

# CONFERENCE ON CONTEMPORARY MORRIS AND SWORD DANCING

## EXTENSION OF TRADITIONAL REPERTOIRE

### AND NEWLY CONCEIVED TRADITIONS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Morris is minor art involving ordinary, not specially gifted people.

This paper is concerned with the South Midland or "Cotswold" Morris. This is distinguishable from the similar West Midland or "Border" Morris, the country dance based Molly and Stave "traditions" and the difficult to categorise free forms which will be classified as "Street" Dancing, because the dances are constructed from short sequences which include a variety of "steps", jumps and capers and patterns of team movement which are relatively simple. The problems of display and repertoire are different for the other forms of dance and it would be confusing to include them.

The paper reflects a personal view based on many years of direct contact with the morris, investigating, recording and teaching, coupled with the attempt to uncover, understand and communicate many of the associated issues. Much of the morris to be seen today is average and repetitious and is making little impact. However the morris exists in very many teams on three continents and each team changes from season to season, thus the personal data base is a small fragment of the reality and consists essentially of snapshots. What appears clearly is that the morris has changed in 35 years and will continue to do so. By its nature it is difficult to document and the available "history" is largely dance notations and anecdotes with emphasis on deviations from the norm. Of recent years it has been impossible to know if even a balanced cross section is being observed, so that any generalisations must be suspect, and no statistical data can be offered. Naturally there is a strong bias to teams in the south of England but even this is far from comprehensive.

A major problem exists in being unable to stand back, having been a considerable influence on the scene through personal activities. However much of what there is to say should be considered obvious.

The traditional repertoire is commonly assumed to be that summarised within Dr Bacon's Handbook. In one way it is the culmination of the recovery of the information on the 19th cent morris, yet it was really a statement of the interpretation of material by the contemporary morris and it also included new dances from the villages as well as modern dances currently in wide circulation. To generate an understanding of what is being created today needs an appreciation of the gradual accretion of material to the available corpus, and of the way that this process has set the scene for current attitudes.

The motivation for dance diversity is a question in the dynamics of small groups. One explanation lies in the "First Crisis", that has been discussed elsewhere, associated with a mismatch between developing motor skills and the limited demands or expectations placed on the dancers. This could be solved by using the increased skills to dance better, but it normally manifests itself by turning to something different for a challenge.

#### 2. THE LESSONS FROM THE TRADITION

Mr Sharp's initial view was that the morris showed small local variations on a common tradition and it is true that there remains a strong family resemblance. Without it we would not be able to recognise what is "Cotswold Morris". These variations were assumed to arise over a long time by analogy to the conclusions of his study of folk song. We now know, as he could not, that a performance depends upon the consensus of the particular dancers involved on the particular day and not necessarily on some absolute notion of what is correct. There was also a tolerance on what was acceptable which Mr Sharp commented upon when excusing the need to fix and stylise the dances for publication.

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The process of gradual change is with us of course, no matter how careful one is to minimise it, because there is still no way of forming fixed templates for movement. It can be seen in films of sides such as Bampton taken over many years where the style reflects the leader and ages as he does. It showed also when trying to establish what and how Mr Sharp and his immediate successors taught, as it was found that informants could not communicate their memories, only what they did when they were last dancing. Thus transmission of essential elements of the morris for which there is no usable written notation nor recognised language is still by "word-of-foot". Within this, the dance is handed on in a "traditional" manner, the current performers are the "tradition", and the way it was in detail is unknowable.

In 1960 a collection was made of the lists of dances in various degrees of completeness as performed in 34 villages, giving over 600 separate usages of tunes and more than 300 separate usages of dance distinctive chorus movements. It was possible to deduce that the average list contained 17 dances of which about 7 were jigs. As some lists were severely limited, it may be that some old sides had much larger repertoires. However they were unlikely to have been the very active dance troupes that so many modern teams have become and one must question why they should have needed so many distinct dances. There is a simple rule-of-thumb used by many in the performing arts of having a repertoire in practice about three times larger than is needed for any one show. Morris stands seem to fall out about 20-30 minutes long, with dances 2-3 minutes in length at a rate of about one per five minutes. Thus one predicts an active repertoire of 15-20 dances.

This is consistent with modern sides which are 3-4 years old. It reflects on the number of dances that can be worked upon seriously in a weekly practice environment with its limited attention span.

Where it has been possible to obtain information which reflects the change in repertoire over a number of years, eg at Bampton, Headington and perhaps Ascot Under Wychwood and Brackley (and now Windsor), it seems that each side might have about 20 dances, old and new, in regular practice and perhaps nearly as many again remembered to some extent and unused for a variety of reasons, both old ones superseded and new ones that did not catch on.

This is consistent with many modern sides that are 10-20 years old. Once dances have been properly absorbed they do not need such frequent polishing. However some sides seemed to know everything. University based teams at Oxford and Cambridge on their annual tours could dance scores of different dances.

The tune lists show that seven tunes were almost universal and that ten others were probably used by more than half the teams. By contrast 10% of the tunes seem to be titles that were unique to the particular side and not normally associated with the morris. The limited number of tunes may reflect that pipers played for several sides, had severely limited repertoires or, what is still a common experience, that good tunes for morris are difficult to find.

Today's morris sides have more varied musical repertoires. This is not surprising when starting from a knowledge of what there was and with access to other folk material. However it is a sign that the search for novelty and of being different is at least as strong as the desire to preserve.

The repertoires of sides that survived into the 20th century have diverged. The conventional explanation is that of isolation with no one to say what it should be like. So an explanation is needed of the earlier similarity. Perhaps the collectors operated a filter. Today's experience is that neighbouring sides want to be different and can achieve variety if the available material is diverse enough at the level of dance that the side wants. Individuality was a particular characteristic of the 19th century countrymen. It is conventional to ascribe conservatism to them when the reality was a lack of appreciation of what could be done. In hindsight it is not surprising that the diversity in modern teams grew as fast as the available sources increased and become accessible, and that adding a few new dances to a common core, which was typical of

older existing teams, would not be reflected in the behaviour of the new teams which of course quickly increased in numbers to swamp the older clubs.

Another point of interest are the older revivals in the traditional environment, which include in the 19th century Bucknell, Ilmington and Kirtlington. Where there is no antiquarian drive to revive everything good or bad, from seven to ten dance ideas are sufficient but fewer have been tolerated, like only five at Chipping Campden and Abingdon for many years.

This is consistent with modern sides drawn together for a specific purpose rather than as a dance club.

The lessons drawn that contrast with more recent experience are,

1. There was a greater emphasis on jigs so that experienced and skilled dancers expressed themselves in these, rather than in rare or additional set dances imposed on the others. It is probably due to the smaller numbers of dancers involved. That the jigs were lost in the revivals must also be significant. Again an emphasis on the purpose rather than the dance.

2. There were few corner dances featuring capers, so the deficiencies of the poorer dancers were not so exposed. Good dancers had the jigs.

3. The number of set dances in practice was not high, perhaps about 14, without lowering standards in public performance.

The current environment of more practice and more dancers would lead one to expect pressures which would produce noticeable differences in the repertoires today.

### **3. THE VARIETY IN THE TRADITION**

We recognise differences between "traditions" and stylise them to emphasise the contrasts. This is a response to modern circumstances rather than a reflection of the way contemporary 19th century dancers saw it. Claims by informants of similarities between neighbouring sides can seem incredible when such as Longborough and Bledington, Bucknell and Kirtlington, Ascott and Fieldtown, Headington and Wheatley were linked. Some dancers in the 19th century were invited into several sides who had what we would consider to have quite distinct styles, eg Charles Taylor of Church Icomb with Bledington, Oddington and Longborough, and this case is matched in recent years with dancers moving both ways between Bampton and Abingdon. Thus the modern experience of switching between styles has precedent, although on those recent occasions when a regular member of one "traditional" side steps into another, his origins are very obvious.

The documented traditions show a wide variety in all the dance elements. This encourages invention of whole traditions rather than simple modifications to some elements. There is a common urge to be distinctive which seems stronger than a drive to be better.

In some cases, eg Abingdon, Bucknell, Ilmington, Kirtlington, where there have been older revivals, it is clear that dances have been simplified or the variety of dance ideas in practice reduced. This apparent "degeneration" was used by Mr Sharp to justify a reconstruction of older forms of the tradition at Abingdon and Ilmington for publication, but he did have the different motivation in presenting the best of the morris. The problems that dancers once had with galleys and slow capers was reflected again when the women's sides were formed over the last 15 years, where changes were made to dances because of the limitations imposed by costume or a lack of physical fitness.

Douglas and Peter Kennedy once said that the EFDSS had considered producing a simple introductory tradition for beginners, because there is no such thing as a simple morris. The reconstructions of Ducklington, Stanton Harcourt and Wheatley eventually met this need.

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Some of the value judgements that circumstances forced onto Mr Sharp have had unfortunate effects. He knew that tunes like "The Rose Tree in Full Bearing" and "The Captain With His Whiskers" were from within his own lifetime and that many of the Adderbury dances were to popular, composed songs. It is still embarrassing to meet a dance being performed to a recognisably modern tune. Thankfully he hinted in his books and papers at stunts and comic, perhaps even vulgar, dances. Modern sides have discovered that such activities have a place in the morris, and the speed at which they pass around the world shows that they are needed.

Other than Jinky Wells of Bampton, we have no experience of innovators in the old morris, apart from his comment of new musicians bringing new tunes and hence dance choruses with them. Personal involvement at Abingdon showed that the older dancers in the 1960's would pick up ideas from anywhere, including Heather Mixture on TV. In recent times it is clear that a few people are prolifically creative.

#### **4. THE EARLY REVIVAL**

The characteristic of the morris between the wars was its commitment to an absolute standard, embodied in Mr Sharp's books and the teaching of the EFDS. The published dances were the only material available. Correspondance between leading Morris Ring figures in the mid 1930's suggests that Mary Neal's books had been forgotten. The EFDS/EFDSS had done a grand job of penetrating to the villages and in many parts of England there were men's sides as well as children's and the well know women's and mixed classes. Most of the men's sides outside of the Morris Ring were lost at the second world war. It is perhaps forgotten that few things got going immediately after the end of the war and a 10 year gap was quite common for clubs that did revive. The repertoire seems to have been limited, a core of Headington because it was the common starting tradition. However the degree of dancemanship it is now unknowable. Conversations with pre-war dancers suggests that the emphasis was on the morris as dance movement and technique, not on it as a performance. The background material available to the majority of dancers was very limited and there were no researchers making information accessible. Morris orientated gatherings were few and the numbers involved minimal.

Rolf Gardiner had met some old dancers during a walking tour in 1922 around Stow with Scaife. The Travelling Morrice starting in 1924 established contact with surviving dancers and began to collect more dances, some of which from Bledington, Fieldtown and Longborough were published by Dr Kenworthy Schofield. Another wave of interest occured in the mid 1930's with a fresh look at Bampton and Headington, and establishing contacts at Abingdon, Bledington, Brackley and Eynsham. However the impact of these was not felt till the post-war resurgence.

#### **5. WIDENING THE BASIS**

Each decade since the war has had its flurry of new sides seemingly exploiting the current visions.

In the 1950's there were new interpretations of old traditions. What had been fixed was being shaken out of its complacency.

In the 1960's the dissemination of mss.

In the 1970's the new emphases that came from the development of women's clubs with hitherto neglected traditions being extensively taught and from the general exploitation of related dance traditions.

In the 1980's the growth of "single tradition" clubs, particularly in the Cotswold villages.

Dancers coming back from the war commented on the changes that had appeared. The major change was in the common performance of Bledington which now included "hooks" instead of galleys and shuffles and changes to the manner of the slow capers which reflected the contacts with survivors of the Bledington Young

Side, although there was more than one interpretation available of what had been taught. Not all that had been learnt was acceptable, few sides ever seriously took to "hooking-to-rule". Another change was the adoption of the rounds from "The Rose" to the other Fieldtown dances, with dancers moving into a tight bunch in the centre and backstepping outwards, rather than turning while still in the ring and backstepping around the circle. The general popularity of dances changed, for example "Orange in Bloom" replaced "Lads a Bunchum", Sherborne, when a notation was circulated within the Ring.

By the mid 1950's there were sides that were noted for their strength in particular traditions. Beaux of London City for Sherborne, Westminster for Longborough, Ravensbourne and Greensleeves for Fieldtown. Westminster introduced new dances such as a Longborough Leapfrog to the tune "Golden Vanity". Ravensbourne adapted dances from other traditions to the Fieldtown style, such as Brackley "Beansetting". Such sides encouraged others to seek for excellence but also suggested a new route to a balanced repertoire. Farnborough, started in 1955 with the good wishes of G. Metcalf of Ravensbourne the then Ring Squire, built a set from a core of Bledington dances choosing an equal number of simple handkerchief, stick and caper dances from the published material, avoiding structurally similar choruses.

## 6. DISCOVERY FROM THE MSS

The mid 1950's was notable for the gift of the Lichfield mss. The dances were worked up by the Men of Mercia and introduced to the morris world through Ring instructionals and the 1956 Ring Meeting at Lichfield. The heirs to this reconstruction are the Green Man's and the Staffordshire Morris. Many sides added "Ring O' Bells" at least to their repertoire. At this time the Border Morris, a descriptive title coined by Dr Cawte in 1963, was unknown. The interpretation of the Lichfield mss had some difficulties, eg in the hey, but the result appeared to owe much to the Cotswold background of the revivers.

Although a number of people had small collections of dance material and Dr Peck as Recorder to the Morris Ring was expected to coordinate, there appears to have been little exchange. Most of it has only become generally available at the collectors death. By 1960 the collectors themselves were beginning to disappear and an effort had to be made to interview most of them and to assemble the mss. Key figures were Douglas Kennedy, Dr Maud Karpeles, Dr Kenworthy Schofield, Prof Carey and Fred Hamer. Dr Wortley helped a little but Dr Peck did not. Some key material in the TM logs were accessed via Rolf Gardiner, John Jenner and Lionel Bacon. There was a considerable collection at the library in Cecil Sharp House which seemed relatively unknown as it was so little consulted. This included the various copies of the Janet Blunt mss and the George Butterworth notebooks. Fortunately the Sharp Mss had been microfilmed and was available for transcription and it was possible to borrow briefly the Sharp Field Note Books through the good offices of Douglas Kennedy. Through Dr Patterson it was possible to access material in the Bodleian Library, such as Percy Manning's papers and Miss Herschel's notes.

When Dr Kenworthy Schofield died it was arranged that most of his mss was deposited in the Vaughan Williams Library, however his notebook on Fieldtown and Bucknell had already been borrowed and was never traced. Among other important missing items were,

- a. Father Jack Putterill's mss, stolen at a Thaxted Ring Meeting, which covered his visits to Brackley and Chipping Campden amongst others. A copy of some it has appeared recently in Dr Peck's papers.
- b. Fred Hamer's notebook also stolen at a Ring Meeting, although he was able to reconstruct much of it later.
- c. Mary Neal's papers. Her photograph collection, loaned once for an exhibition at Cecil Sharp House, was with her adopted son Mr MacIlwaine. Some mss and letters were with Prof Carey and Rolf Gardiner.

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d. Sam Bennett's mss book about the Ilmington Morris borrowed by a relative in Canada.

e. The Longborough fiddler, Joynes, tunebook, borrowed by a woman in a caravan.

It was clear that there were a number of traditions waiting to be recreated from both single and multiple sources. The more obvious ones were looked at first. Wednesday night in the cellar of Jim Brookes in Thames Ditton with members of the Thames Valley Morris and friends was used to work out the material. About then Dr Bacon was elected Squire of the Morris Ring and we were invited to teach Wheatley and Oddington to Ring Clubs at Cecil Sharp House. The day President Kennedy was killed we were teaching Oddington at a Morris Ring Instructional in Sheffield.

## 7. USING THE MATERIAL

Other people were making excursions into the mss sources. The most significant was Leslie Saunders of the Westminster Morris, who collected together sources on a number of traditions, making critical comment, deductions and, in effect, recommendations. rather as Paul Davenport has done more recently. The circulation of such notes around interested parties had a major impact on the thinking about the morris dances. Independently, a number of annual morris weekends were organised at Halsway Manor by Bob Bradbury, starting in 1964 with one led by Nibs Matthews, which addressed a number of traditions on each occasion and often made duplicated notes available which also circulated within the morris community. A significant additional feature was the use of cine film from the EFDSS collection, Dr Bacon and others, and my own filming since 1962. A number of sides were formed inspired by the new material. Such activity culminated in the production of the Handbook of Morris Dancing by Dr Bacon. His own notebook had been one of the first collections of material, seen first through the kindness of Arthur Warland, ex-Whitchurch Morris and then a Guildford Morrisman. Whitchurch had been Lionel's side before founding Winchester.

The interpretation of mss is not simple and needs consideration of the jargon used throughout a mss by its author, the standard of technical description common at the time it was written and a cross correlation with any other sources for the same set of dances. Typical of the errors that could be made was the reconstruction of Adderbury Princess Royal as a corner dance because of the phrase "cross corners" which the mss intended as "hands-across" in Mr Sharp's terminology or "star" in modern country dance terms. It shows how times have changed in that such points seemed to matter then.

There were some happy inventions that gained widespread acceptance. Westminster had started to dance "Balance the Straw", an Ascott stick dance adapted to Fieldtown. This was passed on one evening at a Chipperfield weekend in circumstances that modified the dance to its present form with the tune switched to the jig rhythm. Other stories of its origin are in circulation but this was heard within days of the event from people on the receiving end. In trying to trace tunes that went with dance titles on the lists, Edwin Spring found one called "The Valentine" in an 18th cent collection which seemed a natural for the morris. It was used for the Ascott corner dance but quickly found favour in the Fieldtown style. The dance with a wide distribution started as a Ducklington "Brighton Camp" from the Wheatsheaf Morris and, after working up with the Abercorn Stave Dancers, was given to the world as the "Three Musketeers". Several times teams have shown me their latest invention which turns out to be that same old idea.

One of the apparent problems of the time was the growth in the numbers of sides with enthusiastic but inexperienced leaders producing imitations of the real thing. It was felt that one way to force people to think about what and how they danced was to ensure they had to make choices, hence the drive to circulate dance notations unofficially and to emphasise to the rebels where the mss had differences or alternatives.

At one time the Cambridge and Oxford teams produced many founders of new sides. Of course Cambridge gave us the concepts of electable squire and bagman, annual feasts and tours as well as the Morris Ring. Both clubs developed interpretations and odd practices which were carried into the other clubs, undermining any concept of a fixed form of the dance. An example was the interpretation of Badby at Oxford City in which the

dance's intermediate figures were danced by going as far across as possible in four bars before returning to place on the next four bars.

Oxford City had the advantage of Dr Kenworthy Schofield's help before his death. He taught them a version of Ilmington culled from Sam Bennett's post war childrens side. It was commented that Ilmington was one tradition that Kenworthy had not taught at his previous club St Albans. Ilmington had a complex history, but one key version of their dances were those of the 1906-10 team, recorded by Mr Sharp as seen at the Flower Show at Stretton Fosse, an event confirmed by Ewart Russell and myself in talking to the last survivor Dave Westbury in 1962, and taken to London by the side and danced for Mary Neal. Mr Sharp commented adversely on the performance in the Morning Post newspaper, now incorporated into the Daily Telegraph. Sam revised his dances and taught these for many years. As both of these forms of the tradition had been taught to women, they were used in the early days of the spread of morris within the women's sides in the 1970's.

In recent years there has been an attempt to make the morris background material more available. Historical films have been copied. Both the Morris Ring and the Morris Federation have established archives. The former makes available data books as sources that need interpretation. The latter is providing handbooks, recommending approaches to learning the dances for persons or teams with little access to experienced dancers, but, unlike any previous publishing attempt, avoiding the value judgement trap of choosing from the options by offering all known variants in a structured way. The magazines have also made dance notations for new, eg Duns Tew, or recently reconstructed, eg North Leigh, traditions

## **8. WHAT ABOUT THE TRADITION**

The surviving tradition was recognised for many years as Abingdon, Bampton, Chipping Campden and Headington Quarry, with their roots in the pre-Sharp past, and being a constant inspiration to the rest. By general consensus, sides have not copied the Abingdon or Campden dances, although a knowledge of them is an essential part of understanding the varieties of the morris. Campden have added a morris off and a set dance, "Old Woman Tossed Up", in recent years, although a dance to the latter was known to have been performed in the past.

Abingdon have increased the dances revived in 1937 to twice that number. "Remembered" before the war were "Girl I Left Behind Me" and the "Squire's Dance", at first called "Greensleeves" and then the "Aeroplane Dance". Some hand written notations of dances for large numbers of men were extracted by Percy Hemmings, the then bagman, from old dancers, supposedly the Royal Morris performed once before the Princess of Wales's family. These are occasionally performed on special occasions by Mr Hemming's Morris Dancers under the inspiration of Mike Baldock. The "Maid of the Mill" as a dance for six was attempted but agreement was difficult. In 1960-1 Frank Purslow and I found more versions around than dancers in the club. A standard form was achieved when enough of the older dancers had died or dropped out. "Constant Billy" was recreated from memories of Tom Hemmings dancing it once for Jack Hyde and Charlie Brett, while discussing the morris, when Tom was raving in the dried up bed of the river Ock. "The Duke of Marlborough" was a working up of the theme of an old couple dance, "The Marmalade Polka", a version of the near universal "Finger Polka", remembered by Jack Hyde from his youth. The jig "Shepherd's Hey" came from Jack's teaching of William Kimber's version, automatically translated into Abingdonese. The exclusiveness of the tradition in recent years has not always existed. At one period dances were "given" to favoured clubs and there was almost a Ring Instructional. More recently dances have been created, for example in memory of Jack Hyde.

Quarry have danced fairly continuously this century under the tutelage of William Kimber. From the copies of the Sharp-Kimber correspondence it appears that a few of Kimber's dances were not old Headington ones but derived from other Cotswold dancers. The Ring recollected Kimber's dances in the mid 1930's and noted that

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there were significant differences between them and Mr Sharp's publications. He said that he had not raised the points with the EFDSS as they had seemed quite content with what they did. A new handbook was considered. At the formation of a formal club after the war, Kimber both changed some dances and added new ones. These versions quickly spread around other clubs. However as the team moved into other areas, rapper, mummering, folk song and other Cotswold traditions, there was little attempt to create new dances, other than one in memory of William Kimber, and not all their own repertoire has been seen in regular performance. Although the dancing of the Headington dances by other teams was not resented, many had a feeling that it was not strictly necessary, as there so many other dance traditions in the public domain, and sides could have created their own if they wished.

Since 1912 mecca on Whit Monday (late Spring Bank Holiday now) has for many morris dancers been at Bampton-in-the-Bush. Like many of the morris villages, really a small town, and not in the wilds, but with a large tree in the market place. It is taken as archetypal of the traditional morris yet it is not. No where else has the dance tradition been so wide spread and existing in several threads, but, oddest of all, it survives with a continuity that no other team achieved. For many years the visitors had been warned about the degeneration of the dance, apparent in the fluid form from dance to dance as well as year to year and team to team. Not till after the war was it accepted that this was the real thing. One result of the variation seen was the teaching of many forms in the clubs, many of them persisting for years after they had disappeared in Bampton. Although some of the lower forms of "pram-pushing" have been difficult to reconcile with anything seen on a Whit Monday. Oddly, few sides have attempted to be a close copy of the style of any particular Bampton side. Bath City, Frome Valley and Binghamton on the USA have succeeded at particular times. This illustrates another common experience that teams do not deliberately copy others. It implies that in earlier times, either in the 19th cent or between the wars, the similarities between the dances of sides was due to them not knowing the how far one could deviate from the norm, due to a lack of contacts within one's circle. A corollary is that isolation may be essential for preservation.

Bampton have revived dances such as "Step and Fetch Her", "The Webley Twizzle" and the "Webley Jig", although not quite as they were before. They have added dances such as "Shave the Donkey" and "Furze Field" and tunes to give alternative versions of old dances such as "Country Gardens", "Jenny Lind" and "Speed the Plough". These new dances spread very quickly around the morris world. On one occasion Francis Shergold, one of the leaders, asked that the side be allowed to have a dance to itself for a year at least. A characteristic of the Bampton dances has been simplicity and this is reflected in all the new inventions. Pattern complexity is not a successful Cotswold feature.

Invention is easy. It seems easy to be too complex. Good and simple ideas are difficult. When they appear their value is recognised and the idea copied. There is reason behind the saying that all the good dances are stolen ones.

Another characteristic of traditional happenings is that if it is worth doing it seems worth doing twice. There is more than one approach to the morris and attitudes can polarise when there are enough dancers to allow it. Since the General Strike there has usually been two and, more recently, three sides out on Whit Monday at Bampton. Out of the variety of manners of performance in the past it is possible to chose different styles for many parts of the dances. One could recognise a number of dance styles in the village which no leader could eradicate. The main differences between teams are in,

- a. the path of the hey. Arnold Woodley's teams dance a "cast" in which the bottoms do not pass between the tops and middles.
- b. the gipsy. Arnold Woodley's teams dance a back-to-back rather than a face-to-face.
- c. the path, posture and arm movements in the single and double sidesteps.

The variations in distance travelled, the angle of the path to the centre line of the set, the direction of the turns, the choice of show or low waves or the number of upward flicks over the years, at one time allowed the spotting of the year a dancer was trained from his manner of performance in the jigs.



In the outer world the varieties of Bampton are legion. It is a regret that it was not studied more exhaustively. Surely a good thesis topic.

## 9. SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

The emphasis so far has been on the raw material of the morris and its performance by various teams. It has been mentioned how till recently mss has not been readily accessible. Even then it is very difficult for dancers to translate words into movements unless they have some understanding of a manner of performance of the tradition involved. The scene in the USA and in Australia shows that without live face to face teaching the less familiar is not available. Our debt to those who have recreated dances from mss is larger than is normally realised. Thus the normal process for a team to acquire new dances is either from the previous experience of any of the team or through fancy, having observed a performance, attended a workshop, or having an idea, and not often from reading a book. Very roughly about half appear to come from previous experience.

Sides seldom have more than one workshop of their own with a paid instructor. Although a few make it a regular social event with neighbouring sides. The Cardiff Morris men's weekends at Boys Town near Barry were magical. Personal experience is that about half of what is taught sticks, the problem is that the side usually does not really know what it wants and treats the workshop as an opportunity for window shopping.

In the early days of the Morris Federation many sides had to be content with written notes as other sides or teachers were few and far between. Being taught by the second rate male dancers was inadequate.

The Morris Ring in the 1960's had a fear of the written word, seeing the state of morris in the 1950's and before as determined by the dead hand of the Morris Books. A belief that the sort of dance notation used then and now actually fixed a dance is an indication of our lack of understanding of dance notation, of group dynamics and of history. The brief descriptions shape a dance and guide its production only. It has been a common experience in workshops and club practices that working up a dance requires attention to the detail that is just not recorded. Thus in one way the written notations allowed the considerable freedom for interpretation that many leaders wanted, while being able to con the dancers as to its authenticity. Fortunately accurate dance notation is unusable by the ordinary morris club.

In the period when the numbers in clubs were small and public performances often needed outside help, it may have been practical for neighbouring clubs to have similar repertoires. However by the mid 1950's this was not true. Since then there has been a marked reluctance to copy, or steal, dances from sides one is likely to meet, hence the emphasis on festivals and workshops as sources. This gives endless possibilities for forgetfulness, misunderstanding and errors as well as misrepresentation. It is one's experience at workshops that dancers have not necessarily learnt what was taught but remember what they were doing at the end, right or wrong. Politeness requires outsiders not to comment on the accuracy of a dance, only on the teams dancefulness.

Those sides that add a dance by tacking a new chorus into their existing traditions and fudging the detail for consistency with their normal practice appear to be typical. These include those sides who introduce a new tradition every 2 or 3 years and, of course, drop one, so that standards do not reach the club's full potential, but beginners are supposed to have an easier time of it. On the other hand those who work on the performance have a considerable investment in the dances and are likely to stay with "their" tradition. Thus there should be no argument about the virtue of single versus multiple tradition clubs. The solution for a club will naturally arise from the objectives of those who have joined it. Bath City helped me by working up a tradition a year, eg Ducklington, Stanton Harcourt and Ascott, but it proved too difficult to sustain.

Teams take the entire spectrum of attitudes from careful preservation, that is concern for the roots, an admirable stance but tending to produce museum pieces, to using the tradition as a convenient label. Hopefully the side then recognises its position and does not pretend to be doing anything other than their own.

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## V 2.0

Now there are too many sides, doing too many different things, to map the diffusion paths. This must be healthy. "Authority" is no consistent with a folk art that draws its strength from spontaneity. It is interesting to see the trend at Festivals to having sides teach what they do rather than book versions.

It is not possible to mention all the interesting sides around but the following have been noted over the years,

Ascott	Bath, Coventry, Glory of the West, Herga, Royal Liberty
Badby	Moulton, Oyster
Bledington	Albermarle, Farnborough, South Downs, Wath on Deane, Winchester
Ducklington	Pilgrim, Purbeck
Fieldtown	Apley
Ilmington	City of Winchester, Royal Manor
Longborough	Frome Valley
Oddington	Belas Knap
Sherborne	Swindon, Pilgrim
Stanton Har.	Datchet, Trigg, Winchester

### 10. INFLUENCES

Some figures illustrating how sources and sides appear to have influenced each other are given.

#### A. Ilmington, Fig 1

A variety of dance material has been derived from a number of people at Ilmington, even recently by the present village side. Each source has contributed something different to the corpus of ideas thought of as "Ilmington". The complex history of the side is being addressed by Keith Chandler in his documentation of the South Midland Morris. The performance of Ilmington has a great diversity.

#### B. Ducklington, Fig 2

The sources are less and need more interpretation to dance. The nearness to Leafield and Bampton has dominated inspiration to varying extents.

#### C. Ascott under Wychwood, Fig 3

The source material is even less, but like Ducklington local informants since WWII have been significant in supplying stylistic detail. The shortage of dances has led to considerable invention which has led to a rich diversity in performance.

### 11. EXTENDING THE REPERTOIRE

Dances have been invented in recent years for every tradition, even stick dances where none was known before, for example at Abingdon and in the Bampton and Ducklington styles. Many of the ideas are portable across similar traditions. Adaptation is a common process. Coventry's Fieldtown "Trunkles" has a salute that has opposites changing places a pair at a time, rather than simultaneously, but then all the cross corners occur nearly together, passing in the centre in successive bars. It works well in Ascot as well. The obvious reason for adding a dance is to fill a gap in the team's repertoire. Some sides have done this consciously, but not many. If it is operative as a reason it is usually intuitively felt rather than reasoned out. Quite often teams appear to change a new dance to avoid a similarity whilst retaining the interesting movement.

I do not think that anyone has bothered to record all that has been invented, not even within the sides that are creative. It must be assumed that what is performed out are the better dances that have been thought of, but what is good is subjective. I tend to judge them by whether I would teach it to some other side!

It seems quite common, from talking to teams, for them to have one or two dances of their own, which they recognise as quite distinct from their traditions. They often perceive a need for something that belongs to them. Some dances, such as "Lass of Richmond Hill", "Nine Mens Morris" etc, appear to fall outside of what is perceived to have been the morris. Some traditions are seen to be near complete and have not encouraged invention. A prime example is Sherborne, although this style also requires great dance skill and doing it is an achievement in its own right. Those sides that add several dances to a limited tradition such as Badby, Hinton

and Oddington agonise over how much can be added while still keeping the tradition. No such problem is perceived by one tradition clubs who inevitably have to import much of their repertoire.

There has been pseudo analysis to invent a tradition, eg the Kirtlington by Green Oak. Argument by geographical locality is logical as it could well have played a part in the 19th century and has been used for Badby, Brackley and Oddington by some sides, but as a basis it could just as well have been used to justify being different.

Invention needs a team will and a choreographer. Within the size of a typical club it is unusual to have more than one. However having one successful and hence respected innovator, all others would be inhibited.

Those sides that start as single tradition clubs usually have one or more leaders who have a clear idea of what they want. Quite a few sides grow into the specialist position.

The teams that specialise appear to be more concerned about all aspects of the morris and this drive also manifests itself in new and distinctive dances.

Westminster, Hammersmith and Oxford University had creative periods that inspired others to emulation. "The Golden Vanity", a leapfrog dance, "Big John", a two at a time caper dance and "Old Harry", a half through corner dance, filled holes in the Longborough list. Westminster also promulgated the dances of uncertain authenticity in the Butterworth mss, "Gallant Hussar", "Staines Morris" and "Country Gardens". The Hammersmith dances created new niches.

Some traditions were so rich in alternatives that interpretations were bound to produce a great variety, for example in Bampton. Because of its many stops and starts Ilmington has inspired the greatest range. Some sides have added the galleys to the Sharp's published opinion of the oldest form, picking up a remark in Mr Sharp mss. The addition is particularly attractive in the heys when they occur at different times for the various pairs. In England an exponent has been the Earls of Essex, in the USA the Marlborough Women, who appropriately call it Wilmington, which is also a local place name. The Sharp version was reworked by Jockey who in particular modified the cross and turn so that jump at the halfway point was done close to one's opposite when almost on the point of passing through back to place. This figure eight figure migrated into one thread of the ways of dancing the Upton on Severn stick dance and its derivatives. England's Glory started from the Sam Bennett side's style of 1906-10, which was taught to the Esperance Club in London, with its alternate arm swinging and simplifications in patterns.

Berkshire Bedlam, Great Western and Oyster have developed Fieldtown. They were also representatives of that desire to dance with height and energy that appears in Old Spot (Longborough), Ducklington, South Downs (Bledington), Oyster (Badby) and Mr Jorrocks (Oddington). Athletic fitness makes it look incredible, appearing relaxed and controlled. Without it, especially as dancers age, it is not. Old Spot accepted Harry Taylor's comments on the performance of the morris, but also chose to agitate their handkerchiefs at twice the traditional rate. At first they filled in the tradition with dances known from their names, such as a fine "Heel-&-Toe", but then they switched to the other morris tunes collected by Mr Sharp at and around Stow on the Wold and matched them with new dances such as "Just As The Tide Was Flowing" and "The Quickstep."

Bath City had a relationship with Bampton, for a while having an undergraduate from the place. Its solution to finding a way of experiencing the tradition without intruding was to develop a manner of performing the Bampton jigs as set dances that could be called Limpley Stoke.

There appears to have been a genuine regard for the surviving traditions that showed in the relatively little new material that has appeared in their styles. This may reflect pressures within the morris community. OUMM had a leapfrog dance from Dan Howison. It is more that Bampton has been incorporated into interpretations of other traditions, such as Ducklington at Stroud, where it appears in the movements such as sidesteps, and Earley, and Bledington at Farnborough, where it appears in the choruses adopted.

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## 12. FRESH STARTS

Even a specialist side can gradually evolve its repertoire. Old Spot made a deliberate complete change of repertoire. Windsor have slowly changed their repertoire from the original published material, through the inspiration of dance titles, till hardly anything remains of their original set. However they do claim that half heys are not a characteristic of the Brackley style and still refuse to use them in choruses. Thus a stick dance like "Oh Sussanah" from Ring O'Bells (New York) in which opposites draw back, hitting butts then tips on the ground and then capering forward and clashing, passing through to the opposite side while twirling and then a half hey on the wrong side of the set, had to be modified.

The "village" revivals have varied from having considerable local assistance, as at Eynsham and Bidford, through some input, as at Ilmington and Brackley, to being based purely on mss, as at Adderbury, Bucknell, Sherborne and Wheatley. Even with mss, interpretation can depend on how much of the sources are accepted. Adderbury now has two sides, one recognisably using the Sharp basis and the other with its roots only in Blunt. With intelligence, a tradition could be deduced from the mss as at North Leigh and even at Brill. The Bidford revival with its link to local informants did not last, and the more recent revival by the Shakespeare Men appears to reflect little of the locally derived oral material to which I was introduced.

As Bacon's Handbook shows, there was little recorded for Kirtlington and survivors of the local EDFS team could not contribute. Paul Davenport deduced logical extensions from scraps of remarks and developed the tradition with Green Oak. He and Tim Radford helped the village team start, but it differed in significant ways from Green Oak. The unique feature is the hey, with the ends backing along the set, yet forming a tight bunch facing centre before hockling out to place. The initial small repertoire had simple dances consistent with the teams geographic position in the Cotswolds, on the stone, not in the forest. Consistency in these matters is usually ignored in constructing new traditions. The repertoire was expanded to tunes composed by Mrs Barbara Berry their musician to titles with local associations such as "Muriel Dashwood", "Buskins Court", "Forest Feathers", "Nuts and Berries", "The Hollow Tree" and "Molly Minns". The stick dances were unusual for the length of the sticking and the variety of actions utilised.

There is a generic set of figures, Foot-up, Half-gip, Whole-gip, Back-to-back, Rounds and Hey, which danced with double step and a simple backstep, can be used to construct many a basic tradition that stays well within the traditional format. It is also obvious that the traditional length is about correct as much shorter or longer dances seldom appear. The Maids of Barum have an interesting set of such dances. This is consistent with a general historical tendency to simplicity. Odd length and odd phrased tunes often appeal to individual sides but are seldom passed on. Perhaps it is very personal to the introducer?

Some sides have been motivated by the desire to use local material, often tunes, sometimes country dance movements, in an attempt to be different from the Cotswold norm. Broadwood have three. "Lucy of Broadwood" and "Curly Headed Ploughboy" are for two sticks, one short and one long. Chanctonbury Ring have used tunes like "Comical Fellow" from local mss. Kemp's Men started with "Beet Topping" and now have an extended set of unique dances. Thaxted produced a dance to celebrate an anniversary. Bourne Bumpers have a dance "Under The Greenwood Tree" based on dance movements in one of Thomas Hardy's notebooks. The motivation is no different from those southern sides who have included stave dances in their repertoires, even though that was a very minor tradition in north Dorset.

For fun it is possible to generate traditions just by changing one of the normal rules for dance construction. "Withington" is based on the idea of having the galley in the Stow area dances in the second rather than the third bar of a four bar phrase. "Filkins" is based on the idea of the normal starting position of the set for Bampton being a line of six down the centre rather than two files of three. Such ideas turn out to be more suitable for Ales than dancing out.

Raglan is a tradition created by Bamtam Cocks and danced by Diggons Breches, whose most unusual feature is the arm swinging phrase which is 1½ bars long, one circle, down and up, and thus occurs across the usual pulse of the dance.

A strange phenomena has been the proliferation of dances derived from the Border tradition of Upton on Severn. Upton is much more a transitional form between the Cotswold and Border and developments are usually Cotswold in character. The original dance was improved by Chingford, including a variety of stick tapping movements, and in this form it spread quite widely. Chingford Morris went on to develop a set of stick and handkerchief dances from this basis. Stroud women have also produced an interesting set and so also have Sheffield City. In the same vein Cardiff men produced "Upton Sideways" and West Somerset men "Hay on Wye".

Some new traditions emerge little by little, as at Chelmsford who started with "Furze Field", and the Cardiff women with "Llaregyb", the Dylan Thomas place. Yet others appear full fledged, as did Duns Tew from the 1986 Sidmouth workshops, which is now appears at a regular annual weekend, and Moulton's Badby. Moulton's Moulton started with "Knuckles a Kimbo" which has been widely learnt, but its other inventions have not been quite so popular.

The list seems endless and yet ignores the USA and Australian contributions.

Another source of dances has been the problem of making dances for four look as if they were designed for four and not just cut down. Headcorn and New Esperance have shown how effective such dances can be.

When a current side choses a new tradition the dances can come from almost anywhere. For example Fleet Ladies have taken to Badby this winter. They dance,

"First Morris" - morris on and off - Abingdon Nutting Girl  
"Second Morris" - sidestep dance - Moulton  
"Saturday Night" - cross over dance - Dommett invention  
"Flowers of Edinburgh" - handclapping - Traditional/Windsor  
"Beaux" - sticks - Butterworth  
"Beansetting" - sticks - Dorset Knobs & Knockers

### 13. DETAILS

#### Effect of Clothing

The choice of costume has a demonstratable effect on the dancing. An obvious difference is between shoes and boots (Eynsham) where the weight of the boot drives the step. The question of what is good morris footwear has still to be resolved. There seems a greater freedom to dance in breeches than trousers. The former is deliberately archaic with all the problems that invokes. Jeans and fashionable tight trousers inhibit movement.

There is no guide from the English tradition on women's costume. What ever was worn was probably dominated by fashion rather than convenience. The problem since the early 1970' has been to find a satisfactory dancing skirt for women's sides. Skirts and dresses are "Ladylike". Why does the women's dance have to seek respectability by calling itself Ladies Morris? There was a Laura Ashley period with long skirts. Watching England's Glory shows how the stepping emphasises height but not the forward and back movement. Skirts restrict movements such as galleys and capers, or they ride up exposing thighs. It may be interesting but not morris. Petticoats for concealment, and aprons for weight are solutions which bring problems of mass and ventilation.

Practice conditions are also important, not only the size and shape of the space available, but whether done in similar clothes to the formal costume and whether wearing bells.

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The USA has an attitude towards costume of it being "regalia" rather than just mere "kit", which leads them to change out of it when appropriate rather than slum in it. There is of course a cultural difference there in what is considered dressing up.

### **Steps, Capers and Figures**

The lack of invention is probably the most significant feature. The mix of double and single step by Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhodens is still unusual and outside of the Cotswold morris. No new breaks have appeared. There has been very little transfer of steps etc from one tradition to another. A sense of consistency exists which prevents the incorporation of actions in which a side is strong. Cardiff Ladies were once upset at a suggestion of putting Quarry like cross-back-steps into their interpretation of Ilmington.

It has also been difficult to come up with original slow capers. Following a remark by Fred Taylor, many sides have introduced the stunt movements of a galley or a pirouette, that his father did in jigs, into the set dances. Sides have added a second set of slows to Ascott and Ducklington to regularise the dances. Sam Bennett taught Schofield clapping and slow capers in threes (shades of his contact with Bampton?) for a Princess Royal jig, and this has interesting effects when introduced into Ilmington set dances. (see Red Stags)

Most invention has been of paths for figures, in particular a variety of heys. Moulton, Old Spot Heel and Toe, Cardiff, Chelmsford, Kintbury May Maids and Abercorn all have ingenious ideas. A number of heys for 8 have appeared.

- (a) like for 6, but the upper middles go up and end as lower middles, and the lower middles vice versa. The pairs passing through the centre on order 1,4,3,2.
- (b) as (a) but the middles ending where they started each half hey.
- (c) Start by 1st pair through 2nd, but 3rd follows 4th down in casting out at bottom.
- (d) 4th pair dance up the centre (or the outside) to the other end.
- (e) top 6 hey while bottom pair whole gip.

Long figures, a la Fieldtown, have not spread. Farnborough flirted with figure extensions which incorporated an EFDSS Eynsham like break. The City of Winchester have extended figures, partly to allow them to dance to brass bands.

### **Dance Notations**

Some illustrative brief dance notations are given, out of the large body of material that exists.

#### **A. Llaregyb, Figs 4 & 5**

Performed by Cardiff Ladies. The figures are fairly conventional but the choruses are interestingly different from the norm and the tunes unusual.

#### **B. Broadwood Stick Dances, Figs 6 & 7**

Performed by Broadwood Men. The figures are unconventional and the stick tapping unique because of the use of two different length sticks.

#### **C. Moulton Morris, Figs 8 & 9**

Performed by Moulton Men. Unconventional approaches to the normal set of figures and the choruses distinctive.

### **14. FUN DANCES**

The morris never took itself too seriously. However dancers can not always bring themselves to be entertainers, street theatre, or larger than life, in other words they would not make a fool of themselves. But personal experience suggests that morris dancers are more prone than most of society to do anything that is suggested and to think about it afterwards. Hence there are a number of common comic ideas, routines or stunts in circulation.

The older tradition had the "Buffoon". Not just the Adderbury one but the Ilmington dance with the assaulting associated with the Three Old Men's Dance from Lancashire. Another is "Old Marlborough" from Fieldtown to the White Joke tune, and "Jug by the Ear", possibly to "Jockey to the Fair", with a chorus of rounds with the dancers grasping their neighbour's ear. Physical actions fit with the 19th century lack of sophistication in its humour. The Longborough fool would wear a padlock and chain instead of a watch and when asked what was the time would hit the enquirer and say "Just Struck One!". Headington have "How Do You Do" and "Willow Tree" which are amusing played straight.

The problem with comic ideas built into dances is that the performers often want to ham it up to restore spontaneity after constant repetition, forgetting that the audience may then miss the inherent funny part all together. It is not the place of the ordinary dancers to clown, such action should be left say to the middle pair. An example is the Farnborough Morris "Banbury Bill" corner dance in which the middles dance around each other an increasing number of turns at each repetition of the chorus. Great Western have produced so many dances, including comic turns, that they have printed a booklet about them.

The Cotswold Morris does not lend itself to parody in which something outrageous is foisted on the public as serious and accepted as good entertainment. The psuedo Molly had examples from The Seven Champions to Paddington Pandemonium Express and the Wally Molly. There are ridiculous dances such as Hammersmith's "Jockey to the Zoo", in which during each corner crossing the dancers imitate an animal nominated by the foreman, such as crocodile, gorilla, snake, three toed sloth, stork, and has elephant rounds, in which the dancers link hands between their legs. Others are the "Hartley Laying Down Dance", the Victory Morris "Four Old Men's" stick dance and versions of the Scandinavian two man "Ox Dance".

The sense of fun comes out in dances with leapfrog movements, the throwing of sticks from dancer to dancer, using funny or silly words and calls in the dances and dancing Bonny Green off into a telephone box. Even the dancing with friable lathes or sticks of confectionary rock can be amusing. Bath City used to morris off out of pubs to "Heigh Ho!", the Disney tune from Snow White, by putting on long coats and dancing on their knees. Frequently met is the stunt of a dancer who pretends to be hit and falls and an appeal is made for a woman to give a restoring kiss. When this happens all the rest of the team fall down. William Webb Ellis Morris Men have elevated this sort of behaviour into an art form. They also dance Brackley Jockey to the Fair with the men going off in the corner crossings to kiss women in the audience. At first the women are annoyed at being chosen but then they become annoyed at being missed. The audience attention to this aspect completely clouds the performance of the rest of the dance.

The Coronation Morris (tune - "Here's a Heath unto His Majesty") is believed to come from Ravensbourne in 1953, although claimed by others since. The figures are anything called by the foreman, not necessarily consistent from one tradition, and the choruses requires each dancer in turn to perform a short 4 bar solo sequence, then quickly drink a pint, 2 bars often drawn out, then all dance two double steps and a break on the spot.

Thanking someone who has bought a round can be done publically with a dance. Using the tune "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow", allows ordinary figures, with a chorus where all face the good fellow, one side and then the other sings "And so say all of us!" taking off and waving hats, and then into the next figure.

Having the audience join in is always a temptation and some sides have a simple dance for this purpose. One suitable dance is the Bromsberrow Heath Stick dance. Rather than have problems with the turning round at the ends of a reel, it works well in a circle when everyone can keep weaving in the same direction.

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## 15. SUMMARY

All the obvious motivations for change and development exist,

1. change something that would otherwise be too similar to what was already in the repertoire.
2. pick up something from a workshop or instructional, which could be well noted, just remembered or poorly understood, or even altered to suit without admission.
3. based on "principles" or for "consistency"
4. filling a hole in the repertoire. How many dances are needed?

Often these are excuses to satisfy the urge to be different.

The new ideas have many sources,

1. improving old dances - shortening Fieldtown "Old Women Tossed Up" or modifying "Trunkles"
2. new patterns - leading to new Traditions
3. new formats for dances - Ducklington from many men jigs - without going to Border or Street dancing
4. small numbers of dancers - for 4 or even 3
5. fun ideas - incorporate the musicians.

It is happening within a small group environment. This moderates the rate of change because of the natural inertia in having a club investment in having learnt and practiced a repertoire. A full and balanced repertoire should give incentive to concentrate on the other aspects of being a morris. These show in terms of speed, posture, phrasing of actions, etc. Improvement can be by self-analysis or consultation. The counter balance is the regular change of officials, squire or foreman, with the introduction of new drives.

In the end striving on its own is not exciting, so there will always be invention.

## 16. REFERENCES

The source material used is mostly personal,

1. Cine Film Collection 1962-88
2. Note Book Volumes 1-15
3. Letters and Notations from friends
4. Few Articles in Magazines
5. Tony Barrand Edition of typed Dommett Papers