

# WROUGHTON RANT

## Wroughton Folk Dance Club's Newsletter



**October 2016**

**Number 115**



### Chairman's Chat

When we were due to restart after the summer break, Clive learned that the work on the central heating in the Infants School hall was not finished and the hall was unusable. However the school had arranged for us to use the hall in the Junior School but that had a troubled start, now resolved. It has meant a lot of work for Clive in organising us and the equipment usually stored in the Infants School; he now has to transport this from home each week. On a positive note, the temporary venue has good parking and a larger space for dancing. Some members like the Junior School hall better than the Infants' hall but not all. The committee discussed this at the meeting on 20 September and agreed to investigate availability, costs and reliability.

The club's finances continue to be in good shape and so we decided to donate £100 to NYFTE (National Folklore Troupe of England), a group of talented young people who practice dance, song and music-playing. You may have seen them perform at Chippenham Folk Festival. They are trying to raise £20,000 to replace their team van and some costumes which are 20 years old.

Geoff Elwell came as our guest caller on 21 September and remembered that it was in the Junior School hall that the club held its meetings 30 years ago. June told us that she remembered

those early meetings too. It seemed to me that the dances Geoff called were a bit more challenging than usual. What did you think?

At the beginning of July, Ted Morse had given us a lively evening when he came as a guest caller with three musicians, Pat, Lisa and Graham. He taught us some different moves such as north-country lady's chain and ricochet reel to add to our repertoire. He commended us for the number of younger members and for the speed with which we understood what to do, requiring fewer walk-throughs.

The first of the garden dances in the garden of Julia and Francis had good weather all day, lasting into the evening. Francis and Glenys shared the calling but numbers of dancers were down on previous years and sometimes only one 4-couple set was made up. However, those eight people danced enthusiastically and almost like a demonstration team.

A fortnight later, Brian Cassidy hosted the last outdoor evening in memory of Margy and to raise funds for Prospect Hospice with Clive as caller. Because darkness was drawing in, the last evening of the summer break, hosted by Rob and me, was indoors at Liddington Village Hall. All the summer dances were attended by around 20 people. The committee will be discussing what to do and where in 2017 at its next meeting so do tell us your thoughts on what to do in the summer break.

Michelle has told us that she will be joining the crew of a cruise ship as a personal fitness trainer and will be away for a minimum of 10 months. This is a career-change for her and we wished her *bon voyage* on 14 September.

The website [setandturnsingle.com](http://setandturnsingle.com) acknowledges that it is sponsored by Wroughton Folk Dance Club. The site lists events all over the country which can be useful if you are on holiday, but I'm missing the paper version which had so much of interest in it.

*Pat*

**Club website: [www.http://wroughtonfdc.btck.co.uk/](http://wroughtonfdc.btck.co.uk/)**

## Halsway Manor, Xmas 2015 to September 2016, a musical journey

For the first time, I went to Halsway Manor for Christmas. I stayed in my old Autosleeper camper van, which saves me about £100 a visit but allows me to enjoy full board food – they really do cater well for me - Vegan / Vegetarian, and I have use of the showers in the main building. I parked the van in the private courtyard behind the Annexe, sleeping in a lightweight, panelled “fisherman’s suit”, with feet, hands and a hood; I felt like a Yeti.

There were around 45 people there. Music was provided by Dampier’s Round - Peter and Moira. The caller was Ted Morse - another club favourite. Pete and Marge Hendy and Chris Turner and Elaine were there. I went to the music workshops, led by Peter and Moira. There were about a dozen of us; Peter and Moira on guitar / flute and harp / fiddle respectively with Pete on tuba, the rest on double bass, guitars, trumpet, melodeon, bodhran / percussion, whistle and me on Tenor Ukulele.

We had been sent the music to learn about 10 days earlier. Some tunes we knew music scores plus chords for guitar, ukulele etc., but no accompanying words. The Dambusters March is quite technical. I hadn’t read sheet music since 1978/9, so actually getting the timing and phrasing right to play in an “orchestra” was a steep learning curve. Two very intensive 2 hour music rehearsals, one on Christmas Eve, one on Christmas Day, and we were ready to play for about 1 1/2 hours on Boxing Day for the other guests to dance to our band, nerve racking, but it went well.

On Boxing Day, I was St George in the Mummers Play, fighting Chris Turner, an excellent Turkish Knight. 35 years ago, I was always the “baddie” in the Highworth Folk Club Mummers, having a 5ft dragon’s tail or fighting St George with a pair of 2ft wooden scissors.

### **April: Beginners Nyckelharpa weekend.**

What is a Nyckelharpa? It’s a Swedish folk instrument that looks like an overgrown Viola but has 16 strings, 4 main ones each having 3 “sympathetics” which resonate with it, plus, 33 keys (3 rows of 11). It’s played with a bow, with keys held down to form chords.

Trying to read sheet music, use a bow for the first time (my usual bow requires arrows) and to learn to use the keys was a challenge. But I'm going back in September having acquired a 3rd hand Nyckelharpa (the price of a new one starts at £1400).

### **April: English Playford weekend.**

I was joined the following weekend by Jean, Ian and Roma for an excellent weekend of Playford dance led by Andrew Swaine, one of the younger and very accomplished callers getting a big name. I know Dan is a fan too! Lots of familiar faces. Brilliant that we have a few younger people in our club.

In the days between these courses there was a reunion event for people who had attended Martyn Wyndham-Read's folk festival at his home when he lived in France. Because I was joining them for meals and knew a few of them: Martyn, Jonny Coppin, Mike Silver as singers for many years, I got invited to some of their events. A real bonus.

### **July: Guitar and Ukulele, consecutive weekends.**

My second visit to both of these workshop events. The first weekend was guitar, quite difficult learning DADGAD and "C" tunings instead of EADGBE, so new chord shapes. But for folk singing, once mastered, DADGAD offers so many easier to play options. Brilliant tutors who are outstanding musicians. But the highlight for me was Kitty Macfarlane, an immensely talented 22 year-old singer and song-writer (in the folk tradition) who has begun to make a name. She is going to be a big star. Loved by the tutors and was endorsed by one of the Luthiers, there to sell his hand-made instruments, he presented her with a guitar worth more than £3,500! One very happy young lady!

Ukulele is my "first instrument". I've been playing for almost 3 years, mainly tenor but I also have a "concert" (next up from soprano) and a baritone, and soon will have a bass. I



play in RWBU3A Ukes and have recently joined Swindon Ukulele Club, moving from Old Town Ukes.

The weekend was led by Jon Bennett from Oxford and the wonderful Sara Spade from Northampton (The Ukulele Lady), star of Marlborough Jazz Festival and Uke Festivals. I started with Sara's Intermediate Workshops, but she transferred me to Advanced for her Jazz Chords Made Simple session (they are pigs), and I was also told to go to Jon's Advanced Fingerpicking Workshop, which was a compliment. I held my own, understood it all but need many hours, days, weeks, to exploit it.

### **September: Nyckelharpa Festival**

42 people played. There were 3 tutors, Vicki Swan (the organiser from the UK - look up the brilliant Vicki Swan and Jonny Dyer, great folk club act and also Playford Musicians), Magnus Holmström from Sweden - 3 times World Nyckelharpa Champion and Johannes Mayr from Germany. As well as people from the UK those attending the weekend included four players from Sweden, my friends from the April weekends, the lovely Silke from Munich and Amadee from Belgium. There will probably be four tutors next year, it's growing!



Unfortunately, a week before attending this course, a Stagecoach bus rammed my car across the road in Tewkesbury, writing it off and giving me a whiplash injury. The Nyckelharpa is heavy and hangs on a strap round the neck, and after 20 minutes I had to stop playing and for the rest of the weekend, just watch and listen. Really frustrating as it was my first weekend away with my third-hand Nyckelharpa that I acquired recently. Great music, and I'm looking forward to being there again in March and September next year.

### **September: English Playford and Scottish weekend**

This is the 3rd time Jean and I have gone to this event. Those attending were mainly people we had met for the last 2 years.

There was good music, good dancing, good food and nice people. We had a new and excellent teacher for Scottish. Although some steps are similar, it is very different from English Dance. The slip stepping really requires concentration and is tough on the knees. On Saturday there was a Dress up Ball, only a couple of us in Playford outfits but a lot of kilts. I was really pleased that I only had to sit out a few dances late Saturday and Sunday morning due to my neck. I hope to go again next year, plus the 50th Bristol Playford Ball in Bristol in November and Playford again at Halsway in April 2017.

*Alan*

## English Country Dancing in New York

During my recent stay in New York, I discovered that the club 'Country Dance \* New York' was having its first meeting after the summer break. The club meets in the basement of the Church of the Village on West 13th Street and runs two sessions on Tuesday evenings. One session starts in a side hall at 7pm for beginners while more experienced dancers arrive at 7.30pm and dance until 10pm with a refreshment break half-way through the evening. The newcomers join in the main dancing at 8pm when they are partnered by the club's experienced dancers. There were about 40 dancers present. A Contra dance club meets at the same venue on Saturday evenings (unlike in the UK, Americans dance an evening of either ECD or Contra but not a mixed evening).

The caller for the evening was Tom Amessé and live music was provided by the band The Flying Romanos. I have come across this band at various festivals in the UK when they have come over here (although not for some years). As well as calling English Country Dance, Tom also calls Contras and Traditional Square Dance. The Flying Romanos have produced three CDs which callers use from time to time at Wroughton.

Despite New York having a heatwave during my stay I decided to visit CD\*NY. The cost of entry for the evening is \$12 (about £9 at the current exchange rate). As soon as I arrived I was asked to dance by Tom's wife Susan and after that I didn't miss a dance as all

the ladies wanted to dance with me, including, for the last dance, Orly Krasner (a caller and writer of dances who will be one of the callers at Lichfield Folk Festival next year). The dances consisted of a mixture of old and new dances, clearly explained and where necessary demonstrated by Tom and Susan. We danced 'Sapphire Sea', a new dance by Christine Robb set to a lovely tune by Emily Troll and Amelia Mason, which is proving popular in the States and over here (unfortunately it is not published yet and the music has not been recorded; it can be seen on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-8LyExynvA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-8LyExynvA)). Tom managed to get everyone, including the beginners, through Mary K which is quite a challenging dance as we have found out when we have danced it at Wroughton.

I was invited to go to the club at Westchester, north of Manhattan, for its meeting on the Thursday evening but temperature, humidity and full day of sightseeing took their toll and I did not make it.

The club loves to have visiting callers/dancers from England. This year they have had visits from Rosemary and Steve Hunt (Orion's Ring) and Victoria and Dave Yeomans (Deo Volente) and were looking forward to visits next year from Robert Moir and Andrew Shaw. Had he known I was coming Tom said he would have invited me to call a dance - perhaps next time if I go to New York again.

*Rob*

## The Folk Year – Autumn

Travelling in the Middle Ages and even up to the 18th century was a bit hit and miss to say the least especially as the 'dark months' took hold.

Throughout the country the provision of food and shelter for poorer travellers was a common form of Christian charity. Principally provided by the monastic houses up until the Reformation it then fell to kindly individuals either by personal involvement or the gift of money to provide (or dole) out food and shelter through Wayfarers Charities.

The oldest of these is not too far away, at the Hospital of St Cross in Winchester, and was first established in 1136 when Henry

de Blois founded the hospital to give an abode for 13 poor men and to provide free meals for up to 100 poor people each day. In 1446 Cardinal Beaufort added another alms house to it, the 'Noble Poverty', for those of noble rank who had fallen on hard times through no fault of their own. Both doles apparently still exist but these days are limited to 32 persons per day and consist of a slice of bread and a small measure of ale.

Another form of aid to the weary traveller would be the ringing of the village bells about 8pm every winter's night to guide them to safety. The significance of this is perhaps difficult to comprehend in our age of sat-navs, but once they were literally lifesavers. When roads were merely ill-kept muddy tracks full of potholes and devoid of signage, travelling across some desolate moor or thick wood in foggy or snowy weather with the ever present danger of footpads could be an extremely alarming experience. The sound of a distant church bell frequently restored a sense of direction in a bemused traveller and put them on their way again. So it's not surprising that many of those who had been saved from peril should wish to ensure that others should be similarly helped and left money for this purpose.

In 1691 John Carey of Woodstock provided for what is locally known as the "Lost i' the Dark Bell" to be rung every evening from Michaelmas to Lady Day. About 10 miles further east, at Charlton-on-Otmoor, the old Curfew bell served the same admirable purpose every evening from 11th October until 25th March thanks to the generosity of one Thomas Tryte who had himself become lost on the moor. The custom here, like so many others, ceased only on the outbreak of the Second World War when the church bells were silenced for normal purposes, only to be used as an invasion signal.

Probably the best recompensed however were the parish church bell ringers of Twyford in Hampshire. Their ringing saved a horseman from falling into a deep chalk pit and in his will he provided not only for an annual peal of the bells on the anniversary of his salvation on October 7th but for a subsequent feast for them all.

*Clive* (Source – British Folk Customs by Christina Hole)



## Dan's Dancing Diary

The summer feels like a distant memory now but Sidmouth and Broadstairs folk festivals are still quite memorable themselves. What was most notable about both festivals was the opportunity to practice calling. Sidmouth had one square dancing calling workshop a day run by Geoff Cubitt and, besides being a great caller, he is also a great teacher. I learned a lot in those sessions including patter calling and making it up on the spot! That was the scariest bit of calling I've ever done: I got people up on the floor, told the band I wanted American jigs, they started playing and I was calling only as fast as I could think of dance moves. Much to my surprise it was a huge success, calling a whole variety of moves, using a few patter calls (getting an impressed ooohh from the dancers) and even ending the dance with everyone back with their partners.

The week after Sidmouth I went to Broadstairs and got my first artist's ticket! The festival's dance director, Madeleine Smith, granted me the opportunity for more calling at the new caller's showcase and part of the family ceilidh in the main venue on the promenade. It was at this festival that I met Nicolas Broadbridge with whom I made good friends. He specialises in calling for Playford balls and taught us some quite challenging dances. He sold me some music and allowed me to photograph a lot of his dances which has helped with my collection immensely. Mark Elvins was one of the headlining callers who gave me helpful advice and even let me call a dance on one of his evenings. I also met a band called the Bristol Ceilidh Quartet who are incredible musicians, and I can't wait to call with them again.

They were close to becoming the band to play at Michelle's leaving do but she declined and instead I used some recorded music, which went down a treat. There were around sixty people, most of whom got up and danced and thoroughly enjoyed it. Several people came up and said what a great time they'd had, even despite the massive hall being very echoey.

All in all, a great summer break, catching up with folkie friends and getting a lot of calling practice.

*Dan*

## Autumn Dance on Sunday 30 October

We are lucky to have attracted Rhodri Davies as the caller as he is skilled in calling both Playford and contra dances. He is a popular caller at Halsway Manor and at major festivals. Having become involved with folk dancing at Manchester University where he studied computer science, he married a folk dancer and now lives in Stockport.

The musicians will be Paul Hutchinson on accordion and Fiona Barrow on violin. Both are professional musicians who play together or with various others, Paul with Paul Sartin as Belshazzar's Feast and Fiona with Eddie Jay as the Bristol Players. We are in for a treat!

*Pat*

## Notes on the Dances of the Month by Pat

### Paradise Circus (*October*)

This dance is by John Meechan in 4-couple longways sets with the 1s and 3s improper. Trevor Monson called it at Rob's birthday dance last September. There isn't a special tune for it so we shall be dancing to the tune Out of the Box on a Stowfolk CD. It is the easiest of the dances of the month this year.

### Rita's Smile (*November & December*)

The music for this dance is Winter Dreams Waltz by Jonathan Jensen. (We have done Gary Roodman's dance to this tune.) Ian McFarlane wrote this dance which Caroline enjoyed when she was visiting her mother's club. It has six couples in two longways sets which rearrange themselves across the room, up and down the room or in a circle. Those of us who went to Chateau Impney danced it with Ian calling and that certainly helped us to see how it worked, at the time! Rob has drawn various diagrams to help to revise it. Fingers crossed!

# Dance Diary September to November 2016

# October 2016

- 1 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance**, in aid of Wiltshire Air Ambulance, 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Malcolm Mace. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.
- 8 Highnam Dance**, 2.00pm at Highnam Community Centre, Newent Road, Highnam, Gloucester, GL2 8DG. Robert Moir, Bernie Culkin, Pat Hicks, Linda Selwood and Hazel Moir. Cake and Refreshments included in £3 entry fee. Contact: Bernie Culkin on 07821 106052.
- 8 St Andrew's Assembly ECD Club, Dance**, 2.30pm at Cumnor Village Hall, Leys Road, Cumnor, OX2 9QF. Keith Orchard with Merry Andrew. Contact: Ken & Ruth on 01235 831409.
- 8 Salisbury Autumn Tea Dance**, 3.00 to 6.00pm at St Martin's School, Shady Bower, Salisbury, SP1 2RG. Carol Hewson with Pendragon. Contact: Dave Tullis on 01980 863024.
- 15 Oxfordshire FDA, Playford Ball**, 7.30pm at Steventon VH, The Green, OX13 6RR. Val & Ian McFarlane with Folkus Pocus. Contact: Peter & Sheila on 01865 372344.
- 29 Weston Super Mare FDC, Dance**, 8.00pm to 11.00pm at Shipham Village Hall, Winscombe, BS25 1SG. Frances Oates with The Weston Country Dance Band. Contact: 01934 514226.

**0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0**

- 30 Wroughton FDC, Autumn Dance**, 2.00pm, Royal Wootton Bassett Memorial Hall, SN4 8EN. Rhodri Davies with Paul Hutchinson, Fiona Barrow. Contact Clive & Wendy Harman on 01793 725825 .

**0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0~0**

## November 2016

- 5 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance,** 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Colin Moore. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.
- 5 Westbury FDC, Dance.** 7.30pm to 10.30pm at Westbury Leigh Community Hall, Westbury Leigh, Westbury, BA13 3SQ. Jean Foster with recorded music. Contact: Anne Polden on 01225 776766

- 12 St Andrew's Assembly ECD Club, Dance**, 2.30pm at Cumnor Village Hall, Leys Road, Cumnor, OX2 9QF. Christine & Norman Hayes with Merry Andrew. Contact: Ken & Ruth Howard on 01235 831409.
- 12 Frenchay FDC, Dance**, 7.30pm to 11.00pm at Pucklechurch Community Centre, Abson Road, Pucklechurch, Bristol, BS16 9RH. Mark Elvins with Pendragon. Contact: [www.frenchayfdc.co.uk](http://www.frenchayfdc.co.uk)
- 19 Bristol 50th Playford Ball**, 7.00pm for 7.30pm, The Village Hall, Emerson's Green, BS16 7AP. Robert Moir with Deo Volente. Contact Roger Holbrook on 0117 9508533. Tickets must be purchased in advance.
- 26 Highnam Dance**, 2.00pm at Highnam Community Centre, Newent Road, Highnam, Gloucester, GL2 8DG. Robert Moir, Bernie Culkin, Pat Hicks, Linda Selwood and Hazel Moir. Cake and Refreshments included in £3 entry fee. Contact: Bernie Culkin on 07821 106052.

## December 2016

- 3 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance**, 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Brian Lyons. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.
- 3 Mendip FDC, Christmas Dance**, 7.30pm, Wrington Memorial Hall, BS40 5QE. Ian Ludbrook with Stick the Fiddle. Contact: Pat Hicks on 01934 742853.
- 10 Pucklechurch FDC, Dance**, 7.30pm to 11.00pm at Pucklechurch Community Centre, Abson Road, Pucklechurch, Bristol, BS16 9RH. Peter Howarth with The Weston Country Dance Band. Contact: Von Holder on 0117 937 2818.
- 17 St Andrew's Assembly ECD Club, Dance**, 2.30pm at Cumnor Village Hall, Leys Road, Cumnor, OX2 9QF. Mike Courthold with Merry Andrew. Contact: Ken & Ruth Howard on 01235 831409.

**Contributions for the January 2017 edition of  
Wroughton Rant should be with Rob Dawson by  
Monday 5 December 2016 or earlier.  
email: [robdawson08@gmail.com](mailto:robdawson08@gmail.com)**