

Monday, June 25

market to a bar presided over by a plumed cat, which Sue assures us is a good omen. Ring o Bells treated to a round of drinks by their British counterparts, then out to the street for some dancing. Ring o Bells wear navy blue knee breeches, white shirts and waist-length pinnies with the King's Lynn crest on front in back (the crest, in blue and gold, consists of three dragons' heads with sword hilts protruding from the mouths.). Men wear whites with blue & gold baldric & King's Lynn crest at front and back. The side has been going for about a year now and has suffered from the departure of several of their best dancers, who apparently left to start a team that would invent their own morris "tradition." The women now have only 5 dances and dance in a set of 4 or 5. Once again we find that the women state they started dancing because that's what their husbands were doing. Oh! Women are dancing Bampton, ~~and~~ Addlebury, and Stanton Harcourt, and the men are concentrating on Bledington. A blessedly early end to the evening (blessed because of our general fatigue). Strict instructions to have kit in A-1 condition tomorrow for meeting with King's Lynn mayress.

Tuesday, June 26

meet in kit at 11:45 and are escorted to Mayor's chambers for sherry and polite conversation. Town clerk ^{postmaster} takes care of most of the polite conversation, mayress takes care of smiling and displaying Elizabethan waite which is her badge of office. Squire Evans

A Kings Morris Production



King o' Bells ^{meet} King o' Belles
new york ^{at} king's Lynn

castle rising castle
Tuesday 26th June
Dancing commences - 7.00 p.m.
Public welcome to this unique
event. * Admission FREE *

32.

Belles and bells dance at castle

EASTERN DAILY PRESS

JUNE 27, 1977

King's Lynn

An American women's morris dancing team from New York made a flying visit to West Norfolk yesterday.

The 12 members of the Ring o' Bells stopped off at King's Lynn during their two and a-half week whistle-stop tour of England — and spent most of the day dancing.

At midday they attended a civic reception at the town hall, after which they organised an impromptu performance for the Mayor of Lynn, Mrs. Joan Panks, in the grounds of St. Margaret's Church.

The visitors later made their way to the busy town centre to dance for shoppers.

But what really attracted them to Lynn was the chance to dance with their counterparts, Lynn's own women's morris team, Ring o' Belles.

Shadow

The opportunity came last night, when the two teams were joined by the King's Morris for an evening of dance in the grounds of Castle Rising.

Over 200 spectators gathered to enjoy the festivities, and the three teams closed their performance by dancing together in the shadow of the ancient castle keep.

This is Ring o' Bells' first visit to England. They were formed in 1974.

Their founder and squire, Miss Jody Evans, explained: "We had been dancing with the Country Dance and Song Society, where one performed English and American folk dances. But we all loved morris dancing; so we formed our own women's group, which was the first in the country."



The Ring o' Bells morris dancing team from New York perform in St. Margaret's Churchyard at King's Lynn yesterday before going on to Castle Rising

is presented with Tuesday, June 26
 a "charter" in the form of a little silken banner
 with the King's bygon crest and "THE CHARTER TRUSTEES
 OF THE TOWN OF KING'S LYNN, NORFOLK, ENGLAND" on it.
 Sherry swilled, we move across to St. Margaret's
 church and dance three dances, including Ring O Bells
 for the mayress & assorted dignitaries. As captured
 by the eye of the camera, the dancing looks a bit
 random - we're having a bit of a problem dealing
 with miniature hells and galleys. After dancing, we
 are taken to the Regalia Room where we are
 given a complimentary ~~to~~ guided tour. Town charters
 dating back to 1027 and other treasures including what
 is thought to be the finest existing medieval loving cup
 (given to the town by King ¹¹⁷⁹⁻¹²¹⁶ John) are on display. Off
 for lunch and first Ring O Bells solo tour ~~is~~
 through a busy modern shopping ^{mall} adjacent to the Tuesday
 market (a big open square which on Tuesdays is packed
 solid with little stalls, carts, goods and people, people, people.)
 Several of our hosts have taken the day off from work
 and accompany us on the tour, giving us moral support
 and taking around the bag. We net £12 after about an
 hour and a half of dancing then split up to explore town
 at our leisure. Back to the van at 6:15 and off
 to Castle Rising, a magnificent Norman castle partially in
 ruins to dance for a crowd of about 200 people. Ring O Bells
 and King's Movies have done a fantastic job of publicity
 & organizing - they put together a special display window
 advertising our joint town complete with mannequins dressed
 in King's & R.O.B. kit & American flags; they arranged
 to have Castle Rising as a setting for our dancing
 (which involved writing to the state gov't, having the

the guards to
 work overtime)
 and put up
 posters all
 over town
 advertising the
 event). Weather
 continues to
 smile upon us,
 the crowd in
 appreciation,
 Ring o' Bells and
 King's hymn
 are fun & relaxed
 to dance with,
 and the castle,
 to repeat myself,
 is magnificent.
 We learn the
 next day that
 it is also
 haunted, by
 Queen Isabella
 who murdered
 her husband
 and was
 subsequently

confined to the castle by her son. Great! After dancing
 and the traditional mass photos to commemorate the
 event, we are taken to a nearby pub where we are

June 26 Tuesday

reated to another feast of Elizabethan proportions. Our hosts, who have hired a back room for the night, see to it that our glasses never run dry and the entertainment never runs down. Nice, relaxed song-swapping, tunes and jigs with King O Bells participating fully for the first time. Champagne toast to Jessie, who leaves for N.Y. (where?) tomorrow (coincidentally, one of King's Morris' musicians is leaving to live in Germany so he is toasted as well). Grand presentation of reproduction of 18th century map of King's hymn to Jody E after lovely speech by King's hymn squire thanking us for honoring them with our presence (!) and noting that any reservations about women's Morris should be ~~overcome~~ dispelled by our dancing. We try to give them ~~some~~ some idea of how overwhelmed and grateful we are. Party ends at 11:00pm & we wind our ways home, tired ~~by~~ but happy...

June 27, Wednesday

Met at the Saturday market place to pack up for trip to Norwich with stop over in Cromer. Morning Eastern Daily Press distributed to all ROB's for perusal of article and photograph chronicling our King's hymn tour. Escorted by our hosts to the open road, big white van sails on from there. David Niven and Burgess Meredith spotted en route. Sure, girls. Three full hours of freedom in Cromer, crab capital of Norfolk. Blue skies persist against all reasonable expectation but do not believe any ROB's follow through on stated intention of swimming. Meet our Biffin Morris hosts nearby

Wednesday, June 27

on time, have dinner, put on kit and roll up to our first stop, the Maid's Head, a rather posh bar in Norwich. Biffin women, who have been dancing about 2 years now, dress in white shirt & pants, short vests with front and back ~~horizontally~~ vertically divided into zones of red and green red and green Biffin apple (a now virtually ex-Norwich fruit) appliqued against the area of contrasting color. Red and green ribbons, leg belt and sweaters with red socks. They dance Alderbury and Fieldtown, and they dance much the way we are accustomed to seeing women dance in the U.S., i.e. without trying to feminize their movements in any way. Their spouse, Jenny, state that they have some of the same ~~problems~~ reservations about women's music (as many teams here dance it) ~~that~~ that we have. The evening was very low key - no special parties or arrangements, in fact, no special attention whatsoever, which felt ~~at~~ a bit strange after the treatment we have become accustomed to but was rather a relief as it gave us something of a break. Early night, and some of us are actually able to sleep in in the morning.

Thursday, June 28

Individual forays into Norwich for sight-seeing and shopping. Epidemic of Laura Ashley buying hits team as people begin to realize they'll have enough money to get home. Van-packing followed by wild goose chase in pursuit of Norwich football club badges.



BIFFIN

NORFOLK BIFFIN MORRIS WOMEN

and their guests

RING BILLS



unique occasion!

1st time in City!

(All The Way from NEW YORK!)

will **DANCE** the **MORRIS!**

ON Wednesday 27th June
at The Maid's Head 7.30 pm
AND The Gibraltar 9.00pm

Thursday, June 28

Arrive in Beccles around 5pm. and break up into small groups to scour the town for food. We find that most of the restaurants are closed during the dinner hour; in fact, the town looks practically deserted. However, being ROBs we manage to ferret out our supper and meet at the ~~the~~ hooves and fishes pub, which would more aptly have been named the hooves and Pigeons. The Geldston men & women wear blue and red waists with a patch applied on the back; men wear blue knee breeches and women wear red floral print below-the-knee skirts. Men wear shallow boaters made of wicker similar to hats traditionally worn by Norfolk fishermen. The women wear ankle bells, and two of them danced in bare feet! First stand was on the banks of the Waveney river to the side of the pub. Men danced Fieldtown, - Alderbury & bits of other traditions; women danced Bampton and Headington. This team, which has been dancing about 2 years, was good, energetic but not wild friendly and highly appreciative of our dancing - truly a winning combination.

After dancing at the pub we all boarded a low, covered river boat for a trip up the Waveney to the

Geldston Lock Inn, a pub accessible only by boat or bike trail. We drank beer, played tunes and talked as the marshes slipped by.



GELDESTON LOCK INN

Englands unique pub --
modernised in 1660.

CANDLE LIT

MINE HOST - WALTER COE

TELEPHONE KIRBY CANE 414

MAINLY FOR WOMEN

BY LYNDSEY HEWISON

Women morris dancers — American



Painful road to prize



Bells are jingling, ribbons flying, feet leaping, sticks clashing or handkerchiefs waving... all to the sound of a fiddle or melodeon.

Then, there's momentary silence before the applause begins for the morris dancers.

The team is plainly enthusiastic and the dancing is clearly good — slick, with spot-on timing and plenty of

television... but not as a team.

Ring o' Bells grew out of the society and began with seven members. It now has 25.

In Norwich the team danced with Biffin Morris, a three-year-old side who claim to be the only wholly independent women's club in Norfolk.

They enjoy a good relationship with the Norwich men's group, Kemp's Men. Biffin are able to practice with the men once a week and have tips passed on to them.

But, some of the women have experienced hostility from men dancers. Squire, Jenny Howard, remarked: "Personally I have

Handkerchiefs waving the Ring o' Bells team dance in the Maid's Hotel in Norwich as seen top left. Top right, members of the Ring o' Bells team from America seem to be applauding the performance but it's the home side, the Norfolk Biffin Morris that is winning their approval. Biffin Morris, who claim to be Norfolk's only wholly independent women's team, are seen going through their paces lower left. And in the



A distinctive trouser suit worn by this model has won Mrs. Pauline Bright a competition prize.

Over enthusiasm for sport gave Pauline Bright a painful elbow, but it also led her to a new career and now a competition prize.

For, finding the pain from tennis elbow too great to allow her to follow her interest of hand knitting, she bought a machine.

That was about 12 years ago — since then she has been a lecturer in fashion knitwear at a polytechnic and now works freelance from her home, Orchard House, North Road, Ormesby.

Her latest success will be marked today when she is presented with a prize for coming second in one section of a national fashion design competition organised by the WI and the British Wool Marketing Board.

The presentation will be at the Royal Show at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire where Pauline's entry — a trouser suit will be modelled.

The suit, in natural shades of Shetland wool ranging from cream to dark brown, took Pauline about two months to make. "I was very lucky with this. I had an idea at the back of my mind," she said.

Pauline, aged 50, hasn't yet decided whether to keep the suit. "If I think it looks really nice on the model I shall probably decide it probably won't suit me. It might be a little too young," she said.

Pauline, a member of the Ormesby branch of the WI for about four years, finds her knitting skills much in demand. She makes clothes — mostly suits — to measure and works from a caravan in the garden of her home.

But she is determined to keep it a part-time occupation. "The trouble is I have so many hobbies. As time goes by and you get older you think I must fit this in," said Pauline, whose interests include, tennis, badminton and sailing.

They were determined it would be that way. For here, dancing in an English hotel were American women morris dancers.

Either nationality or sex would have been enough for most people to contend with. For here, the home of morris dancing, there is bound to be much critical interest in the re-imported dancing.

And, to many traditionalists, women just don't take part in morris dancing.

HARDER

And Ring o' Bells, the 11-strong team from New York City were well aware of reactions they might get on their 2½-week tour of England.

When they stopped in Norwich, Linda Swenson, who did much of the tour organisation, told me: "We knew if we came here and were interlopers and women and weren't good we would be in trouble.

"So we worked awfully hard because we didn't want to be in that position. When we get in a difficult situation we just work harder."

It was the right approach. For a man in one of the teams they danced with told them that although he didn't think women should take part in morris he thought they were good.

Ring o' Bells was the first women's morris team to be formed in America — in 1974 — and although the oldest men's team has only been in existence for 11 years they found mixed reactions to their venture in their own country.

It was four years before the Morris Men in New York would dance with them — but they were also the last team to hold out.

Linda remarked: "It's not always the older teams. It's the younger ones who hear the way it is in England and wanted it to be like that."

The oldest team in America is the Pinewoods Morris Men who are members of the Morris Ring — a federation of clubs based in this country.

Sue Salmons, Ring o' Bells most experienced dancer, remarked: "Their attitude was mixed. They formed bylaws for men only because that's the way they could get into the Ring, the whole thing was part and parcel of their formation.

"It wasn't for many years that the question of women came up. When it did I would say the old guard didn't care. They were for changing the bylaws. The newer, younger members were against and they never did change the bylaws.

"They would have had to withdraw from the Ring. That was a very big issue."

Although morris teams of either sex are comparatively new in America, morris dancing is not — even for women.

They have been doing it with the Country Dance and Song Society since 1917; demonstrations had been staged and women dancers appeared on

Individual male dancers said some pretty nasty things to me."

It's an attitude which has forced some women's team to adopt subterfuges. At the same function Jenny has seen notices for "men's morris dancing workshop" and "women's ritual dancing."

Biffin is affiliated to the Women's Morris Federation which has been searching for evidence that women have taken part in the dancing for hundreds of years.

There are, says Jenny, records showing that women danced with William Kempe for

Bennett, who plays the fiddle for Biffin Morris and Lee Ellen Friedland, the Ring o' Bells melodeon player chat during a break between dances.

parts of his marathon from London to Norwich in 1599. Kempe, whose name has been taken by Kemp's Men, was one of Shakespeare's fellow actors.

Biffin is a type of Norfolk apple believed to be a rarity these days. The team has an apple design on the backs of their waistcoats.

SUPERSLIM RECORD PAIR



Super-slimmers Melody Sylvester, left, who lost 6 stone and Diana Swatman who lost over 4 stone.

Together, there was enough of Diana Swatman and Melody Sylvester to make three people.

Not any more. Between them the two Norwich women have slimmed off 10 st. 4 lb., gained the figures they always wanted ... and won places in the finals of a "Slimmer of the Year" contest.

That makes them record-setters. For it is the first time two women from the same place have got into the finals of the Slimming World Club competition.

Over 600 people entered and only 20 have reached the finals to be held on Saturday.

SIX MONTHS

Diana and Melody — who go to different classes in the city — both took about six months to shed their extra stones and reach their targets.

Diana, aged 29, of 16, Old Farm Lane, Norwich, lost 4 st. 4 lb., said: "I am the owner of a very proud husband. We have been married 12 years and he

has never seen me like this."

She now weighs 9 st. 10 lb.; was 12 st. 8 lb. when she married, aged 17; and at her heaviest was 15 stone.

Diana said: "It got to the point when I thought I was going to kill myself because I couldn't breathe. I was getting spots before the eyes. I thought, 'it's not good' so I went to the doctor and he sent me to the slimming club."

Melody, aged 24, of 81, Muriel Road, Norwich, shed 6 st. to reach her present weight of 10 st. 4 lb. "I was fed up with trying to get modern clothes in size 24. It was absolutely impossible, it really was.

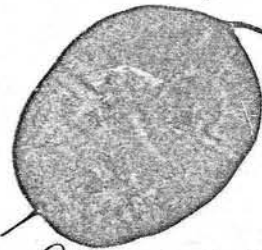
"It was just a snap decision to lose some weight and get down to a size 14. I did it. I was so determined nothing was going to stop me."

"I'm a completely different person. I have self confidence. I used to stay at home every night. I would hardly go out because I was too self-conscious."

Thursday, June 28

We danced at the Geldeston Lock Inn until about 10:30 for a crowd of about 75 people, including some dancers from the Kemp Morris Men, the Norwich men's side. Once again we are gratified to find that we make a favorable impression on a men's side which has formerly refused to dance with women. ^(i.e. Kemp) Both Geldeston and Kemp seem especially impressed with our Lichfield (!?) though Geldeston dancers, including the squire, were talking about adding some Elmington and Brackley to their repertoire by the end of the evening. The boat ride back to Beccles was relaxing and a good end to the day's dancing.

HONESTY FROM
DOUGLAS KENNEDY'S
GARDEN →



Friday, June 29

For the first time Ring O Bells manages to get packed and off on schedule — a tribute, one suspects, to Douglas Kennedy, who we are ^{going} to visit. Reach Walldringfield where he makes his home (called the deck house due to the fact that 2 of the rooms were part of the living quarters of a barge) about 10³⁰ and are very graciously received by him and his wife. We dance three dances for him and his guests out back in their garden, where he has especially mowed a section of grass for us! He manages to put everyone at ease and our dancing is warmly and enthusiastically received. Photos are taken to document the historic (for us) occasion before we reluctantly ~~steer~~ return to the van for the longest drive of our tour.

Friday, June 24

Windsor at last! Treated to
 a delicious dinner spiced with
 political discussions about - you
 guessed it - morris dancing. It
 is a relief to find ourselves among
 relatively kindred spirits for a change.
 Our first stop is at a pub as
 close to Windsor castle as legally
 possible (apparently someone on the
 team had actually called



Buckingham Palace to apply for
 permission to dance in the castle, but was told that "public
 dancing" is not allowed in royal palaces). The Queen is
 in residence at Windsor now, but no doubt was
 prevented by pressing matters of state from coming out to
 watch us. Windsor morris, a team about 5 years old, now
 wears a kit consisting of white shirt and chinos, large
 green and white rosette fastened to the left breast and a
 green belt with a horizontal white stripe. Simple, but
 effective. The team really know how to "take" the street
 where they're dancing -

they sing and dance a
 morris on or off (they diddle
 dleas/ My cheek you may kiss/
 And off goes the Windsor Morris)
 and immediately fill the
 area they're dancing in
 with their set. The team
 both gets height and
 lowers ground dramatically
 without missing a



"THE TWO BREWERS"
 Windsor

Friday, June 29

distorting the nature of the morris step. They dance Brackley, including many dances from manuscript which we have never seen before (and which they have shared with us), and Badby. Their Brackley is higher off the ground than ours, and their sets are more widely spaced. Their sticks are shorter than ours, and they begin their stick dances with a very dramatic twisting round, and end with an all in with stick thrust upward. Their fool, clad in a farmer's smock, chinis and top hat with rosette, does an incredible job of haranguing the crowd, dancing in and around the set, and using ~~the~~ the ~~#~~ cow's bladder to urge on the dancers. The team is exciting to dance with, and really knows how to put on a good show - none of the reticence or shyness that one so often encounters with women's sides. Despite "van lag" and general fatigue, we dance until about 11 and enjoy it.

■ We are surprised to see Windsor do an "Oh, Susannah!" Brackley, altered for having come through Ray Dommett and another woman's side and they are surprised to see us do the original. If a dance can alter this much in the course of one year with the original side still dancing, it one can only imagine how much our traditional dances resemble their ancestors. Windsor morris dance to a melodeon, ably handled by Alan Wharm who writes for "Morris Matters" and a field drum. All in all, a very inspirational evening.

The Windsor Morris

