

Beltane Border Morris

# THE 'FIRST' BRIDPORT FOLK MUSIC AND DANCE FESTIVAL

**What a Fantastic Festival we had. The music, dance, and colour were truly spectacular and our thanks to all the dance sides who made the festival a success.**

**CHRIS DEACON**

We put out a call to support the first Bridport Folk Music and Dance Festival and you responded with numbers, good humour, and enthusiasm.

Among the 26 dance sides including Border Morris, Cotswold Morris, Clog, Appalachian, and even Bulgarian, were *Wessex Morris* celebrating their 60th year - here's to the next 60! However, the biggest attraction were the inimitable *Beltane Morris* leaping with feigned aggression toward the crowds amidst the music and sound of beating drums and on frequent occasions stopping the traffic as the crowds swelled into the road. (Note to self, must be better prepared safety-wise next year.)



Not to be outshone, the local side *Wyld Morris*, led by squire Briony Blair, worked tirelessly to perfect and perform their new *Rope Dance* specially created to celebrate Bridport's rope and net industry heritage. *Wyld* also ran a very successful Cotswold dance workshop teaching *Journeyman* to a flock of willing and some not-so-willing participants.

Unfortunately, the Guinness World Record attempt failed due mainly to lack of

management on my part, and so I deeply apologise to all those dancers who had stayed on late to participate and for any disappointment caused. On a brighter note though I, along with many others, have had a constant barrage of emails, texts, and tweets, praising the standard of the festival and the exciting programme it provided.

The feedback locally and from afar has been amazing and that is in no small part due to our wonderful dance sides, so

I feel the following should be addressed to you:

*'Wow Bridport, where did that come from? It took Sidmouth 40 years to reach the standard of your first festival!'*

*'Well done to the organisers of the first Bridport Folk Festival. It was just like Sidmouth in the good old days!'*

We can be quietly proud of our achievements but not complacent. There were mistakes and we could have done better, but we couldn't have put more passion and commitment into bringing our festival to life.

All the dance sides performed brilliantly, with energy and smiles to large appreciative crowds. Despite the heat of the summer sun they all created a truly electric atmosphere. I am honestly and truly humbled by the commitment and belief that the dancers and musicians gave to the festival. We couldn't have done it without you.

My personal thanks go to dance co-ordinator Ian Cox (*Wessex* and *Wyld*). Ian worked tirelessly to organise the dance programme and did a fantastic job despite the many obstacles and amendments thrown in his way.

Thank you all, sincerely and well done all of you, and please come back next year!



*Wyld Morris*