

Country (Folk) Dancing



The photo above comes from Mr. Parkinson, Head of Physics in the 1960s. Thank you.

A Splendid Display - July 12th 1923

Mr. Jenkinson produced his promised display of folk-dancing and singing on a Thursday evening, using the quaintly-named "cricket patch" behind the school. The originally-planned area for the display was the forecourt of the school as was used the previous year, but it became obvious at an early stage that more space would be required due to the involvement of four of the local Primary schools. The extra spectators and participants were well-accommodated in this new area, although later generations of Hilmian cricketers might not have been so forbearing about the use of their hallowed turf. The school's children danced with Primary pupils from South Elmsall Central, North Elmsall, Moorthorpe and Fitzwilliam. About 500 spectators had an excellent view, and 150 children sang and danced to the accompaniment of piano and gramophone. The opening processional dance, "Helston Furry" involved all the performers, followed by the Secondary School girls and their square dance, "The Old Mole". The children of Fitzwilliam then displayed excellent grace and rhythm in their dance, "The Merry Milkmaids" and this was followed by an old country folk song "The Keeper" by the Secondary School under the baton of Mr. Jenkinson. Everyone of all ages danced "Picking Up Sticks", and noticeable among them were the girls from South Elmsall Central, distinguishable in their light green dresses which seemed in harmony with the surrounding scenery. The boys and staff of the Secondary School performed a Morris Dance, "Blue-eyed Stranger", and they were joined in this by the supervisors of physical education for the West Riding, Messrs. Whitehead and Fitzgerald. The description from the local newspaper paints a clear picture of this. "The ringing of bells fastened to multi-coloured trappings in which the dancers were gaily decked, attuned by precision movement, was accorded warm applause. The boys proved that charm and grace are not monopolised by the fair sex." There followed a little country dance, "Scotch Cap" which had been one of the competition dances at the Pontefract Festival, and which was as short as it was sweet. The children from South Elmsall Central and North Elmsall then combined to perform a complex square country dance, "Winifred's Knot". Special admiration was expressed of the ever-popular boys' Sword Dance, which had been a show-stopper on more than one occasion. In all, 27 dances and songs figured on the programme, and the interest of the spectators never flagged. The evening was a huge success, with a particularly pleasing feature being the correlation of Primary and Secondary children. The staff of both these sets of children deserved praise for organising the best al fresco entertainment ever seen in Hemsworth, and it was commented upon that many of the country and Morris dances were hundreds of years old, and their simplicity and grace had given the audience some idea of the merry scenes of the parish, village and town greens of the Middle Ages.

1925

The Hemsworth Folk Dance Class competed in the Pontefract and District Musical Competition Festival on 24th March 1925 and was awarded three firsts and one second class certificate. One of the firsts went to the Morris dancers led by Mr. A.G. Jenkinson. A banner presented by the Hemsworth Secondary School for the highest aggregate of marks in the Folk dancing competitions was won by Castleford Girls' Secondary School.

Hemsworth's Folk Dancing Festival 5.30 to 7.30pm Saturday, June 20th 1925

All the local Primary schools were invited to send teams to this festival, and for those who came to Hemsworth from outlying areas, help with their travelling expenses was promised, "should the patronage at the gate allow". This was clearly a festival with a price of admission. The day itself was dry, though threatened with dark clouds. The all-inclusive feature of this occasion was that the general dances could be danced by anyone who wished, with primary school children enjoying being able to share the amenities afforded by the venue. There were 26 items on the programme, taking over two hours to complete. Miss Prince was in overall charge of the dancers, and Miss Morgan Jones was assisted with the music by an amateur boys' orchestra of violins, whistles and drums. In the evening's programme were the following dances:

- Country Dances: Helston Furry, Sellinger's Round, Childgrove, My Lady Cullen, Goddesses, Mage on a Cree.
- Morris Dances: Winster Processional, Rigs O' Marlow, Country Gardens.
- Sword Dances: Flamborough Head.

Thursday, 24th June 1927 The Annual Folk Dancing Festival at Pontefract

"In previous years this festival has been purely competitive and has suffered accordingly from the point of view of both spectator and performer. In addition, until the present year, all the dancing has been done indoors in the Pontefract Town Hall, where the atmosphere has become, to say the least of it, somewhat sultry.

Two excellent innovations were introduced this year – the competitive element was subordinated to the spectacular, and all the dancing took place in the open air. A more suitable spot than the lawn in the Castle Ground for recapturing the real spirit of Folk Dancing would have been hard to find. Competitive dances there certainly and rightly were, but by far the most pleasing part of an extremely pleasant afternoon was the display of general dances. All the competitors and many of the spectators joined in these, and since these numbered more than five hundred, the scene, particularly during Sellinger's Round, was most pleasing and inspiring.

With regard to the competitive dances, we at Hemsworth maintained the high standard which teams from the School have set up in previous years. The performance of the boy prefects who gained a first class certificate in both Morris and Sword dancing deserves special mention. The girls and junior boys also danced very well, and we had the satisfaction of bringing home the artistic banner (which we presented two years ago) as the Secondary School with the highest aggregate of points.

The general dances, which contributed so largely to the success of the afternoon were organised and supervised by Mr. Jenkinson, while the marking out of the grounds, by no means a light task, was splendidly performed by Mr. Austin.

All will look forward with keen anticipation to the next Folk Dance Festival, and undoubtedly an attractive display such as this will do a great deal to popularise Folk Dancing in Yorkshire.

Folk Dancing Display July 15th 1936



Mr. Jenkinson (centre) leads the way

The Folk Dance Festival 1948



On the evening of July 7th the weather was fine for once on a Country Dancing Festival Night. It is still not known whether this was a stroke of luck or one of Mr. Manning's bits of weather forecasting. Everything went to plan, especially the ice-cream, under the careful guidance of Mr. Swinbank Senior, Mr. Manning and Mr. Massarella. The evening was started as usual by "The Helston Furry" and the others that everybody knew. Then came some first class exhibitions of country dancing by Wakefield Girls' High School and Howard School, Ackworth, together with Morris Dances performed by Featherstone Council School. After the interval, more well known dances continued and Thurnscoe Secondary Modern School did a very clever and colourful Peasants' Dance. The evening was concluded with more dancing, God Save the King, and carrying chairs back to the Dining Hall. Then gradually everyone left, feeling happy but exhausted. That, though, is not the end of the story, because behind the scenes much work had been going on before the Festival. Mr. Manning had worked extremely hard, giving backing to the dancers, printing programmes, obtaining ice-cream and helping

Mr. Swinbank. Mr. Swinbank helped to make the whole evening a success, for he gave up much of his precious retirement in order to teach the dances not only to us but also to many of the schools represented on the night. We were therefore deeply indebted to him for the success of the evening, and we were happy to present him with a gift on Sports Day as a token of his work. This year's 1949 country dancing at Hemsworth is in the capable hands of Miss Woodward so we are looking forward to another successful Folk Dancing Evening. Mr. Manning wishes to thank all those who took part in the dancing because they forfeited time after school in order to keep up the country dancing tradition of Hemsworth.

Roger Andrews, 5A

The Folk Dance Festival 1950



The photo comes from Irene Wright.



The afternoon of the 5th July was dark and gloomy. Everyone was asking the fateful question, Will it rain?" It didn't, fortunately. The sun valiantly attempted to shine - but didn't - unfortunately, but the Festival was 'on'. As is usual, a large number of schools attended the Festival, and some of them gave exhibition dances. Our team, which had been coached for many long and weary hours, "performed" without any great mistakes. The School was shamed by the Staff, who 'slipped' light-heartedly through most of the intricate dances. One pupil was overheard saying, "It's a pity it hasn't rained, then they really would have slipped." We were very pleased to see the team from Ackworth School who danced their Scottish Dances in the national dress.

The exhibition dances were as follows:-

- **Wakefield High School** - "Bonny Breastknot."
- **Ackworth School** - "Eightsome Reel," "Petronella," "Triumph," "Dashing White Sergeant."
- **Featherstone School** - "Beansetting," "Rigs o' Marlow," - Morris Dances.
- **Hemsworth Grammar School** - "Thady You Gander."

We would like to thank Mr. Swinbank (Senior) who kindly accepted the post of M.C. and Miss Woodward who spent many happy hours arranging a successful evening.

Manning G.C. L6S Price

The Folk Dance Festival 1951



For once, the day of the Country Dancing Festival was fine and this enabled us to hold our practice in the morning. The visiting Schools began to arrive very early and the evening began with "Helston Furry", which started promptly at 6-30 p.m. Everyone danced very energetically and we were very thankful to rest during the exhibition dances which were given by various schools. Several new dances were included in the programme and these helped to make the evening a very successful one. The evening ended with "Selling's Round" and everyone finished dancing feeling tired but happy. At the last moment the recording of "The King" was found to be missing and Mr. Burnett saved the situation by leading the singing of the National Anthem.

I would like to express our thanks to Miss Woodward, who so kindly gave up most of her spare time to teach us the dances and also to Mr. Swinbank, Sen., for acting as Master of Ceremonies.

Irene Wright, 5C

The Folk Dance Festival 1952



A whisper runs through the ranks of the girls' P.T. forms - Mrs. Owen has found a new kind of secret weapon - no-one knows what it is - everyone fears it. In this way Mrs. Owen shanghai's quite a lot of people into the Folk Dance Teams. After many practices the great day arrives; rain is expected - the sun shines brightly - typical of our English weather. But we can't possibly have it all our own way; someone is ill - a gap in the team; unlucky, but worse is yet to come. At 6-30 p.m. when the first dance is due to start we are two more people short. Mrs. Owen and Miss Wimpenny will fill in the gaps. In spite of these and other mishaps the Festival goes on; it is a success. At the end everyone is gasping with exhaustion and relief. The Great Day is over; we can go home and recover. But no! Wait! A gentle voice wafting on the summer breeze says, "Hey, you! Don't go yet! These chairs have all to go back to the Dining Hall." Ah well, we may get home sometime. So, the Great Day ends.

The Folk Dance Teams would like to thank Mrs. Owen and Miss Wimpenny for their instruction and help in the weeks before the Festival, and Mr. Swinbank, Snr. for his assistance as MC. on the day of the Festival.

Pat Atkinson, U6A

The Folk Dance Festival 1953



At 6-30 p.m. on the last Wednesday of the Summer term, all the visiting schools had arrived to take their part in the Folk Dance Festival. The first dance, Helston Furry, was led off by the Headmaster and Mrs. Hamilton. We should like to thank Mr. David Manning for raising some enthusiasm among the boys and for providing us with something different in the way of a Morris Dancing demonstration. The school also demonstrated three Yorkshire Dances - The Yorkshire Square, Brass Nuts and Turn of Six. We thank Mrs. Owen and Miss Wimpenny for all the work they did towards the success of the evening and also Mr. Swinbank (Snr.) who once again acted as M.C. for the evening.

Pat Atkinson, U6A

PRICE 2d.

HEMSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL
Thursday July 7th. at 6.30 p.m.

1. Helston Furry. Long sets.
2. Brighton Camp. Long sets.
3. Waltz Country Dance. Round with squares for 4.
4. If all the World were paper Round for 8.
5. Demonstration: Wakefield Girls' High School:
NEWCASTLE or SHREWSBURY LASSES.
6. Goddesses. Longways set.
7. Gathering Peascods. Circles of 8 to 12 couples.
8. Ruffy Tufty. Square for 4.
9. Dashing White Sergeant. Circles of 6.
10. Epping Forest. Round for 6.
11. Demonstration: D.F.Manning & J.M.Riggott:
THE HILMIAN'S DELIGHT. Source: anonymous.
THE FOOL'S JIG. From Bampton, Oxfordshire.

INTERVAL

12. Christchurch Bells.
13. Strip the Willow. Long set for 8.
14. We won't go Home till Morning. Long set.
15. Bonnets so blue.
16. Flowers of Edinburgh.
17. Demonstration: Hemsworth Grammar School:
1. ORANGES AND LEMONS.
2. THE RIBBON DANCE (First Form girls).
18. Durham Reel.
19. Black Nag. Long set for 6.
20. Picking up Sticks. Longways for 6.
21. Sellenger's Round. Concentric circles.

THE QUEEN

The programme comes from Alice Govier. Thank you.

The Morris Dancers 1953

“The other Manning is my elder brother David who went to QEGS in Wakefield. He was at Oxford that year and had taken up Morris. As his term finished early he formed a Morris side at HGS that year at the latter half of the summer term. We performed at the Folk Dance festival that we had in those days. My memory says that 1952-53 is right for the Morris side as it was my last year at school.”

“...looking harder at the programme the demonstration is just a duo of my brother and John M Riggott who was younger than most of us. I can't remember what the Morris dancers called ourselves but I am sure that we didn't dance the Fool's Jig which is normally a solo dance.”

Geoff Manning

Back Row L-R: Tony Allsopp, Robert Walker, Geoffrey Manning

Middle Row L-R: David Manning, Christopher Gascoigne, Peter Robinson, John Butterfield

Front Row L-R: John Riggott, Barry Johns

