

Join us!

We are a friendly, mixed side who have been dancing the Cotswold tradition around Letchworth and beyond since 1922, and welcome new dancers and musicians.

We practise at Wilbury Hall, 103a Bedford Road, Letchworth SG6 4DU from 8.00 to 10.00 p.m. Do come along on any Thursday from September to April, ideally ringing our Bagman, Andrew first.

Our Foreman teaches new dances, encourages beginners in the basic Morris steps and hand movements, and helps us all to develop and improve our style and co-ordination.

If you are interested, as a dancer or musician, talk to any of us if you see us out dancing, or call or email our Bagman, Andrew Harper on:

07768 388953 / harperandrew937@gmail.com

Find us on Facebook or visit www.letchworthmorris.org.uk

PRACTICE NIGHTS

at Wilbury Hall, Bedford Road, Letchworth SG6 4DU
every Thursday from 18th September 2025, 8.00 to 10.00 p.m.

Come and have a go!

THE REVIVAL

Cecil Sharp was one of the main collectors of the Morris dances and tunes in the early part of the twentieth century. Without this one man's determination to record the dying traditions of the dance, it is highly likely that by now virtually nothing would have survived. The Morris world holds this man in such high regard that at feasts and formal occasions a silent toast - 'The Immortal Memory' is drunk in his honour. The paragraph below details his first chance meeting with Headington Quarry Morris Dancers.

"Sharp and his family spent that Christmas (1899) with his wife's mother, who was then living at Sandfield Cottage, Headington, about a mile east of Oxford. On Boxing Day, as he was looking out of the window, upon the snow covered drive, a strange procession appeared: eight men dressed in white, decorated with ribbons, with pads of small latten-bells strapped to their shins, carrying coloured sticks and white handkerchiefs. Accompanying them was a concertina player and a man dressed as a 'Fool'. Six of the men formed up in front of the house in two lines of three; the concertina player struck up an invigorating tune, the like of which Sharp had never heard before; the men jumped high in the air, then danced with springs and capers, waving and swinging their handkerchiefs which they held, one in each hand, while the bells marked the rhythm of the step."

From Cecil Sharp by A.H. Fox-Strangeways (OUP, 1933)

Letchworth Morris



The rarely performed 'Wet Trousers' dance from the little-known Trunch tradition. Cromer September 2024
Photo: Martin Butler, Copyright Letchworth Morris 2025

Summer Programme 2025

www.letchworthmorris.org.uk

Letchworth Morris - Summer Programme 2025

MAY		
Thur 1	06:30	Ickwell Maypole <i>with Bedford MM</i>
	12:15	Letchworth Town Centre - Leys Square
Mon 5	11:30	Crown, 2 Ickwell Road, Northill <i>with Bedford MM</i>
	13:30	Procession of May Queen, Crown Northill to Ickwell
	14:30 on	Dancing within the circle of stalls, Ickwell May Fair
Thur 8	20:00	Red Lion, School Lane, Preston, Hitchin. SG4 7UD
Sun 11		Ashwell at Home:
	12:00	Rose & Crown, 69 High Street, Ashwell. SG7 5NP
	13:00	Three Tuns, 6 High Street, Ashwell. SG7 5NL
	14:30	Bushel and Strike, 15 Mill Street. Ashwell. SG7 5NY
	15:30	Museum, Swan Street, Ashwell. SG7 5NY
Thur 15	20:00	Chequers, Bragbury End, Stevenage SG2 8TH
Sat 17	Day	Westminster Day of Dance, Central London
Thur 22	20:00	Plough, Plough Lane, Ley Green, Hitchin. SG4 8LA
Thur 29	20:00	Admiral, 1 Broad Street, Clifton, SG17 5RJ
W/e 30-1		Weekend of Dance, Thaxted
JUNE		
Thur 5	20:00	White Hart, Mill Lane, Campton. SG17 5NX
Sat 7	Day	Day of Dance, Letchworth, <i>with other sides</i>
Thur 12	20:00	Fox, 1870 Willian Road, Willian. SG6 2AE <i>with Baldock MM</i>
	21:00	Three Horseshoes, Willian. SG6 2AE <i>with Baldock MM</i>
Sat 14	Day	St Albans Folk Festival Day of Dance, St Albans
Thur 19	20:00	Three Cranes, High Street, Turvey. MK43 8EP
Sat 21	11:00 - 13:00	Letchworth Green Festival, Letchworth Town Centre
Thur 26	20:00	Cock, 23 High St, Broom, Biggleswade SG18 9NA <i>with Golden Hare Morris</i>
JULY		
Thur 3	20:00	Pig and Abbott, High Street, Abington Pigotts SG8 0SD
		<i>with Devil's Dyke Morris Men</i>
Thur 10	20:00	Three Tuns 30 High Street, Guilden Morden, Royston, SG8 0JP
Sat 12	Day	Ely Folk Festival, Ely, Cambs
Thur 24	20:00	Stone Jug, 10 Back Street, Clophill MK5 4BY <i>with Hemlock Morris</i>
Sat 26	Day	Bedfordshire Day of Dance, Bedford Town Centre.
Thur 31	19:30	Plume of Feathers, Upper Green, Ickleford. SG5 3YD
AUGUST		
Thur 7	19:30	Lytton Arms, Park Lane, Old Knebworth, SG3 6QB <i>with Wicket Brood</i>
Thur 14	19:30	Lordship Arms, 42 Whempstead Road, Benington. SG2 7BX
Thur 21	19:30	Leys Square, Letchworth
	20:15	Garden City Brewery, The Wynd, Letchworth. SG6 3EN
W/e 23-24		Saddleworth Rushcart weekend
SEPTEMBER		
W/e 6-7		Swanage Folk Festival
Sat 13	14:00	Dunton Community Gardens, Great Close, Church Farm, Church Street, Dunton SG18 8RR
Sat 27	Day	Peterborough Day of Dance

How old is it? And why is it called Morris?

Nobody really knows how old Morris Dancing is, or why it's called Morris. Some people think that it was brought over to England from North Africa via Spain by the Moors - hence Moorish dancing - six hundred or more years ago. Others believe that it derives from the Druid's Maris dances, celebrating the ancient Celtic festivals.

There are records going back to 1509 showing that '*Mores-dawncers*' were closely linked to local churches. We also know that the Morris developed into a courtly entertainment for upper-class nobility.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the dancing had progressed to become a rural tradition, and it developed very local characteristics - the stick and hanky dances of the Cotswolds and South Midlands area, the Rapper "short" Sword dances of the far North-East, Molly Dancing in East Anglia, processional Clog Morris in the North-West and Border Morris where England and Wales meet, to name just a few.

The great movement of people in the latter half of the nineteenth century from a rural to an industrial economy saw many dance traditions die out, then the Great War of 1914 - 1918 killed off many of the Morris men who were left.

Letchworth Morris revives, recreates and perpetuates the long history of England's traditional dance. It was founded (as Letchworth Morris Men) in 1922, nurtured in the early days by the Garden City environment of free-thinkers and radical artisans. Over a century on, we are proud to continue the tradition of Morris dancing in Letchworth. We became a mixed side in 2022 and accordingly changed our name to Letchworth Morris.

The Morris Ring, an association of Morris, Sword and Mumming Clubs, was founded in 1934, and Letchworth was one of the six founding members. Since those early days, we've performed the Morris at fêtes, festivals, dances, parties, gatherings, overseas trips, and sometimes just outside a local pub!

Our dances this year are drawn from the Cotswold traditions of Ilmington (Warwickshire), Adderbury, Bampton & Fieldtown (Oxfordshire).

You can find more information on our website at
www.letchworthmorris.org.uk

The Morris Ring is at **www.themorrisring.org**,