

Morris Dancing is one of the oldest English traditions; references to the dance date back more than five hundred years, during which time it went from being a court entertainment to a rural custom. There are many theories as to how it came about and what the name means, but the truth is that nobody knows with any certainty. It is a ritual dance, and is performed for the pleasure of the audience, as opposed to social dances, such as English Country Dances, which are done solely for the pleasure of the participants.

The Winchester Morris Men dance what is known as Cotswold Morris from the South Midlands, but there are several other distinct regional varieties of Morris: the North West Morris, often danced with clogs, Border Morris from Herefordshire and Shropshire, and Molly from East Anglia. Sword dances were also widespread, particularly in Yorkshire and the North East. In the form we know it now, the Cotswold dances were typically performed by agricultural labouring men at Whitsun. Many villages had a side but in the nineteenth century rural deprivation took its toll, until by the turn of the twentieth century only six survived. In 1899 Cecil Sharp started to retrieve details of the dance from the oral tradition; others followed and today there are probably more morris dancers than there have been at any previous time. The Winchester Morris Men, however, remain unique.

The Morris Ring was founded in 1934 by six revival sides who formed a national organisation, the aims of which are to encourage Morris dancing and to preserve its traditions. It maintains a national archive of photographs and dance related documents, and also sponsors historical research

The Morris Ring is the national association of men's Morris clubs

Why not become a Morris Man?

New musicians and dancers are always welcome and no previous dancing experience is necessary. We practise in Winchester on Wednesday evenings throughout the autumn and winter and we will give full training to any interested man or boy.

Help to Maintain an ancient English Tradition

If you want to know more ask any of our dancers or Contact the Bagman, Albert Wilkins.

Telephone: - 01962 883 341

E-mail: - bagman@winchester-morris-men.org.uk

Or Visit: - www.winchester-morris-men.org.uk



Winchester Morris Men

Programme

2008

