

Weald of Kent Morris

We are often asked how and when Morris dancing started. There are many theories but nobody knows for sure. We do know that it is a very old custom and believe that it had its origins as a means of ensuring fertility for crops, animals and perhaps for our forebears themselves! Even today many believe that there is powerful magic in a Morris Man's hat and we would advise any young woman against wearing one.

The dances that we perform came originally from the Cotswolds but different forms of dance came from other parts of the country, notably ceremonial clog dancing from Lancashire and Cheshire and two types of sword dancing from Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland. Cotswold Morris was traditionally danced by men (although there are now women's and mixed sides) and each village had its own style of dancing. Most Morris dancing had ceased by the turn of the century but luckily it was seen by the well-known folk song collector, Cecil Sharp and others who made notes on most of the dances that we do today.

Every dance has its own tune. The music was provided, in the earliest times, by the pipe and tabor. Later came the fiddle, concertina and melodeon and in more modern times, the piano accordion. The Weald of Kent Morris use all of these instruments for their dancing.

The first rural Kent morris tour recorded took place in 1589 and one of our characters is of similarly ancient Kentish descent. The Hooden Horse and his attendants were part of an old custom which came from the Isle of Thanet in East Kent - we took pity on this one and now he follows us everywhere. We hope he will not be too much of a nuisance to you - he means well.

Weald of Kent Morris was formed in November 1988 and first appeared in public on Mayday 1989. We practise in the church rooms Goudhurst on most Wednesday evenings throughout the winter and we dance locally throughout the summer.

Any potential new members will be made welcome. For information ask any of the members or telephone

Tim Dwyer on 01580 240414
email timdwyer@wealdofkentmorris.org.uk



QRCode to our website
Use with internet devices



Programme 2018

In the rare case of our not being able to perform, we don't want you to have a wasted journey - please check in advance with the publican or ring us or look at www.wealdofkentmorris.org.uk

WEALD OF KENT MORRIS PROGRAMME 2018

To help you find us (and some of the best pubs in the area) use the postcodes shown below

Sunday 15th April	1.00pm	The Bell and Jorrocks Beer Festival (TN17 2EJ)
Tuesday 1st May		The 30th Annual Mayday Tour
	5:32am	May Day Dance - Goudhurst Church (TN17 1AL)
	7.00am	Breakfast at Horsmonden Club (TN12 8HT)
	8.30am	Horsmonden Village Green (TN12 8HT)
	9.15am	Goudhurst and Kilndown Primary School (TN17 1DZ)
	10.15am	Frittenden Primary School (TN17 2DD)
	11.20am	Benenden Primary School (TN17 4DN)
	Midday	The Bull, Benenden (TN12 7NQ)
	1.00pm	The Milkhouse, Sissinghurst (TN17 2JG)
Sunday 6th May	10.45am	St Dunstan's Church, Cranbrook (TN17 3HA)
Wednesday 9th May	8.00pm	The Woolpack Inn, Benover (ME18 6AS)
Thursday 17th May	8.00pm	The Stile Bridge Inn with Loose Women (TN12 9BH)
Wednesday 23rd May	8.00pm	The Vine, Goudhurst (TN17 1AG)
Wednesday 30th May	8.00pm	The Queen's Inn, Hawkhurst (TN18 4EY)
Wednesday 6th June	8.00pm	The Knoxbridge, Knoxbridge (TN17 2BT)
Saturday 9th June	Midday	Goudhurst Fete (TN17 1BL)
Wednesday 13th June	8.00pm	The Flying Horse, Smarden (TN27 8QD)
Wednesday 20th June	8.00pm	Bell and Jorrocks, Frittenden (TN17 2EJ)
Wednesday 27th June	8.00pm	The Peacock, Iden Green (TN17 2PB)
Wednesday 4th July	8.00pm	The Bull, Benenden (TN12 7NQ)
Wednesday 11th July	8.00pm	The Chequers, Laddingford with Ravensbourne Morris Men (TN12 9PL)
Saturday 14th July		Classic tour around Kent and East Sussex borders
Wednesday 18th July	8.00pm	The Lord Raglan, Rabbits Cross (TN12 0DE)
Wednesday 25th July	8.00pm	The Castle Inn, Castle Hill (TN12 7BN)
Wednesday 1st August	8.00pm	Halfway House, Brenchley (TN12 7AX)
Wednesday 8th August	8.00pm	The Hopbine, Petteridge (TN12 7NE)
Wednesday 15th August	8.00pm	The Elephants Head, Hook Green (TN3 8LJ)
Monday 27th August	1.00pm	Lord Raglan Onion Festival (TN12 0DE)
Saturday 15th September		Weald of Kent Ploughing Match Midday'ish Marden, Kent
Saturday 6th October		The 12th Cranbrook Apple Fayre 11am'ish Cranbrook High Street (TN17 3HA)
Saturday 8th December		Marden Christmas Event Midday Marden village centre (TN12 9DT)
Saturday 29th December		The Festive Tour (please confirm details on website) Midday The Vine, Goudhurst (TN17 1AG) 1.00pm Star and Eagle, Goudhurst (TN17 1AL) 2.00pm The Peacock, Iden Green (TN17 2PB)

Which one's Morris?

Throughout the summer it is likely that you will see many different groups of morris dancers around the villages of Kent performing in a way that has been witnessed by many generations. Unfortunately there are no known traditions originating in Kent but this does not hinder the local 'sides' who perform the dances of the Cotswolds, Welsh borders and other areas of England. The costume worn by the dancers normally reflects the roots of dance; Cotswold dancers would generally wear white clothing, or simple shirts and breeches, whilst the more flamboyant northern clog dancers sport spectacular festooned headgear and gaily coloured tops.

Traditionally the appearances of the morris dancers were linked to the major festivals of the year. The coming of summer, the harvest and Christmas present occasions for the local morris side to celebrate with dance, mummers plays and song. Indeed until the 19th century the morris was performed in village churches as part of the celebration of Christian festivals. In England the history of the morris may be traced back to the 15th century and its name may well derive from the word Moorish although the dances themselves are unlikely to have originated from Moorish traditions.

Some say that the actions of the dance are to scare away the evil spirits whilst encouraging the fertility of the land and the growth of the crops, the movements of the dancers being emphasised through the use of handkerchiefs, bells, sticks and swords. To ensure further attention dancers are often accompanied by the 'Fool' or a 'Betty' as well as a 'hooden horse', dragon or other such weird and wonderful creature. The origins of such attendants are as mysterious as those of the dance itself.

The music is played by a variety of instruments ranging from traditional pipe and tabor, (whistle and drum), to concertinas, melodeons, flutes and tuba. The tunes themselves include the widely known such as 'Country Gardens' as well as the more oddly entitled 'Lollipop Man' or 'Old Woman Tossed up in a Blanket'. A good deal of the tunes and dances that are performed by today's sides rely on the notes taken down by Cecil Sharp prior to the Great War without whose efforts many dances may well have been lost.

Most sides have a main dance season that lasts from the May 1st (at sunrise) through to the end of harvest, there then follows a winter period of practise.



For up to date information and a map of locations see
www.wealdofkentmorris.org.uk