

Squires Report 2021

2020/21 has been an unusual period for the New Forest Meddlars, and other Morris Sides. Needless to say the past 16 months have proved a challenge for everyone. However we seem to have come through the worst and now look forward to preparing for the 2022 dance season.

We resumed practice at the beginning of May at Minstead which eventually led to us finding a new practice Hall at Emery Down. This will be a financial bonus, saving the side approximately £300 a year. Furthermore, the members appear to approve of the new venue. At the same time Marilyn (Foreman) decided the time had come to leave us, in order to enjoy her retirement with her husband, we wish them well. Eileen stepped up to the mark and took on Marilyn's role as Foreman. One of the issues that this raised was the lack of Dance Notation that existed for our dances. I have therefore begun to research our dances and started to record the dance notations, so hopefully in the near future we will have a full written record. As you are aware I have also started to video our dances with the intention of making them available to all members. This will hopefully assist new dancers and remind us older ones what we should be doing. All of this material hopefully will be put onto our web site once completed.

Our Dance Out season commenced at the end of July, with a limited repertoire, but it has proved positive as the new dancers have improved their confidence and managed to consolidate their first few dances. With our 1st outing at The Mailmans, Lyndhurst this proved a positive start to the season. Four other public houses also proved to be a success; especially The Smugglers and The Red Shoot with audience participation.

The Eastleigh Mela appeared to be thoroughly enjoyed by the Meddlars and, the final session of the day with the large audience participation was a huge success. It would appear that the change of dance from the Five Hand Reel to Tinnars Rabbit has been a good choice. The year culminated in our appearance at the Swanage Folk Festival, which felt great to be back at again. The additional bonus was being joined by Bob (our previous Squire) and Pam (who was our lead musician). A great finish to a very short season.

Of the 9 events this year, 5 were Tuesday evening dance out's mainly at public houses. A Day of Dance at Hythe appeared to be a success, with the possibility of 2 new recruits. The following weekend, Hythe had a local recruitment drive in the village for local organisations. It may be possible in 2022 for us to participate in the event, recruit new dancers and treat it as a day of dance dance.

Due to a short dance out season and Jane's efforts we have raised nearly £400 to present to the Honeypot Charity. Which we will arrange in due course.

Unfortunately due to Covid the Sarum workshop in February which we look forward to was cancelled. Hopefully it will take place in 2022.

We have had Jan join us as a musician, and occasionally her daughter Mel, both who have been great additions to the side. The new practice format of 30 minutes for the musicians prior to dance practice and the reduction of dance practice to 90 minutes appears to be working well. It is essential that the musicians have the time to practice

together as this ensures they play together and the timing is correct, even more so when they are learning new dance tunes.

Finally, thanks to everyone, musicians and dancers, for the effort they have put in since resuming from Covid lockdown, and hopefully as we move forward 2022 will be a successful year for us.