

# WROUGHTON RANT

## Wroughton Folk Dance Club's Newsletter



**January 2016**

**Number 112**



### Chairman's Jottings

The ending of one year and the dawning of a new one gives the opportunity to look both back at the last one and forward to the new one. The past year has been one of consolidation for the club. Our five Guest Callers, each with their own individual styles and choice of dances, gave us very enjoyable evenings. Both the Spring and the Autumn Dances were very successful and as usual drew members from various other clubs.

Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, our own outdoor summer events were not so well attended as in previous years. Our own club callers have brought new dances to us throughout the year and have shown patience and determination in teaching them to us. We have welcomed several new faces during the year and those that have stayed have settled in well.

Looking forward, we again have a good selection of Guest Callers and two very promising dances planned. On Sunday 28th February Ted Morse will be calling to the music of Chris and Julie Dewhurst and then on Sunday 30th October, for the club's 30th anniversary, we will have Paul Hutchinson and Fiona Barrow providing the music for Rhodri Davies to call the dances.

The club is now in a very sound financial position largely due to combination of successful dances and regularly good attendances at our weekly meetings.

Our Annual General Meeting is now just a few weeks away and as I previously stated, I will be taking a step back and you will have the opportunity to elect a new chairman who will lead the club forward into a new phase. Whoever takes my place is likely to have the support of a strong and willing committee and I wish them every success.

Finally I say thank you to everyone who has served on the committee during my stint as chairman, without their help and dedication my term of office would have been much more difficult and far less enjoyable.

Continue to enjoy your Wednesday evenings.

*Francis*

## Dan's Dancing Diary "I danced like a chicken!"

As well as three contras at Cecil Sharp house, two Englefield Green contras, the Brummie contra, two Bath ceilidhs, Skint festival, my gold Duke of Edinburgh expedition and Rhodri Davies' 50th birthday contra I went to the Coventry Zesty Playford (CZP) dance and Mabel Day, which was one of the best dancing weekends I've had all year.

I started my day with (the world's best homemade) scrambled eggs on toast and took a two hour train journey to Coventry where my friend Anna met me at the station. We bought some things for dinner and went the long way back to her house, taking in the sights and Christmas lights of the city centre.

Some more friends came over and after we had eaten, I changed into my colourfulest dancing trousers - which Anna got very envious of, vowed to steal one day (and did so the next weekend) - and we all walked to the venue, a nice little church hall bedecked with lights

and drapes. There I greeted many more folkie friends, bought a t-shirt and danced Playford like I never would have imagined. Amongst others we did Black Nag, Jenny Pluck Pears and the Geud Man of Ballangigh with a waltz at the interval and end. We were advised of which doors in the venue were locked and how fast around the building one would have to run to get back to our partner in time, as is the fashion; Jenny Pluck Pears seems to be a staple dance at the CZP and very fun to do, especially to Steamchicken.

From one dance they have become one of my top three dance bands; their ceilidh-jazz style music is stunning and perfect to do Playford to... zestily. They are playing for the Stroud ceilidh in January and have two CDs out.

Unfortunately on two occasions my partner and I did siding so enthusiastically I fell over backwards, thankfully it wasn't on the videos, which can be found on YouTube!

The next day I was promptly awoken by having my feet tickled and after breakfast we took a train down to Oxford for Mabel Day. On the first Sunday in December rapper sides from all over the country gather together for a ritual of performing and partaking of alcohol, the latter of which I joined in with exuberantly.

Essentially a big pub crawl, with some sword dancing. This time Oxford was entertained by Warwick Uni rapper, Mabel Gubbins, Northgate, Tower Ravens, Hawksword and Thrales all dancing in the Royal Blenheim then splitting into three groups, touring the pubs of the city centre and meeting up again in the Kings Arms for a final dance, stew and cake.

That was my first time in Oxford, a very pretty place, and I can't think of a better way to spend a Sunday.

The following weekend was just as good if not slightly better; certainly more dancy. Another first for me, this time in the form of 'On Bouge', a monthly French dancing session in Primrose Hill community centre, London. The band consisted of a fiddle, a melodeon and three hurdy gurdies! It was a lot of fun, seeing new people and catching up with those I hadn't seen in a while and doing beautiful French style folk dancing.

Best part of the evening: a mazurka on the station platform and a bourée and a schottische on the train! I can now tick dancing on a moving public train off my bucket list. It certainly beats reading a magazine!

Saturday was spent wandering along the Southbank looking at the Christmas stalls and Camden market before meeting Anna at Euston station and walking to Cecil Sharp House for the last London Barn Dance there before its four month refurbishment. Rhodri Davies and Fiddlegang put on a spectacular dance, including one of my favourites, 'Fan in the Doorway'.

Sunday was possibly the best day of the weekend. It started with my colourful dancing trousers being stolen and paraded around in, in front of me. A few French dances in the living room, then a hearty breakfast with said trouser-thief and family, a tube to the city centre and a train out to Egham for the Englefield Green Contra. The English Country Dance Band and Barrie Bullimore did a very enjoyable dance.

One memorable occasion is when I was asked to dance by my friend Andrew and alternating gender after every time through the dance, confusing our shadows somewhat and bemusing everyone else.

I came home from that weekend still glowing from three days of happy socialising, dancing and cake.

*Dan*

## Playford and Scottish Weekend at Halsway

We enjoyed a similar weekend last year so quickly signed up for this year's.

This year there were only 24 dancers so we had to do every dance. This year's event clashed with something else.

Which foot do I start on (left or right?)

At the evening dances we did two Playford followed by two Scottish. There are more similarities than many people think but the terminology is different. The difference between a tandem reel and a Shetland reel is so small that I didn't even notice. Hands across or stars? Many times we said we do that in Playford/Scottish but it's called something different.

Many Scottish dances have four couple sets but only three couples dance at any one time but triple minors can have people standing out.

One of our musicians was Ian Muir, one of Scottish dancing's leading musicians and he has written many dance tunes.

He explained that like Playford, Scottish dancing as we know it today, started in the 'big houses' but they did not have Playford to publish dances for the dancing masters to teach. Many dancing masters in Scotland had a strong French influence but each had their own repertoire. Soon after Cecil Sharp started collecting English country dances and songs, at around the start of the 20th century, efforts were made to standardise Scottish dances and dance manuals were produced and indeed still are. Scottish dancing seems to me to be more regulated than Playford and that is why I prefer Playford.

I enjoyed the Scottish dances but when I managed to 'do' the complicated footwork I totally lost the dance so concentrated getting the dance right (more or less).

We have already booked for next year as we thoroughly enjoyed both styles of dancing and we will have the services of a top Scottish teacher and excellent Playford caller under the guidance of course leader Wendy Mumford.

*Ian*

## Harvest at Halsway Manor, September 2015

Judith Inman must have the 'Midas, touch!' For the second year in succession I have been to her 'Harvest at Halsway' weekend and both occasions have been not only very enjoyable but also bathed in glorious sunshine, particularly appropriate this year as attendees were invited to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of the Manor. Roma, Ian and Celia came too. Celia and I were, once again, in Room 1, which boasts 5 single beds, huge wardrobes and the most glorious views. Last time it was just the two of us, but this time we were joined by Nevia Mullen, who is from Croatia and a circle dancing teacher. (We met Nevia last year.) That part of the house doesn't offer en-suite rooms, so we share the showers, which was particularly fortunate for one gentleman, in that Celia, whilst in the shower, happened to come across his dental crown. Both were reunited after Judith made some discreet enquiries at breakfast time. He told me later he was much relieved as he and the crown had not otherwise been separated for 40 years.

In her overview Judith wrote that the weekend was also being held to remember Harold Waite and the Bucks weekends, which started in the late '60s and which preceded the Harvest at Halsway event. Four of the dancers who led the calling were introduced to folk dancing by Harold Waite: they were John and Ann Symmonds and Val and Ian McFarlane. Other callers were Alan Archer, John Hale, Judith, Diana Triplow and John Wood and the musicians were Liza and Grahame O'Connor, who have visited our club in the past accompanying Ted Morse. John Symmonds also ran the longsword workshops (none of us took up the challenge this year) and an impressive longways set demonstration was given after only two practice sessions.

Throughout the weekend there were quite a lot of references to Harold, such as 'Dances as called by Harold'; 'workshop of Harold's dances'; 'Ceilidh in the style of Harold'; further dances of Harold's. It certainly was a festival of remembrance.

As usual food was in abundance, but so was exercise. Without compromising the dancing programme there was ample opportunity

for working off the cooked breakfasts and the puddings by exploring the beautiful surroundings, such as walking one of the many steep sided coombs which provide a backdrop to the Manor, or by walking to Minehead from Dunster Beach, or even swimming, which Celia indulged in... I just looked on in amazement! A brisk walk to delightful Stogumber station fitted in nicely before dinner one evening in order to discover the distance from the Manor and we also managed a visit to Dunster Mill and Castle grounds – plus...

However, back to the dancing. There were workshops of the Saturday and Sunday mornings, but quite honestly I can't remember what we concentrated on. I know I found some of the sessions challenging, i.e. interpreting the nuances of callers who were new to me, and filling in the gaps of what seemed to be 'economical' instructions, yet at the same time trying not to get frustrated at not getting it right and holding onto the mantra, 'it's only a dance'. Thankfully frustration didn't get the better of me, it paled into insignificance, particularly when I saw others looking equally bemused. Surely I must have benefited from an insight into other styles of calling and to the introduction of many new dances.

Dancing started on the Friday evening and the final session was Sunday evening, which was a party night, peppered with 'turns', as well as dance requests (The Queen of Sheba being the most popular). It was really nice meeting up again with folk I had met previously, many coming from the Wantage/Oxford area, but also farther afield such as Ramsgate. A friendly, welcoming atmosphere pervaded the whole weekend and it beckons me to return again for lots of dancing and hopefully time for some walking, with fingers crossed that Judith will not have lost her golden touch.

*Hazel*

## From the Moors to the Moors

We opened the bedroom curtains of our first floor hotel room and saw several grouse strutting round the field. In the distance we could see the hunters arriving in their four wheel drives.

We were staying on Baslow moor on the edge of Chatsworth estate where we were to attend the Playford ball that evening at Edensor on the estate.

This is a yearly event organised by the 'Run of the Mill' club. This year the caller was one of our favourites Andrew Swaine. The Cavendish Hall is very ornate and an ideal setting for a costume ball. The dancing was excellent and we renewed several dancing friendships. During the interval we had a cold collation; a scrumptious buffet.

Two days later we were at Southampton boarding the Queen Victoria for a cruise into the Med. We visited Santiago de Compostella from La Coruna. The Cathedral has that enormous fumidoria which hangs from chains in the tower and when filled with a mixture of charcoal and incense takes 8 men to swing it up and down the cathedral, spewing out hot charcoal onto the pilgrims!

At Cadiz we visited a very large Alhambra style garden built on a hill by the Moors. The cost of entry was about £5 but we 'senile citizens' only had to pay about 50 pence.

We had live music in several different venues in the afternoons and evenings. One of the performers was a harpist played a wonderful rendition of the 'Queen of Sheba' which we thoroughly enjoyed.

Our last port of call was Lisbon and we were followed up the estuary by our sister ship the Queen Elizabeth. In Lisbon we called at a little bar in a park. When I needed to visit the toilet I was told I would have to wait a few minutes as they were having a beer delivery. When I eventually got to use the facilities it was very apparent where they stored the beer! I refrain from making the obvious comments.

We made several calls and enjoyed warm sunny weather in November.

*Ian*

## Bristol Playford Ball 2015

On a cold evening in late November, six of us (Pat, Rob, Ian, Roma, Alan and myself) travelled down to Bristol to attend the annual Playford Ball. After a welcoming glass of sherry we duly admired one another's costumes before taking to the floor to dance to the music of Dampier's Round. Our excellent caller was Sue Horsham, who made sure that everyone had grasped the instructions before any music began.

Halfway through the evening we made our way upstairs, where a three course meal was available. I had ordered the salmon, which I remembered enjoying the previous year, but there was also chicken or a vegetarian quiche. All the dishes came with a varied salad, and deserts followed: apple pie, fruit salad or lemon meringue, with coffee and chocolate mints afterwards.

After such generous portions I'm not sure how fit we were for more dancing, but somehow we managed. Many of the dances were familiar, others new and interesting. Everyone was very friendly and the evening finished at 11.30pm. I, for one, had aching feet by then, but it was a most enjoyable evening.

*Jean B*



## Thanks from Jane

Some of you will remember that I brought my neighbour Jane to the club on a couple of evenings, first with her husband in a wheelchair and next on her own, having found somebody willing to sit with Doug while she was out. Doug had a stroke three years ago which affected his brain as well as the right side of his body. As a result, he is very anxious until she is back at home. Jane is grateful for the welcome and help she received which made the evenings so enjoyable and she hopes to come again when the evenings are dry and warmer so that she can bring Doug.

In the meantime, we are trying to get enough residents of our retirement flats interested in doing some English Country Dancing of the slow and graceful kind, partly because it's on carpet but also because our bodies and brains don't operate as quickly as we would wish! We can get a 2-couple set together but finding enough for a 3-couple set has been unsuccessful so far. Fingers crossed!

*Pat*

## Notes on the Dances of the Month by Pat

### *Sea Caves (January)*

Alongways set for five couples danced to a Scottish tune. The active people are the ones and threes so it is important to notice your position in the set at the beginning of each time through. They are involved in reels across the set in groups of three or four and then a chase half way round the set.

### *Fan in the Door (February)*

A dance by Gene Hubert in longways formation with the first couples improper. The tune is in slip-jig rhythm and Colin Hume says on his website ([colinhume.com](http://colinhume.com)) that 'the dance should be a purposeful walk, not a meander or a plod'. Dan danced this recently in London and will be the first to call it for the club.

## Sticky Toffee Pudding (March)

According to Hilary Herbert's book (Hilary's Humours 3), this 4-couple dance was created when Gill Monson (Trevor's wife – he called at Rob's birthday dance) was annoyed because the Herberts had been served with sticky toffee pudding after the Monsons had been told there wasn't any left. Gill went to steal a spoonful from Neil Herbert's plate!

The music is 'Lumps of Plum Pudding', a traditional tune. The interesting/challenging move is diagonal heys but other moves will be familiar.

## Dance Diary January to March 2016

### January 2016

- 9 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance**, 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Jean Crook. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.
- 17 Frenchay FDC, Dance**, 2.30pm at Hanham Community Centre, 118-124 High Street, Hanham, Bristol, BS15 3EJ. Ivan Aitken with JIP. Contact: John & Lynne Griffin on 0117 940 9508.
- 23 Bath Ceilidh**, 7.30pm, St Gregory's Catholic College, Combe Hay Lane. Bath, BA2 8PA . Baz Parkes with All Blacked Up. Contact: Richard & Jo on 01225 311634.

### February 2016

- 6 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance**, 3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Ian Ludbrook. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.
- 13 Westbury FDC, Valentine's Dance** , 7.30pm at Westbury Leigh Church Hall, Westbury, BA13 3SQ. Ian Ludbrook with recorded music. Contact: Ann Polden on 01225 776766.

## **February 2016** *(continued)*

**27 Bath Ceilidh**, 7.30pm, St Gregory's Catholic College ,  
Combe Hay Lane. Bath, BA2 8PA . Nick Walden with Pigeon  
Swing. Contact: Richard & Jo on 01225 311634.

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## **28 Wroughton FDC, Spring Dance**

2.00pm, Royal Wootton Bassett Memorial Hall, SN4 8EN.  
Ted Morse with Julie & Chris Dewhurst. Contact Francis  
Hobbs on 01793 812282.

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## **March 2016**

**5 Melksham Country Dancers, Tea Dance**, 3.00pm at The  
Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP. Barry  
Reeves. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225 703650.

**19 Bath Ceilidh**, 7.30pm, St Gregory's Catholic College ,  
Combe Hay Lane. Bath, BA2 8PA . Sue Barker with Phoenix  
Band. Contact: Richard & Jo on 01225 311634.

**26 Melksham Country Dancers, Easter Tea Dance**,  
3.00pm at The Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12  
6LP. Robert Wright. Contact: Geoff Elwell on 01225  
703650.

**Contributions for the April 2016 edition of  
Wroughton Rant should be with Rob Dawson by  
Wednesday 16 March 2015 or earlier.  
email: [robdawson21@talktalk.net](mailto:robdawson21@talktalk.net)**