

# REEL TIMES

The Newsletter of  
**Melksham Country Dancers**

Issue No.16 - February 2013

<http://www.communigate.co.uk/wilts/melkshamcountrydancers>



Welcome to the new look newsletter of the Melksham Country Dancers. Not only do we have a new look, a new editor, **JILL HITCH**, we also have a new name! Our first competition of the year was won by **JANET AKERMAN** whose suggestion for the name was chosen by your newsletter team. We had lots of excellent suggestions and it was a difficult decision. Thanks to everyone who submitted an entry and well done Janet who took the prize!

Our new year kicked off with a Tea Dance with live music with Malcolm Mace. The dance was well supported and a great tea was supplied. Congratulations to the raffle winners.

## COMPETITION

What's the best, worst or most peculiar raffle prize you have ever won? Let one of your newsletter team know and there will be a small prize for the winner to be judged by the newsletter team.

We'd like to hear about the places where you have been to dance! Why not write an article for our next edition telling us about it? Maybe you travelled a long distance, or danced in an old barn... whatever it may be, why not share it with other club members! Read Christine Gale's story on page 6.



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**Editor:** Jill Hitch  
**Assistant Editors:** Geoff Elwell & Colin Hill

## A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY!

One of our dances of the month during 2012 was Black Nag. This dance was devised by John Playford.

John Playford (1623–1686/7) was a London bookseller, publisher, composer, and member of the Stationers' Company, who published books on music theory, instruction books for several instruments and psalters with tunes for singing in churches. He is perhaps best known today for his publication of *The English Dancing Master* in 1651.



In the 1600's, English Society got bored with dancing the complicated and difficult-to-learn formal dances (which were very much display dances for couples to show off) and started dancing 'country dances' for light relief. Country dances were the dances done by the country folk and had to be easy because country folk didn't have time to go to lessons, and couldn't read so they couldn't look up the dances in a book. The

dancing masters rapidly got in on the act and started inventing more complicated 'country dances'. These compromise dances proved very popular; after all an educated person going to a ball every week or two may well feel that a dance simple enough for someone who only goes to a dance once or twice a year is beneath him! In 1651 John Playford published '*The English Dancing Master*'. It is thought this title was probably just a joke because all the best dancing masters were French (or, maybe, a dig at a rival French book). This was a book of brief instructions for a hundred odd such dances including Black Nag.

## **BITS AND PIECES**

### **Joke:**

A man visits a Chinese restaurant but is unhappy and wishes to complain about his food. He says "Waiter, this chicken is rubbery"! The waiter replies "Ho, fank u velly much".

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What do you call a man with a plank of wood on his head? - Edwood!

What do you call a man with three planks of wood on his head? -

Edwood Woodwood!

What do you call a man with four planks of wood on his head? - I don't know either, but I bet Edwood Woodwood would?!

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### Instructions for **Postie's Jig**

4 couple longways.

- A1: The two ends are working couples. These couples set and cast to middle (middles move out to be new ends); working couples, half-figure 8 through the new ends.
- A2: working couples take inside hands and cross (men make arch), turn with a gatepost round ends to face up or down; cross again (bottoms make arch), and turn with a gatepost to face across.
- B1: ditto across (men make arch); ditto up/down (bottoms arch).
- B2: working couples half rights and lefts, then swing partner.



### **Your Committee:**

**Chairman:** Geoff Elwell:

01225 703650

**Secretary:** Christine Gale

01225 706037

**Treasurer:** Colin Hill

commtemp@gmail.com

**Committee Members:**

Stan Vice, Brenda Hodges, Ivy

Eaves, Meg Elwell, Jill Hitch

The **DANCE of the MONTH** theme will continue with **WINTER SOLSTICE** in **January and February**. This is a modern dance written in 1988 by Wendy Crouch as part of her “Flights of Fancy” series of dances. The tune was written by our own past member, David Dean, in 1995. A five couple dance in square formation it is peculiar in that it has all five couples doing a slightly modified grand square. Challenging but nice.

In **March** we move on to the 4 couple dance **THE SLOF GALLIARD**. Written by Pat Shaw in 1971 as part of a series of dances “New Wine in Old Bottles” using a collection of old Dutch tunes. Slof is a Dutch word for slipper. In this dance you are always opposite your partner and in the same sex line. What could be easier?

**April** uses the **STAR OF KINTRA** written by Trevor Monson with music by Elvyn Blomfield in 2004. Another 4 couple longways dance. It was written in memory of John Blomfield a founder member of the band Wild Thyme. He had retired to the Scottish Isle of Mull with his wife and they continued to keep in touch with their folk friends by organising an annual folk festival on the island. He sadly died after only a few years there. The only challenge in this dance is a tandem reel.

If you always wanted to master the square shape dance **NEWCASTLE** then in **May** you can. A Playford style dance from 1651, interpreted by Cecil Sharp, its main stumbling point is the ending where lines of four cross over to make different lines of four. Easy once you learn where you should end up.

For **June** there will be the longways dance **FENTERLARICK** written in 1977 by Joyce Walker for the Staffordshire Silver Collection competition with the tune “Nancy’s Delight” by Fred Grimshaw. The challenge here is the final ending where you turn the one that is not your partner aiming to end progressed and together. Fenterlarick is the name of a Cornish hamlet where Joyce’s parents lived.

To end the season in **July** we will use the Longways dance **DUNHAM OAKS**. Dance and tune written by Brian Wedgbury in 1972 for a competition to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the EFDSS. He did not win but was a runner up. This uses a pousette movement followed by setting to both of the opposite sex and with a tendency to forget the back to back before three changes of a circular hey.

Master all these - which you can - and you will be well on the way to enjoying your dancing even more. Good luck.

A big thank you to members and friends for supporting our **THREE** charities. The following may help you to know what they are all about.

The **WILTSHIRE AIR AMBULANCE APPEAL** was established in April 1990 as a joint venture between the Wiltshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust and the Wiltshire Constabulary. The Air Ambulance side of the project is funded through the Wiltshire Air Ambulance Charitable Trust which is a registered charity. It is an essential service that serves all the people of Wiltshire whatever age or gender and is there for those life and death situations where the speed of the helicopter and the skill of the crew play a major part in the outcome of the patient. The helicopter used is a twin-engine McDonnell Douglas 902 Explorer that has no tail rotor, cutting down the noise produced in flight and is a huge advantage when it has to land on motorways or small spaces. It is bright yellow in colour and is available to fly 365 days a year and 19 hours a day.



The **DOROTHY HOUSE HOSPICE** is a charity, founded on Christian principles of care. All services in the community and the hospice are provided free of charge and with equal access to all. Their aim is to offer physical, psychological, social and spiritual care to patients and their families facing life threatening illness, death or bereavement, who have specific problems which need specialist skills. In partnership with all others involved it focuses on quality of life, respecting the uniqueness of each person and their family. They have many shops selling goods (2 in Melksham) and are well worth supporting additionally.



**HALSWAY MANOR SOCIETY** is a creative organisation that provides courses, events and activities for everyone interested in traditional folk music, dance and song, storytelling, folklore and arts and crafts. Located in the Quantock Hills - an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - in South West England. It has a fascinating history that goes back over 600 years. Set in 6 acres of grounds, the Manor has a warm friendly atmosphere, good food, a bar, a range of overnight accommodation and camping in the grounds. Its Library contains thousands of books and recordings of folk, traditional music, dance and song and can be used for research and study. There is a 200 Club (to which your Club partakes and had a win recently) which supports the activities of the Society whereby 50% of the subscriptions go directly to the upkeep of the Manor and the other 50% to four cash prizes in one of the bi-monthly draws.

The amount the Club has raised and donated to charity since April of 2012 is as follows:

Dorothy House	-	305.00
Halsway Manor	-	46.50
Wiltshire Air Ambulance	-	212.22
Hope for Tomorrow	-	40.10
Wiltshire Folk Dance	-	15.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£618.82</b>

This is a fantastic achievement, well done and thank you all.

**Look out for details of our Club outing we hope to arrange shortly and for another issue of 'Reel Times' ready for our new dance season starting in September.**

### **KEEP DANCING!!!**

I've been dancing for almost 40 years, and enjoyed every minute of it. Following my mum's advice to 'always keep an outside interest', I was wondering what to do - and found folk dancing classes at Lowbourn Junior School. I turned up one evening and have never looked back!

Some of the highlights have been the weekends at Halsway Manor, which went on for about 18 years. Dave had no option but to babysit - but never minded, bless him.

Some years ago some of us had a foray into sword dancing - that was really good fun, but you had to watch your fingers!

Nowadays, the best thing for me, is the Tea Dances, very enjoyable.

So all of you - young and young at heart -

### **KEEP DANCING!!!**

**Christine Gale**

# Halsway Manor



## POMPEII

Has there been something you've always wanted to do? In my case it was wanting to see Pompeii. There is something about volcanoes, tornadoes and other natural phenomena that has always enthralled me.

Pompeii, destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD had captured my imagination since I was 12 years old. This year I decided I would finally go to see it. My first outing was to Vesuvius. The coach trip took us back towards Naples with Vesuvius dominating the skyline, it was quite frightening to think of the hundreds of thousands of people who live in the Red Zone - the area where it is deemed not safe to live and directly in the path when Vesuvius erupts again. We had to walk the final 900 metres to get to the top and were provided with stout sticks to help.



I gasped a sigh of relief when I finally made it! But was it worth it - oh yes! You get a sense of the power of nature. Our guide told us we were lucky - this was the first day this season that the steam coming from the centre had been visible - I had a sneaky suspicion that maybe he said that to all the visitors!

My final outing was to Pompeii, the fulfillment of my dream. Fortunately it was another sunny, fine day. Did you know the Romans had takeaways? We saw the remains of shops and the stone containers where the takeaway food was kept. We saw the public baths, separate ones for men and women. Of course we saw the brothel and the public fountains that were used as direction finders. We also saw the remains of some of those who died when they were overcome by the ash. The remains are plaster casts but the actual skeletons of the poor souls are still inside.

It's impossible to tell you about everything I saw but I will never regret making this childhood dream a reality... where to next time?!!

## Jill Hitch

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## CHILDREN'S DAY OF DANCE (36<sup>th</sup> year) 17<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2013

Every year the Club organises and invites over 40 junior schools in Melksham and surrounding villages to come to the day. Usually between 300 & 400 children from 16 schools attend. Lessons and dances taught by the teachers and learnt during the year are expanded and they learn to mix and work together with other schools. The event is well directed by our own local caller Stan Vice assisted by local folk band Wiltshire Klof. An event well worth seeing.

# EVENTS DIARY 2013

## TEA DANCES

2 February	Ian Ludbrook
2 March	Brian Lyons
30 March (Easter Saturday)	Robert Wright ( <a href="#">Charity Dance for Dorothy House</a> )
7 Sept	Geoff Elwell and Barry Reeves
5 October	Stan Vice
2 November	Colin Moore ( <a href="#">Charity Dance for Wiltshire Air Ambulance</a> )
7 December	Richard Woodward

## VISITING CALLERS

8 February	Ivan Aitken
25 March	Barry Gant
13 May	Robert Wright
1 July	Rob Dawson

## ANNUAL SATURDAY EVENING DANCE

19 October Holt Village Hall, Ivan Aitken. 7.30—11pm.  
Post Code BA14 6QH

## CHILDREN'S DAY OF DANCE

17 April

## CHARITY DANCES

17 June, [Wiltshire Air Ambulance](#)

## COFFEE MORNINGS

21 March	for <a href="#">Halsway Manor</a> at Meg Elwell's
9 May	for <a href="#">Dorothy House</a> at Brenda Hodges

## CLUB AGM

22nd April

## No Meeting

1 April	Bank Holiday
6 May	Bank Holiday
27 May	Bank Holiday
29 July	Last meeting before Summer Break = Party!

## FOR YOUR NOTES:

## TEA ROTA: