

## Band Leaders report October 2023

First of all thanks to all members of the band whether they have been able to play regularly or occasionally. Everyone makes a contribution to what is recognised as one of the most entertaining Morris team bands. Thanks also for band members clicking the booking sheets as early as one can as it makes things easier, and attending the occasional band practices when you could.

For me highlights of the past year have been Shrewsbury folk festival and one of my personal favourites Upton folk festival.

We are, I think, back at the point where no one 'needs' the notation just to get through the tunes and I would encourage printed music to be ignored as much as possible even at practice - though as band guidelines have said on this subject, you should do what you need to do.

However playing for dance is a particular skill that requires that you play out from yourself and requires a keen attention to what is happening in front of you. This is especially true when playing for either team, but especially when playing for the Ironmen where the requirement of the music is more than that it must be played at a strict tempo but it should fit itself to the step and stick clashes of the team. This is impossible if a musician's concentration is on a musical score.

There is, of course, also the very important issue that any written music doesn't take into account of the differences between instruments such as rhythms created by the playing, the need to breath, grace notes that suit the instrument and most important of all, spaces between notes. A music book is a hinderance to good dance playing.

On July 20th 1965 Bob Dylan (bear with me) was called Judas at Newport folk festival for, for the first time, using electric instruments and there has been some discussion amongst this team's band members and even some sneaking in of amplification, which until now has been restricted to use by Shirley, a double bass.

I would encourage the band to think very carefully before going down this route for a variety of reasons.

Firstly you don't need it. All the instruments can be heard, of course I acknowledge that when I am there it is easier for me, but still the sound of the IMSG band has always been a mixture of acoustic instruments which has, for over 40 years, worked well.

Secondly It would entirely change the character of the band and if not careful can lead to an arms race of competing volumes. Although amplification is a regular thing with the newer 'pagan style' border teams, many of these consider themselves to have show bands who are highly arranged and rehearsed and who I am sure audition their members - it would be a shame to have to go down that route.

It is very rare in established traditional teams (especially Northwest teams) and significantly adds to the complication of a dance set requiring sound checks etc It would change the feel of the music so much that I would suggest that it is a matter for the whole team, or at least the officers as whole to have a view on whether the band goes down that route.