

Oxfordshire Folk Dance Association

FOLK NEWS

Autumn 2026 and Winter 2027

Chairman Bruce Laurie chair@oxonfolk.co.uk

Treasurer Ian Cummins treasurer@oxonfolk.co.uk

Minutes Secretary Sally Hersom

Events Secretary – Vacant. Please get in touch with the Chair if you feel able to help arranging events.

Folk News Editor coling@oxonfolk.co.uk.

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Dance related items for inclusion in Folk News always welcome.

Next edition spring 2027.

Copy Date March 7th.

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Oxfordshire Folk Dance Association

Playford Ball

Sunday, 4th October 2026

2.0 – 5.30 pm

Yarnton Village Hall OX5 1TE

Madeleine Smith

with

Pete & Sue Hall

Tickets: £12

Please bring a plate of food to share – no dips.

*(We respect those wishing to bring food
for their own consumption.)*

Chairman's Letter

The 2026 Music Day on 30th May at Cumnor VH was a great success, thanks to the inspired musical leadership of Rod Stradling and the calling of Malcom Bright.

This was the first Music Day organized by Stella Wentworth and she did a magnificent job. Thanks also to Norma Stallard and Joyce Dawson, who provided refreshments during the day and the team of helpers who provided the magnificent tea for the musicians.

The dancers who came thoroughly enjoyed the early evening dancing, but we could have done with a few more dancers. This Music day was on a smaller scale than some in the past, but we are aiming for similar numbers in the future. This provides a really useful coaching environment for the musicians and a balanced sound to dance to.

We hope to run another Music Day in the Spring of 2027 and will be finalizing the date soon. Meanwhile you can attend Chiltern's Music Day on 24th October 2026 at Lewknor VH with Pete and Moira Gutteridge leading the music and Madeleine Smhn calling. Full details are on page 5 and the OFDA website.

Our next Oxfordshire event is the annual Playford Ball (costume optional) at Yarnton VH on 4th October with Pete and Sue Hall and Madeleine Smith at 2.00pm. While a Sunday afternoon is not the best atmosphere for a ball, it has proved more popular than Saturday evening and ensures that those who do not like to drive at night can come.

I reported last time that we had set aside £2000 for dance development and that we had approached the EFDSS for guidance. I have had a fruitful meeting with Jen Cox, Director of dance development for the EFDSS and she has given us the contact of the head of the Schools Music Service for Oxfordshire, who is keen on dance. We have had a constructive and encouraging initial meeting, with the aim of fostering potential musicians developing dance in a few schools- something on the lines for our Music Days. I will update you on progress from time to time.

The growth of new members particularly at Headington is encouraging. Please talk about how much fun and good exercise folk dancing is, among your friends. Personal contact is, perhaps, the most successful way of bringing new people in.

Finally, several Clubs have been worried about the increase of the excess on the EFDSS Public Liability Policy for Clubs to £1000, which while a claim is unlikely, is a crippling sum for the officers of most of our clubs. Partly as a result of an interchange with the EFDSS by Upper Basildon, the excess has been negotiated down to £500. A good result for us all.

Bruce Laurie

GENDER FREE CALLING

There is a growing appetite, mostly among younger generations, for gender free calling, i.e. without the use of the words 'men' and 'ladies.'. Callers where gender free is required are expected to provide suitable alternatives to the established words that the dancers will understand. In some cases this can cause misunderstanding if the caller is not fully prepared.

Positional calling eliminates the need to use 'men' and 'ladies' but this too can lead to ambiguity and confusion and often uses more words. In a 3 or 4 couple set the phrase "the line facing the windows" may need further description if the hall has windows on both sides. Surely much easier just to refer to 'the men's line'? even when there both sexes in the line.

When arranging a dance, booking caller and band, it is in everyone's interest to define the style of calling to be used, to be included in any publicity.

My understanding is that all OFDA clubs continue to use the original gender terms.

Colin Hume (renowned Folk Dance caller and composer) has written a comprehensive article on the subject in the Autumn 2026 edition of EFDSS members magazine, which also

contains a piece by Andrew Swaine on modern interpretation of Playford as it appeals to younger dancers and musicians. If you are not an EFDSS member ask a friend who is, or your club secretary, to lend you their copy.

[Colin Hume has a comprehensive website which includes descriptions of dances he has written and much other information, all available without charge.]

Colin G.

What is your view ? do you have a comment or opinion you would like to share. Send to the Editor (coling@oxonfolk.co.uk) for publication next time.

OXFORD OLDER PEOPLE'S DAY

in Oxford Town Hall will be held this year on
Wednesday .7th. October. From 10.00 am.
Come and help promote Folk Dancing.

All welcome - free admission!

Browse the stalls and information stands .

OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL 2027

Will be held over the weekend April 16th – 18th.

Details should be available early in the New Year.

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2027 WINTER FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL

in the sun will be in the
Don Marco Hotel , Torremolinos
From 23rd. January – 2nd February.

CHILTERN FOLK ASSOCIATION



SATURDAY, 24th OCTOBER 2026
LEWKNOR VILLAGE HALL
HIGH STREET
LEWKNOR
OX49 5TL

MUSICIANS' FOLK DANCE BAND WORKSHOP

Led by Moira and Peter Gutteridge
10.00 am to 3.30pm.
£25. Students £8
Doors open 9.30am

DANCE

Caller – **Madeleine Smith**

5pm – 8.30pm.

£10

with the Musicians attending the workshop playing.

Contact for further information:

Lesley Baillie (CFA secretary), lesley_baillie@hotmail.com

Report on the OFDA Musician's Workshop 2026

On Saturday 30th May, 25 musicians from as far afield as Powys, Suffolk, the West Midlands and Surrey convened bright and early at Cumnor Village Hall for the 2026 OFDA Folk Dance Musicians' Workshop.

The workshop was led by Rod Stradling, who shared his extensive knowledge of folk dance musicianship with his customary humour and a lightness of touch which made the day as thoroughly enjoyable as it was informative. Rod was ably supported by Frances whose expert percussion accompaniment added that indefinable *je ne sais quoi* to our practice sessions. I rather missed this in the evening when Frances and several other musicians joined in with the dancing, although our massed band was still three times the size of the dance bands I usually have the opportunity to play with.

We had a really nice mix of instruments: accordions, cellos, concertinas, Frances' drum, electric bass, flutes, a folk harp, keyboards, a mandolin, descant and treble recorders, violins and whistles. I'm quite sure I'd have enjoyed both the music and the opportunity to play alongside a different range of instruments wherever in the room I'd happened to be sitting but I have to say that the lovely rich timbre of the cello in the row behind me was a rare and welcome delight.

From my perspective, the music was a good blend of the familiar, the completely new and the slightly challenging. Rod had selected tunes which would suit the dances Malcom Bright had chosen for the evening dance and at the same time illustrate points worth bearing in mind if you're asked to play for a folk dance. This included two completely different tunes with identical names (don't assume the tune you know is the one the caller has in mind!) and some tunes with which I was completely unfamiliar for dances I've played for frequently over several decades. I wasn't entirely convinced they'd work to unfamiliar tunes – but of course, they did and that reminded me not to be afraid to try something new or different every so often for dances which don't have a "set" tune. With the agreement of the caller, of course!

The success of the day was greatly enhanced by all the support we received from OFDA members who helped get the hall ready beforehand; generously gave up their Saturday to keep us regularly supplied with tea, coffee and cold drinks; baked home-made cakes for us; made sandwiches for our afternoon tea; greeted the dancers as they arrived in the evening; helped clear up afterwards; and generally assisted behind the scenes to make sure everything went as smoothly as possible. I'm not going to include a list of names but as Rod would say, "you know who you are" and all your hard work was very much appreciated. Thank you, one and all!

As the emphasis of the workshop was specifically on playing for folk dancing, it was lovely to end the day with a dance, for which Malcom Bright had prepared an excellent programme. Only the dancing guests of music workshop participants were pre-booked for the evening dance so it was very reassuring when other dancers began to arrive. I have it on good authority (from an OFDA committee member) that "it was a great dance as well [and] the music was brilliant". Thank you to all concerned – Rod, Malcom, musicians, dancers and everyone who helped behind the scenes – for making the day an enjoyable one.

OFDA plan to run a similar event next Spring – the date will be listed on www.oxonfolk.co.uk as soon as it is confirmed. When it is, do put the date in your diaries, spread the word to any musicians you think might be interested and keep the evening free if you are a dancer. It will be worth the effort ☺

In the meantime there are a couple of other musicians' opportunities coming up which may be of interest:

- Saturday 24th October at Lewknor Village Hall
Chilterns Folk Association are running a Musicians' Folk Dance Band Workshop led by Peter and Moira Gutteridge followed by an evening dance for which Madeleine Smith will be the Caller.
Details on www.chilternfolk.org.uk

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- Sunday November 29th 2026 at Jubilee House, Horton Rd, Stanton-St-John, Oxfordshire, OX33 1AG
Workshop day (for melody instruments- not just accordions!) led by the No1 Ladies Accordion Orchestra.
Booking form available on their website,
<https://www.no1ladiesaccordionorchestra.co.uk> or e-mail
Enquiries@no1ladiesaccordionorchestra.co.uk

Stella Wentworth.

Madeleine Smith also notes :-

MUSIC WORKSHOP AND DANCE, Saturday 24th October 2026

It is the turn of Chiltern Folk Association to organise a music workshop and dance. Once again this will be at Lewknor Village Hall, close to junction 6 of the M40. It will still (just) be British Summertime, so still light for the start of the dance. If you have not made it Lewknor before, it is very accessible and has a good dance floor. Please see details elsewhere in the newsletter. Booking is required for the music workshop. You can just turn up at the dance, cash please, and bring a plate of food to share. Tea etc provided.

We are delighted to welcome Moira and Peter Gutteridge to run the workshop this year. The music will be sent out a month before. The tunes will be in 2 part harmony, and will also have the usual chord symbols for accompanying instruments. Moira and Peter are very helpful with tips on playing simple harmony on a melody instrument too, enabling everyone to join in and feel part of the band, which is a wonderful experience, so do come along, no need to be able to play all the tunes fluently and up to speed. And of course, they will give advice on what kind of accompaniment will work for each tune, including simple ones for less experienced musicians. Let them know any special requirements like transposed music when you book. During the day we will prepare the tunes for the early evening dance, plus a couple of performance pieces, starting slowly and building up speed. It is a long day for the musicians, but we will pace ourselves, with a good break for lunch, and feel free to rest if you need to: listening can also be very instructive. We hope you can stay to play for the dance, which is so rewarding after all the hard work.

Moira and I are working on a varied programme of tunes and dances across all dance genres. I am aiming to make the dances both interesting and accessible, with something for everyone, and I hope this will make walkthroughs reasonably straightforward and quick. We want you to enjoy dancing to the lovely music - the hall has brilliant acoustics - without too many complicated calls. We are delighted to be including a tune by Neville Gardner, who skilfully organised the day for many years, and musician and dancer Celia Thomas has written a dance for it.

So, dancers, please come along and support our musicians!

Club Reports as presented to the AGM 2026

in June

Chinnor

Chinnor Folk Dance Club, known as the 'Jane Austen Dancers' have had an excellent year. We are a small friendly group, with a very variable weekly attendance, but have grown enough to move to a bigger hall. We were sorry to recently say goodbye to our sprung floor at the Church Hall, but are enjoying a good floor and more spacious dancing room at the Methodist Church.

Our evening is a teaching class, with guidance from me on how to dance well and bring each dance to life as well as possible.

We cover a variety of genres, not just Jane Austen. I always manage to come up with a programme to fit in with our numbers, so no one has to sit out.

We also have several callers, one of whom attended the recent Caller' Workshop day in Amersham. They contribute interesting dances, and are able to stand in for the occasional evening.

We try to have live music evenings occasionally with musicians who are members of the group.

We support local dances, and also provide caller (me), musicians and of course dancers for local barn

dances and ceilidhs, which get excellent attendances. This year there have been barn dances for

Christian Aid and the U3A with attendances of 60 to 80.

Dunsden Green

No report received.

Hagbourne

No report received.

Headington Quarry

No report received.

St. Andrews Assembly

Our average monthly attendance has increased to 25 and we also held a well-attended and enjoyable

Jane Austen Ball with Brian Stanton in August.

We are very grateful to The St. Andrew's Assembly Players who produce wonderful music for us each month, and to Ruth who organises a variety of callers from far and wide.

After 15 years of serving the teas, Muriel and Jean have retired from the committee so we now have a tea rota and are very grateful to those who help out. At the same time Ken retired as treasurer and we are very grateful to Stewart for taking on this task

Stonesfield

The Stonesfield Group will be hosting the 54th Folk Dance Weekend from the 12th -14th June 2026 at

Stonesfield Village Hall. The callers will be Frances Richardson and Liam Binley.

Information about tickets for this event is available from Stewart Nicholls by emailing r.stewart.nicholls@gmail.com.

In advance of the weekend, Trevor Monson will be calling at Stonesfield at 8pm on Wednesday 10th June. All welcome!!

This spring, members of the group have enjoyed the annual dance weekend at Casterton, Cumbria

Sunday Playford

We usually meet on the fourth Sunday of the month but sometimes move to a third to avoid clashing with other events so it's best to check the website. We have an average monthly attendance of 16 although we sometimes have 21. We are very fortunate to have Playfordia play such superb music for us to dance to.

Thank you to Stewart and Angela for all their practical help, and also to all those who take turns in making the tea.

Tadmarton

Like Old Father Thames in the song, Taddy FDC keeps rolling along. Now in our 41st year we continue to provide English Folk Dancing every week for the good folk of Banburyshire.

There is always live music and of course live dancers (which is always a bonus) who are kept alive by the invariably high quality refreshments. Resident callers are Diane and Carolinne and a collection of good guest callers ensure that all the 16 or so dancers leave at the end of the evening having had a really good time.

Thatcham

from September to July on Monday evenings at Shaw-cum-Donnington Village Hall in Newbury. We appreciate the support of our regular members and would welcome anyone who would like to come and try out folk dancing with us. We have had a good selection of dances from different callers over the year, and our evenings are always great fun! Further details of dates and any other information can be obtained by emailing me at

robynananin@yahoo.co.uk

Towersey

Towersey continues to thrive with often 30-40 dancers and 5 or 6 musicians – a different caller each Monday who show great patience to our newcomers (and some of the older ones too!).

We meet every Monday except bank holidays and August.

Upper Basildon

Dancing at Upper Basildon Village Hall has finished for the spring term. It will resume on Wednesday 2nd September for the Autumn. Mike Courthold will start the term. Following

that we have Diana Triplow coming to call for us, please try and get there it is always a great evening. We then dance every week until the Christmas party on 16th December.

The Bournemouth weekend in October is getting nearer. We are going to the Marsham Court Hotel again. This is a very nice hotel opposite the Russell Cotes museum and we were pleased with it last year. This event is more popular than ever and we're fully booked now with a number of people on a waiting list. The caller is Ivan and Shane and Julia Day are providing the music.

End of May bank holiday is Chippenham folk festival. A great place for folk music and especially dance. Why not get a day tickets and try it out? Over the summer we have Lichfield, Sidmouth, Broadstairs and Whitby festivals, so plenty going on. Not forgetting New Year at Halsway.

Also looking further ahead to January there is "Winter Folk Dancing in the Sun" remaining in Spain for 2027.

Slightly further ahead is the Halsway Easter House party. This starts on Easter Monday (29th March 2027) and continues until Friday. This is a fun week of dancing, music and other entertainments.

Finally may I finish by hoping everyone has a great summer and I look forward to meeting up at dances in the Autumn.

Wantage

The last year has been quite successful. Club Nights continue to attract around 25-30 members normally (though not always the same people) and we are fortunate to be led by Diana and Malcom.

We have also had a few new members.

The Summer Party Dance was ably led by Ian Cummins, who is calling for our Christmas Party this year, and Ted Morse and band led by John Dawson got the Christmas spirit going in style at our Christmas Party.

Ivan Aitken with Pete and Sue Hall led our 26th New Year's Day Dance, with numbers back to pre- Covid levels.

We never envisaged that we would still be doing them when we tentatively arranged "Tea for 2000". For most of those occasions, Pam Fouracre has diligently updated the stage banner with the New Year number. Sadly, she feels that she cannot carry on and the Club have presented her flowers, as a token of all of our thanks. We were delighted to be able to send £100 to Sightsavers charity from the raffle this year

Rosemary Hunt and Orion's Ring led our Spring Dance and while it would have been good to have a few more dancers, there were sufficient to make it a pleasant afternoon.

Malcom has kindly offered to host a Garden Dance this Summer on 22nd August at his house; we are thinking about a boat trip for the following year.

My thanks go to our two resident callers, Malcom and Diana, to our most able treasurer, Keith and to Eileen, who as well as doing exemplary minutes, provides flower arrangements for functions. Thanks also to Linda for hall bookings and being an active Committee Member. She and Eileen end up in the kitchen for most dances.

Thanks also to Diana for producing "fliers" and our contributions to "Folk News" and for those who volunteer do the tea and coffee at Club Nights and those who help set up and put away the chairs.

We are booked for New Year's Day up to January 2028 so please continue to support us and bring more friends to dancing.

We could not function so well without the small but effective Committee, but it would be good if we could get a fresh view from one or more new members.

AUGUST UP-DATES :-

HEADINGTON QUARRY FOLK DANCE CLUB

We are still thriving with at least 4 new members. Our average attendance now is 20 people and sometimes can reach 26. We have had to cancel two Thursday meetings due to the weather but we are hopeful we will be able to meet until the end of July without cancelling anymore evenings. Hooray for emails as we are able to keep our members up to date with these cancellations. Headington recommences on the first Thursday in September. The club held a memorial dance for Julie Tatham in April which was well attended. Ivan Aitken was the caller and Shane and Julia the musicians. Whilst Julie was in Sobell House Hospice she was able to attend music therapy sessions and during these sessions she composed some music using a marimba. Ivan used this music to write a dance which we danced to. Thank you Ivan.

Headington will be manning a stall at the Oxford Town Hall promoting folk dancing in Oxford. This is part of the Oxford Older Peoples Day on 7 October. This is a free event to encourage older citizens to take part in all the activities that are available for them. Headington have been running this stall for many years but it would be nice to see members from other clubs who are able to talk to people about what folk dancing is about.

Going further ahead, Headington will be having their usual Christmas dinner at the Plough at Wolvercote on Saturday 12th December.

THATCHAM FOLK DANCE CLUB

The Autumn Term will begin on Monday 7th September and will end on Monday 21st December with our Christmas Party. We are always happy to welcome anyone who would like to try out folk dancing. Our sessions run from 8pm to 10pm at Shaw-cum-Donnington Village Hall in Newbury on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month (and 5th when there is one). We are grateful for all the continuing support from our members, who make our sessions great fun! Many of us are looking forward to the October dancing weekend in Bournemouth, organised by Ian Cummings, which gives us a chance to catch up with friends from other groups in the area and other parts of the country. Our Spring term will begin on 4th January 2027.

Robyn Ananin

UPPER BASILDON

The caller for our meeting on 2nd. September will be Ted Morse. After Christmas we have New Year at Halsway Manor.

FOLK NEWS.

The intention of Folk News is to keep folk dancers in Oxfordshire, and neighbouring areas, informed about our style of dancing in the county. All 12 clubs within OFDA are invited to give up-dates of their progress, members news, events held and planned. Reports of festivals, events, and other items of general interest

Would you be interested in compiling it or help with producing it?
There will come a time when a new editor is needed.
Don't hesitate to come forward if you are interested.
Please contact the Editor – coling@oxonfolk.co.uk .

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Margaret Brookes thanks everyone who bought the jams and other items she produces at the various sales she has attended which has raised a total of £75 for LeukaemiaUK.

Looking for a Folk Dance CD, or dance or music book?
Many items available from Folk Sales at www.folksales.com .
You may have seen them at various festivals around the country

St. Andrew's Assembly's Jane Austen Ball

Jane Austen was very fond of country dancing and her letters to her sister, Cassandra, frequently mentioned the latest ball she had attended. In August we held a very successful “*Jane Austen Ball*” of which I hope the author would have approved!

Cumnor Village Hall was transformed by Pam's silhouettes of Jane Austen, Jean's beautiful pictures of authentic period costumes (which attracted much interest), and Eileen's lovely floral decorations which added the finishing touches. Our thanks to them all.

Brian Stanton called a good selection of dances which Jane would probably have known: Stella, Ian, Phil, Gill and Sheena provided wonderful music which made us want to dance.

We attracted 40 dancers, including 6 visitors (2 of whom were from Australia). The evening had a lovely atmosphere and we hope everyone who came enjoyed it.

Diana.

From the Festivals.

MayHey Days, Evesham. 2026.

The Folk Dance Festival in the Vale of Evesham, just over the border from Oxfordshire.

There was the same extensive programme of workshops, dances and balls (English, International and others) that we have enjoyed in the previous years as well singing and music. Everything on the De Montfort School site which includes camping for tents, caravans and motor homes.

For more comfortable accommodation many used the NorthWick Arms in town for B & B or the near-by Premier Inn,

Disappointed that as last year there was no in-house catering. Instead we had mobile street catering vans, different each day.

Callers included, Brian Stanton, Geoff Cubitt, Louise Siddons, Andrew Swaine , and others. Main musicians being Keeping Thyme.

This was a very enjoyable and popular weekend with 'house full' for many sessions especially the American and Contra style dances.

Note the date in your diary for 30th. April. –3rd. . May 2027

Early Bird booking opens on 1st. November 2026.

SIDMOUTH FESTIVAL 2026

“Ear to the past, Eye to the future”

“The Sidmouth Folk Festival simulates and celebrates awareness, interest, and involvement in traditional and folk arts from the UK and beyond through performance, learning opportunities and other activities.”

Described by one Hotel afterwards

“The 72nd Sidmouth Folk Festival was a huge success, with the town once again coming alive with music, song and dance. There’s something incredibly special about seeing this much-loved tradition continue year after year. “

The general decline in standard English Folk dancing continued this year with only one dedicated workshop each morning. Some sessions were called by Mark Elvins and Louise Siddons. Andrew Swaine took us through several Playford dances and the history and of ‘Playford’ and the Dancing Master with interpretations from the original manuscripts.

We had a full house for the Playford Ball (in St. Teresa’s hall), and also for a Playford Party (in All Saints hall) where the dances are the same but the music a little faster and danced through several times. Younger folk ‘flying’ all round the room at one point. Both ably controlled by Andrew. There is a growing trend for Gender free and Position calling which occurred many times.

It was an occasion to greet dancers from previous years but some expected faces were missing. Those from older generations are slowly moving away. However folk dancing will continue with the younger people putting their own interpretations on the moves and music which has always been the case as traditions evolve. As usual the American and ceilidh dance morning workshops in Blackmore marquee were well supported and all the afternoon entertainments there were free, with many people standing around the outside, watching displays from the many Morris sides who were performing during the week. I understand the

late evening events and LNE at the Bulveton (a marquee a little out of town, above the campsite) were also popular. Plenty to please and entertain throughout the town all week.

Sidmouth has seen some changes during the year. The well-known department store has had a make-over (under new owners) and their coffee bar closed, but there are many other coffee bars/cafes in town to make up for it. The old Drill Hall at the end of the esplanade has at last been renovated and is now an up-market fish restaurant. The toilets and shelter have gone with no replacement.

Early bird Season **Tickets for 2027** are now available. Do come and enjoy this holiday beside the sea.

Colin Gammon

Lichfield Folk Festival.

The festival took place on an extremely hot weekend starting on the evening of Friday 19th June until Sunday afternoon on 21st June.

The number of dancers was unfortunately down on previous years.

135 season tickets had been sold whereas numbers had been over 300.

The callers this year were Bernie Culkin, Colin Hume, Charlie Turner, David & Kathryn Wright and Victoria Yoemans .

Unfortunately many of the sessions were classed as positional so we mainly attended the gendered workshops and evening dances.

The music during the weekend was exceptionally good especially Stradivarius and 3D.

Despite the heat it made everyone eagerly form up and dance.

Unfortunately there was no Playford Ball this year but the Sunday Folk Service with live music went ahead & was well attended.

The Committee again did a great job and everything ran smoothly especially the catering. This was run by the King Edward School dinner ladies.

We really enjoyed our Sunday roast!

Linda and David

BROADSTAIRS FOLK WEEK REPORT from Madeleine.

I have attended the last 2 BFWs as a punter, having retired as dance director in 2024, and being honoured with freedom of the festival. It is delightful to have a week without commitments, meeting lots of old friends and enjoying the wide variety of events.

I go with Sarah Westcott from Oxford, who runs our Towersey Village Voices community choir, and whom I introduced to the festival a few years ago. She runs the very successful Festival Choir, with lots of old friends returning each year, including a delightful couple from Holland. For the workshop showcase, our resident poet (!) writes a song that Sarah sets to

music, and we print out copies for the audience to join in. We have had 2 songs featuring a fearsome Viking, who arrives at Viking Bay and enthusiastically participates in all the folk activities. We also liaise with the ukulele group and sing a song to their accompaniment.

Another highlight of the showcase has been the European dance workshop (mainly Flemish) led by Ernestine Lawrence. Fiddler Clare Haythornthwaite has led a brilliant musicians' workshop to learn the tunes in conjunction with this, which Sarah and I always enjoyed, but it was sadly axed this year, apparently because there were not enough punters last year. Several local dancers, including Ernestine, regularly get the ferry to France to go to workshops and dancers there - quicker than getting to distant venues in the UK.

The mention of axing brings me to the very sorry state of English and American country dance. When I took over the dancing at Broadstairs about 20 years ago, we had a thriving whole week of dancing. Dancers came because we offered small events with well known callers and bands, ensuring excellent teaching and calling to brilliant music, and ran only one event at a time, so everyone got to know each other. The festival was happy to keep this going, as it was started by Jack Hamilton and Peter Dashwood 61 years ago as a dance festival. Over the last few years, the week was gradually reduced to only a day or two, so fewer dancers attended - a vicious circle. Last year the Playford Ball was given an afternoon, not a success. The last one I did was a proper evening do, and we attracted quite a lot of dancers, including youngsters. This year, no ball at all. This is not the fault of the new dance director, Alison Rowley. I had a word with the new festival director, Kai Hoffman. She is a singer, and singing was very well represented. There were dance workshops, just not country dancing. Kai said she could not afford to put more in. I went to a delightful introduction to Zimbabwean music and dance, and the leader told us that this is proudly taught in all their schools. What a contrast to England!

There were 2 English workshops, Jane Austen dances and Contra, led by Alison Rowley, with lovely music from Vicki Swan and Jonny Dyer. Alison had worked hard to select suitable dances for newcomers, but it was a bit slow, as I don't think she realised there were experienced dancers there too. But very thorough teaching and good to get everyone involved.

You could dance at many ceilidhs, with excellent bands and callers. The annual Jack's night, in memory of Jack Hamilton, is still going strong, with an appearance from the famous hooden horses, and Clarence the Dragon, who join in a dance. Broadstairs has always had a delightful family ceilidh every day, plus free dancing and fun for children every day at the Hobby Horse Club at the Bandstand.

Broadstairs involves everyone, running lots of free events all over the town. The evening bandstand concerts were very popular this year in the warm evenings. And the morris dancers busked even in the heat.

I was delighted to see Graham Knibbs, the fiddler from Masquerade, Daphne Baker's band, who used to be Broadstairs regulars. Daphne now lives near her son in Reading. One of the best concerts was a 'A celebration of the fiddle', in honour of the late Ian Cutler. Lots of traditional tunes, and some beautifully expressive slow airs from Graham.

So do consider Broadstairs for a folk holiday, particularly if you have grandchildren - a delightful week, but not if you want dance workshops! Children enjoyed lovely activities in the sheltered grounds of a new venue this year - Bleak House on the cliff top. Also great tea and cake, and some cool shade!

Beautiful town, and excellent bus service round Thanet, plus a festival bus to and from the campsite.

Halsway Easter House Party

We've had the longest day and the days are getting shorter, Christmas will soon be on use! Why not look forward to a fun Easter at Halsway? In 2027 it starts on Easter Monday (29th March) and continues until Friday. This normally coincides with lighter traffic due to the school holidays.

Halsway is a great location near Taunton. Easily accessible by road or rail with a bus or taxi transfer. Lots to do locally including a steam railway, walks, Dunster Castle, Taunton Classic Car museum and much more.

Every day we have dancing to music provided by the brilliant Gareth and Linda.

What else happens you ask? Next years activities extra are not yet planned but in 2026 we did the following:

Music workshops leading up to a wonderful afternoon tea dance.

A ceilidh featuring some of our very talented attendees

Morris dancing with hankies

A guided walk

Handbell ringing

Ukulele playing

Callers sessions

Line Dancing

Seasonal crafts

Music and stories in the bar.

Everything is optional and beginners for any of the activities are always welcome.

Why not join us for next year?

CLUB MEETINGS AND CONTACTS

-
- *CHINNOR Thursdays 8.00 pm Contact Madeleine Smith 07974 720473 smith.madeleine@gmail.com*
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- *DUNSDEN GREEN 1ST. 3RD. & 5TH Wednesdays. Contact Howard & Anne Ballard 0118 948 1195*
- *howard.ballard@outlook.com*
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- *HAGBOURNE Friday 8.00 pm Contact Malcom Bright 01235 818585*
- *malcom.bright53@gmail.com*

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- *HEADINGTON* Thursdays 8.00 pm Contact Keith 01993 898132 or Joyce 01865 246458 j.a.dawson26@btinternet.com
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- St. *ANDREWS ASSEMBLY*. Saturdays monthly - usually 2nd. Contact Ruth Howard 01325 831409 k.howard935@btinternet.com
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- *STONESFIELD* Wednesdays 8.00 pm Contact Carolinne White 01869 347889 carolinnewhite2@gmail.com
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- *SUNDAY PLAYFORD*. Sundays monthly. Contact Diana Tripfow 01235 933309 kdtrip01@gmail.com
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- *TADMARTON* Tuesdays 7.45 pm Contact David Morgan 01295 811404 dndmorgan@gmail.com
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- *THATCHAM* 1st. 3rd. & 5th. Mondays Contact Robyn Ananin 07759 800882 robynananin@yahoo.co.uk
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- *UPPER BASILDON* Wednesdays 8.00 pm Contact Ian Cummins 07718 050 005 i.cummins.@outlook.com
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- *WANTAGE* (Friday Folk at Steventon) 1st. Friday monthly. Contact Linda & David 01235 831482 david.sandford294@btinternet.com
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- Details of all our clubs – venues, locations, and useful information, including the Events Diary , can be found on the website – www.oxonfolk.co.uk
- Click on the list on the left of the home page.