

SWORD DANCE GATHERING IN 2008 – from the CDSS News, Nov./Dec. 2006

I would like to tell all your readers about the Fifth International Sword Dance Spectacular Festival, which will be held in Yorkshire, England, on May 23–26, 2008. The aim of the weekend is quite simple – to bring together the biggest and most varied collection of sword dancers we can manage, so that they can see each other dance and get to know each other a bit better. We hope to see 30 or more British teams, a dozen or so from Europe, and an unknown number from North America, which is where you come in.

This event is already known to a number of North American teams, with previous participants including Half Moon Sword, Orion, Toronto Women's Sword, the Gay Blades, and a host of participants from the Great Meadows breeding ground including Velocirapper, Slightly Green, Beside the Point, and Candy Rapper. We are keen to extend this range still further.

One theme for 2008 is to reach out to those teams who do "a bit of sword" but who rarely go out with other sword teams; this is a common feature of both British and European teams, and I suspect happens with you as well. In particular, there are a surprising number of morris sides who also do some sword, but mostly in secret, or so it would appear. We would love to see you.

What's the deal, then?

1. Friday night is meet and greet time, an informal session for gathering and registration. Your tour guides will be identified to you, and there will be the opportunity to mix and chat; if some people feel the urge to dance or play tunes, so much the better.
2. On Saturday, each team will be scheduled on a tour with some British teams and a couple from Europe. This will take in a number of locations (these will vary, but could include towns, seaside resorts or inland villages). Tours finish in the late afternoon, after which there is a break before the evening social dance (English and other country dances).
3. On Sunday morning there will be a couple of workshops, followed by some dancing from midday into the early afternoon. The dance concert will start around 4 PM and finish around 9 PM, but don't worry, the format is informal enough to enable you to move in and out, get a bite to eat and so on. After the concert there is some more social dancing for those who want it – this tends to be more of a "let your hair down" occasion.
4. Monday is the wind-down; those who wish to will go together and do some sword in a village setting, followed by an informal session which tends to develop into dance swaps, seeing how many swords you can tie into a single lock and such like. It's all very pleasant, especially as it's with people with whom you've now spent a whole weekend.

And the price? Well, each team will pay a small registration fee (still to be determined) and that's it. You find your own accommodation, but we can help with that if you wish, and there will be plenty of places around for you to find something to eat.

What if you want to come as an individual? Then you'll be very welcome. Contact us as shown below.

We are trying to contact teams individually, but North America is a big place and we're bound to miss some people, so if you don't hear from us then get in touch. It's still nearly 18 months away, which means that you have plenty of time to book your time off work/school, raise funds and practice your dances. Regular updates will appear in the sword dancing periodical "Rattle Up, My Boys." We are looking forward to hearing from you, so contact me at 88 Liverpool Rd., Preston, Lancashire, PR1 0HT, UK; phone 00-44-1772-748976, e-mail: Andrew@north-british.co.uk.

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