

## COMMENTS ON PAPERS PASSED AT SIDMOUTH

### COTSWOLD MORRIS STICK DANCES

I object to "short" being used for anything not "long". Most sides have three lengths of sticks and "medium" being 24-27 inches long is the standard

#### 1. ABINGDON

They did for a while "Beansetting" to tune "Buttercup Joe" - medium length.

#### 2. ADDERBURY

"Cobb's Horse" is in a different class from the others.

You have no knowledge of the frequency of performance of various dances or the content of shows, or even if they were contemporary.

The most significant difference between Adderbury and anywhere else is the **SINGING**, often used instead of dancing. You should also note the different types of steps used in the stick dances.

#### 3. ASCOT

There are other dance titles which suggest more stick dances existed. Ascot "Balance the Straw" is like the Bledington "Young Collins", not the created Fieldtown dance. Length probably medium.

#### 4. BADBY

Known locally as "Rosy London City". There are other titles that could include stick dances. Length medium.

#### 5. BAMPTON

Sticks used in jigs. Short in fools jig, two medium in a double jig no longer remembered.

#### 6. BIDFORD

The foreman would chose the stick tapping at whim so that there was no definate relationship of movement to particular tune. The "Young Collins" appears in photographs and confirmed by local informants.

#### 7. BLEDINGTON

The key point is that the sticks dances had a handclapping equivalent, so that taking the sticks was not critical, nor a large part of the repertoire. Charles Taylor of Oddington was the main source for the Bledington versions.

#### 8. BRACKLEY

"Month of May" was a misapplied tune. "Captain" and "Rosetree" similar as was "Balancy" and "B&J". "Shooting" also known as "Beaux of London City". There are other titles some of which were stick dances.

## 9. BUCKNELL

The stick dance is structured with half heys and the clapping version is not. It is difficult to comment when Sharp says there were no stick dances when it is his papers that give the notation. We do not know the circumstances.

## 10. CHIPPING CAMPDEN

Long sticks, one end wound with 9" of red, yellow and green ribbons. Handk in hand carrying sticks wound around hand to take the shock and other hand also carrying a handk. Only **ONE** stick dance, as was common around Stow!

## 11. FIELDTOWN

This is a family of sides covering a number of different leaders. Probably a "Shooting" dance from Finstock days.

## 12. EYNSHAM

They have talked of having a stick dance, but I have not seen the side since.

## 13. HEADINGTON

Quarry's "Shepherd's Hey" stick may owe much to Kimber's exposure to the Bidford dance. There is a "Brighton Camp" dance which might have been a stick dance. Trafford told Carey that "Rigs" and "Shepherd's Hey" could also be two stick. You should note the two types of steps used in stick dances.

## 14. HINTON

The stick twirling in figures is only in "Shooting" and then only in bars 3/4 when it does occur in B2B and Whole Hey. Hinton is 50 year earlier Brackley.

## 15. ILMINGTON

Stick tappings were interchangeable. The various notations in Bacon are different revivals. Add to list "Constant Billy" two stick and "Beansetting" as dances recovered in the current revival.

## 16. LICHFIELD

A Border tradition not Cotswold.

## 17. LONGBOROUGH

Harry Taylor did not have a stick dance but there are indications that those who followed him did and the Campden dance was called the "Longborough Stick Dance".

## 18. ODDINGTON

Same source as Bledington so similar. Medium sticks.

19. SHERBORNE

Headington two stick "Constant Billy" like Sherborne, as it was remembered by Kimber the day after seeing the Sherborne dance. Another place where we would expect handclapping versions of stick dances and more whole set dances than were collected.

20. STANTON HARCOURT

There was no real information about the details of the stick dances other than the Manning Mss, so the lack of stick tapping and raising up were a Bath developments.

21. WHEATLEY

Have created "Ladder Hill" and "Windmill".

22. NORTH LEIGH

Had "Bobby and Joan" and Mike Heaney has explained why and how they created the others.

I would have classified "Medium" as 21-27 and "Long" as 30 upwards.

**OTHER FRAGMENTARY TRADITIONS**

I do not see why you say 'related' to Cotswold morris?

23. BROMSBERROW

30 inches long and "stout". The dance is for six but the tune is called "Three Hand Reel".

24. EVESHAM

Handk in free hand. Stick "short" and decorated.

25. LEOMINSTER

1½ inch diameter.

26. MUCH WENLOCK

4 inch circumference = 1 1/3 inch diameter.

27. STEEPLE CLAYDON

Only "sometimes" used sticks. Suggest medium length. You personally need to know more about the Bucks tradition which was seen by contemporaries as different from OXON for competition purposes. Dances based on reels of 4 or 6 etc are common and could well be the oldest and most widespread form before the Cotswold fashion spread.

28. UPTON ON SEVERN

Also used "Keel Row" tune. The Newfoundland tune was collected by Maud Karpeles.

29. WINSTER

Collected from Women in Winster by the Ancient Men on a tour I was on part of and I have a copy of the notes made. Its existance was denied that ever done by the men but there is a photo of the women carrying their sticks.

### 30. PEOPLETON (Worcs)

Short sticks.

### 31. MALVERN

Short sticks, ribbons on the middle.

## **BEDLAM STICK WORKSHOP**

The analogy I believe that should be developed is with the Appalachian precision clogging, as these teams should have had a UK antecedent. I have seen much better sides in the USA, the UK ones are poor at the patterns and the complex rhythmic sound, being still absorbed in the techniques of the steps.

Before drawing on the Adderbury singing evidence, you must date the songs that are used. I would expect them to be too late to have been influenced by dancing to the far north of Banbury which must have stopped earlier, and there were the sides at Badby etc as given below which were definately Cotswold in format.

Other Northants/Bucks sites, Anyho (1723-31), Badby (1850-70), Blakesley (1740-1750), Chacombe (1832), Croughton (1731-mid 19th), Culworth (1850-60), Daventry (mid 19th), Eydon (1860), Helmdon (1840), Kings Sutton (1723-1842), Middleton Cheney (1731), Moreton Pinkney (1801), Preston Capes (1840), Sugrave (1840-1860), Syresham (1725).

If one is honest there is NO mss support for either slip hey or morris hey at Hinton, so it is matter of preference. Sharp published it first with a Headington like hey.

I do not like linking dance "bits" separated in time any more than separated in distance.

The heel and toe description could equally be like the Quarry morris reels with some figures done with a toe touch and repeated later with a heel touch. One must beware of making assumptions about the meanings.

## **LONG ITCHINGTON NOTATION**

Sticks are of "medium" length.

It should state that dancers turn the easy ie shortest way to face across to clash with opposite.

The 14 "single" steps as taught do not allow for symmetry in the figures, one is always having to pinch a bit of space.

The sticks are laid out "to the eight compass points".

FIG 1 - The music length for the opening figure depends on where the line is formed up, which presumably depends on how far away the musician is?

FIG 2 - start by saying "Full Circular Hey....." Need to pass on the first strong beat of every two bars to get round in time.

FIG 4 - Presumably the lines across pass through the starting places of the middle four, but we did not achieve this at the workshop.

FIG 5 - I find that the word “triangle” gives the wrong image for what the sticks form.

FIG 11 - “...then turn around each other.....finishing facing one’s opposite up (odds) and down (evens) the set for the jump....”

## **ITCHINGTON BOTTOM**

### **STICKING**

With a forearm or wrist movement?

U's & L's

It is a “Half Circular Hey for Six” and calling it an unadorned “Hey” is potentially confusing, whatever the detailed description actually says.

NB at end.

“...7 & 8 have changed sides.” Not quite enough words for clarity in the second sentence. Set position numbering not dancers original starting position numbering.

What is the direction of turn into the clash when finishing the half hey by crossing the set? The description of the hey ignores the problem of moving the set down one place. Ie 5&6 do not move up in the last change and the rest move down a bit more. The tops pass the third pair and carry on one more place before crossing etc. Bottoms end in top place, exactly!

It helps to include sketches of floor plans to show where dancers are expected to travel. For example in FIG 3 it was not clear at the workshop what the intended path was after turning back, we actually crossed on a diagonal but more curved paths would be possible.

You may have noticed a trend by the “border” sides to run several dances together for a show. This could be an interpretation of the morris at Malvern.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

I assume in making these comments that you are interested in upgrading the mss.

### **ADVANCED MORRIS**

The pace was good when working with familiar material but fell off at the the end of the week. Word of mouth should be keeping up numbers or increasing them during the week. I would expect to teach the same dance in Bledington, Longborough, Oddington and Sherborne in one session. The dancer’s should not be expected to find out for themselves about spatial issues in Long Itchingdon, you should make it plain for them in a limited time workshop. Unless an attempt is made to draw the dancer’s attention to points before they try, they tend to miss them!

Try for the earlier time slot ahead of the beginners!

### **DISCUSSION GROUP**

One liners or a topic title to start is not enough. There must be a five minute, provocative, lead in, not necessarily given by yourself, what are friends for? An alternative format is to use the reverse of the panel

and questions with you providing a number of questions to which the people respond. For us to benefit it all needs to be tape recorded and summarised in print. There was too much good stuff said to remember it later.

## FIELDTOWN

You comment that waving the stick (or the hands) on the backstep is impractical but I guess you have the wrong image of the movement. Its related to the backstep swirl at Bampton. The hands are swung a little out, in and out again, the palms rotated outwards as the hands move out so that the hands/sticks do a slight figure of eight. The "out" occurs as the dancers start to retire in half-gyp, B2B and the "in" as they pass shoulder to shoulder. What could be more natural? The unnatural movement is holding the arms out to the sides in a rigid manner.

I think that 1½ inches diameter is the upper limit for morris sticks. Some would have been like chair legs and probably turned by the same process. Seasoned wood would always have been available in the 19th cent. Also some sides painted their sticks. At Ilmington I think they fined people for not bringing their stick, it being a personal responsibility.

Not so long ago taking a knife on a country walk and cutting a walking stick (long morris stick length!) and whittling the bark etc was common. Its the change in people's behaviour and the loss of hedges and coppising that makes it uncommon now.

Holly is an interesting material for sticks, it was used as the hitting part of flails, but it destroys other sticks if not also of holly! Fir/pine is very good for short sticks before it gets too dry because of the quality of the sound, but the resin sticks to the hands.

I have written that the musician has to allow time for the dancers to accelerate into a figure following a static sticking. That dancers speed up through not making a big enough movement between hits. What you say about women dancers with sticks is untrue. They have the problem of dancing defensively, unless it is pointed out to them, instinctively wanting to protect their breasts. Normal womenly activity requires more wrist flexibility than most men use, but they do not use their upper arms so much, keeping their elbows in to the sides more. It is mostly a cultural thing and you should read some of the books on body language. What is needed is some exercises to overcome inhibitions. I created dances like the "Three Musketeers" to encourage strong sticking because it needs big movements to do it at all.

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