing the maypole as a child, maypole traditions are now her primary research focus. At present, her main study is her thesis which is entitled: 'Maypole Dancing as Microcosm: Performing Politics, Moralities and Identities in Seventeenth-Century England.'

Lally MacBeth

The Mock Morris: Explorations of automatonism in the landscape

Since 2016, Lally MacBeth has been exploring and making work inspired by the land, and ancient monuments using automatic processes. In this paper Lally will give a brief history of her artistic practice and her re-invention of morris with The Mock Morris, and explore how through artistic practice folk dance can be re-imagined, re-enchanted and revived for a new era of changing environments and climates.

The Mock Morris endeavours to explore the history of morris, mumming and masking in a surreal and playful way. Cecil Sharp described Morris dancing as having 'nothing sinuous in it, nothing dreamy, nothing left to the imagination'. The Mock Morris refutes this; morris dancing at its core is a nostalgic and eerie form of dance. It comes from no past and moves into no future, it inhabits an eerie space in which England's history has been smoothed into bells, clacks and hankies. A past and future in which bean-setting, dibbing and ploughing the land coalesce with beast and hillock. Mark Fischer states in 'The Weird and the Eerie' that:

"We could go so far as to say that it is the human condition to be grotesque, since the human animal is the one that does not fit in, the freak of nature who has no place in the natural order and is capable of re-combining nature's products into hideous new forms."

The Mock Morris aims to accelerate this uncomfortable fusion between human, landscape and beast into odd and (hopefully) intriguing performances that explore the at once changing and stagnant relationship humans have with the landscape they inhabit.

Lally MacBeth is an artist, writer and researcher. She studied at Central Saint Martins, and has since divided her time between being sensible and silly. Her work wanders the line between the real and the imaginary, taking in history, folklore, performance, ritual, and artifice along the way. In 2019 Lally founded The Folk Archive as a means to bring attention to the recording and preservation of customs, and objects that are in danger of going unrecorded or getting forgotten, and in 2021 co-founded Stone Club with Matthew Shaw.

Alex Merry, Stephen Rowley and Boss Morris

Boss Morris – From a Cotswold village hall to the Brits

Stephen Rowley talks to Alex Merry and the team about the origins of Boss Morris. What is Boss Morris? What are its influences? Is it traditional? Is it a tradition?

***Boss Morris** is a Morris dancing collective based in Stroud, Gloucestershire. It was founded in 2015 with the aim of bringing a fresh and energetic perspective to traditional English Morris dancing. The group performs a vibrant and playful style of dancing, characterised by intricate footwork, bright costumes and jingling bells. Boss Morris is dedicated to promoting the cultural heritage of Morris dancing and making it accessible to all.*

***Alex Merry** is not your typical artist. Her canvas is not confined to a studio; it stretches across meadows and village squares where tradition comes to life. Born into a family with a passion for the arts and a deep appreciation of the folklore of England, Alex Merry has carved a unique niche for herself in the world of Morris dancing and the folk community. While many artists find their inspiration in museums and galleries, Alex's muse lies within the rhythmic jingle of Morris bells and the swirl of colourful ribbons. As a founding member of Boss Morris, she has danced her way through countless festivals and celebrations, bringing ancient traditions to the forefront of modern consciousness.*

Incorporating her artistic skills into her Morris dancing, Alex often designs and creates intricate costumes and folk beasts. Her keen eye for detail and a deep appreciation for the aesthetic aspects of Morris dancing have made her a sought-after artisan in the folk community. Alex actively promotes Morris traditions and folk culture through her art, teaching and involvement in the community. She believes in the power of these traditions to unite people, celebrating the richness of England's folklore.

***Stephen Rowley** is founder of the Mummers Symposium in 2011 and the Pipe and Tabor Symposium in 1999. He has been involved in morris dance since the early 1970s and was co-founder of Rose Moresk and Redding Moreys, both action research projects to explore what early morris might have looked like. Since 2000 he has been regularly participating in traditional dance and music festivals and conferences in Spain with a particular interest in the traditions of Catalunya. Former squire of Beaux of London City Morris Men and Plymouth Morris Men. He supported Alex Merry in the foundation of Boss Morris, as their first foreman and musician.*

Chloe Middleton-Metcalf

How do we strip back the willow? Traditionality, familiarity, and the 'living tradition' in English social folk dance

This talk will critically examine the relationship between traditionality and familiarity in English social folk dance. For many years standardisation of repertoire and style has been avoided amongst enthusiasts of this dance form, and participants enjoy sampling choreography drawn from over 400 years of records. Of course, there will always be arguments about which choreography should be in a 'folk' repertoire: 'Black Nag' or 'Palais Glide'? But I believe that there are elements to fostering a dance tradition which should come from knowledge of the dance itself. There is power and agency for experienced dancers to have familiarity with the repertoire to know a dance.

After critically examining current practice I will present a case study for an alternative approach, the monthly dance sessions at Samuel's Rest in Hampshire led by Jo and Simon Harmer. These dance events feature two types of dancing (although there is some overlap between the two styles): improvised step dancing, and social dances drawn from the collecting of Alice Gillington. I will give an overview of my impression of the event, and I will then explain how the dances at Samuel's Rest are different to most English social folk dance events.

I will conclude by considering in greater depth the relationship between familiarity and traditionality in an English social folk dance context. I will examine the idea that familiarity with repertoire and tunes can impart a greater sense of traditionality amongst, and between, participants and onlookers. Moreover, I will argue that familiarity in this sense is necessary to foster a truly 'living tradition', as it provides an internalised framework from which dancers can adapt a dance, and truly make it their own.

Chloe Middleton-Metcalf started life with an interest in garment-making and history which eventually transmogrified into a passion for traditional dance research. Her PhD was the first in-depth study of post WWII social folk dance development in England. Publications include: 'An Introductory Bibliography of Traditional Social Folk Dance' for the VWML (2019); 'Douglas Kennedy and Folk Dance in English Schools' in *The Routledge Companion to English Folk Performance* (2021); and a *Folk Music Journal* article on social dance in Adrian Bell's 1930s biographic novel 'The Cherry Tree' (2022). Her current research interest is couple dance and eponymous tune 'Varsoviana' and its various offshoots. She is a board member of *Folk Music Journal*, and a trustee of the *Instep* dance research team. Further information can be found at middleton-metcalf.weebly.com

Grace Redpath

'The magic was still in my heart like an old sweet pain': Revisiting longsword in East Cleveland and prospects of revival

This paper is about the custom of longsword dance in the region of East Cleveland, and the possibility of revival locally in a post-industrial landscape. It is based upon recent preliminary Ph.D. research examining the lack of presence of the Yorkshire tradition of longsword in East Cleveland museums. Here emphasis is placed on the region's steel heritage, despite Longsword having been performed by iron stone miners. Placing the village of Skelton at the heart of this paper, through examining Cecil Sharp's notes and observations, the history of the dance in the area is revisited, alongside Rolf Gardiner's 1925 fieldwork and darker nationalistic relationship with the North Skelton White Rose Team. I discuss the possibilities of reviving the dance as a means of amending such tainted histories, as well as, using revival or even still, reimagination, as a form of engagement with young adults on a museum site, (as demonstrated in "prog-morris" sides in the South of England). At the same time I justify why such an innovation would not destroy tradition.

Grace Redpath is based south of the River Tees in the East Cleveland village of Skelton-in-Cleveland, and graduated from the University of Brighton in 2022 with an MA in Curating Collections and Heritage. She runs the Instagram account @fortyyearsina Moorland parish – a visual archive shining a light on North Yorkshire's folklore and customs. In the past month, she has taken up the role of Learning Manager at Land of Iron in nearby Skinningrove, having previously acted as Project Cataloguer for Teesside Archives on the Teesworks Collection, and Assistant Curator at community gallery, The Redcar Palace. Since May 2021 she has also been one-third of North East Statues, (northeaststatues.com) a project that explores public art and memory in the Tees Valley and East Cleveland.

Derek Schofield

Folk dance and the new Northumbrians

Cecil Sharp's collection and publication of traditional country dances was limited to the eighteen dances contained in 'The Country Dance Book Part I' (1909). Thereafter, he concentrated on the historical dances published in the various editions of Playford's 'The (English) Dancing Master' from 1651 onwards. Sharp died in 1924, and by the late 1920s/early 1930s, it was clear to Douglas Kennedy, his successor as Director of the EFDS/EFDS, that change was needed in both the style and repertoire of the folk dance revival, especially after the response to the English dancing in Copenhagen in 1931: "Do you not have any social folk dances? - These are only beautiful little ballets".

Maud Karpeles's 1931 publication of traditional dances she collected in Northumberland, Cumberland and elsewhere was the start of a new repertoire of traditional dances. This paper examines Karpeles's collecting in Northumberland and in particular the assistance she received from folk dance enthusiasts in the area, within a wider context of interest in the life and history of Northumberland.

Derek Schofield is a doctoral student at De Montfort University, researching aspects of the English folk dance revival. He is the reviews editor of the Folk Music Journal and a former editor of English Dance and Song magazine. He was awarded the EFDSS Gold Badge in 2009. He is a retired college manager.

Liz Scholey and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Panel of the Joint Morris Organisations

An examination of the songs used in morris dance

In (primarily Cotswold) Morris, songs are habitually used at the beginning of certain dances, they help to announce to the audience that the dance is about to start and add energy to the performance. Often, they are sung without paying attention to the words, the song is just part of what is always done.

Recently questions have been raised about the meaning of the words, and certain song lyrics have been subject to scrutiny. This has been brought to the attention of members of the recently established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Panel (EDIP) of the Joint Morris Organisations (JMO), as a result of which a piece of work has been carried out by the EDIP to review morris songs used today.

The Panel designed a questionnaire to survey teams in membership of the JMO.

Is the use of 'traditional' songs that could cause people to take offence still a valid part of our performance? Are modern Morris teams moving away from this practice and editing lyrics? What do those who participate have to say about the songs?

The analysis of the responses to the questionnaire will be presented to the JMO and shared with this conference, with recommendations for progressing the work.

Liz Scholey is presenting the paper as a representative of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Panel (EDIP) of the Joint Morris Organisations (JMO).

Other members of the EDIP involved in the presentation:

Jen Cox (she/her) – Chair of Open Morris

Roary Neat (they/them) – Morris Federation EDPI Representative

Matthew Turvey – West Midlands Area Rep, Morris Ring EDIP Representative.

Fee Lock – JMO Secretary, formerly Secretary of the Morris Federation

Liz Scholey is an officer (Treasurer) of Open Morris, one of the three constituent organisations of the JMO. She is a morris dancer, and dance is her profession and her passion. She is a qualified dance teacher (AISTD) and owns a dance business teaching her own classes, working for local organisations, and in schools. As well as teaching, she is a caller for barn dances, hoedowns, ceilidhs, and an entertainer for all manner of parties and events.

Prior to working in dance full time, she was a Human Resources director at a university and has worked at a senior level in education and health. Her responsibilities included managing equality and diversity across the university community. She has worked on issues relating to gender equality in science and technology and was one of the originators of the Athena, now Athena Swan project. In addition, she was a committee member of a Race Equality Council and involved in both strategy and individual case work.

The establishment of the EDIP brought together her work in dance and her expertise and experience in promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion for the benefit of the morris community.

What is a tradition? Examining Devon stepdance from a personal perspective

Devon stepdancing is known particularly for its annual competition at the Dartmoor Folk Festival. Lisa learnt to dance in this tradition from those who grew up when it was a vibrant and very popular pastime, being danced in a range of social settings, but by the time they were older, it was little known or performed in the following generations. Having been passed on a diminished tradition, with the old dancers desperate that it continued, Lisa describes the journey to today where the tradition is no longer in danger of being lost, and is finding audiences beyond the borders of Devon.

In this short talk, Lisa will look at the practice of Dartmoor Stepdance, its context, participation, influences and transmission, and particularly the historical and social context in which the dancers of the last generation learnt to dance and competed, and compare to the current context - what the tradition gives us today, and how a new unfolding of the tradition is currently a journey of discovery.

Lisa Sture learnt to stepdance in 1980, when stepdancing had almost disappeared in Devon. Older people talked about it, but few could do any steps. Lisa had the fortune to meet Les Rice, the champion of his generation, Jack Rice and Bob Cann and learnt to dance. She started teaching and helped Bob Cann to restart a competition on Dartmoor. She was also fortunate to meet the Romany Gypsy Orchard family; Tom and Jean, and their relations and friends, are stepdancers and have been a great inspiration and influence over the years.

Lisa is a four times Dartmoor stepdance champion, and member of the Instep Research Team. As part of a 2017 Heritage Lottery funded project, she carried out extensive research into stepdancing on Dartmoor. As part of the project, Lisa authored a short booklet on Devon Stepdancing called, 'Dartmoor Stepdancing: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow', which is available as a pdf from the Instep Research Team website. In 2019 she delivered a presentation at the 'Stepping On' Conference at Cecil Sharp house.

Lisa is also a fiddler, having learnt from older players and playing for Dartington Morris. She has played in a number of ceilidh bands, and was a founder of the ceilidh band Stomp. She runs a long-running session in Newtown, mid-Wales and calls for the Shrewsbury ceilidh club, Shrophoppers.

Wendy Timmons and Iliyana Nedkova

Pomegranates, sowing the seeds of international traditional dance across Edinburgh: Thriving not surviving

The purpose of this presentation is to articulate recent developments within the Traditional Dance Forum for Scotland (TDFS) and its broader remit and re-imagined role within dance traditions practice in Scotland. We will demonstrate how the TDFS works across traditional arts networks and the contemporary art world, including policymakers, cultural, artistic and educational organisations to create and extend opportunities for dance traditions in Scotland to flourish. In the context of globalization, it is important to preserve and develop national cultural traditions, especially dance, which is known to contribute to the improvement of relations between countries and peoples, as well as to disperse cultural barriers. Re-imagined and framed in our vision for belonging, inclusion, free membership, festivals, productions, publications, commissions, residencies and events; the forum promotes intercultural exchange and dialogue through dance. We will discuss how the forum unites and explores possibilities while traversing traditions, art forms and national difference in the contemporary world. This will be demonstrated and exemplified through a case study of 'Pomegranates', the TDFS's contemporary world dance festival, that provides opportunity across art forms (dance, poetry, storytelling, visual arts). We argue that this experience allows participants and audiences to explore the unfamiliar and expand their comfort zone, addressing and re-thinking identity, lifestyle, relationships, beliefs, and values.

Wendy Timmons advocates for dance nationally and internationally both as the Convenor for the Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland Board of Trustees and the Health and Wellbeing Trustee at Dance Base, Scotland's national centre for dance. She also serves on the Editorial Board for Research in Dance Education Journal. Wendy is a Senior Lecturer in Dance Science and Education at Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh.

With over forty years' experience working with dance artists and teachers, she completed her PhD at the University of Edinburgh and continues her research in dance medicine and science seeking to enable dancers to realise their full potential.

In addition, Timmons plays an active role as a curator, working to reimagine and produce dance works that motivate the artists involved and their audiences. More about this curatorial work can be found at: <https://linktr.ee/wtimmons>

Iliyana Nedkova is a curator of contemporary and traditional performing arts, as well as visual arts and crafts. Her interests include arts and activism, artist's moving image culture, women artists practices, intangible cultural heritage and literature in translation.

Most recently Iliyana held curatorships at Peace & Justice (Scotland) (2020-22); Perth Theatre and Concert Hall where she founded the Threshold artspace (2005-20) commissioning and acquiring 350 works by over 150 artists, as well as at Screen.dance – Scotland's festival of dance on screen (2016-21), Sofia's ARC Projects (2007-10), Edinburgh's Stills (2001-03) and Liverpool's Foundation for Art & Creative Technology (1996-01).

Iliyana holds a MPhil in Curating Contemporary Art from Liverpool John Moores University and a MLitt in English and American Studies with History and Theory of Culture from the University of Sofia. As a writer, speaker and literary translator, Iliyana has contributed to a wide range of conferences, publications and books.

Deborah Ward

From Elva Hill to Loch Sunart: Adapting folk tales into folk ballets whilst exploring the traditional balletic and folk dance language

As a choreographer I have been re-imagining ballet vocabulary to tell stories for some time and in 2019, in collaboration with folk artist Lucy Ward, I developed a folk ballet 'The Sisters of Elva Hill' which premiered at Cambridge Folk Festival. During the research for that work I explored the phrasing, footwork and floor patterns of some morris and rapper dance forms and adapted elements to inform the balletic language. Emerging from that initial performance project the company Ballet Folk has since established a theatrical form positioning multi-faceted folk artists, dancers and musicians in the performance space to create contemporary adaptations of folk tales from across the British Isles. Centring our most recent works 'The Tears of Jenny Greenteeth' (2022) and 'The Swan of Salen' (2023) as case studies, this paper offers an opportunity to demonstrate the similarities found in traditional ballet and some folk dance vocabulary which have emerged from the research, whilst also positioning the validity and relevance of these innovative 'folk ballets' as a contemporary medium to engage new audiences for both ballet and folk dance/music.

Deborah Ward is a dance artist, and an early career researcher and PhD candidate at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where she is exploring narrative works by women ballet choreographers through a feminist narratological lens. Deborah is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, a committee member for DanceHE, and Vice-Chair of the British and International Federation of Festivals. Deborah is the Director/Choreographer of Ballet Folk and has presented work internationally in both educational and professional settings.



JOIN US!

At the English Folk Dance and Song Society (Reg. Charity no.305999), we champion the folk arts at the heart of England's rich and diverse cultural landscape.

- * We deliver national initiatives in learning and participation, artist and educator development, research, discovery, advocacy, practitioner networking and more
- * We manage Cecil Sharp House, the UK's only arts venue dedicated to folk music and dance
- * We are custodians of the internationally significant folk library and archive at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library
- * We run the National Youth Folk Ensemble, as part of a national youth programme

Our members are our valued advocates and supporters in championing the folk arts throughout England. You can join them for only £2 a month!

But membership is much more than a simple financial transaction – it's about joining a vibrant and far-reaching community of folk advocates. You'll receive our members-only email newsletters, and we'll also send you one of our exclusive FOLK pin badges (shown above) as a small but significant symbol of our shared commitment to folk. Growing our membership base is also crucial in helping us to secure support from funding partners.

Join us now, or make a one-off or regular donation:
efdss.org/support-us

BROADSIDE DAY 2024

Saturday 17 February 2024, Cecil Sharp House

The Broadside Day is the annual one-day conference for people interested in street literature and cheap print in all its fascinating aspects – broadsides, chapbooks, songsters, woodcuts, engravings, last dying speeches, catchpennies, news (real and fake), almanacs, carol sheets, wonder tales, and all kinds of cheap printed ephemera sold or distributed to ordinary people in the streets and at fairs, from peddlars' packs, and in back-street shops, up and down the country.

Organised jointly by the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and the Traditional Song Forum, the 2024 Broadside Day will be an in-person event at Cecil Sharp House.

Food will not be provided but refreshments will be available throughout the day from the onsite café.

Book now: efdss.org/BroadsideDay

LIBRARY LECTURES 2024

The next round of lectures will take place on Zoom, and are on sale now on our website, priced at £5 each or £15 for the whole series.

Stephen Rowley

**Sticks, Bells and Baldrics:
Ball de Bastons – a Catalan
tradition evolving with the times**
Tuesday 16 January | 7.30pm

Stephen Rowley examines the history and contemporary survival of a Catalan dance form which has much in common with morris dancing, showing how the folk music and dance community can work together to ensure the continuation of tradition.

Frances Wilkins

**Seinn Spioradail: Sacred
soundscapes of Scotland's
Highland and Island
communities**

Tuesday 13 February | 7.30pm

Frances Wilkins shares the findings of her project on singing and belief in the Gaelic tradition of the West Highlands and Western Isles.

Adèle Commins

**Shaping and controlling
tradition: Charles Villiers
Stanford's contributions to
the preservation and
reworking of folk melodies**
Tuesday 12 March | 7.30pm

In the centenary of his death, Adèle Commins highlights the use of folk melodies in the music of Stanford, his involvement with the Folk Song Society, and his contribution to debates on folk music in education at the turn of the twentieth century.

Nigel Tallis

**Seeing music: George Scharf and
the street musicians of London**

Tuesday 16 April | 7.30pm

Nigel Tallis introduces the work of Bavarian expat artist George Scharf (1788-1860), which depicts the music and dance of Georgian London's streets, and may hint at the origins of some of English folk culture's traditional beasts.

On sale soon at efdss.org

**Christmas
Challenge**

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From Tuesday 28th November to midday on 5th December, donations made to the English Folk Dance and Song Society through The Big Give website will be doubled.

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