

From Lex Edmonds:

I started to learn to dance the Morris when I joined Free Settlers Morris in 1980, a mixed side started in Perth by Elaine & Boyd Wykes formerly of Plenty Morris (Elaine has now reverted to her maiden name of Elaine Bradley). I was with the side for 15 years, until it "expired" in 1995. During those years, FSM was tolerated by the Perth Morris Men as it was a mixed side. In 1997, I ran into PMM again at the Balingup Farm Day in South Western WA. They were short a man, so I was talked into joining in for a few dances. They loaned me some kit, and I got changed in the car park (not the first time I have changed into kit in a public place!) I enjoyed the dance out with them, so joined up permanently at the next practice night. I've been dancing with PMM ever since.

From Terry Sweet

I can confirm I joined PMM in mid-1974, but had a couple of breaks (in early 80's I was with Hong Kong Morris).

It should be noted that as well as being the oldest Australian Side, PMM has danced at a more Westerly Australian location than any other side in the world (Rottnest Island). Other interesting facts are that there are now more deceased PMM than there are currently dancing, and that our present average age is 64. We have always been a men-only dancing side, however have conferred the title of "Honorary Man" on several female musicians who have played for us over the years.

Our most (in)famous member was undoubtedly Dr. Rory Thompson, who murdered and dismembered his wife, and flushed her remains down the toilet. He received a "never to be released" life sentence. In mitigation of his offence, he was a good dancer. PMM still present the annual Rory Thompson Memorial award for the biggest dancing "stuff-up" noted in the preceding year (Rory's crime was discovered because of stuffed-up plumbing).

I recall an incident at a fete, in the mid 80's in which the PMM were dancing Jockey to the Fair, attended by our hobby-horse Maurice (ridden by Fritz Fitton). Maurice galloped towards 3 mounted police, who were to put on a riding display. The sight of a brightly coloured, 2-legged horse-like creature, with a the barbarian Fritz astride it caused them to rear and scatter in panic, with their police riders hanging on for dear life. The crowd thought this was great, however Maurice (and Fritz) had to run for it, as the police were definitely not amused.

From Joyce (former "Fair Maid") & Lex's wife

I first witnessed Morris dancing at the Toodyay Folk Festival 1981 shortly after arriving in Perth. There were three sides dancing that day - The Perth Morris Men, The Fair Maids of Perth and The Free Settlers Morris. I was enthralled. The following February I joined the Fair Maids of Perth and danced with them until 2006 when the side finally folded. During 1982, I also started to dance with the Free Settlers Morris, and danced out with them on various occasions until raising children seemed to become a greater priority to them than dancing. An attempt was made in 1996 to get the Free Settlers going again, but the attempt failed.

With the Fair Maids I have danced at many festivals. I had no sooner joined them than I fell whilst ice skating and broke my right arm. Undaunted, I danced out with

the Fair Maids for the first time at a folk festival in Albany at Easter 1982 with a cast on my arm. I still remember the buzz of dancing "Knutsford" in a hall in the evening. As we began the dance our clogs all hit the floor at the exact same instant - the one and only time that ever happened. We danced in Albany several times.

We began 1983 by dancing at the Old Mill in Yallingup. We forgot both our sticks and our garlands then and had to make do with gleanings from the bush. Our next stand in 1983 was a trip to Broome for Broome's centenary celebrations at which Ted Egan gave a most interesting workshop about the pearling industry in Broome. There he launched several new songs including "We're Going Back to Broome Today", and "Sayonara Nakamura". We camped amongst the prickles on the race track and danced in street in town, outside the pub and the town hall. Several of our members had driven up to Broome. En route they came to a river with enough water in it to swim. So they just stripped off and jumped in, and, lacking towels, danced naked on the river bank to dry themselves (yes, there are photos).

1983 continued with a trip to the National Folk Festival in Adelaide where I, and by then, my two daughters, danced in our first mass Morris event. During the course of 1983 The Morris sides in Perth received an invitation from the Hong Kong Morris to go and help them celebrate their 10th anniversary. Ann Fitton was inspired by the invitation and what ensued was a series of events put on by the Fair Maids of Perth to raise the money to get there for the celebration. In July one such event was a Medieval dinner in the Nanga Bush Camp just out of Dwellingup, WA. It was a great success and a memorable event. Then, of course, there was the Toodyay Folk Festival again, where we danced again.

1984 saw the continuance of many opportunities to dance out. The Free Settlers Morris put on a mummings play in Yallingup, where the Fair Maids and Free Settlers danced. Fair Maids events continued including the selling of bucket loads, I cannot count how many, of shortbread to raise the money we needed to get to Hong Kong. The trip to Hong Kong was in November when the weather was purported to be kinder. The celebrations also included a small folk festival. We danced in many places around Hong Kong. It was a most enjoyable trip with great interaction with the Hong Kong Morris (amongst our souvenirs were the HK squire's underdaks).

The following year saw the National Folk Festival come to Perth, hosted at UWA and with the mass Morris in Fremantle. The Hong Kong Morris came down to join us for that event. It was another memorable event.

Since then there have been many, many opportunities to dance out with the Fair Maids and the Free Settlers. We danced in Adelaide, Canberra, Alice Springs, Nannup, Toodyay, Fairbridge, and at school fetes, and medieval fairs (Perth and Balingup) to mention just a few. Through Morris dancing I have made many good friends and it has certainly enriched my life since coming to Perth.

Joyce Edmonds (formerly Temperly, nee Syms)

From Ric Curtis

I joined PMM in early 1975 having been enticed in by Dave Varey at a folkie event at the Charles Hotel. As for interesting stories regarding the PMM, I can think of a few.

As a follow on to Terry's tale of the mounted police, I remember when PMM were dancing in Hay Street 'pedestrian' mall in the early 80s. A police car drove down the mall and pushed through the set as we were dancing with not a sign of acknowledgement or word of apology. I was fooling at the time and donked the police car with my pig's bladder.

We did a gig one evening at the trots at Gloucester Park, again in the 80s. A member of our side at the time was a fellow known as "Butterfly". That was his real name and I happen to know that he had a blue butterfly tattooed on one cheek of his backside. I know this because on one occasion when rock climbing on Wilyabrup cliffs, he was climbing naked (as one does!) above me and I noticed said butterfly. Anyway, I digress. Back at Gloucester Park, Butterfly pranced up and down the race track in the Morris horse much to the enjoyment of the other racegoers.

Yes Rory was a good dancer although his style was a little effeminate. I don't think that we quite have the numbers on "the other side" to match our current living members. My tally is 8 at the moment.

On the subject of pig's bladders, whilst fooling I have zapped two Premiers of WA on the head - Richard Court at Tranby House and Ray O'connor at Ascot Race Course. I also got a Governor of Western Australia at the Nannup folk festival. A military man - the expression on his face translated roughly as 'We are not amused'.

Cheers Rick

A note from John Watson on influences:

The original connections *ie* influences were set by John Haliday South Shropshire Morris Men and Kris Keen, ex Oxford Ancient Men.

A note on Lady Musicians (also from JW):- Angie Varey preceded Christine Hogan as the 1st "Honorary Man.

Squire's note – Kay Jones has recently joined the Perth Morris Men as a musician.