

What do you when you are 40? Celebrate! How? Do what all Morris dancers would do. Hold an ale. We did. And how.

In all we had 93 attendees, and 44 of those came from various states east of the Rabbit Proof fence. As expected, the Adelaide Morris men were over in force, but we also had members of Black Joak, Brandragon, Jolly Hatters, Lancashire Witches, South East North West, Surly Griffin, and Belswagger.

Perth and points south were not kind with the weather but that stopped no one. The first outing in the Perth city centre did not pull a big crowd so we were outnumbering the audience as was. There is nothing quite like massed Morris for a spectacle, and even if you were watching from the balcony opposite the colours and music would have stopped anyone in their tracks. From mid morning til lunch the various sides and composites danced on the steps outside the old post office.

Time to return to the buses for a quick trip across to Northbridge and after a while finding parking (a 24 seater is a bigger challenge than a car!) We all found ourselves outside the Northbridge Brewing Company. Pause for food and drink and off we go again, this time on a lawn in front of the pub, this time with sun.

The plan was to take our interstate guests back to their accommodation and return later to pick them up and head for the evening's Ale proper. Worked like clockwork. The format for the ale (was there one?) was for each side to present a show dance and some silly stuff. And of course indulge in food and drink. Our MC for the evening was occasionally seen as he spoke to those who were quiet enough to listen to him. He made mention of Cecil Sharp, acknowledging that without his diligent collecting of Morris tunes and dances, none of us would have been present. Apart from that, he did actually tell us what was going on. The sides displayed their skills and eventually descended into silly stuff. Of note was the presence among the Fair Maids of Perth a muso who normally tries to keep the Perth men on their toes. Could that be Robert Bannister dressed in a skirt and wearing a bonnet and not keeping his usual straight face? You bet! Carrying the cross dressing to extremes and having pairs of men tie their legs together and present themselves in horn rimmed glasses and brown coats, the Perth Men succeeded in celebrating the boy from Bassendean (not but a kilometre or two away) with their rendition of "Jake the Peg". Subject now closed ...

The next day, this writer took refuge in the Hills, so passing right along to Monday, we all boarded our bus and headed south to the home of Terry and Anne Sweet at Yallingup. However, the crowd made two pit stops along the

way. The first was at the Bush Shack, a rustic pub approximately in the middle of somewhere known only to some people. Real ale was drunk along with several other brews (and a great Citron Presse for the driver of the bus). If the weather was cold and wet it did not suppress some wonderful dancing from all concerned. A memorable jig was the delicacy (yes, our dance form can be gentle) of Geoff Wark sharing the floor with Rachel Neild to give us "Enlist for a Sailor".

If Bush Shack was the real thing, Duckstein was a tad plastic and empty apart from us. The wind was blowing gale force and it rained sideways. Still, plastic pubs and crap weather doesn't stop the Morris.

On to Terry and Anne's place not too far away, for a splendid dinner. Next day, off to Margaret River for a crawl around some pubs. You've guessed it. More foot ups. Don't these folks ever get tired of Morris Dancing?

And there you have a snapshot. It was a fantastic weekend and a great honour to have so many folks venturing forth to the west. And I feel sure everyone who attended would congratulate Steve Mansfield for his huge effort, right down to the logistics of getting three drivers and two buses in the right places at the right times.