



U-SPY KENNET MORRIS



YOUR WELCOME TO KENNET MORRIS WRITTEN BY A FOOL

How to enjoy fun, fellowship, and fitness in the most traditional way. All you need to know should you consider becoming a member of our merry band; where, when, what to wear and who's who. We recommend you read our other two guides, [U-Spy Kennet Dances](#) and [U-Spy Kennet Morris](#). If you're really keen there's also [The Kennet Morris Men – A Foolish History](#)

Where and When



During “the season” from May until October we dance out weekly and at odd weekends (some more odd than others). Our full colour programme would usually be found in the pubs we’ll be visiting or can be downloaded from our website www.kennetmorris.com. This gives full details of all venues, including post codes and map references.

Perhaps more importantly for someone taking up morris dancing for the first time, from the first Monday in October until the last in April we practice our dances weekly at St Mary's Church Hall, Church Lane, Shinfield RG2 9BY from 8:00pm to 10:00pm.

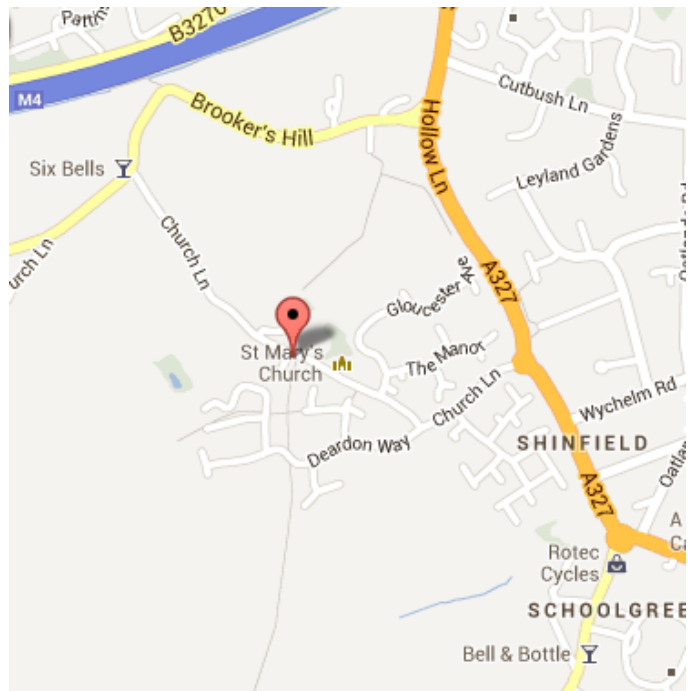
All are welcome to any practice – but the earlier in the practice season the better. Under 18s may become members, provided that they are accompanied by a parent or other suitably responsible, approved adult.

Practices

Practices are lead by our Foreman and are structured to cover our whole repertoire before the season begins again. Some years, new dances will be introduced and we’ll concentrate on them. Beginners and improvers always receive individual attention and you should check on our web site as we often offer “Taster Sessions”, especially for the curious.



The “meeting” ends a hard evening's practice



Attend 2 practices and we’ll buy you a pint – or the equivalent beverage! Practices are informal and will not normally be in kit. Be warned- you will get a sweat up! Practices conclude with a business meeting and then it’s off to The Bell and Bottle for a well earned pint, or two, or whatever.

Unless you’ve learnt the morris elsewhere, we’ll normally just introduce you to one or two “traditions”, or dance styles, in your first practice season. You should have learnt enough to perform out on the first of May. So you’ll need to get your dancing kit ready!

Subs

Subs are currently free for “apprentice” members, £20 per year for full members.



Display Kit



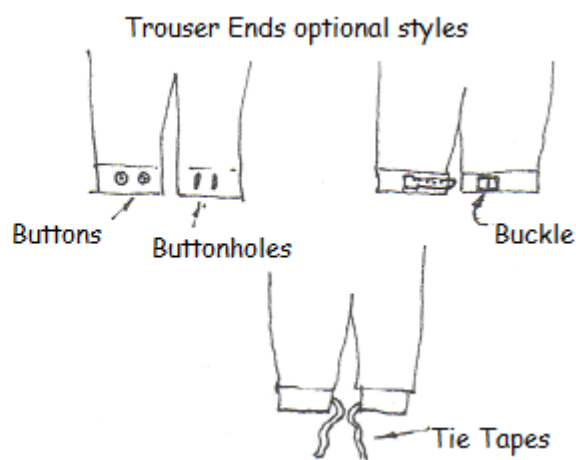
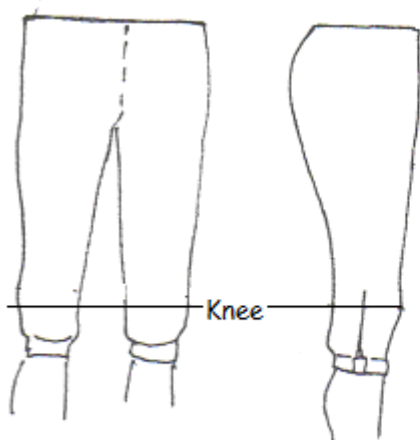
Small size

Our dancing kit is black shoes, white knee length socks, black breeches, bells, white long sleeved shirt, crossed red & green baldrics with badge at front and rosette at back, neckerchief, straw hat and large white handkerchiefs. The badges are awarded after qualifying.

As public entertainers we pride our selves on looking smart and full kit is worn for all performances and at formal occasions.

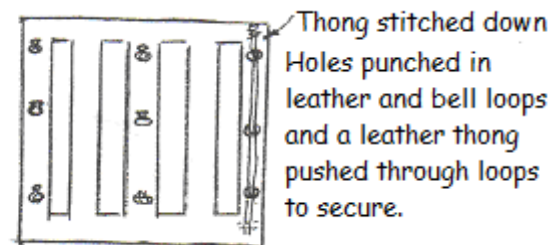
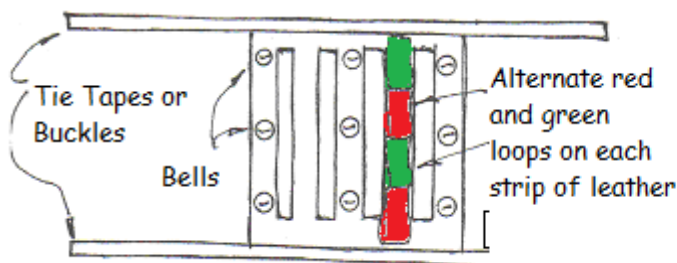
Shoes - should be all black, not trainers or boots. There are all-black sports shoes available but easily visible logos should be avoided.

Breeches - can be made by cutting down a pair of black trousers. Cut off the legs 100mm. below knee, and turn up 50mm. to make a hem. Side seams are split to about the top of the knee. The open leg should be fastened just below your knee with buttons, buckles or tie tape.

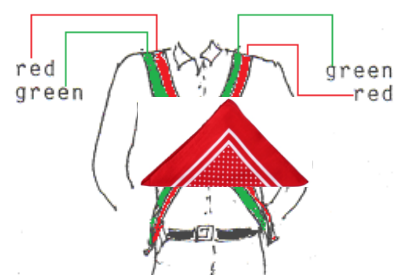


Socks - White nylon turnover top football or cricket socks are suitable.

Bells - require two 180mm. squares of thin leather, with four strips cut out. Fasten these to your legs with tie tape or leather straps. 6 to 12 bells are required on each pad. (available from Jon the Bagman). Red and green 30mm wide webbing, tape or ribbon available from good haberdashers. John Lewis always has the right colours. The Morris Shop has contacts who will make bell pads to order. <http://www.themorrisring.org/shop/morris-kit>



Baldrics – made from 40mm red and green webbing stitched together along length, then stitched to cross body at breast level, and crossed on hips. The material is available from the Bagman.



Neckerchief - red & white “country style”, often advertised as Gardeners’ Hankies.



Hats - should be close weave straw trilby style, decorated as desired, (not too many badges).



Handkerchiefs – 2 large white heavy cotton 500mm square.

Shirt – long sleeved plain white shirts (clean and ironed!). Many of us wear collarless “grandad” style shirts, but this is optional. Whatever the style, you’ll need more than one. We often enjoy weekends of dance.

Sticks – we provide the sticks at no cost to you – however many you break – and you will!

Rag Coats - you will notice that many of us wear “rag” or “tatter” coats. These are not kit, and are not even a Cotswold dancer’s traditional garb, but they are useful. They keep you warm in summer and cool in winter and act as a wonderful sponge to protect your display kit from spilt drink. There is no correct way to make a rag coat; they are literally all unique, but one thing’s for sure. They take a lot of time and effort. The basis is most often a long white lab coat – after that you are on your own. The tatters can be any material or colour - or all. They can be long or short, single or double, patterned or plain. From recent experience, an unfolded 3” tatter will require 3 metres of standard width material. In days gone by, jumble sales were a happy hunting ground for cheap materials, but nowadays they are few and far between.



Après Morris



It has been mentioned that the Kennet know how to enjoy themselves. It is rare if an evening’s dancing is not concluded with a “session” of the best of British music and song, and a pub is usually involved. It is a traditional “all come ye” and everyone is encouraged to join in, either by leading a song or playing a tune, or just joining in the many chorus songs we know. It’s a family affair too, and partners and other loved ones are always welcome. We often dance out with other local sides who add to the fun ... and share the work.

Away Days



During the summer we are regularly invited to join other sides for weekends of dance or to perform at folk festivals. We have travelled as far afield as Cyprus but more usually within England. Favourite venues are Portsmouth, Sidmouth, Swanage, Saddleworth, Kent and Wallingford’s Bunkfest. The Reading Beer Festival used to be a calendar fixture in May, working behind the bar on Friday and dancing Saturday, but the last couple of years have been fallow. We live in hope for its return. Not quite an away day, but a very “full” couple of days.



Ales



Ales are held by morris sides, usually during the closed season. Local, and sometimes not so local sides, are invited to partake of food, ale and the fellowship of dance, music and song. They are often “away days”, held in village halls offering indoor camping for those that prefer to sleep it off. We usually hold our own ale in February each year with is attended by about 60 people, many of whom have become very old friends (who get older every year).

Socials



We are a sociable bunch and our normal morris year features an an end of season bash, Christmas pub carols, and partners lunchtime get-togethers. More recently we have organised weekly walks, and inevitably, Zoom sessions during lockdown (featuring the rather good “Kennet Kwiz”).

Lunchtime on New Year’s day at The Calleva Arms is an especially sociable session with dancing, whatever the weather, followed by an excellent session. The after practice pub session is not compulsory, but always enjoyable.

Shaun



Shaun the Sheep is the closest thing Kennet have to a mascot. He is actually a money bag introduced for the millennium when we celebrated by downing 2000 pints between us over the year- well quite a bit less than a year actually. We put in, and continue to put in, 5p for each pint consumed “on duty” which is then donated to a charity nominated by The Beverage Utility Manager. Our formidable beast keeper, Jack Smee, is the current BUM. On duty is coined in the widest sense – when in kit or enjoying the informal parts of an “away day” or après practice.

Dobbin




Dobbin is the Kennet beast or animal. He is what is known as a Hooden Horse and tradition has it that he never speaks. So please don’t talk to him and expect an answer – other than nods of the head if you’ve asked if he wants a beer! Feel free to invite audience members to feed him his stable diet – coins of the realm.



Who's Who

The current Kennet Morris Men's rogue's gallery: a happy bunch.

					
Bill Martin	Brian Jones	Carey Moreton	Chris Hutchinson	Chris Newman	Chris Tunnicliffe*
					
Clive Blunt	Danny Giani	Dave Bush	David de Courcy	Dave Tindall	Denise Allen ♥
					
Dick Taylor*	Edwin Trout <i>Foreman</i>	Glen Barrett*	Graham Thomas*	Jack Smee Beast Master	Jason Yannacopoulos Squire
					
John Austin*	John James	John Walford♦	Jon Holmes <i>Bagman</i>	Matt Smee*	Max Beare
					
Michael Booker	Neil Stevens*	Nic Yannacopoulos	Peter de Courcy♦ <i>Fool/Web Master</i>	Peter Gregory*	Peter Jones
					
Ray Annetts	Richard Gregory	Tim Lloyd	Tony Bartlett <i>Treasurer</i>	Dobbin	Shaun

* Country Member

♥ Honorary Member

♦ Life Member



This Could Be You

Neil's Tale



Another of Neil's Activities

My first proper introduction to Morris Dancing was at a folk festival a couple of years ago - I was shanghaied into a teaching dance by the Morris men that we were watching: good fun even though I had no idea what I was doing!

I made up my mind there and then to look into joining my local side. Eventually I plucked up the courage to contact the Kennet Morris Men, as they were called then - that led to me blundering about in a dark lane near Reading one Monday night in November trying to find the practice venue. When I did find it I was made very welcome by everyone and after a quick demo of a double-step I was thrown straight in at the deep end and placed right into a dance - they even let me have a stick straight off! Well I managed to not break anyone's fingers and didn't fall over or anything so I had a go at a couple more dances: all along the chaps were so very encouraging and friendly that I ended up going back the next week and indeed every week after that!

With some encouragement and lots of patient training from one of the former Squires I decided to dance into the side - that is I danced a jig on my own in public so as to earn the badge for my baldrics.

It was one of the proudest days of my life to dance around the penguin enclosure at Whipsnade Zoo with all my new mates cheering me on! When the Squire finally remembered to give me my badge some weeks later that was jolly proud day too! :)

I'm so glad I took up Morris dancing - we have a laugh dancing out and it's hugely satisfying to learn something new. It's also great exercise and the social side of it is second-to-none.

My first suspicions about Kennet Morris proved true - they really are the splendidest chums you could ever wish to meet - and three years later they made me the Squire!

Your Tale

Eagerly awaited – tell us which of the 3 Fs you enjoy most – the fun, the fellowship or the fitness – or most likely, all three

Just go to the ["Join"](#) page on our website.

Yours foolishly
Peter de Courcy

