



### 2005-2006 WAS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF CROOK MORRIS

2006 sees Crook Morris, based in Kendal, complete 25 years of dancing. So, it is from this state of total shock that we have planned a full year of celebrations. As you read this some of the events may already have happened and the rest we are eagerly looking forward to!

We travel to Whitby on the weekend of 11th and 12th February to join up with both Jet Set ( the local side ) and Ryknild Rabble from Lichfield. Each of us has lost a member of the side unexpectedly so this will be a chance to remember them, have a fine time with good friends and get some early season dancing in. It will also see the first dance out of a new welsh border style dance "Knickers In The Hedgerow" written specially for the occasion.

Just 2 weeks later we are hosting Silhill Morris. As a side, we've been to stay with them for a 'Balti Weekend' on several occasions. This has included dancing in Stratford Upon Avon, commandeering one of the excellent Balti Restaurants on B'Ham's Indian restaurant street ( there must be a 100 places to choose from! ) and some walks.

Well now it's our turn and we have organised a weekend of Kendal and Lake District highlights with a casino cocktail party, a cross country run, eating out at a Mint Cake speciality chip shop and finally some dancing on a nuclear reactor at Windscale! If you haven't realised it yet, what we are actually doing with them is a closely guarded secret.

Winter practices come to an end before Easter and we kick off the dancing out season with a full day, to blow the cobwebs away, on Saturday 22nd April.

This should prepare us nicely for our annual pilgrimage to the Upton Upon Severn FF. We've only missed 3 - the first because we didn't know about it, the second was the one where the government decided to b\*gg\*r around with the May Day holidays and the third one was where we went to Cornwall to stay in some chicken huts for a week, but that's another story. It does mean that we have just about been to this festival more than any other side. There's a claim to fame.

At the end of May, we usually go to one of the excellent long weekend FFs, but not this year. This year no Chester, Chippenham, or Cleethorpes. No, we're off to France. This is our 6th trip abroad and we do wonder if Sarlat le Caneda, in the gorgeous Dordogne region, is quite prepared for the horrors and delights of English Morris?

We've managed to book all of us onto the same site which can accommodate our mixture of tents, caravans, motor homes and cottages, which is just brilliant. They've even agreed that we can take over their bar one night for a special party to celebrate one of our original member's 60th birthday. She dances, plays, and doesn't look a day over 59!

Then we have just over a month to put the finishing touches to our weekend of dance, based at the John Ruskin School in Coniston village, on 21st, 22nd and 23rd July. As weekends go we are justifiably proud of the whole package. It has taken 18 years of development and refining to reach this standard and we are very lucky that we have a plethora of skilled and willing members who have made this be the case. The location is brilliant with good site facilities, the tours are splendid and we manage to engineer that every side meets up with every other side during the day, the joy of all 200 of us on a Lake Windermere steamer cannot be matched, our bar is so professional that I sometimes think we should hire ourselves out, the evening ceilidh has such a big reputation that extra people travel significant distances to be there, the Sunday finale with its procession, 2 dance locations and massed Dorset Four Hand Reel finishes the event in superb style. I've left the biggest 'wow' factor to last. Simply put, we have the best morris weekend food there is. This is not an idle boast, in fact thanks to massive demand from guests over the years we have collected and collated recipes, added some anecdotes and finally produced " The Crookery Book ". a real collectors' item and only available from us.

The sad news that is that we reckon we've earned a rest and so for the time being this will be our last weekend of dance on this scale. It is our 25th birthday and seemed appropriate for this event to go out in style. That means that the lucky guests who are coming are set for several extra special treats! We sent the initial invitations out in 2004 and every invited side accepted promptly which is a pretty wonderful testament, I think.

On Monday 24th July the whole side is going out for a meal where we can laugh and cry about past weekends. I guess we'll have a few pints as well.

Next in our calendar we are toying with seeking an invitation to either the first weekend of Whitby Folk Week or Shrewsbury (Bridgnorth) FF at the end of August. Watch this space.

We're delighted to be going to Otley FF on 15th - 17th September especially as it's their 15th year. Two of the dance sides local to the festival - Flag Crackers of Craven and Flash Company - are good friends as are festival director Steve Fairholme and especially dance director Dick Taylor.

The culmination of our season's dancing out will be towards the end of September when we hope to have a gathering of as many of the Cumbrian dance sides as possible, in Grasmere. There will probably be 4 or 5 tours from around the county converging on the village of Grasmere. The evening will be a true ceilidh with songs, drinking, dances, spots, music, food, games!

The following morning will see all the sides strutting their stuff to the total bemusement of any Japanese tourists who thought they were visiting Dove cottage and all things Beatrix Potter!

So in just 8 months we'll have celebrated 10 special events and we'll all be k\*a\*k\*r\*d. It will be October, the time for our winter hibernation, practice season in other words, and if we get another 9 new members as happened at the start of this winter then I don't think we'll rest on our laurels. It'll be time to come up with new and different ways to celebrate our wonderful national dance heritage over the next 25 years.

Martyn Harvey, Foreman