

'Farewell to Hinny': End of year Ceilidh

Tutor Hinny Pawsey said farewell to M@HoT with one last Cream Tees concert – and a stomping ceilidh – before Christmas at The Hub in Barnard Castle. The concert and ceilidh repeated the success of a similar gig at the end of 2012, also at The Hub, which marked Cream Tees' first birthday and since then, under Hinny's musical direction, M@HoT's youth folk band have just been going from strength to strength.

Cream of the Crop

Hinny had even written a new tune - 'Cream of the Crop' - for the band to mark the occasion. She will be sadly missed – but Cream Tees were determined to send her off in style! They started the gig with their latest repertoire of traditional tunes, along with some fantastic solo performances.

Hinny then took the stage alongside with a trio of brilliant young folk musicians – Sophy



Hinny performing (centre) with Ian and Sophy at The Hub

Ball, Ian Stephenson and fellow Cream Tees tutor Alex Cumming. Everyone danced the night away with some traditional ceilidh dances, such as the famous 'strip the willow' – and by the end we had all just about mastered it!

Absolute joy

Hinny is moving on from her beloved North East for new challenges down south but said,

'It has been an absolute joy working with this brilliant bunch of young musicians. In each generation, new people offer themselves up to be new guardians of our folk tradition, and it has been a great honour for me to be the one

to hand these kids the key. They are learning melodies and ways of making music which have been a part of our life for hundreds of years but, as has always been the way with traditional music, they are adding their own ideas, styles and personalities.'

She added, 'It's been a huge joy to hear them do this in the music we've been making together, and I hope they will continue to get great enjoyment out of it.'

Great tunes

Fiddler Nick Hamilton, now 14 and from Teesdale School, has been a member of the band from the start. He summed up the feelings for many when he said, 'I feel sad that Hinny is leaving but it's been really good learning to play in the traditional style – by ear – with her. She's so friendly and brings great tunes for us to play!'



Cream Tees at the 'Farewell to Hinny' concert

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Mike Bettison, who leads the research side of the M@HoT project, tells of his discoveries and the revival of an old dance tradition...

Traditional Dance in Teesdale

I had never expected to find any examples of traditional ritual dance in Teesdale. Many folk enthusiasts have been here long before me and surely some mention would have been made somewhere.

However, if anything was to be in the area, it was likely to be longsword dancing – a slow, rhythmical, almost hypnotic dance, making shapes with swords. Earliest records of this dancing are from the 15th century and it has been found in an area stretching from Sheffield in the south to Greatham, Co. Durham in the north. Further north of this area, you find the north-east rapper sword dances and to the south, the various forms of Morris dancing. It is thought that all longsword dances used to have a mummers play as part of the performance. This does still exist in some places, though not in all.

The first Teesdale reference I found was in the American, James Madison Carpenter's (JMC) notes. He was from

Harvard University and won a scholarship to research British folk culture. He came to Britain, bought an open top Austin 7 car and set off! We do not yet know exactly when he was in Teesdale, but it has to be between 1930 and 1935.

Dancing in Startforth

One of his informants here is Henry Scott of Startforth. JMC's typewritten notes say:

'84 years old. Remembers sword dancers seventy years ago. Brother one of performers. Half a dozen or so dancers came in, one by one, each announcing his name in a rhyme.'

The Teesdale Mercury reported that Henry Scott celebrated his 90th birthday on Monday 15th September 1941, so it points to JMC being here in '35 which we know is the last year that he was in England. Thus we might presume that the dancing happened about 1865. It was also attached to a mummers play and Henry says that they used wooden swords. It was longsword dancing, but there is no description of the dance.

After a few lines from the play it simply notes, 'Then came sword dancing.' Not a lot to go on, but we can safely say that there was a sword dance team in Startforth in the middle of the 19th century.



Sketches of the costumes worn by a 'dancer' (left) and the 'clown' (right) taken from correspondence in 1894 from Alice Edleston to Thomas Ordish

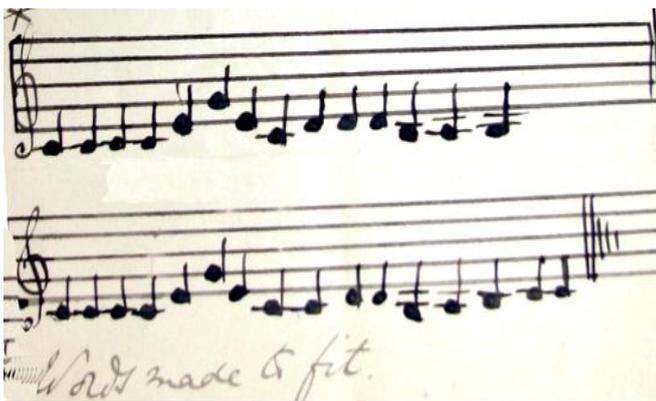
The editor's corner

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone had a fantastic time over the festive season. 2013 was a great year for Cream Tees with lots of gigs over the summer, such as the Hexham Gathering, Durham Regatta and rounding the year off with a stomping ceilidh. Of course, we also had to say a fond farewell to Hinny Pawsey who has acted as musical director for the M@HoT project since its beginnings in 2011 (page 1). However, there is lots to look forward to in 2014 with a new composition (see page 4) and more Longsword Dancing (pages 2-3) on the horizon!



The Ordish Connection

Sometime after this discovery, we received a note from Kim Harding of Barnard Castle, suggesting that we look at the Ordish collection. Thomas Fairman Ordish (1855 – 1924) worked as a clerk in the Patent Office in London, but had a passionate interest in mummers' plays and sword dancing, becoming acknowledged as an expert in the field and then elected to the Folklore Society in 1886. In November 1893, Alice Edleston, the daughter of Joseph Edleston, the vicar of Gainford, wrote to Thomas Ordish.



This tune, which is much like 'Bobby Shafto', was documented by Alice Edleston in her correspondence with Thomas Ordish. The writing underneath the music says 'words made to fit'.

The Queen of Gainford

In a later publication Alice is referred to as the 'Queen of Gainford.' She was a great benefactor and she wrote numerous articles and left the village hall and the theatre to the village. This first letter in the Ordish collection implies some earlier communication which we don't have. In the first letter we do have, she is offering to arrange for an elderly villager, Mrs Calvert,

who was a milliner and who remembered the dancers, to make a set of costumes. Miss Edleston would then send these to Thomas Ordish. She would also send the fiddler's tune book. I've yet to locate either costumes or book, if they exist!

The description she sent of the accompanying mummers play is extensive, as is the description of the costumes – even though she sent a complete set to him: King, Clown, Doctor and Dancer. However there are only fragments of tunes (where is that book?!) and the dance description is very sketchy.

Of course dance is difficult to notate at the best of times.

This sentence in the letter caught my eye: 'This village was not so noted for sword dancing as Piercebridge (2½ miles off)

and Eppleby and Aldbrough.' These villages are all within 4 miles and it implies each village had a sword dance team! Another sentence reads: 'The swords were real ones. Ones that Mrs Calvert remembers had been dug up on Stainmoor.' I find this hard to believe, but who knows?

Miss Edleston says that the last time it was danced in Gainford was 34 years ago.

As this letter was written in 1894, this puts the date of the remembered dance at 1860, close to the date when it was remembered in Startforth. I believe that up until that time a longsword dance would not have been an uncommon sight around Christmas time in Teesdale.

Longsword dance revival

Based on all this information, the M@HoT project felt fully justified in trying to revive the tradition in Teesdale! Working with Gainford-based tutor Patrick Langdon, and with workshops run in Teesdale School lead by Alex Cumming in 2012 and Tom Redman in 2013, we now have a fine group of 12 and 13 year old dancers established at the school who meet once a fortnight during term time.

At the School's December concert they performed a longsword dance, to the accompaniment of music by Cream Tees – perhaps the first time the dance had been performed in Teesdale for over century! Its reintroduction is exciting and our hope is that the Teesdale Longsword Dancers will now go from strength to strength.



A group of Year 7 Longsword dancers show off their 'Lock' at a workshop held in Teesdale School in November 2013.

Diary Dates

2014

January

Sat 25th

Opening act for Jez Lowe at The Witham

February

Sat 15th

Acoustic Café at The Witham

March

Sat 15th

Acoustic Café at The Witham

Fri 21st - Sat 22nd

'New Composition I': Weekend Workshop at The Hub

May

Fri 23rd - Sat 24th

Workshop at The Hub, followed by Hexham Gathering

June

Fri 20th - Sat 21st

'New Composition II': Midsummer Residential at Langdon Beck YH

October

Fri 10th

'New Composition III': Recording at The Hub

November

Fri 28th

'New Composition IV': First public performance at The Witham

N.B. Other dates to be announced

A New Year, a New Challenge: a New Composition!

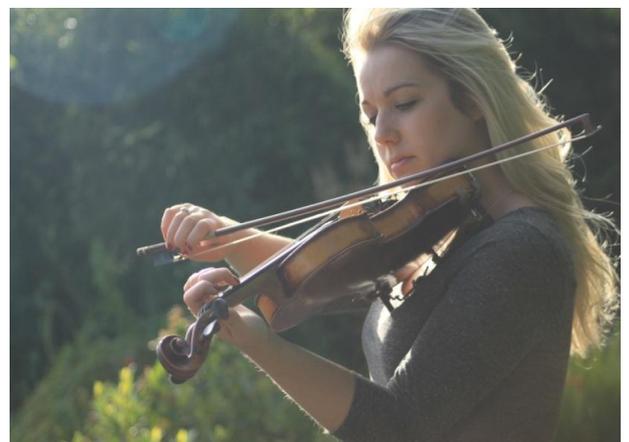
For 2014, our Cream Tees musicians are set to produce a new piece of music, inspired both by the landscape and the folk music traditions of Teesdale. Working with tutors Sophy Ball and Ian Stephenson over a series of four workshops, our young musicians will (see 'Diary Dates' opposite):

- work up some initial ideas for themes and tunes in March;
- work on the actual arrangement of the new piece as a whole at our midsummer residential in June;
- record the 'New Composition' at The Hub in October; and
- perform it in public for the first time at a special concert at The Witham towards the end of November.

Sophy and Ian are no strangers to M@HoT having played at our 'Farewell to Hinny' ceilidh last November (see front page), and also in 2012. Like Hinny, both are very well-respected folk musicians and teachers and are much in demand, so we are very lucky indeed to be working on this exciting new project with such fine musicians.

Meet the Folk: 'Jammin' tutor Izzy

Izzy Burns is currently in her final year on the Folk and Traditional Music degree course at Newcastle University. Her main instrument is the fiddle but she also love to sing! After graduating she hopes to carry on teaching music (maybe even with Cream Tees!) and also gain a place on a PGCE teacher training course.



Izzy Burns striking up a tune on her fiddle

Reflecting on her involvement with Cream Tees to date, Izzy said, 'Working with you all for the last year and a half has been such a rewarding and useful experience. I am so proud of how much everyone has committed and come on as musicians, both individually and as a group and I look forward to working on some new projects together in the New Year.'

The M@HoT project is part of the wider 'Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership' which is supported by Barnard Castle Vision, Durham County Council and the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project is also very grateful to the County Durham Community Foundation, Teesdale Action Partnership and Blaize for their funding and support.