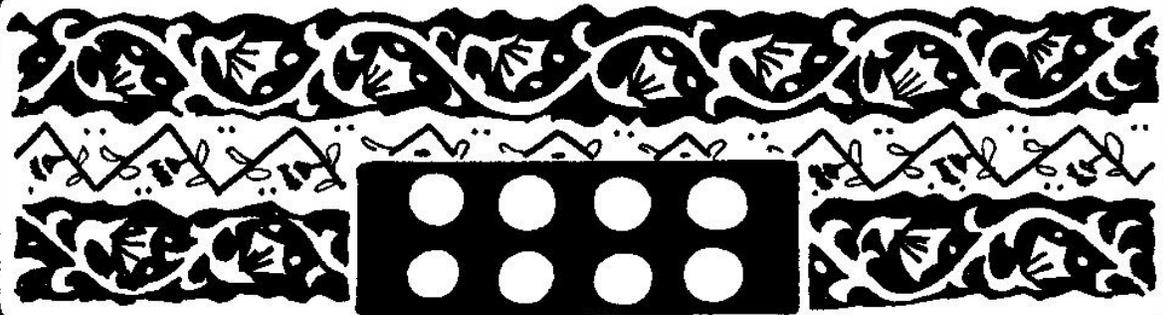


M A R T I E R S
M O R T I S

HOHNER



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Only room for a short note as events overcame me – just as this was about to go to the printers we heard the very sad news that Tubby Reynolds of Bath City Morris and Sherborne, Paul Woods of Bristol Morris Men, John Maher, also of Bristol and the Ring Overseas Bagman, Colin Street of Adderbury and Mike Steel of Mortimers all died this week. There are some memories of the first three included at the end of the magazine. There may be further tributes in the next issue when people have had time to reflect upon their contributions to the morris world; there have been lots of postings about the three of them looking down on us all while sharing a pint.

The rest of the issue includes several articles about collecting dances old and new. I have started (inspired by conversations at Roy Dommatt's workshop) to scan all the early typed editions of Morris Matters of which we have no electronic copy, with the aim of getting them all accessible online – eventually! Thanks as always to Jill Griffiths for assistance in getting the final text of each issue right.

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Reviews or other contributions always welcome [beth@neillpoole.co.uk].

London Lavender

“In Which We Lose A Few Centuries And Find A Living Picture By Sir David Wilkie¹”

The Director in his search for primitive English music had tidings of two old Morris dancers in an Oxfordshire village², survivals from the past when the whole of that county fostered the art, and he took me to see them. Never have I spent a more curious evening.

We left the train at Bicester late on a golden afternoon, and were driven to a little hamlet a few miles distant where the old fellows lived. They were brothers: one a widower of seventy, still lissom, and the other a bachelor of sixty-seven, bent and stiff; and with them when we arrived was another elderly man, a little their junior blowing and beating away at his pipe and tabor as though dear life depend upon it.

Unfamiliar music these ancient instruments give forth, and I defy anyone hearing it to keep his feet still. They are not the drum and fife by any means, though those are the nearest things to them today, nor are they like the old magic drum and pipes of the “Punch and Judy” man (never to be heard again, alas, with a beating heart); but something between the two, with the suggestion of rollick or even madness added. I heard the sounds while we were still approaching the cottage and had no notion what they were; and the strangeness of their melody was increased by the player’s total disregard of our entry, although it was a tune that might have ended anywhere. The pipe and tabor have now passed into the limbo of musical archaisms, but it was absurd to allow them to do so. There are certain effects on the stage that no other instruments could so well achieve, and their invitation to the dance is in a simpler way not less commanding than Weber’s.

The old fellow played both instruments simultaneously; his left hand at once fingering the three holes of the pipe and supporting the string to which the tabor was suspended, while his right held the little stick with which he unceasingly beat it. For the twain are never separated.

Upon his stopping at last — and I for one could have heard him, uninterfering, for hours — we had a little talk as to his repertory and so forth, until, having changed their boots, the venerable capering brethren were ready. The elder one, Eli, was bright of eye and still very light on his feet; but the younger, Jack, creaked a little. Eli had a gentle smile ever on his curved lips, and as he danced his eyes looked into the past; Jack kept a fixed unseeing gaze on the musician. Together, or alone, they went through several of the old favourites — “Shepherds’ Hey,” “Maid of the Mill,” “Old Mother Oxford,” “Step back,” “Lumps of Plum Pudding,” “Green Garters” — and it was strange to sit in that little, flagged Oxfordshire kitchen, with its low ceiling and smoky walls, and watch these simple movements and hear those old tunes- more than strange; for as they continued, and the pipe and tabor continued, I became conscious of a new feeling. For the Morris dance is like nothing else. It is as different from the old English dance as that is different from the steps of the *corps de ballet*, it is the simplest thing there is, the most naïve. Or, if you are in that mood, it is the most stupid; jiggling rather than dancing, and very monotonous. But after a little while it

¹ David Wilkie (1785 – 1841) became well known for visiting markets and fairs, sketching people and scenes that caught his attention. Success allowed him to move from Scotland down to London to attend the Royal Academy. More portrait commissions followed and two of his early larger works, Village Politicians and The Blind Fiddler attracted considerable interest.

² The dramatis personae in the introduction to the book are given as Eli Hayes and Jack Hayes – Ancient Morris dancers. “The Director” is reported only as a folk-song enthusiast. In real life they have been identified by John Forrest as the Rolfe brothers in Bucknell; Sharp refers to them in his Morris Book Part V as “Eli (aged 72) and Will two years his junior”.

begins to cast its spell, in which monotony plays no small part, and one comes in time to hope that nothing will ever happen to interrupt it and force one back into real life again.

The feeling became positively uncanny when old Jack, the bent one, jigging alone, still with his eyes fixed on the musician, but seeing nothing nearer than 1870, began to touch his body here and there in the course of the movements of the dance, every touch having a profound mystical meaning, of which he knew nothing, that probably dated from remotest times, when these very steps were part of a religious or mystic celebration of fecundity. Odd sight for a party of twentieth century dilettanti in an Oxfordshire kitchen!

The occasion was not only curious but pathetic too; one saw after a while not these dancers, so old and past the joy of life, but the dancers as once they were, when, forty years ago, they would set out in a team every Whitsuntide, six in all, to dance the Morris in other villages, and sleep in a barn all so jolly, and drink the good ale provided by the farmers, and each strive to be the most agile and untiring for the sake of a pair of pretty Oxfordshire eyes.

Forty years ago!

Asked if there were any others who still remembered the steps, they said no. "We be the last, us be," said Eli, in his soft, melancholy voice. "All the others be dead."

The brothers described, each fortifying the other and helped by the promptings and leading questions of the Director, the ritual of the Morris¹ as they remembered it. A lamb would be led about by a shepherd, and behind this lamb they danced. At night the lamb was killed and the joints distributed. Most was eaten, but portions were buried in the fields. Why, the old men had no notion; they had never heard. But the Director knew although he did not explain.

For upwards of an hour these energetic enthusiasts continued to dance, sometimes without a hitch, and then again with hesitations and arguments as to the next step or movement. What thoughts were theirs? I wondered. - Since he had last danced Eli had married, had had children, had seen his children grow up and his wife die. Yet I am certain that as he skipped and capered on those flagstones in the cottage where he was born, his personality was that rather of a young man than an old. And then the music stopped and he ceased to wave his handkerchief and spring from foot to foot, and he sank into a chair and the light left his face and wistful old age settled over it again.

I congratulated him on his sprightliness, and again asked his age, to make sure. "Seventy," he said. "I shall be seventy-one in July if I live. If I live," he added, after a while. "Of course you'll live," I said. "You're good for many years yet; and many more dances."

He shook his head.

That he thinks of his end a good deal, I am sure; but never morbidly, or with any affectation of sadness, but with the peasant's quiet acceptance of the fact. All his life he has been a tiller of the soil: the same soil, year after year, turning it afresh, sowing it afresh, gathering the harvest afresh, and then beginning all over again—the best school for patience and acceptivity.

And so, after some ale had been brought, we said good-night and drove away, for Oxford and London again, or, in other words, for the twentieth century.

E V Lucas

Note: **London Lavender** was published in 1911, so it's rather appropriate to print this excerpt on its centenary; this text forms Chapter XXVIII, pages 215-219.

¹ This is here describing the Kirtlington Ale which Bucknell men used to attend

Innovative Ilmington

The Ilmington tradition is valuable for the modern morris world because of the insights derivable from its many stops and starts and the changes to the dances that have been documented. For most of the 19th century the local morris was danced to a pipe and tabor, played by three generations of the same family, from the founder George Arthur (1769-1836) from Snowhill, Warwickshire, through his son Tom (1802-1890), a mason, and grandson James (1828-1906), a carpenter. Most of the "historical" facts published by Cecil Sharp in his *Morris Book* were wrong and the correct details should be sought in Keith Chandler's two books¹.

The dancing traces back to the beginning of the 19th century, perhaps as early as 1805, when George Arthur came to the village and set up a workshop. The morris probably stopped first about the time of the end of Dover's Games in 1852, and then again a little later, 1858-1861. Evans, the Stratford-upon-Avon vet who restarted Bidford, recorded a interview on an Edison phonograph which told how its last tour towards Brill met the local dancers and when the fighting broke out, the Ilmington leader Johnson ran all the way back to his village. The ridicule caused him to live in Birmingham for a few years. It was revived from 1886 to 1888/9 stimulated by the local interest in the Bidford team, then in 1897 for Queen Victoria's second Jubilee and again in 1906 because of the growing wider interest in morris. Sam Bennett² revived the morris with women dancers after WWI and with children after WWII. There is an indication that Ilmington was danced with galleys in its early days and this thought has been inspirational to several modern sides in England and the United States. Galleys do not work in all the figures. It is particularly attractive in the hey where each pair galleys at different times.

Cecil Sharp collected dances from those who had been in the 1886 and 1897 revivals. He even recorded the dances of the early 20th century side when it was dancing at a Stretton-on-Fosse Flower Show, and these notations and an interpretation have been published by the Morris Ring under that village's name. Ewart Russell and I visited the last survivor of Sam's team. He remembered the incident but not very favourably. Sharp thought that he could recover "older" forms of the dances from the senior dancers in the village and his reconstruction was published in his revised edition of the *Morris Book*. Because of Sharp's public condemnation in the national daily papers of the then active Ilmington side, for which Bennett was playing (although he was not responsible for the dances), Sam re-collected the dances himself and produced a version which was seen and recorded by Kenworthy Schofield. This form was taught to Oxford City MM when Schofield moved to the city. He had never taught Ilmington to his previous side at St Albans.

Ilmington was one place where beginners were taught to morris step by supporting their weight on the backs of two chairs, on the bars of a sheep dip, or hanging from a beam. They also each supplied their own sticks, 23" long and double-tapered like many chair legs, and the dancers were fined if they forgot theirs. The current village side started in the 1970's with the intention of avoiding both the Sharp and Bennett influences. They had the joy of some local inputs on the dances, once they were established and locally accepted.

Pipe and Tabor (Whittle and Dub)

This was once the only instrument used for the morris and it should be more widely adopted again. It is easy to learn and only requires one hand to play³. The three-hole pipe (two

¹ *'Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles- the Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900'* and *'Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900, A Chronological Gazateer'* both by Keith Chandler, (Hisarlik Press), 1993

² See later in this issue for more about Sam Bennett

³ One friend (the reader can probably guess who it was...) practised while driving!

holes on the front and one behind), is played in the first overblow octave as the fundamental notes are weak. This ensures that it is high pitched and shrill, more of a rhythm instrument than a melody one. They are made for particular keys. They can still be obtained made in metal. The accuracy of hole positioning is critical, which ensures that hand manufacture is difficult, and probably explains why the art died amongst players in the 19th century. An instrument maker who is a supplier in Brasstown, North Carolina, USA, has them made in the keys of C and D by the company who manufactures his CDs. G pipes are much larger. Major Fryer of Wargrave used to make large pipes from bamboo, which he could tune using matchsticks and plastic wood. The modern problem is the volume of background noise from traffic and other things.

There are actually two forms of three-hole pipe available, called here the Basque and the English. They differ by a tone, which ensures that transferring from one to the other is very hard. Joseph Powell at Bucknell had a commercially available Basque pipe. When Helen Kennedy gave him a copy by Dolmetsch of the John Potter (of Stanton Harcourt) damaged pipe owned by Jinky Wells, he could not get on with it at all. Musicians played their own versions of the tunes, suited to the instrument. It is thought that it should be possible to tell, from the tune collected, with which instrument the informant was familiar.

The tabor can vary from a very deep side drum to a small tambourine-sized one suspended vertically from the little finger of the hand playing the pipe. Usually the drum is played with a single headed stick, but some players had a short double headed stick which could be "rolled" for excitement. Although the pipe could not provide much sound colour the pair were rhythmically independent and hence very flexible in expression.

STYLE

The dances considered are those used in the late revivals as they are described in Lionel Bacon's Handbook, but which are usually ignored by morris clubs.

Stepping: Single stepping, Cotswold, not any other form.

Hand Movements: The arms are swung down and up, not a large swing, not up very high, and up on any jump. One source describes a "sailor's roll with alternate arm swings" but this does not look well unless it is done in the Chipping Campden style.

Jumps: jumps were not used consistently during the dances, and should be kept for the finishes of movements.

Slow Capers: During the period of interest these were only performed in jigs. Sam Bennett told Schofield that each involved three movements rather than the more normal four, as had become common at Bampton, for one of whose sides Sam was playing, and he showed a cross-apart step and a clapping set.

Because of the D'Arcy Ferris contacts about 1886 with various dancers to help his Bidford team dance, it has long been thought that their dances were influenced by Ilmington ones. However the Ilmington dances of that period seem to reflect the reverse!

FIGURES

Once to Yourself: A jump. Start on to left foot unless there is another consideration.

Foot Up: This could be danced on the spot, facing up and then down, turning first outwards to face down and then inwards to face across. It could also be danced moving up and back, then turning in to face across and dancing on the spot still facing across.

Cross Over: *not* a whole or half gyp. Two bars across, passing right shoulder, turning right to face back, two bars back on the same track passing left shoulders, turning left to face front.

Cross and Turn: Normally done as a whole gyp movement, except in *Maid of the Mill*, and elsewhere when it suited to have such a movement.

Half Heys: These were "Country Dance" like with the top pair going between the middles and the bottom waiting, not turning out to start, with no extra loops.

Whole Rounds: This was the normal, not half rounds, and probably not with a pause facing across at half way, ending all capering up, but facing across at half way and turning out to carry on looks much better.

DANCES

The choruses tended to stay the same or be simpler than Sharp reconstructed but the figure order was rather variable from dance to dance.

Shepherd's Hey - hand clapping

Chorus :

b rk r+r - / b lk l+l - / b unr b unl/ b beh r+l, l+r - / plus a half hey.

b = dancer claps both hands together at chin level,
rk, lk = slap top of right or left knee, which is not raised, with right or left hand,
r+r, l+l = opposites clap right or left hands together,
unr, unl = dancers clap both their hands together under right or left thigh,
beh = clap both hands behind back,
r+l, l+r = opposites clap both hands with each other.

Figure Order: Foot-up, chorus, [back-to-back, chorus, whole-gyp or half-gyp, chorus] ad lib, whole rounds to end. Or, as *Molly Oxford* version 2.

Clap hands above head at each jump.

Cuckoo's Nest - stick tapping

The stickings appear to include a number of small variations on a single concept.

Chorus : Odds hold their stick by the butt and hit their opposites stick, held horizontally at chin level by both ends, in the middle 3 times, while the odds tap their right toes on the ground and the evens their left in front 3 times. Next the evens do the same to the odds and tap opposite toes to before. All hold sticks by the middle vertically and clash the ends, tips right to left and butts left to right, 7 times in all, while dancing single step and jump on the final clash.

Half hey and repeat all to place. *Figure Order* as above.

Black Joke (1) - with a stick held by the butt.

On the tune extension all the dancers do 4 plain capers on the spot. There is no specific sticking in this dance but at the usual place for clashes the evens hold their stick out to the side and the odds hit down on the tips with their tips.

Chorus: half back-to-back (4 bars), half of a half-gyp ending with 4 plain capers (6 bars), both passing right shoulders and then repeat dancing the other halves, passing left shoulders.

Figure Order: [Foot-up and down, chorus] ad lib, whole rounds to end.

Foot-up (2 x 6 bars) could be alternately up or down to start.

Black Joke (2) - with handkerchiefs

Chorus: dance first half of a half-gyp, dance in position and end with 4 plain capers. Dance first half of back-to-back, dance in position and end with 4 plain capers. In repeats dance the other halves.

Figure Order: Dance facing opposite ending with 4 plain capers (6 bars), cross over and back ending with 4 plain capers (6 bars). Chorus. Foot-down (6 bars) etc

Cross-Over: end turning left to face front for 4 plain capers.

Molly Oxford (1)

Chorus: All sidestep to left, so that lines uncover, and side step back to right, without a jump, and half hey. Repeat all this to place.

Figure Order: [Foot-up, chorus, whole gyp, chorus] ad lib, whole rounds to end.

Molly Oxford (2)

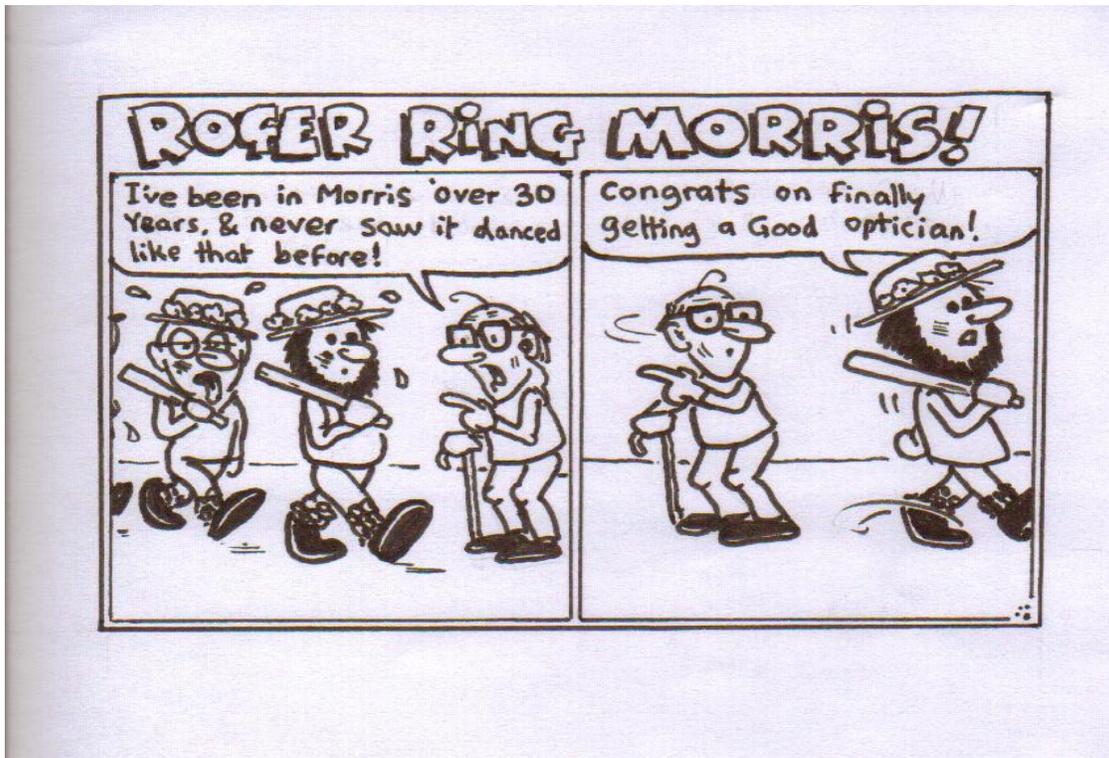
Chorus : Sidestep to left and right and half hey, sidestep to left and right.

Figure Order: Foot-up and retire and dance facing, forward and back to meet opposite (not a half gyp) and then first half of a figure [Chorus] then dance the second half of the figure.

Repeat all but start sequence dancing foot-down and use another figure in two parts such as half-gyp, whole-gyp, back-to-back, cross-over, cross and turn and half rounds.

At Bidford I was told by the two sons of the old foreman that they had two dances known as the handkerchief and the stick dance. The former was the common sidestep and half hey dance which could be done to a variety of tunes, but for the latter the stick tapping was at the foreman's discretion and might not be known by the rest of the team until they saw what the foreman did!

Roy Dommett
July 2009



On Sam Bennett

Sam Bennett was effectively the Ilmington village squire. He owned the biggest farm; he had the best house at the top of the hill. He owned the orchard which employed lots of people in the village. Later on he owned a number of small fitted coaches to provide transport. In other words he dominated village life. This means other families in the village were a bit anti-Sam and his heritage. Sharp's morris books' dates are all wrong – he said people were dead when they weren't. Sam had played for the 1886/7 revival (about the time of the Queen's first jubilee). He learnt to play tunes from the pipe and tabor man. He then made attempts 10 years later and was playing for them alone in 1907 ish about the time the Esperance club became nationally famous. He wrote to the local paper saying the Ilmington side existed but no one was very interested in Ilmington, only in the wonderful dances the Esperance club were doing. So he went and taught himself Headington – and anything else that was popular

Having heard that the morris was going on at Abingdon, he then went over there to try and learn the morris there. Hilda Weblin, (who I talked to about 1960) knew the dancers and remembered Sam (and all the other collectors) coming over when she was a small girl. She was Tom Hemmings' sister - James' daughter. She remembered Sam coming over several times; he had problems playing the tunes properly. In the end he became such a nuisance they threatened to shoot him to stop him coming!

He was invited over to Bampton the year that Jinky had a row with the rest of them (1926, the year of the big strike). He played for the old side that had kicked out Jinky Wells - who then formed his own young side. I was told by one of the people who danced with Sam at the time that he would play on the fast side. They got a bit fed up of it so they would say, 'Hey Sam, play a bit faster' in a sarcastic way – but he did! So they regretted it!

He obviously liked Bampton as the hobbyhorse that he had made for morris over at Ilmington was left to Bampton. Sonner Townsend was meant to collect it but there was a delay in getting a truck to go and collect it. By the time they went, it had been taken by Ilmington School. In August 1962, Ewart Russell¹ & I went to Ilmington and found the hobby horse in an empty school so we were able to turn it over & take pictures of it.

He tried to get the side revived in the '20s but they had lost too many men through the war, so he had a women's side. It was the dances they did and the way they did it which was the basis of my first teaching Ilmington dances to the Federation. Not the way Sharp reconstructed it from the way Michael Johnson danced, nor the way the local side danced. I did produce a few sheets as taught by the old dancers to Sharp – again where the variability of the dance structure came in. I did those notes because I was asked at Sidmouth one year to teach dances that were danced to different instruments (pipe & tabor, concertina, fiddle) - to show if you danced to original instruments how it affected the dance. For Ilmington, Mary Jo Searle from New Esperance played (pipe & tabor) for me at a workshop and it had quite an effect.

That women's side generated a lot of photographs. When Ewart Russell and I talked to Sam's son and his wife; the son didn't have a good word to say about his father as he would be gone for days on end with no word of where he had gone. Years after Sam died he was still resentful. Sam junior's wife didn't echo that; she seemed very proud of Sam senior – and he had encouraged her children to learn to play the fiddle. While we were there they got out Sam's best fiddle – it had a seventeenth century date in it – by not the most famous

¹ *Bag of Morris Ring at the time (1960 to early 1970's) and with Colchester MM – his father was a gamekeeper on an estate on Colchester and claimed never to have left the estate in all his life. His mother (and possibly his father) could neither read nor write. His father was charming and gave Roy some of his driving experience!*

violin-maker of the time but a well-known one anyhow. He got his fiddle from someone over in the Forest of Dean – one of the old musicians who played for the morris. Sam also for morris tended to play an old fiddle and although he was noted as a teetotaler he used to give his fiddle a drink!

As a result of seeing Sam's son we went over to see his sister (Sam's daughter), who had a cottage of her own. She had the photograph album - I don't know what's happened to it. It was a big thick album with photographs of the women's side between the war and the children's side afterwards. She was pleased to have anybody come & talk to her, spoke as though she thoroughly enjoyed being in the morris and talked about places they danced at; going to Stratford-upon-Avon for a festival. The morris seemed to have had a busy life.

Sam Bennett senior, by talking to people in the village, had got together a history of Ilmington in fine detail from the beginning with George Arthur at the beginning of 19th century. Not only the history, but who they were and what they did including notations. This book was left, after the war, to relatives in Canada but it never came back! We never found out if they were called Bennett or not. What's interesting is that there were comments that when Michael Johnson started in Ilmington in 1840 the tradition had galleys in it. Several sides have tried putting galleys in and it does look good. I spent a day with Andy (Barrand, née Horton, of Marlboro women in Vermont) going over their tradition as they did it.

After the war Sam formed the children's side that used to dance at EFDSS festivals at Stratford-upon-Avon. Kenworthy Schofield wrote down the dances that the children did. That version of Ilmington was taught to Oxford City. At the time he was dancing with St Albans but the people at St Albans told me that Ilmington was one of the few traditions they didn't do. So I presume Kenworthy thought it so different from the way Sharp had published it he wouldn't teach it like that.

Sam was invited to the United States by Henry Ford (who had established a settlement to preserve folk life) and after that visit Sam's character changed – he became big headed, but he obviously enjoyed it. He was interviewed by the BBC on a number of occasions. On one occasion he was invited to a studio in the Midlands – they interviewed him and invited him to play. What they didn't realise was they couldn't stop him playing – in the end they had to carry him out of the studio still sitting on his chair – to get him away from the microphone.

I would say on the whole only his son was bitter about him. A few people were irritated because he went to places like Eynsham when the side revived – he was interested I suppose. When he disappeared he went to Abingdon and Eynsham again and again. If he didn't get anything the first time he would keep going back. He had a big catchment area! He was so used to being his own boss.

When I went in the 1960's to see the revived Bidford side and talk to the old dancers, they all told me that Sam used to come across and play at the wake – he played for Almscott. I'm not sure if he went and played because he was the only musician or he was invited, but he was well known.

When I went to a Stratford-upon-Avon Ring Meeting in the late '60s, for the tour round the villages (with the Ilmington village side) I went with Julian Pilling from Nelson. He was good at talking to people in the crowd – he had a gift of chatting people up from cold. We found one who claimed he was a shepherd who remembered some country dances so we went across on the Sunday to chat to him and collected them – they got published in "English Dance and Song". So often in a crowd it's easy for people clam up or they think it's trivial – other times people get the knack of getting them to talk.

Roy Dommett, talking to Beth Neill in June 2009

Zachariah Lankin, Collector and Folklorist

Among the Lankin family papers are the diaries of Dorcus' Uncle Zachariah, one of the lesser known of the early folk song collectors.

Dorcus noted in her own diary that on his death, "There was much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the Lankin family . . . It was not so much that he died that caused the sadness as that he left so little in his Will. We all knew the codger was rich but we never knew where his fortune came from - nor, more to the point, did we know that he was leaving it all to the Princess Royal Fund for Abandoned and Destitute Folklorists".

Old Uncle Zach, or "Sir" as the youngsters grudgingly called him, developed his interest in folk music as he travelled the local villages: as a young man he would spend much of his spare time touring the local pubs noting down the songs being sung. Dorcus could recall that when still a child she would lie in bed late at night listening out for his raucous voice, staggering home singing the latest addition to his collection. As he came up the road his voice would gather in strength and then the neighbours would come out and join in the chorus of "Shut-up, you old #%\$*! I've got work in t'morning!" He never paid them any attention because he was almost totally deaf.

Unusually for the early collectors he also seems to have collected songs from the womenfolk by visiting their homes during the day. This it seems was better as the men were out working and thus unlikely to interrupt by offering their own songs. However, in deference to their modesty, Zachariah is vague in identifying his female sources in his diaries and refers to them by first name only. "Big Mary" and "Gentle Lizzie" must have been two of his main sources as there are numerous references to him playing with them and to entertaining them with his flute.

Although a prolific collector Uncle Zachariah did not have any formal musical education (or much of any other sort of education). He developed his own notation so that he could remember the tunes and a curious form of shorthand so that he could get the words down quickly. He left the family his song book, which remains in the family home to this day. It has never been published, mainly because his notation is almost totally indecipherable. A few snippets have been decoded, though we think he must have misheard some parts of them.



Among the lesser known songs are:

- All around My Bat: This has references to the willow and seems to be a cricketing song.
- The Unquiet Grate: A work song about cleaning out a fireplace.
- The Duck and Sailor: Something about a drunken sailor and what they will do with his duck.
- Green Sleeves: About the perils of not using a handkerchief.

There are scattered references to the other collectors of the Edwardian period and some odd ones that suggest some kind of arrangement he had with them – for example in 1910:

- 25 June: 15 shillings from GB for introductions to Big Mary
- 20 August: 10 guineas from S for playing with Lizzie
- 16 September: 20 guineas from B-G for "Services"

It is obvious from the entries that Uncle Zachariah was paid by the other collectors for introducing them to his sources and this could go some way to explaining the origin of his wealth that Dorcus referred to when noting his death. It also illustrates the good will and spirit of cooperation that existed between these early collectors. However the diaries also suggest some rivalry. There are a number of references to slashing bike tyres that coincide with Cecil Sharp's known visits to the area (this may account for his not including any of the local songs or dances in his own collections). At least once it seems Sharp got his revenge as Zachariah notes that his planned visit to Headington Quarry with Sharp had to be cancelled when somebody stole his bike saddle. Zachariah simply records that Sharp's own bicycle, next to it, was completely untouched.

However, Uncle Zachariah did have considerable respect for Vaughan Williams. When, many years later, they met and shook hands Uncle Zach was so moved by the occasion he swore that he would never wash that hand again. Over the years the dirt built up and then septicaemia set in and he had to have it amputated. He kept it in a pickle jar so that he could be buried whole until it mysteriously disappeared during the Great Coronation Feast of 1953.

Zachariah was perhaps one of the first of the collectors to develop an interest in children's songs and pastimes. He would often be seen talking to groups of children, offering them sweets and taking one or two aside to play games. He also encouraged the older girls to Morris dance and would often stand entranced as they danced on the Green or call on them to have a jig with him. Occasionally he would take one of the local girls behind the barn to teach them some new steps he had learnt on his travels. In fact his enthusiasm for women's Morris is commemorated in two of the local dances.

- "The Old Goat" which starts with the following rhyme sung by all the dancers:
What do you want, you dirty old goat? You stay away from here.
For if you don't we'll beat you blue, and drown you by the weir.
- "Beating the Goat", a stick dance during which a member of the audience (usually an older man) is led into the centre of the set and is then beaten about the body - the dance continues until he collapses or is rescued by his friends.

Uncle Zachariah's papers never made it into the Cecil Sharp House. They were meant to part of the library but at a critical point in the negotiations Zach's name was dragged into the Great Guizing Scandal of 1939 and he went out of favour amongst folk circles. His death passed unnoticed except by the family and the owners of the boat his home-made mechanical Morris man crashed into.

However he is remembered to this day by the local women's Morris side. Each year, on the anniversary of his death, they dance "The Old Goat" on his grave.

Long Lankin
April 2011

Morris and Women – an outsider's viewpoint

Being a relative newcomer to Morris Dancing (having only participated for the last 11 years) and coming from a non-folk background I thought I would spend even more of my leisure time putting my two-penn'orth down in print about how I see the surprisingly still disputed question of women and morris dancing.

I laugh when people (50 years plus always) say to me 'I didn't know women did Morris Dancing'; when I joined I didn't know that women DIDN'T do morris dancing. From my perspective ordinary women danced for fun; men didn't. That was just my experience growing up in the 1970's in a working class urban environment. Women danced around their handbags at the local disco and men were forced into dancing – badly.

Having seen the recent BBC4 documentary 'Still Folk Dancing...After all These Years' where young lads were voicing the opinion that women did not have the correct bits to morris dance, and having been on my first ever Roy Dommett workshop in Exeter earlier this year, where his lecture on the role of women in the revival was so eloquent and informative, it started me thinking; surely the attitude that women shouldn't morris dance is not one that even the Morris Ring still hold?

If you want to read a piece on why women should morris dance you're reading the wrong article. Any notion that they shouldn't is so idiotic today as to be not worthy of argument. Just as it's wrong to argue with flat-earthers as you end up giving legitimacy to plainly ridiculous arguments, it's wrong to even set out the reasons why women should or shouldn't dance the morris.

If people still hold these views then it's sad for them and sad for society but we shouldn't waste our time worrying about it. Although one does wonder what their position is on, say, black men or Sikhs in turbans dancing the morris; and is it the genitalia difference they object to, in which case what would their opinion be on trans-gender morris and would it make a difference if they were pre- or post- op? Or perhaps they still hold on to the notion that as only men demonstrated their fertility and virility in the past only they should do so for ever more. Who knows and frankly who cares?

If you just put the words 'black person' or 'jew' in place of the word 'woman' when talking about morris dancing (or anything really) this is a good rule of thumb on how to be respectful.

In every other area of society (with the possible exception of organised religion) men and women do things together; as the master of Wellington College Dr Anthony Seldon said when he opened the institution up to girls 'we live in a co-ed world now, we live in co-ed houses, we go to co-ed work places, we are treated in co-ed hospitals and we should be educated in co-ed establishments.'

Today if you said to the proverbial man on the Clapham omnibus that only men should dance, work, play sport or whatever, you would be laughed out of court and quite rightly so. AND we want to spend our leisure time dancing with our friends and family.

That is not to say there shouldn't be single sex teams. Of course there should. The uniformity, attitude, movement and above all tradition should always be maintained and preserved. And through gritted teeth I will acknowledge the supremacy of the good male team – although this is NOT a matter of genetics and there is no reason why tomorrow the opposite will be true. And I personally prefer the grace of the female morris dancer any day of the week.

By the same token single sex events, be they traditional or otherwise, can be very jolly affairs – I remember a particularly enjoyable female only evening dance out and I'm sure the traditional male only events are nearly as good.

It is interesting to note that of the very few new morris teams set up by the younger generation over recent times - Morris Offspring, Nonesuch and the new Fool's Gambit – they are all mixed. Young people when doing things for themselves want to be together. And when looking at such teams it is genuinely the case that you can't sometimes tell the gender of the good dancers in similar uniform.

From a technical and visual point of view whilst it's impressive to watch uniformity in all its forms (gender, height, waist measurement, athleticism, dancing ability and age) and we need teams to maintain high standards and the beauty that comes from this, we are not all 20-year-old 6' 4" white men!

There is an extra special feeling that comes from watching unbroken (male) morris performed in its original setting with traditional instruments, kit etc – it sends a tingle down the spine – but how many of us can say that ours are such teams? And hopefully in future years our daughters, sons and their offspring will feel the same way when they dance one of our 'traditional' dances.

At the recent workshop Roy Dommett said that we are in danger of forgetting our audience by communing only with each other. He was referring to the practice of inviting other teams along to a day or evening of dance, the fools doing 'in-jokes' and the dancers performing for other teams not the audience. This could also be true in our sometimes obsession with tradition over entertainment. We are there to entertain, albeit in a traditional way.

Folk dancing is dancing for the people and shouldn't it be made up and reflect, well, people? The nauseous approval of Nick Griffin (BNP) of Eliza Carthy should send warning signals to us all about reserving rather than preserving our traditions for one ethnic group and gender.

So let's stop this turning our backs (yes this still happens physically as well as metaphorically!) or conspicuously ignoring dancers we don't approve of and continue to enjoy, preserve, evolve and celebrate our history, music and traditions.

Tracey Marshall
June 2011



Cecil Sharp diaries now transcribed



Cecil Sharp's Appalachian diaries (1915-1918) now include a transcript with short biographies of named associates. The Country Dance and Song Society is the sponsor of the transcription project, which will make the American diaries of its founder, Cecil Sharp, widely available to scholars, singers, and all those interested in traditional American dance and music.

These transcripts were researched and made by Dr. Christopher Bearman and edited and prepared for the website by Kate Faulkner MSc MCLIP. This project is dedicated to the memory and contributions of John M. ("Jack") Langstaff. It has been underwritten by the Ithaka Foundation, the Langstaff family and William L. Ritchie.

Read and search Cecil Sharp's diaries at:

<http://library.efdds.org/cgi-bin/introsharpdiaries.cgi> (<http://tinyurl.com/sharpdiaries>)

Fool's Gambit

Fool's Gambit, a definition:

A foolish strategy, an unwise move or a dangerous manoeuvre.

Some might say that starting this morris team was an unwise move. The idea of a morris team of students who live all over Britain, from Durham down to Devon and from London to Abergavenny, would strike anyone as foolish. But thanks to public transport and the parents of the younger members of the team and despite the logistical issues, the team has so far been a success.

The team began unofficially at Sidmouth Folk Week 2010 with a meeting of friends and developed from there. Our first practice took place in London in October 2010; 13 of the current 14 members attended, the last member to join, Edd Bennett, doing so in December. The first challenge at this practice was to discover whether the 13 of us could stand each others' company for long enough to dance together. Despite being friends (indeed the team includes many sets of siblings) dancing in a morris team tests friendships rather more than just meeting up at festivals over the summer.

All of our members have been brought up in the folk world, all keen ceilidh dancers and the majority also dancing with teams from an early age. Myself, my sister Charlotte, Rosie and Tom Wright were all dancing morris together in Earl of Stamford long before the age of 10, while Dominic and Ben Moss have been dancing with Great Western since 2006. Mark and Alun Pinder, Will Marshall, Ellie Neyhus and Sam Cope all learnt to dance morris with NYFTE while Edd Bennett has danced with St. Albans Morris since the age of 9. Rebecca Moore is a recent convert to the morris and rapper side of folk, starting rapper at 15 with Mabel Gubbins and Evienna Goodman is our least experienced member, having only done ceilidh dancing in the past. The 14 of us, who range in age from 13 to 22, dance with a total of 17 teams, including Cotswold, Rapper, North-West and Molly.

As Foreman of Fool's Gambit, it has been difficult to try and mould all of our members to dance in a similar style. 12 of our members dance Cotswold with 9 other teams so in some ways it was much easier to teach the less experienced members, as they do not have to unlearn their style from another team. With the more experienced dancers it was a challenge to stop people from falling back on their previous styles. As we are a mixed team, it has been especially difficult to find a balance between the styles of girls and boys as some dance in very different ways.



We chose Fieldtown as our first tradition as it is one which most of our members are familiar with from other teams and one which ranks as a favourite with many of us. To create our style we looked at the way in which each member dances the tradition and, put bluntly, stole the best bits of each one. This has resulted in a style which we all enjoy dancing and which we believe looks both energetic and graceful. We now have 7 Fieldtown dances worked up to performance level and another which combines both Fieldtown and Bampton which we adapted from a dance which some of the team were taught by Seven Champions at Sidmouth 2010. We have recently started to learn Bledington, which we chose due to its contrast to Fieldtown, and currently have one dance and a procession in our repertoire; the plan is to continue working on dances from both these traditions as well as possibly creating some of our own.



So far, Fool's Gambit has had 9 practices in London, Nottingham, Reading, Bath and Bristol and our debut dance out was with Hammersmith Morris Men in London over the May Day weekend. We knew this was taking a risk, having a dance out so soon after the beginning of the team, but it was successful, proving that forming the team was an unwise move which has paid off. After such a great start we intend to persevere with the team and will be dancing on Sidmouth seafront in August and some of our members may be entering the jig competition at the festival. Keep an eye out for us!

Alice Dover
May 2011



Read on- Roy Dommett in action at his workshop

Roy Dommett Comes Out ! (of Retirement)

In July 2010, 450 men women and children gathered in the beautiful Teign Valley in Devon to celebrate Great Western (GW)'s 40th Anniversary. During our initial planning there were really only four people who we wanted as 'Guests of Honour' – Roy and Marguerite Dommett and Tubby and Betty Reynolds. Sadly Betty died before the event having been ill for a while as well and Tubby felt unwell enough not to join us. Despite Roy's many health problems he and Marguerite did join us. During the weekend Roy had conversations with a number of people about instructionals (Halsway, Cardiff, Lains Barn) in the past which had inspired many of those present. Roy's last instructional had been in California (in the 20th century!) so the question arose "What about another one?". Roy, and Marguerite, seemed keen. The five minute standing ovation Roy received from all of those present during our Saturday evening entertainment confirmed to a few of us that illness had not dulled Roy's vigour and it was wonderful to see so many young dancers on their feet applauding.

So what to do about it? GW are no strangers to organising tours – the 40th itself was a giant act of faith – "Will anyone come?" swiftly followed by "What the hell do we do with 450 people?". We had had Roy down to Exeter for one day events back in the mists of time. Many of us had been to Cardiff and Lains Barn so why not Exeter? During the summer of 2010 Roy, Marguerite and I had a number of phone conversations about Roy doing another full-on weekend instructional. Roy stressed that if we were going to go ahead we would have to be very up front about his health issues. Central to that being that he has dialysis 3 times a week so that would have to be borne in mind. We also needed to have in mind that, should Roy fall ill just before the event, we needed a plan B.

We first wanted to gauge possible numbers and who better to use for our focus group than those who attended the GW 40th Tour. Emails were sent and first indications were that we would get somewhere between 120 and 150. During discussions within the side I had said that should GW as a group not feel able to support the event I would take it on myself. I needn't have worried. Meanwhile Roy and I had decided on April 2011 as the best time to go for. This would give Roy 6 months to prepare the material (see www.great-western.org.uk/dommett). Roy clearly saw this not just as a 'get the buggers to dance' weekend and from the outset it was advertised as a mix of lectures and practical sessions.

We started to advertise and search for a location big enough. We decided on a local school which had recently been re-built which had a large hall, lecture facilities and we would be able to use the services of their catering team. We wanted at this stage to 'keep it simple'. We would set up the space and people would be responsible for their own catering, accommodation etc. In parallel with recruiting and organising a space there were frequent discussions with Roy and Marguerite about how we would manage Roy's dialysis. Eventually it was decided that they would travel on the Thursday; Roy would have dialysis locally on Friday and they would then stay until Tuesday so that he could also have his Monday dialysis down here. Roy and Marguerite were booked into a local hotel and all seemed set. During these early discussions it also became clear that Roy saw this as a starter for three similar weekends. So all of a sudden we had gone from a one-off to a series. Not only that, Roy had agreed to do a couple of one day instructionals for local teams. Coming out of retirement with a vengeance.

As time went on the numbers dried up. We knew fairly early on that our date clashed with a couple of other events around London but had still expected to top the 100 mark easily. But it wasn't going to happen so we had a re-think. Roy had insisted that the space should be big enough for people to dance at least arms width apart in all directions. We found a local hall with all its own catering facilities, easy parking, built in PA, drop down screen and most importantly a laser levelled sprung floor and a pub nearby with space for camping. We decided to move the venue. You might ask why we hadn't gone for this venue in the first place.

Quite simply – Numbers. Despite the fact that we, or maybe Laurel Swift, had persuaded two mad Canadians to come over literally ‘just for the weekend’. And that we had advertised through the Fed, the Ring and Open Morris we had only got to just over half our projected numbers. In the event the move proved the making of the weekend. If we had got to our 120 it would have been a far less intimate occasion. However it did mean that we had to re-think the domestic arrangements. We toyed with the idea of an outside caterer but it was prohibitively expensive. Up stepped Mary Lewis who offered to ‘lead’ on catering. Great news. We decided that even if we had a late rush of requests for places we would just have to say no. So the move to Broadclyst Victory hall was confirmed. Initial disappointment at the lack of numbers was quickly replaced with a realisation that the whole event would be far more user-friendly in such a hall.

One slight hiccup was that Roy was now going to have his Friday dialysis on Friday afternoon and then come straight to the hall for the evening session. Not good news. As the event grew nearer Roy started to pass on some of his material. The initial panic that ensued when he said that some of this material would be on Amstrad diskettes was unfounded; most arrived in fairly normal forms. The vu-foils/OHP’s¹ – yes OHP’s! not the ubiquitous powerpoint – Roy would bring with him. Bear in mind that much of his original material is irreplaceable. We decided that we would scan these after each of Roy’s lecture sessions. So John Lewis set up a small office in the bar and he and Jerry West scanned them in. At the time of writing Roy is writing up notes to go with these vu-foils and these notes will be added to the material on the GW website.

The trial runs that Roy had organised went well but we also had to cope with a few late health scares – like Marguerite ringing up the weekend before ours to say they had had a wonderful weekend at some sort of celebration but that Roy had then spent two days in hospital! Quoting Marguerite “But not to worry dear everything is fine now; they were lovely in casualty”. So we got to the weekend itself and hey presto it looked like we were going to be blessed with good weather – good news for those who had opted to camp. Roy and Marguerite travelled down on Thursday as planned. Dawn Honeysett did the taxi-ing honours to the Friday dialysis and then we waited. We needn’t have worried. Roy arrived promptly at 6.45pm for the start of the evening session and we were off.

As promised we had a weekend mix of lectures and dancing. Roy proved he has lost none of his passion and showed how what he brings to bear on this sort of event is far greater than the sum of the various parts. There are many who claim to be able to teach dances or recount historical detail and context but as he said himself Roy is our link with that heritage. He placed the practical dance sessions in context. Yes he wandered off the point sometimes – look out for the transcriptions. But what the heck! The dance sessions themselves were, as always, frenetic and challenging. Starting with a border session using 8 inch sticks. I got more emails querying the request to bring an 8 inch stick than anything else. “Morris is about precision not strength” – and you get very precise when you only have 2 or 3 inches of stick to work with!

So the weekend progressed. Roy’s own fears that he might flag a little either on Friday after 4 hours in dialysis or on Saturday around teatime proved unfounded. In fact our biggest problem was the amount of food Mary and the rest of GW provided! Saturday’s ‘feast’ was preceded by a stunning session of creativity. Teams of 6 to 8 dancers plus musician created new dances with only a word or phrase from Roy as inspiration. Five new dances were created, none of which would have looked out of place on a tour. Hopefully Jerry, as Fed notation guru, will be publishing them in a future Morris Matters or Fed newsletter. Sunday finished with a lunchtime pub session and dancing in some glorious sunshine and included attempts to re-create and even adapt on the hoof some of the dances taught over the weekend.

¹ For the under-30s readers – vu-foils, or overhead projections (OHPs) were the mainstay of lecturers in the 70’s and 80’s; some places still use them!

I am not sure if many of us would have wanted our exploits at the Cardiff instructionals recorded on film but very early we knew that we wanted to record as much of this weekend as possible. Quite a few people recorded Roy's talks and these will eventually be transcribed. But we have to thank Rob Jukes (Champs, Smiffs etc) for stepping in very soon after we started planning and offering to video the event. Eventually we will find a way of disseminating Rob's edited version. Once we have all the material in electronic form we hope to be mirroring it on the Fed website.

As Roy said, once an event is 'on', Great Western, young and old, just pitch in and do what's necessary. So many thanks to all for help before, during and after the event with special mentions to John and Mary Lewis, Duncan Moss our treasurer and Barry & Dawn Honeysett.

So what of the future?

It was great to see such an eclectic mix of dancers and musicians (thanks particularly to Mary-Jo [MJ] Searle for doing the lion's share of playing). Young and old, from a variety of sides with the Ring, Fed and Open Morris were all represented. Our problem next time may well be space. What do we do if we are inundated with requests for places? It will be a nice problem.

As mentioned earlier Roy saw this weekend as one of three spread out with eighteen month intervals. We will probably use the same or a similar venue. First indications from those present are that the next two will be oversubscribed. October 2012 and Spring 2014 have been earmarked for the next two. In the more immediate future Roy will be doing a one day event in the Berkshire area and a one day 'GW only' instructional in October 2011. So the cat is well and truly out of the bag and Andy Pandy is up and if not running then purring along.

Lessons learnt? - Main one is that I should have applied for a heritage Lottery grant or some such! I won't make that mistake again.

I would like to finish with my favourite quote contained in the many thank you's and follow up comments - and not because it came from my daughter.

"Miryam Boston is exhausted and aching but feels inspired and eager after spending the weekend learning from a true master of his art"

Just about summed it up for all of us. Here's to the next one!

Mike Boston
June 2011

And the next one will be.....

Plans are afoot to hold a workshop on "all the other bits" that Roy is not covering in his planned series of 3 workshops covering all the Cotswold traditions and the bits he didn't quite finish last time round.

Date - weekend of 21-23 October 2011

Venue - Farnborough, Hants

Contact Beth Neill at beth@neillpoole.co.uk if you are interested

Maple dancer flies over for a weekend workshop....

Late last year, I heard of a weekend workshop being put on by Roy Dommatt the next spring. I had never met Roy, but I certainly knew who he was. A version of Sherborne that I developed for use on my home team, the Toronto Morris Men, and later brought to our youth team Maple Morris, was based heavily on his notes.

North American dancers a generation older than myself talked often of workshops that he had been over to teach at camps and elsewhere, and about his general influence in Morris. And I knew it had been many years since the last such workshop he had put on. So, with time, opportunity, and a mother kindly paying for my plane ticket, in April I set off to England with my Maple Morris teammate Stefan Read.

The theme of the weekend was "an insight into the way it was", which meant that Roy intended to teach dances as closely as possible to how they were notated. Even as he did this, however, he was careful to talk about dance notations as an imperfect mirror of what *might* have been done at the time they were collected. In the spirit of following the recorded evidence as closely as possible, when we arrived on the Friday night we were taught a border dance using, as the notation indicated, eight-inch sticks. It took quite a lot of care and control not to rap each others' knuckles with the tiny dowels!

The weekend was split between teaching and dancing of various traditions, and sit-down talking sessions with slides (ok; some time was also devoted to the casks that the organizers, Great Western, had set up in the adjacent room). The dancing instruction was fast-paced, taking us swiftly through the dances of Stanton Harcourt or Ducklington with little time spent on finer details of style. Roy strode around the room with a cane while employing members of Great Western to demonstrate the moves he was describing. Related to Roy's point about notations being imperfect, he also maintained that a teacher was effective when providing a model to mimic rather than mere description.

The talking sessions ranged on a variety of topics related to the history of Morris, especially in the last century or so. As he talked, he embellished the stories with interesting little nuggets, such as how Morris music and dance was sometimes used with shell-shocked soldiers in WWI as a way of accessing their inner lives, or the story of the two brothers from whom Sherborne was collected both working as policemen under assumed names for some reason.

He emphasized the point of Morris in his mind as being part of a "festive culture" going out to meet its public rather than trying to draw the public towards itself. Putting this in a larger context, he reflected that in earlier days the nature of work itself was more solitary than today, making a festive, gathering culture a much more starkly obvious social function. But the best Morris today still communicates a vigour and enthusiasm, embracing a carnival atmosphere on the streets. I've felt this myself at home in Toronto, the difference between dancing ourselves on a street as pedestrians swept by on their way home, and dancing during street festivals when being there, ready to look at something, is the point of being out.

Continuing on the theme of notations as an unreliable witness into how things actually might have been, he described how Sharp would frequently seek out the older men in villages like Abingdon, passing over younger, active dancers in search of a more ancient and "authentic" version of the dance. He described a later notation collected from Bledington, sourced from a younger side, as being significantly different from the Bledington that Sharp collected.

Asked how sides should recruit younger members, he responded that he wouldn't know and, moreover, it's the job of younger people to do that. He followed this with a rather provocative question -- "why should older sides expect that they should be able to recruit younger members?" He expanded this to describing dancing on a modern younger side as being quite a different experience than being on one with older members, something that I was keenly aware of as someone who divides his time between a team that is mostly older than myself and one that is mostly younger.

It was then time for a little bit of fun, with a session that Roy termed "Strictly Come Morris Dancing". We split into about 5 or 6 different groups, which were each given a theme, which could be quite abstract. Our own theme, for example was "the NHS", for which we used hankies in overhead circles to represent flashing ambulance lights, and there were other groups that evoked military battles and gangs of football hooligans. Awards were given in various made-up categories, and everyone got to expend a little creative, fun energy.

For some reason, Roy saved Longborough for Sunday morning. Anyone who thought a weekend led by a septuagenarian would not be physically demanding was in for a surprise here! He ran through Country Gardens, Young Collins, Swaggering Boney, and Trunkles. As with the other dances, Roy didn't waste much time on fiddly details, but raced through the instruction of these physically demanding dances, getting us to power through them and chuckling as we sweated and wheezed.

After the official workshop time was over, we walked through fields and sunshine to the idyllic New Inn, where we sat outside having pints and doing pickup dances. Roy was brought a small stool to sit on and watch the dancing, but he couldn't stay still for long, soon getting up to teach us a five-person border dance. Among the various other dances, I and some of the Offspring members got to do an original Maple dance that I had taught on a previous trip in November, during workshops in preparation for our own collaboration at Cecil Sharp House in July. Sitting and having fun, dancing in the sunshine, was a very pleasant and fitting end to the weekend.

During the weekend, Roy also made an appeal for anyone who might have recordings of previous talks, interviews, or workshops of himself to share them with him, as he was trying to collect as much of this material as possible. To ensure that a record was kept of this weekend in particular, Great Western went to a lot of trouble to take video of the entire weekend, and have posted Roy's slides and documents at <http://www.great-western.org.uk/dommiett/index.htm>.

As we waved goodbye, ready to go to London and fly back to Canada the next day, some of the Great Western dancers remarked at how astonished they were that we had travelled so far for a weekend. A few things Roy said suggested to me that, while apprehensive at the idea of anyone taking his words as gospel, he was keenly aware of his role as a link to the past. But what struck me about meeting him was finding, in combination with that historical link, someone whose thinking reflects a lot of what I find on Maple about how current and future dancers might approach the Morris. I'm certainly willing to travel for that.

Justin Morrison
July 2011

Justin will return to England with Maple Morris in July, performing in Must Come Down, a collaboration with Morris Offspring on Thursday, July 28th at Cecil Sharp House before going with the team to Sidmouth Folk Week

CD review – Morris Dancing – An English Tradition

(Talking Elephant TECD177)

This is a low price compilation of finely played, up tempo versions of assorted morris music from the Talking Elephant archives. All the material on here has been released elsewhere recently, much of it on the latest 'Morris On' recordings, but there are also contributions from the Albion Band, Albion Morris, Moulton Morris, and others. Most tracks feature classic tunes which will be familiar to morris aficionados, and also feature high quality musicians, albeit with bass and full drum kit on most tracks, not quite what you see out on the street.

With a wide variety of tunes from different traditions, it's certainly not the generally excellent music which lets down this CD – rather, it's a number of other things. There are no sleeve notes other than a list of contents, and the front and back covers and disc itself rather curiously feature half a dozen knitted characters in approximations of morris costumes – not really getting across any sense of the tradition implied in the CD name. Some track titles don't give much of a clue to the names of the tunes played – one is called 'Two Morris Dance Tunes', one is called 'Morris Dance Medley', and a couple more are similarly vague.

As there are no sleeve notes, there is no attempt to put any of the tracks in context (e.g. the types of dance they normally accompany), and therefore no explanation of why Moulton Morris's distinctive but non-morrisy version of 'New York Girls' is included. There are a couple of typos in the band names (e.g. Centenery), and although there has been a creditable attempt to provide links to morris websites for those who want to find out more, web addresses for the Morris Ring and the Morris Federation are shown, but not for the Open Morris (sorry, Openers). There are also a few random morris photos inside the front CD liner which a small footnote says are from various Rochester Sweeps Festivals. Amongst them I recognise Hobos and Witchmen – fine teams, but they have no connection to this CD.

Oh dear, I'm starting to sound curmudgeonly – so let me finish positively by saying I love Ruth Angell's haunting version of the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance which concludes it. A pity the CD's accompanying material isn't to the same high standard as the music on it.

Malcolm Major
June 2011

The EFDSS National Gathering

Saturday 12 November 2011

An afternoon and evening of events to celebrate the Centenary of the English Folk Dance Society at Cecil Sharp House, London NW1 7AY.

- ♪ From 2pm to 5pm - films from the archives, talk on the history of the EFDS and interviews with members from across the decades.
- ♪ From 6.30pm to 10.30pm - music from David Fleming-Williams and Friends, Eliza Carthy, Alistair Anderson and John Kirkpatrick with dance displays of Cotswold and North West Morris, Rapper, Long Sword, Appalacian Step, and a social dance.

All tickets are available online (£10 in advance) from www.efdss.org or by phone on 020 7485 2206. Keep an eye on our website (www.efdss.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/efdss) for the latest announcements - we have more events to announce in the coming months.

DERTy Memories 2011

Last year, I wrote about DERT for Morris Matters, giving a competitor's eclectic view. This year, my view was very different.

In April 2010, Mabel Gubbins Rapper went to DERT and came back with second prize in the Open Competition. That should have made us feel happy. It did, so why did we also have a sinking feeling in our stomachs?

This year, we were 'it' – Mabels were organising the whole damn thing. It was all our own fault. A few years ago, we'd foolishly agreed to be the hosts for the 2011 Dancing England Rapper Tournament (DERT). It seemed like a good idea when we said yes; we'd got lots of time to sort it out. It's funny how things creep up on you. Until in 2010, we came home with lots of good memories and 11 months to get the next one sorted. Help.

Well, readers, the good news is that we did it. On the weekend of March 4th to 6th, 25 teams competed at DERT 2011 in Oxford. I'd be lying if I said it all went without a hitch (see the 'not so plus' points below) but it was great and we got lots of lovely feedback. And only a little bit of blood was spilt.

Plus points

So many things went well, it's hard to know where to start. But the key thing that made it a success was the people. First there was the team itself, Mabel Gubbins. Definitely a case of quality not quantity – never was so much done so well by so few. Then there were the partners, friends, families, slight acquaintances and passing strangers who pitched in and helped. Especially the breakfast crew at the indoor camping – what on earth made Judy, Andy, Mel and Mike volunteer to get up very early at a rapper weekend and work hard for hours?

Plus there was that rare breed: really helpful pub landlords. We love Ali at the Kings Arms and Ian at the Royal Blenheim and want to have their babies.

We were lucky to get the Town Hall as the evening venue. Great architecture and decoration, central location, enough space and exciting little stairs that let you suddenly and surprisingly pop up on the stage. And we were even luckier to hold the junior and youth competitions at the Bates Collection. It's so useful when morris dancers go on to become museum managers (many thanks to Awol!).

The competition itself went very well. Wonderful performances and no-one came to blows over the results (as far as we know). Only one slight mishap but every DERT should include breaking a floor in one of the competition pubs.



The happiest team was Sallyport who came on stage an indecent number of times during the prize-giving ceremony. First their Tommy (Chris Cartridge) won the Character Prize, then they came third in the Premier Competition, then they won the Tyzack Shield for the highest 'buzz' factor AND then they got the Steve Marris Trophy for the highest overall score. Didn't they do well?

And congratulations to Newcastle Kingsmen for winning the Premier prize, Mons Meg for the Open and Matt Crum (Black Swan) who won best musician.

Of course, we had to make sure we upheld Mabel's reputation in the rapper world. Yes, we dance rapper, but we really love gin and cake, so both had to feature in the weekend. We were spoilt for choice, but in the end we decided we should eat the cake and drink the gin.

So we organised a cake competition. Judged by us, of course. And wow, were the entries good! Seven fabulous cakes that looked and tasted delicious. Third prize went to the Maltby Phoenix Hat Cake (complete with recognisable models of their five dancers and Betty), second to Gaorsach's 'lady garden' cake (suffice it to say that its centrepiece was pink and probably best censored), and first prize to Whip the Cat's cake-stand loaded with glittering rapper cupcakes and bizarre vegan bars (which looked like s*** but tasted scrumptious).



And then there was the gin. We didn't have the time, people or nerves to compete, but we did want to dance at the evening show. After opening the show with a straight dance, we ended it by demonstrating our real talent: the ability to drink gin while dancing with bendy swords. I (as Mabel's betty) and my lovely assistant (Bea) ran round delivering gins and tonics, and pouring gin down the dancers' throats. What more could you want in life?

Last year, I said that everyone takes the competition very seriously, but we have fun doing it. I can honestly say that we had fun organising DERT. Not all of it, of course, but I'm sure we all enjoyed at least some of it!

Not so plus points

There weren't many. Being a small team meant we had a lot to do, so little things like the organising the prize-giving got left to the last minute (i.e. we made it up as we went along).

Some things were difficult to predict. The company who filmed the junior/youth competition and the evening show said they needed to sell a minimum of 40 DVDs. We thought that was feasible so we went ahead. We still have a few to sell. A snip at £20!

The beer at the evening show was expensive, despite us supplying it to the Town Hall's bar contractors. Our Katie did a magnificent job in beating them down from their usual price of £3.70 to £3.20, but that was still more than it ought to have been.

There were also a few accidents. Sadly Becky Graham, who played for the Kingsmen, tripped on the stage steps during the prize-giving and lacerated her face.

And then there was my ankle – I broke it at DERT. I'm writing this 16 weeks later; I can now walk again (after a fashion), but full recovery is still a way off. Having a plate and six screws holding my fibula together was not one of the outcomes I expected from this year's DERT.

Lessons learnt

- Think before you volunteer to organise DERT. You should still say yes, of course. it has to be done.
- You never know what your team is capable of until you try.
- Standing around leaning on the wall in the early hours of the morning can be dangerous...you never know, you might doze off, fall over and break your ankle....

Sally Wearing
June 2011

Three Men Go to Venice – via Korčula

Television travelogues and documentaries are popular viewing in the Frampton household. BBC2's recent 'Three Men' series featured Rory McGrath, Griff Rhys Jones and Dara O'Briain, visiting the Adriatic coast of Montenegro and Croatia before progressing to Venice. Readers will be interested in their visit to Korčula. This Croatian town has one or more sword dance traditions and, somehow, Dara was talked into dressing up in the scarlet costume of one of the dancers and being trained for performance which he came through unscathed. Reviewers called him a 'natural'. This was even more remarkable as one of his teachers showed him the scars where another of his colleagues was 'nearly accurate' with his sword play! Upon being asked what his instructor thought about the English morris dance, the reply came 'Not a lot!' These were real swords (plural), not rapper swords or blunt longswords used in Yorkshire and the North-east traditions. There was the usual conjecture about the dance form having come from Spain five hundred years ago, but nothing controversial. The troupe with which Dara rehearsed was resplendent in scarlet tunics over gaitered stockings, with military-type pillbox hats reminiscent of those at Bacup. Other photographs show dancers in similarly decorated tunics but in black, presumably representing two warring factions. Some wear crowns to representing kings.

Having forgotten the key place names cited and too late for the iPlayer option, I 'googled' my way to find more. The dance tradition itself is, not surprisingly, called the 'Moreška' and is described as a sword battle dance. Various websites give information about the form, its history and development – you can even play film footage to give yourself a flavour!

Throughout history, people from Korčula fought against the Turks and Arabs and it is said that, for centuries, Moreška was performed to commemorate the siege of 1571. People from Korčula participated in the struggles against the Turks in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, although it is surprising that this Christian island should preserve the Moreška as emblematic of the conflict between the two Moslem rulers.

Korčula historian, Vinko Foretić, tells us that in 1571 the fights between Turks and Moors were well known in Split, on the occasion of their victory over the Turks. He compares the Moreška from Split with the one from Korčula, since they also have a war dance between Turks and Moors, although the Moreška from Korčula does have a dramatic plot – unlike that from Split. However, both are very alike and different presentations of the war dance between the Turks and the Moors (occasionally to the glory of Venice) were not rare in those days. However, these are presumptions without any reliable answer, the one that Moreška has lasted in the Mediterranean for almost one thousand years demanding more research – just like the origins of Morris in this country!

Historically, the first known document on Moreška in Korčula was written by Paul Paskvalig on 7th March 1666. It speaks of an incident at carnival time in which moreškanti performed the dance. Certain improprieties were done by this jovial group of young men at the time and, in doing so, insulted three men from Korčula: Marin and Isep Milovčić and Augustin Vidošević. The prince of Korčula, understood the over-exuberance of the young moreškanti, accepting their apologies and took no further action. It seems that these sympathies indicate a deep respect for the men who were playing Moreška – obviously the Hammersmith Morris of their day!!

Another incident in 1685 also occurred at carnival time. It occurred when the Moreška was over ('doppo finiva la moresca'). Both these examples suggest that the moreskanti were specially trained for the day. Also, the performance during carnival time indicates these young people were afforded 'special ethical status.' (sic)

Until the Second World War, Moreška was performed once a year on July 29 (St. Theodore's Day – the patron saint of Korčula). It was prepared over many weeks, and lasted for two hours. After the War, the dancing with its dramatic roles was shortened to thirty minutes due to the frequency of performances. Previously, Moreška was accompanied only by a drum (tamburin). At the beginning of the twentieth century, band music was added. Currently, the preferred accompaniment is a full brass band with music composed by Krsto Odak in 1937. Today's Moreška from Korčula is definitely one of the most attractive sword dances seen in Europe, and performed at least once a week in Korčula due to the interest from tourists.

Some kind of notation is available! The war dance is connected with a short drama. The play begins with a scene where the son of the Arab King Otmanović, Moro, abducts the white king Osman's fiancée, Bula. Bula rejects Moro's love, and the white king arrives with his army to liberate his fiancée. Both armies are ready for combat, and Moro and the white king fight for Bula. The dance has an introductory part – 'sfida', and seven figures (kolaps). Moro, performing the sfida and waving his swords, challenges the white king Osman. Osman accepts the challenge and other soldiers gradually engage themselves in the battle. After each sword-clashing figure there is a pause in the battle while the dancers (moreškanti) walk in a circular formation. Bula tries to reconcile the two kings, but a more fierce battle follows. Finally, the war dance ends with a figure in which black soldiers fall exhausted in front of the white ones. Moro recognises his defeat and gives to the white king both his arms and Osman's fiancée. The battle symbolises a universal message for victory of good over evil, and for the victory of eternal love. (It says here!)

Next time we see the tradition from Grenoside or Handsworth, perhaps we'll look at it with renewed interest!

George Frampton
July 2011

Useful websites for more information:

www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0125t4z/Three_Men_Go_to_Venice_Episode_1

www.mediterrano.hr/services.asp?id=73

http://www.korculainfo.com/moreska_korcula.htm

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/More%C5%A1ka>

<http://www.korcula.net/naselja/korcula/moreska.htm>

http://www.ikorcula.net/moreska/moreska_eng_2.htm

As If Possessed:

Celebrating the life and work of Maud Karpeles...

Saturday 1 October 2011 at Cecil Sharp House, London NW1 7AY
Doors open 1pm, starts 1.30pm, ends 4.30pm

As part of our EFDS Centenary events we present an afternoon of talks from Georgina Boyes, Mike Yates and Derek Schofield and to celebrate the extraordinary work of one of the founders of the EFDS. There will also be the launch of a biography of Maud by the late Simona Pakenham. All tickets are available online (£5 in advance) from www.efdss.org or by phone on 020 7485 2206.

Fondly Remembering Three Morris Men

Eric (aka Tubby) Reynolds

13 January 1925 - 14 July 2011

A true friend, a man who made dances and instructionals memorable, and half of a team of repute. He will be remembered through many anecdotes, although we once agreed that although we were pleased with the things that we had done, we were not necessarily proud of them and would not like any account published!

We first met during National Folk Week in the 1960's. He was a travelling salesman learning to play the three hole pipe whilst driving, who made his own snare drums. Then we worked together on Bob Bradbury's Advanced Morris Instructionals at Halsway Manor with their amazing Saturday night dances, for which Bob brought in a coach load of women, and established a style of weekend that still continues. When the folk world closed down for the annual Albert Hall Festival, Eric ran *Albert's Out of Town* at Bath University, a weekend of dance and workshops. Raising Bath City Morris with both men's and women's teams, he and Betty provided the older stability that a young university based side needed. The teams helped me reconstruct some classical Cotswold traditions that led to a university side providing a Morris Ring instructional interpreting Ducklington and to interesting southern teams in the local tradition of Friendly Societies dancing with slaves. One lesson from Bath was never to repeal stunts, and to be looking for fresh possibilities, as repeats tended to become cruder and wilder. Who can forget the men after a show, kneeling down, putting on their coats, moving off on the knees still singing "Heigh Ho".

Personal memories of happenings include,

- Going via Bath to Bacup with two others. Our car broke down. so Eric came and towed us to Timsbury, overtaking a bus whilst doing so.
- Picking up ten Dommetts in his car from Bath Station and passing a rather surprised policeman.
- Calling a dance at Smiths Industries at Swindon on the centenary of Custer's Last Stand, which became the theme for the evening. With each dance we tried to top each other - including taking prisoners, forward and back, forward and carry off your partner over your shoulder-
- Four of us dressing up. Eric in pantomime dame's dress, and going to fool for an unsuspecting Gloucester Morris outside Bath Abbey.

Eric invited the then Camberley Silver Band to play for dances at the University - forty musicians and a sound you could wallow in. One night it snowed, the porter came in and said it was drifting up to the height of the parked cars. The band had a competition the next day and had to leave up a snow covered M4. Those who stayed were snowed in for 2 or 3 days. During a workshop at Farnborough near Timsbury, one of the dancers was persuaded to restring Eric's fiddle in reverse order. He was clearly puzzled when asked to play Nutting Girl. The culprit spent the rest of the day trying to play with the new arrangement.

We went together to the USA in 1979 where he fulfilled an ambition to drive a huge Chevrolet out to Harpers Ferry near Washington. He was always kind enough to offer to do the washing-up everywhere, not realising they had dishwashers; nobody dared to dissuade him. We were taken to a dance at a Fire Station in the back of North Virginia which took all day traveling to reach. You had to have brought your own partner, and all the dances, big sets or couples, went only clockwise, leaving us frequently giddy. He also went to New Zealand, there could never have been a better ambassador for English Morris.

An early achievement was the Apley Morris, a single tradition side dancing the best Fieldtown at that time. Later he was instrumental in helping the Sherborne Village side to

revive its tradition. But perhaps his greatest was as an adviser to the Letterkenny International Folk Festival in Ireland. There are many stories. I remember the year that the Carnival procession assembled along the bypass around the town, and when the front went round it met the rear before that had started off. Eric presented a slate-based trophy for the most traditional performance. It should have been awarded to the Carnival Committee.

Roy Dommert (the other half of "Roy and Tubby")

And....

Tubby Reynolds was a force to be reckoned with in the morris and folk revival. Enthusiastic, knowledgeable and experienced, he was always keen and willing to teach and share his love of the morris with everyone who showed an interest. Many people (including me) owe him a great debt for introducing us to the morris and enriching our lives.

He was born Eric Anthony Reynolds in 1925. Following an eventful Second World War serving as a paratrooper in North Africa, Italy, France, Norway and Palestine, he married Betty in 1945 (although he was first attracted to her sister Pam). After the war, he tried a few different jobs, including putting up TV aerials, studying to be an architect and milking cows. After he had settled into a technical job, he and Betty moved to Timsbury, near Bath, in 1961. There he became a morris dancer relatively late in life, joining Bathampton Morris in about 1963 or 1964. The morris really grabbed him and he was keen to dance, so he started Bath City Morris in 1967, based at Bath University. The photo shows the team with Tubby on the right in 1975.

Originally, this was men only, but their girlfriends used to watch them practice, while waiting to join in the social dancing that always ended the evening. Then Betty decided to teach the girls to dance the morris as well, so Bath City Morris Women started in 1971. Tubby was delighted with this development, as he couldn't stand the attitude that women weren't allowed to do some things.



At this time, his job wasn't too demanding so he had enough time for the morris and many other aspects of the folk world. He established the Bath University ceilidhs that were held once a month for many years. He called, played (including the pipe and tabor), and organised many events, including the highly enjoyable series of "Albert's out of Town" festivals at Bath University. He taught many morris workshops, often with Roy Dommert, both in the UK and abroad.

When he met Betty, he'd enjoyed the open house approach of her father. This led to the legendary hospitality that welcomed so many people into the Reynolds' home, to talk, dance (including on the table), sing, drink, eat (there was always toast) and sleep (wherever there was space – I once ended up in the shower room as everywhere else was full).

Tubby and Betty were married for 65 years, until Betty died in February 2010. He is survived by four (Lizzie, Simon, Claire and Dominic) of their seven children. He died at home in his beloved garden. As I write this five days later, Tubby's tribute page on Facebook is already full of many happy memories, giving just a little glimpse of how many lives he touched and how much joy he gave us.

Sally Wearing (Bath City Morris 1972 – 1976)

Paul Woods

Paul Woods, aka wudzi and/or Uncle Happy, as he was affectionately known, died on 17th July 2011 after battling pancreatic cancer for about a year. He kept all his friends updated on Facebook; always upbeat and whimsical about the highs and lows of his treatment.

I seem to have known Paul forever - but we met at a Roy Dommatt workshop at Sidmouth in the late '70s; he was in a set with Jill Griffiths and me and apparently we were sufficiently encouraging (with our 2 or 3 years vast experience!!) to him as a complete beginner for him to carry on.



He was a much-loved member of Bristol Morris Men (BMM). When he heard Bristol were invited to a day of dance in Windsor, he realised he could make that part of his 60th birthday celebrations and a huge number of Bristol turned up for our boat trip. A great time was had by all.

When unable to dance he still turned out on tour and was a wonderful announcer. The picture shows him at the Intervarsity Folk Dance Festival in Bristol in February of this year.

Anyone who knew him soon realized that, when not dancing, he was the world's biggest Archers fan, a great appreciator of Shirley Collins and had a huge collection of many genres of music. Several of us in Windsor found a shared interest with him in the songs of '60s girl groups and still strike up "Going to the Chapel" as part of our limited repertoire, while Sloop John B is a song I will recall him belting out in pub sessions. I think he also played a significant part in the eagerly anticipated (?) BMM Christmas cards showing imaginative poses of BMM - usually anonymised. He spent the last few months getting as much out of life as possible, travelling to new places - and turning out with BMM when he could. Once met, never forgotten.

Beth Neill

John Maher

I've also known John a long time too - ! recall sharing stewarding duties with him and Geraldine, his wife, on the Sidmouth Arena in the late '70s. He was very active within the team and also in so many other morris capacities.

The following are a short selection of tributes paid to John:

John, a Bristol Morris Man, was well known across the Morris world, highly respected as the Morris Ring's Overseas Bagman and whose genius designed and managed the Ring's website. The angels are blessed to receive such a Colossus into their midst. (Peter Halfpenny)

John Maher was creator of Mainly Morris Dancing, the online directory of all morris websites in the UK and beyond. This will be his greatest legacy. He also had an alter-ego as Horse, the Bristol Morris horse... or rather, it was the horse that had the alter-ego, and John was it. (Simon Pipe)

John Maher set up and administered the John Gasson Jig Competition website. He was obviously very passionate about the Morris and ensured that by raising the profile of the Jig Competition to an international level it would make sure that the enthusiasm for the competition continued. It has proved amazing in the interest that it has received and this year resulted in the competition being full by 14 June. John entered the competition when he was 70 and danced very well. I think this was 2 years ago and I remember thinking how fit he was. (Tracey Rose)

Farewell to you all - your memories will remain.