

# The Full English

## Unlocking hidden treasures of England's cultural heritage/

by Rachel Elliott, Education Director, English Folk Dance and Song Society

In 2012-2014, the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) led a landmark national project, The Full English, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project made thousands of folk music and dance manuscripts freely available online, which included field notes, notation, correspondences and other documents generated by 19 of the most significant folk music and dance 'collectors' of the late 19th and early 20th century. The project delivered a creative learning programme which reached over 13,000 people across England, in schools and community settings. Multiple partnerships were integral to the project's wide-ranging engagement and its ability to achieve its overarching aims: to greatly increase access to important folk archives, reach new audiences and participants for folk arts, and demonstrate the value of folk arts within education.

Our partner organisations were six important archives (including the British Library) and 18 cultural organisations (venues, music education hubs, arts development organisations and museums). The formal aspect of the learning programme worked with 19 schools across primary, secondary and special educational needs levels, using folk dance, music and other arts in a wide variety of ways. This enhanced learning in the school curriculum, from Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 5, and culminated in a national showcase conference at Town Hall Birmingham.

Photos: EFDSS - Photographer Roswitha Chesher



“ **THE WORK ALLOWED THE PUPILS TO EXPERIENCE FOLK DANCE AND MUSIC AND CONSIDER IT FROM AN INFORMED VIEWPOINT — GIVING THEM A SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGE BECAUSE IT ALLOWED THEM TO MORE CREATIVELY EXPLORE AND FUSE IT WITH THE CONTEMPORARY STYLES WITH WHICH THEY ARE MORE ACCUSTOMED.** ”

SALLY TYRRELL, HEAD OF DANCE, STANTONBURY CAMPUS, MILTON KEYNES

Each school project was co-created by professional folk artists (musicians, dancers and storytellers) working collaboratively with teachers, most of whom had no prior experience of folk arts. This approach to partnership working was essential to ensure that the work was truly relevant to the school curriculum and as exciting and engaging as possible. There were very few parameters set in the creation of the projects other than they were required to use materials from The Full English digital archive to inform and inspire the work. Given that the archive contains over 80,000 items collected from across England and beyond, potential material and inspiration wasn't in short supply! For example, in County Durham

we worked with the Federation of St Godric's and St Mary's Primary Schools to reintroduce local traditions to the school community. Prior to the project they had 'never heard of, and had no idea' that clog and rapper sword dances were vibrant local folk dance forms – the latter very much associated with mining communities such as the villages in which the schools are located. Staff were delighted how much the children loved learning these dances – and were particularly surprised at the boys' enthusiasm!

In Barnsley, at Horizon Community College, dance and music students across Key Stages 3 and 4 worked on fusions and juxtapositions of hip hop, rapper and morris dance

– involving the school's rapper and street dance groups – with morris tunes and popular music played by music students. As the relationship between live music and dance is integral in the folk tradition, teachers at Stantonbury Campus in Milton Keynes realised that Cotswold morris dancing could be a perfect vehicle for GCSE Dance and Music creative work and collaboration between departments – particularly as it features in the modern ballet *Still Life at the Penguin Café*, one of the GCSE Dance set works.

At Impington Village College in Cambridgeshire, Year 13 students taking the International Baccalaureate used the disturbing locally-collected ballad *Lucy Wan* as

the stimulus for creating powerful dance and theatre work, combining traditional dance and accompanying music from the East of England (molly, broom and ceilidh dancing), with contemporary dance and physical theatre.

Freely downloadable learning materials created during the project, are available via the new EFDSS online resource bank. These include comprehensive Beginners' Guides, teachers' packs, video clips and audio files. [www.efdss.org/resourcebank](http://www.efdss.org/resourcebank)

Visit [www.efdss.org/thefullenglish](http://www.efdss.org/thefullenglish) for more information and film about the project.

“ **WE NOW TEACH MORRIS AND RAPPER TO MORE GROUPS OF STUDENTS AND ARE PERFORMING OUR PIECES AT SWANAGE FOLK FESTIVAL, WHICH WILL HOPEFULLY BECOME AN ANNUAL EVENT.** ”

JADE HUNT, HEAD OF DANCE, HORIZON COMMUNITY COLLEGE, BARNSELY