

## Countesthorpe Day of Folk – February 27<sup>th</sup> 2010

This year's event was a sellout. The workshops were well attended and everybody came prepared to join in. I thoroughly enjoyed those which I tried. I belong to the Jerusalem Jammers - a Ladies Garland Dancing group. We held our practice at the hall during the morning and four ladies joined us who were interested in trying us out.

I started my day by maypoling with Patsy Paterson. This workshop was particularly to encourage potential leaders, who it is hoped will take skills learnt into the wider community. It was gratifying therefore, to see three teachers attending, who will be offering pupils at their schools the chance to try this traditional pastime. Patsy had managed to get two maypoles into the hall, and we all enjoyed the different dances and patterns we made with the ribbons. Patsy led us all with her usual skill and aplomb.

After lunch I joined in the Scottish dancing with Val Weynberg. Val had managed to find an assortment of simple dances, which gave a real flavour of what Scottish dancing is all about without being too complicated. Scottish dancing is a really excellent exercise for both body and brain - why not give it a go if you haven't tried it yet.

Next, for me, was the most challenging part of the day - clog dancing. I had tried this before and found it rather difficult. This year, we were very ably led by five ladies from Charnwood Clog. I was very impressed by the fact that they brought along an assortment of clogs and nearly everybody was able to find a pair which fitted them. This really made a difference and I felt that maybe I was in with a fighting chance as your feet interact with the floor quite differently with the correct footwear. The ladies took their time to build up a series of four short routines with a break called "Bob's your uncle" between each one. We also split into two groups - a small group of those with some previous experience - or maybe they were just quick learners - and the rest of us who needed longer to learn each section. The ladies were very patient and went round to trying to help us all individually. We managed to build this up to a finale of the routines and breaks - albeit much more slowly than the experts and with many mistakes - at least on my part. Thanks were also due to the musician, who kept having to play the same piece of music – but slowly.

I then went home for a rest before returning refreshed in the evening for English dancing with callers David and Kathryn Wright and music by Folkus Pocus. The music from this young couple was truly excellent, and with professional calling from the Wrights of Lichfield we all had a very enjoyable evening to round off the day.

Although the day was well attended, it was mostly by those who are already involved in dancing or folk music in one way or another. It would be great if we could manage to attract more people not already involved - this seems to be an eternal problem that many groups have. I wish I knew the answer!

The whole day, however, was an excellent opportunity to try something different and maybe find a new hobby or interest. It was very well organised and our thanks are due to Patsy and Ian Paterson, their band of helpers and all the workshop leaders for all the hard work they put into the day.

Stella Moore