

The Mystery of the Whistling Sewermen: How Cecil Sharp Discovered Gloucestershire Morris Dancing

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On 5 July 1906 two men called Stagg who were working in a sewer were discovered 'whistling Morris tunes' and were invited into Cecil Sharp's home, where he recorded two morris tunes. Although it had been thought this was the only result of that meeting, the Staggs gave Sharp details of a number of dances and led him to William Hathaway and John Mason in Gloucestershire. The article explains who the Staggs were, and their importance in leading Sharp to Gloucestershire morris traditions, which resulted in Sharp's discovery of the Bledington, Longborough, Sherborne and Oddington morris dances.

1999 marked the centenary of the famous occasion on Boxing Day 1899 when Cecil Sharp, who was staying with his wife's family at Sandfield Cottage on the London Road outside Oxford for Christmas, first encountered the Headington Quarry Morris Dancers. Sharp always spoke of this meeting as the turning-point of his life.¹ But perhaps a little-known encounter in 1906 had ramifications every bit as profound as that 1899 meeting in provoking the rediscovery of the Gloucestershire morris dance and helping our understanding of the dynamics of the early days of the morris revival.

On 5 July 1906, two men working in a sewer were discovered 'whistling Morris tunes' and were immediately invited into Sharp's home at 183 Adelaide Road, Hampstead. There Sharp recorded two morris dance tunes, 'Belle Isle's March' and another which remained unnamed.² The first tune was labelled as having been whistled by Mr Stagg and the other by Mr Stagg (senior). An address was also noted,

'18 Cardian Street, Hammersmith.' As Sharp was at home, he presumably made his notes on materials readily to hand, rather than in his field notebooks. Thus far, these notes have not been found. But who were the mysterious Messrs Stagg? Where did they come from? Very little appears to be known about this event, but it proves to be of paramount importance in the re-discovery of the Gloucestershire morris dance.

Although Sharp found the 1899 encounter with 'a few peasants dressed in flannels bedecked with bells and ribbons dancing a Morris dance to the strains of a concertina'³ momentous, he appeared to have had little idea of what he had seen, or what to do about it. Having noted nine of the Headington tunes from Kimber,⁴ Sharp made no further efforts to record any more and apparently had no interest in noting any information about the dance itself. It was only after he had started noting song in 1903 that he copied the Headington tunes into his notebooks. It

seems appropriate that the plaque which now marks the site of this encounter (the site of Sandfield Cottage is now at Cummings Close, Headington) only refers to it as being the place 'where Cecil Sharp first heard William Kimber play the Headington Quarry Morris Dance tunes' with no reference to the dances or dancers at all. It was only in later years, when it was necessary to be seen to have pre-empted the work of Mary Neal, that Sharp would claim that 'the sight of them on the day after Christmas Day 1899 affected me so profoundly that without exaggeration I may say that it changed the whole current of my thoughts, provided me with a new occupation and led to the publication of a large number of books and eventually brought about a small revolution in the social life of England.'⁵

As Fox Strangways says, '... he made no immediate use of his discovery; beyond harmonising and orchestrating the tunes he did not see what to do with them.'⁶ Indeed, by 1905, nothing further had come from Sharp's encounter with the Headington Quarry dancers. Sharp had made no attempts to collect further tunes from the Headington tradition, had had no further contact with Kimber and, after a period of fitful performance, the Headington side had once again faded away.⁷

However, Mary Neal, the co-founder of the *Espérance Girls' Club*, a society to help working-class girls in London, and Herbert Macllwaine, the Club's Musical Director, were looking for new material for the Club's Christmas concert. Neal had become interested in having girls perform traditional or national songs and dances, and consequently they had indeed in consecutive years performed Scottish and then Irish dances. Dave Townsend says that Neal used 'the ubiquitous "Irish Jig, Highland Fling and Sailors's Hornpipe" to

be found in standard dance manuals of the time'.⁸ However, Neal herself was quite firm that the girls had 'learnt the Scotch dances direct from two Scotchmen and the Irish dances from an Irish lady, so that we were quite ready to learn the English dances in the same way'.⁹ Thus, even at this stage, it can be seen that she felt it was vital that the girls should learn traditional material direct from traditional sources, with no mediating or second-hand influences. The circumstances in which Neal and Herbert Macllwaine linked with Sharp to produce English material, and which led to the girls performing the morris dances which they were taught by William Kimber has been described elsewhere, as has the success of their performances.¹⁰

1906 marked a continuation of the harmonious partnership between Cecil Sharp and the *Espérance* club, whose leading lights were anxious to build on the great successes they had gained with the promotion of the Headington dances. The *Espérance* girls continued to perform the dances at public events, whilst Sharp gave a short lecture on the programme's contents. In June, Neal had received an invitation from Lady Isabel Margesson for her to watch a performance of the Bidford Morris Dancers at Redditch. With a view to extending the club's repertoire, she immediately obtained extra invitations for Sharp and Macllwaine and asked them to try and note the tunes and dances.¹¹ Sharp did indeed write down the tunes and also made valiant attempts to notate these dances, particularly 'Brighton Camp', to which he attempted a full notation,¹² but he lacked the expertise which Macllwaine had built up from hour upon hour of watching the *Espérance* Club's best dancer, Florrie Warren, whilst he wrote down her dance movements – notes which became the basis for the first edition of

The Morris Book.¹³ Thus the three had clearly defined roles: Neal the enthusiastic spur for discovering the dances and getting the girls to perform them, MacIlwaine of similar opinion and becoming expert at noting down the dances, whilst Sharp was the musical expert – uninterested as such in the dances, but accustomed to collecting songs in Somerset and therefore skilled at noting tunes from traditional performers, such as the tunes to which the dances were performed.

It is at this point that the chance encounter with Messrs Stagg occurred. In later years Stagg 'claimed that his father and grandfather had been noted Morris dancers, and that he and his brother had been discovered by Cecil Sharp on 5th July 1906, because they were whistling Morris tunes whilst mending the sewers outside Sharp's house...'.¹⁴ In 1906, 5 July was a Thursday, a normal working day, so the likelihood is that they were discovered as described, rather than having been invited to come to Sharp's house at a later date. It is also pertinent that the tune which caught Sharp's ear was 'Belle Isle's March' a tune which, only the month before, he had noted from the Bidford dancers as 'Heel and Toe'. Contemporary press reports of interviews with Mary Neal, however, firmly place the discovery with her:

'Hammersmith, one would think, is about the last place where one would think to look for information on morris dancers. Miss Neal has just found a couple of working men there whose grandfather was a great Morris dancer. The grandfather, who is now living in the West Country, is to be brought up to London to superintend the girls dances and the two grandsons will then play the proper music, having, Miss Neal assured me, just the spirit and touch of the old village player.'¹⁵

At this point it seems as if Mary Neal's plan is that the Staggs plus their 'grandfather' would provide a team able to work with Espérance along the same lines as had Kimber. Unfortunately these statements, although abundantly optimistic, were wishful thinking and illustrate the absence of 'quality control' in the reporting of Mary Neal's activities which became such a major cause of division between Sharp and her in the future. Dave Townsend's description of her prose as 'gushing and breathless' is just as appropriate for her reported speech.

There certainly was cause for optimism—although Sharp had only been able to note two tunes, recent research by Roy Judge shows that Sharp's original interviews with the Staggs were more extensive and significant than had originally been thought.¹⁶ In *The Morris Book* Sharp wrote: 'We have noted down between twenty and thirty Morris tunes, and have collected the names of several others, which no doubt we shall eventually acquire as well. The list below consists almost entirely of tunes which are still in constant use by Morris-men in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire, and Derbyshire. The figures in brackets record the number of times we have collected the same tune, or variants of it, from different Morris sides.'¹⁷

The table (Figure 1) gives this list, together with suggested sources of origin for tune or name. The reference above to 'Oxfordshire' indicates William Kimber and Headington Quarry with twelve tunes, collected in 1899–1900 and also at the Espérance Club on 25 May 1906. 'Worcestershire' refers to the nine tunes collected on 2 June 1906, at Foxlydiate House, Worcestershire from the Bidford dancers (although this is rather confused as the Bidford dancers came from Warwick-

Tune title	No. of versions	Tune source 1	Tune source 2	Title source	Other
Laudnum Bunches		Headington			
Bean Setting		Headington			
Constant Billy	3	Headington	Bidford	Stagg	
Blue-Eyed Stranger		Headington			
The Rigs o' Marlow	2	Headington		Stagg	
Old Mother Oxford		Headington			
The Old Woman Tossed Up In A Blanket	2	Headington	Bidford		
Jockie to the Fair		Headington			
Rodney		Headington			
How d'ye do?		Headington			
Trunkles	4	Headington	Bidford	Stagg	Plus 1 unknown
Country Gardens		Headington			
Brighton Camp (the Girl I Left Behind Me)	2		Bidford	Stagg	
Shepherd's Hey	3		Bidford	Stagg	Plus 1 unknown
Bluff King Hal			Bidford		
We won't go home till morning			Bidford		
Princess Royal	2		Bidford	Stagg	
Heel and Toe			Bidford		
Morris Off			Bidford		
Green Sleeves				Stagg	
Hey Morris				Stagg	
The Cuckoo's Nest				Stagg	
Swag and Boney				Stagg	
The Gallant Hussars				Stagg	
The British Grenadiers				Stagg	
The Vicar of Bray				Stagg	
The Sherborne Jig				Stagg	
Belle Isle's March	Stagg				
Two Derbyshire Tunes ('This is it, and That is it')					Sorby

Figure 1

Table of tunes with suggested sources

shire). The two Derbyshire tunes came from Miss Sorby of Enmore on 6 September 1906 (Folk Tunes 1148 and 1149). One Gloucestershire tune, Belle Isle's March, certainly came from William Stagg on 5 July 1906, Folk Tunes 957. The other tune collected on that occasion, Folk

Tunes 958, was described by Sharp as 'Morris Dance (No Name)', so, understandably, it cannot appear in the list as a title. This makes a total of twenty-five tunes collected, which tallies well with Sharp's initial comment, 'We have noted down between twenty and thirty Morris

tunes' noted above. If these tunes are removed from this list, then what is left may reasonably be considered to be the titles concerning which Sharp had written: '[We] have collected the names of several others, which no doubt we shall eventually acquire as well.' It is suggested that most of these names most probably came to Sharp on 5 July 1906 from his meeting with William Stagg and his son.

There were minor revisions to *The Morris Book* following its commencement in July 1906. One is Sharp's insertion on p. 14 of material sent him on 15 September 1906 by Mr John Phillips concerning Morris at White Ladies Aston (according to a hand-written addition by Maud Karpeles, *Folk Dance Notes* (Transcript), vol. 1, p. 91). The other is the addition of Miss Sorby's tunes, sent on 6 September, at the end of the list of tunes. It would seem certain that this represented the last revision of that list. The Novello Business Archive¹⁹ indicates conclusively, and somewhat ironically, that the book was bound on 5 April so that it would not have been possible for Sharp to have incorporated any material from collecting trips to Gloucestershire.

Six of the Staggs' titles duplicated Headington or Bidford titles. This raises the possibility that Sharp may have presented the Staggs with a list for comment. The presence of Rigs o' Marlow as one of the seven is perhaps suspicious. Sharp noted in *The Morris Book*: 'Neither the Oxfordshire nor the Gloucestershire Morris-men, from whom we recovered this tune, had probably heard of Mallow' (p. 28).

Stagg had given Sharp the prospect of recovering not only six new versions of previously encountered tunes and dances, but also nine more of which he was previously unaware.

Who were the Staggs?

The information recorded by Sharp is sketchy. The press report above implies that they were two brothers who had said that their father and grandfather had been great Morris dancers in Gloucestershire. But, according to available information from censuses, no-one by the name Stagg was recorded as living in Gloucestershire (with the exception of Bristol) during the nineteenth century. However, the entry for William Charles Stagg in the 1891 Census for Hammersmith showed that when Stagg met Sharp he would have been 41 (only a few years older than Kimber) and his eldest son, Arthur Richard, would have been 22. This would not have been an unusual age spread for brothers, and, with them both being called Stagg, it would have been easy to assume, mistakenly, that they were brothers. I suggest, therefore, that Sharp met William Charles Stagg and his son Arthur Richard Stagg. The elder Stagg was indeed born at Stow-on-the-Wold as had been thought, and his wife was born at 'Swell nr. Stow'. However, once William Stagg's marriage certificate was discovered, the pieces finally fell into place. On the certificate, the entry for the groom's father is given as 'William Hathaway, shoemaker' (the entry then having been crossed out).²⁰ This is the William Hathaway who was the fiddler from Lower Swell, the fiddler whom Sharp was to see during his first field trip to Gloucestershire.

William Charles Stagg was born at Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire towards the end of the year in 1865. His mother, Eliza Stagg, came from a large family centred around Burbage in Wiltshire, and his father was William Hathaway, a shoemaker who originally came from Lower Swell, but who had spent time

during his apprenticeship in Oddington and now lived in Stow-on-the-Wold. William Hathaway and Eliza Stagg married just after the new year in 1866, and their son was brought up as William Hathaway – the name in which he appears in the census records for 1871 and 1881. The family lived in the new part of Stow, which had been developed in the 1820s and 1830s on land belonging to Mangersbury, a small village a mile or so outside Stow itself. This had produced a site for nearly a hundred houses, as well as the Union Workhouse. This new area of development officially became part of Stow towards the end of the century.

William Charles Stagg and Ann Warren married in St Peter's Church, Hammersmith on 9 December 1883. Ann Warren was herself an exile from Lower Swell, having left there to work in service in Hammersmith, not far from Stagg. Their first child, Arthur Richard Stagg, was born in 1886, followed by Sarah Anne in 1887 and Emma in 1890. Arthur Richard Stagg married in Hammersmith in 1903, and at the time of his death in 1957 had moved out to Hayes.

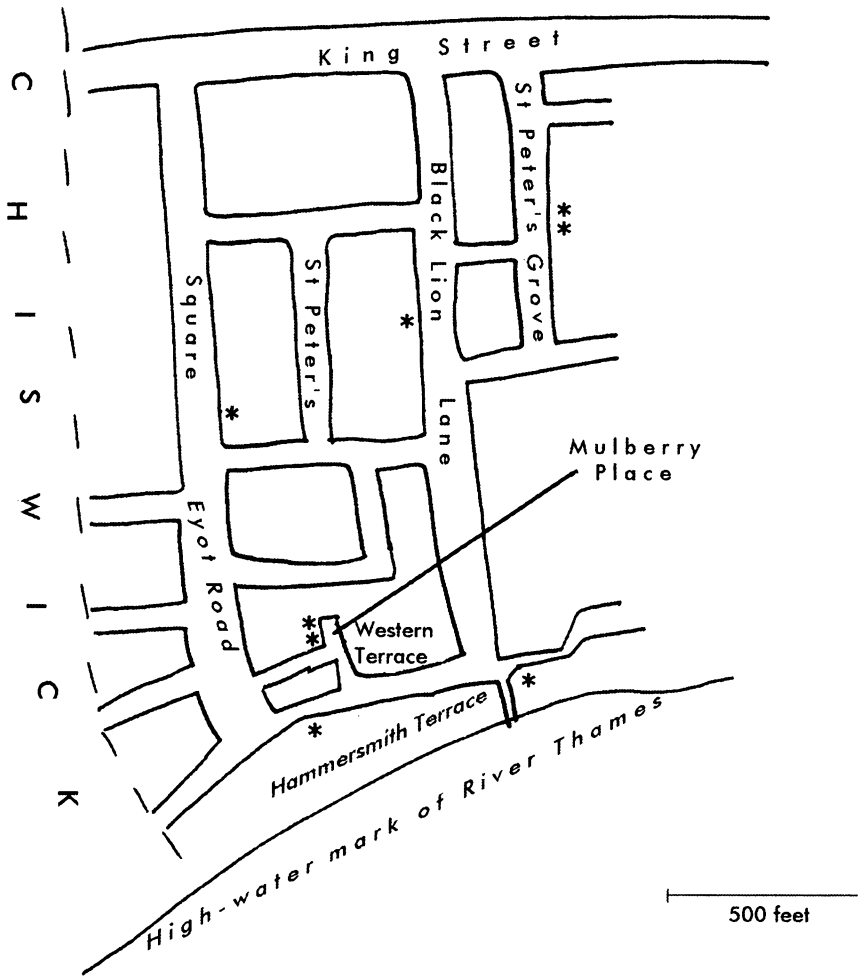
William Hathaway's next-surviving son (Edwin) appears to have taken on the job of looking after his parents following William Stagg's move to Hammersmith. Although Edwin was of an age where he would be obliged to accompany his parents when they moved from Lower Swell to Cheltenham, for the rest of his life he continued in close attendance. Although he started living in the same house, when he was older he moved into the house next door. When Edwin's parents moved to the other end of the road, he married and continued to live in the same street. His sons both returned after serving in the First World War, and Edwin continued to live in Burton Street until shortly before

the Second World War. Edwin's eldest son, Albert Victor, again stayed in the locality, taking a house nearby at Millbrook Street, where he was interviewed by Russell Wortley. He moved to Bishop's Cleeve two years before his death in July 1974.

Hammersmith

On William Charles Stagg's marriage certificate his address is given as 4 Marlborough Court, Black Lion Lane. This was in the middle of a small grouping of families and young agricultural labourers from the Stow-on-the-Wold area of Gloucestershire, who appear to have moved to Hammersmith. (Figure 2) Hammersmith at this point was a fairly rural area in the throes of rapid building expansion. It was therefore an excellent place to gain employment in the building trade. This migration should be seen in the context of the agricultural depression which saw a 30% fall in the number of farm workers during the period 1871–1901,²¹ whilst the introduction of the reaper/binder machine in the 1880s spelled the end for the peripatetic harvesting gangs which Keith Chandler has described²² and which provided a sympathetic cohort for morris dance performance. The majority of these migrants were young – men looking for work and girls going into service.²³

Several of the Hammersmith families contained girls from the Hart family who had lived next door to William Hathaway and were of the same generation as his son William Charles Stagg. Others had strong connections with the morris. James Hathaway, who lived at 7 St Peter's Grove, was one of these. His uncles were Samuel Hathaway, who danced with the Lower Swell set, and George Hathaway from the



* Locations of Gloucestershire migrants

Figure2

Hammersmith c. 1890 showing Gloucestershire immigrants

Longborough dancers; and although William Charles Stagg was the son of James's cousin William Hathaway, the Lower Swell fiddler, they were about the same age. Next door to James Hathaway was Charles Wilks, living with his mother and in the same house as his sister, her husband and their young child. The Wilks family came from Icomb in Gloucestershire, not far from Stow, and had moved from there to Hammersmith around 1878.²⁴ Their

proximity in Hammersmith meant that it was unlikely that Stagg, Hathaway, and Wilks would *not* have known each other.

Charles Wilks was born in 1860, and at the time that he was born his uncle, then aged 25, was also living in the same house in Gloucestershire. This uncle was John Mason, the Morris fiddler who was the target of Sharp's first collecting in Gloucestershire. When John Mason's father had died in 1849 John was only 15, and he

went to live with his sister Ann who was two years older and who had married a labourer from Idbury. John had been living there for eleven years when Charles Wilks was born, and he continued to live there for another five years, until his marriage to Hannah Stayt of Bledington. John and Hannah moved to Bledington for a short while and their first child, Thomas, was born there. After only a few years however, John and Hannah were back in Icomb and they must have been familiar figures to young Charles, living as they did in a village which contained only twenty-nine cottages and which, including the farms and 'big houses' only sheltered 151 inhabitants (1861 census).

Both Charles Wilks and William Charles Stagg were still living in the Hammersmith area when the 1891 census was taken. The Stagg family had moved to 20 Brook Street, where William Charles was listed as 'General Labourer', whilst Wilks lived at 5 Paradise Row, Hammersmith (despite having, in the meantime married a girl from Paddington, and their having had a child born at Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire!).

Gloucestershire

So why was it that, given that Sharp had gleaned so much material from William Charles Stagg, he was not able to go straight to Stagg's father to collect tunes? All the references to Stagg state that he used to dance morris at Stow-on-the-Wold and no mention of Swell appears to have been made. Stagg was born whilst his family were living in Stow, where they continued to live until the family returned to Lower Swell around 1880. Following the death of their ten-week-old son, Stephen in 1884, the family moved to Burton Street in Cheltenham. William

Hathaway stayed there for the remainder of his life, but it was around this time that William Charles Stagg left Gloucestershire for Hammersmith. When Sharp interviewed Stagg in Hampstead, he noted his address as '18 Cardian Street, Hammersmith'. In fact, this is erroneous. No such street appears to have existed in the Hammersmith area. So it may be that Sharp was unable to contact Stagg to check how to find his father (and may not have known of the disparity between Stagg's surname and his father's) before setting off for the West Country. He appears to have had the information that John Mason was to be found in Stow Union near to where William Charles Stagg used to live and was relying on Mason's knowledge of Stagg and his father to track the latter down.

Sharp may have been under some pressure from Mary Neal to visit Gloucestershire and retrieve a new strand of repertoire for the *Espérance*. By November, he had written to Anne Gilchrist, telling her that he was planning to go 'after Morris dances in Gloucester'²⁵ and had enthused to the audience at an *Espérance* display, 'Nothing more characteristic of Merrie England than the Morris. It figured at all the chief village festivals & ales. Every village had its Morris dancers. Is it not worth reviving?'²⁶ He had also told his friend Etherington that he intended to visit Gloucestershire before the end of the year and asked whether Etherington wished to accompany him,²⁷ but his normal Christmas collecting trip was disrupted by the illness of two of his children. Sharp stayed in London over Christmas, and, suffering badly with his eyes himself, decided to return to Somerset for a fortnight's collecting before the Ludgrove term started. Following this he gave an interview to the

press in which he lamented the shortness of the trip to Somerset, the amount of material still to be gathered in that area and the fact that, due to the extreme age of his informants, he expected many of them to have died before he could return.²⁸ However, when next he set out upon a collecting trip, he did not go to Somerset to attempt to glean the remaining songs which he feared may have died on the lips of his informants, but went straight to Gloucestershire for the very first time. Indeed, he went straight to Stow-on-the-Wold workhouse to find John Mason and collect his tunes. With him he took three field notebooks: a brand new book to note tunes,²⁹ a notebook for words,³⁰ (which he had last used for the words of a song from Bill Bailey at Cannington on 24 January), and a third notebook,³¹ entitled 'Morris – 1906', which had last been used to record the performances of the Bidford Morris at Redditch nine months earlier. The fact that he had specifically brought this last notebook with him shows that he knew exactly what he was going to get – morris tunes.

Detail of Sharp's Initial Collecting in Gloucestershire

When Sharp started collecting material from John Mason, he appears to have used the 'Morris' notebook and to have noted down collateral information regarding contacts in the new 'Music' field tune book. As this collecting trip progressed, Sharp appeared to find it increasingly difficult to separate the material he received into discrete strands, and, during his noting of material from William Hathaway a few days later, abandoned the idea of a separate field notebook for Morris tunes.

27 March 1907

Sharp arrived in Stow-on-the-Wold on Wednesday 27 March 1907 and immediately started work collecting at Stow Union. Sharp spent two days noting tunes from Mason, and also obtained an interesting range of collateral information (a good haul considering Sharp's relative inexperience in this field at this date).

During his first session he used the 'Morris' and 'Tunes' field books. Sharp's normal routine with these field books appeared to be to use the (unruled) inside front cover for noting down the names of contacts to be followed up later. When he needed to note a number of these, he sometimes also used the first of the pages with staves. In the new field tune book, he wrote down a group of five names, all of whom lived at Broadwell, a short distance from Stow: Carter James (this is crossed out, but James Carter does appear again in a later list from this area), Thomas Russell, Henry Moss, Jesse Smith and J[ames] Stevens. Although Sharp later visited Jesse Smith and recorded one song from him, he appears not to have noted material from any of the other four. These names are then separated from the rest of the page by a line. It may be that these names were volunteered to him by Jesse Keen, a stonemason originally hailing from Kingham, from whom he then attempted to note a song, 'He was Born in the Three Sevens 1777'. This is unsuccessful, producing only a few scraps of melody suggesting a music-hall type composition (one fragment appears to be related to 'Sweet Jenny Jones'). Sharp then started to record material from John Mason, possibly starting with the next set of names of suggested contacts: 'Jim Harding' (from whom he noted four songs and some fragments the following day), 'Thomas [illegible] – an old

man on the road', and 'Henry Fields (Odlington' [*sic*]). On the second page of staves, he wrote the all-important 'William Atherway, shoemaker, Burton Street, Cheltenham, from Lower Swell, lame'. Sharp now had the address of William Hathaway (although he didn't as yet have the correct spelling of the name) plus the street in which he lived and, for the first time, the indication that Hathaway was connected with Lower Swell.

Sharp then proceeded to note the tunes of 'Old Trunko', 'Swaggering Boney', 'Jockey to the Fair', 'Black Joker' and 'Shepherds Hey' in the 'Morris' field book and wrote down the times at which he was allowed to visit the following day.

28 March 1907

On the 28 March, Sharp again started off with some background information in his field tune book 1907/4 – writing down 'Jack the Lad, Bourton on the Water (whittle player)'. Although this may be a result of Sharp working from a list of known morris tunes, and asking about the Espérance dance 'Jack the Lad', it seems more likely that, as was to be the case with other informants, Sharp asked about pipe-and-tabor players. On a later occasion, Sharp is again given the name 'Jack the Lad' as being the piper 'J. Hopkins', so it may be that this was a local generic nickname for pipe-and-tabor players.³² Consequently, Mason recalled 'Jim the Laddie', the Sherborne piper who, whilst playing for the Northleach set in 1856, drank himself to death at Bourton-on-the-Water (when Mason was 22). It may be this which prompted Mason to provide a tune named after another piper, Old Heddon of Fawley, (probably Thomas Edens of Fawley, who died when Mason

was 16).³³ Mason then provided more information pertaining to Sherborne, about Greensleeves and the behaviour of the Fool, and at the same time Sharp notes 'a morris at Didcot', a reference to George Simpson, the Sherborne dancer whose address at Manor Farm, Upton, near Didcot, Sharp obtained from Mason on a later visit. Again on a later visit, Mason gave Sharp the tune 'Lumps Of Plum Pudding' with the jingle 'Lumps of plum pudding and pieces of pie/My mummy gave me for telling a lie' allied to the comment 'Sherbourne [*sic*] Jig'.³⁴ By this he meant that this was a jig danced by the Sherborne Morris, and not 'My Lord of Sherborne's Jig', which has completely different characteristics. As it is known that Sherborne Morris danced to two unknown fiddlers at times during the nineteenth century,³⁵ Mason's knowledge of the tradition marks him out as a prime candidate for having been one of them, whilst Mason's volunteering of the names Hugo Hambidge and William Turfrey at this point during Sharp's collection of Morris dance tunes is quite tantalizing, as both men were parish clerks in Icomb and quite probably instrumentalists.

Sharp then noted 'Handkerchief Dance' (a version of 'Highland Mary') which he described as being for handkerchiefs – 'sometimes sticks', 'Country Gardens', 'Heel and Toe' ('Belle Isle's') and 'Princess Royal'. The last of these proved troublesome for Mason to remember, and he only managed to produce a version for Sharp after, as he says, 'I begun perusaling it about'.³⁶ Although it is an odd version, Sharp is adamant that 'This is exactly as played but I think there is something wrong about the second half which should end a fifth higher. John took the a' quite clearly in repeating the air'. This is the end

of Mason's remembered Morris repertoire at this visit.

Sharp collected a few more items, now using the field word book. Firstly he asked about songs and it seems that Mason gave him two more names, 'John Hitchman (Bledington)' with the comment 'Holborn Hill' (this may be a reference to the song 'Sam Hall' the words of which often contain these words), and Peter Mason, who appears to be no relation to the fiddler and about whom nothing further is known. Hitchman was in fact one of the members of the Bledington Morris set and lost many of his possessions in a fire on his cottage in 1886, whilst on tour with the Morris.³⁷ The song that Mason gave Sharp is 'The Shepherdess', the tune of which Sharp noted in the 'Morris' notebook, and the words to the first verse in the field word book. Mason then played three country-dance tunes, 'Haste to the Wedding', 'The Rose Tree' and 'Gallop Hey'. Sharp also asked Mason for further information about Hathaway and the Lower Swell tradition noting 'never had sticks'. He asked Mason for identification of the unnamed tune which Staggs had provided for him, and Mason, although presumably unable to play it, is able to identify it as 'Young Collins'. Sharp also noted Mason's comment that the Swell side 'used to black the fools face' something he later followed up when he met Jane Hathaway (see below). Following his meeting with Mason, Sharp spent the remainder of the day collecting songs from James Harding at Stow-on-the-Wold, concluding with 'The Unquiet Grave'. The following day Sharp went to Moreton-in-Marsh to visit George Henry Drew, who also sang 'The Unquiet Grave' (and may therefore have been recommended by Harding).

29 March 1907

At some point during this period (either on 28 or 29 March) and before going to Cheltenham to visit William Hathaway, Sharp went to Lower Swell to visit the 'widow of the fool' Mrs Jane Hathaway. In his field word book Sharp notes:

The fool. George Hathaway
been dead 13 years at age of 69.
Red gridiron marks on his seat. Blacked face,
hairy thing on his head. One dancer
and six fools. He went to the bank [back?].
'Always called me the Squire's wife'
It was great enjoyment it was
William Hathaway was fiddler.
Tabber and pipe.³⁸

Sharp visited Jane Hathaway again in August 1909, and when he wrote up the interview in Morris Dance notes he is quite specific in heading the item 'Lower Swell'. This shows us that George and William Hathaway played for the same team, Lower Swell (although it is known that George was also the fool for Longborough) and may be what Mr Richens was referring to when he recollected seeing, c. 1868, the morris 'danced from pub to pub' in Stow: 'One Hathaway was the Tom Fool ... [and] another Hathaway played the fiddle, the latter being lame.'⁴⁰

I think that it was from Jane Hathaway that Sharp obtained the final three names on the inside front cover of the field tune book, which were written at a different time in a heavier hand. There is no indication that this notebook was ever used during Sharp's interviews with William Hathaway.

Alf Tufley [sic] Longborough Morris Dancer
Harry Taylor Longborough
Albert Taylor Lower Swell.⁴¹

Jane Hathaway was not only married to George Hathaway, the morris fool, but she was sister to Harry Taylor whom Sharp was to meet later – their father was the influential dancer who ‘came from Longborough & taught Swell team’.⁴² This made her the aunt of Alf Tuffley and William Hathaway the Lower Swell fiddler (who had, however, been brought up by his grandparents, George’s parents). In addition, Albert Taylor, who lived near Jane Hathaway in Lower Swell, was her niece’s husband. (Figure 3)

It just remained for Sharp to note the times of trains for the next episode of his collecting trip, and the address in Cheltenham of Mr Moody. Possibly he stayed at Mr Moody’s house, Moody was considered one of the ‘resident gentry’ in Cheltenham, and his small villa was within easy walking distance from the town’s Great Western terminus at St James Square – a walk which would take him past the end of Burton Street, where William Hathaway lived.

30 March 1907

On Saturday 30 March Sharp headed for Cheltenham, where he met Stagg’s father, William Hathaway and collected some fine tunes, many of which found their way into *Morris Airs*.

Afterwards

The following day Sharp did no collecting, but on 1 April travelled down to work in Somerset once more. William Hathaway was to prove a useful source of information on the Morris within the area and Sharp made several return visits, but he was, to quote Sharp ‘lame’. Sharp took photo-

graphs of Mason and Hathaway when he visited them again in August 1907.⁴³ Hathaway (Figure 4) can be seen wearing what appears to be a shoemaker’s apron and is seated, whilst Mason (Figure 5) certainly appears very fragile. By the time that Carey and Neal visited Mason, a few months before his death in 1912, he could still play his fiddle and Carey noted three of the tunes which Sharp had previously encountered, but he was bedridden.⁴⁴ There was never any real possibility of Neal bringing either of them to London to teach the dances.

By September 1907, Mary Neal put a slightly different slant on the matter. Writing in her booklet *Set To Music*, she is able to say that ‘Mr Sharp has already been to the country to take down “Grandad’s” tunes, and now we must learn the dances to go with them’.⁴⁵ Perhaps in order to prepare for this, William Stagg prepared a music manuscript containing the tunes Sharp collected ‘for William Hathaway’.⁴⁶ Although the original manuscript has been lost, Douglas Kennedy made a transcription of it – and with one or two exceptions, it is a note-perfect copy of Sharp’s notation of William Hathaway’s tunes – in the order in which they were collected (and does not contain any of John Mason’s tunes). This assumes that Sharp had at least given active encouragement to this project and that it was expected that William Stagg would be capable of performing the tunes as Mary Neal had envisaged. I suggest that the purpose of the manuscript was that it was a copy made to allow Stagg to learn the tunes in order to play for the *Espérance* girls. As we have seen, at his meeting with Sharp Stagg could only remember two of the tunes, but Neal was intending to use him or both of the Staggs in this role, in the same way that Kimber was being used for the *Headington*

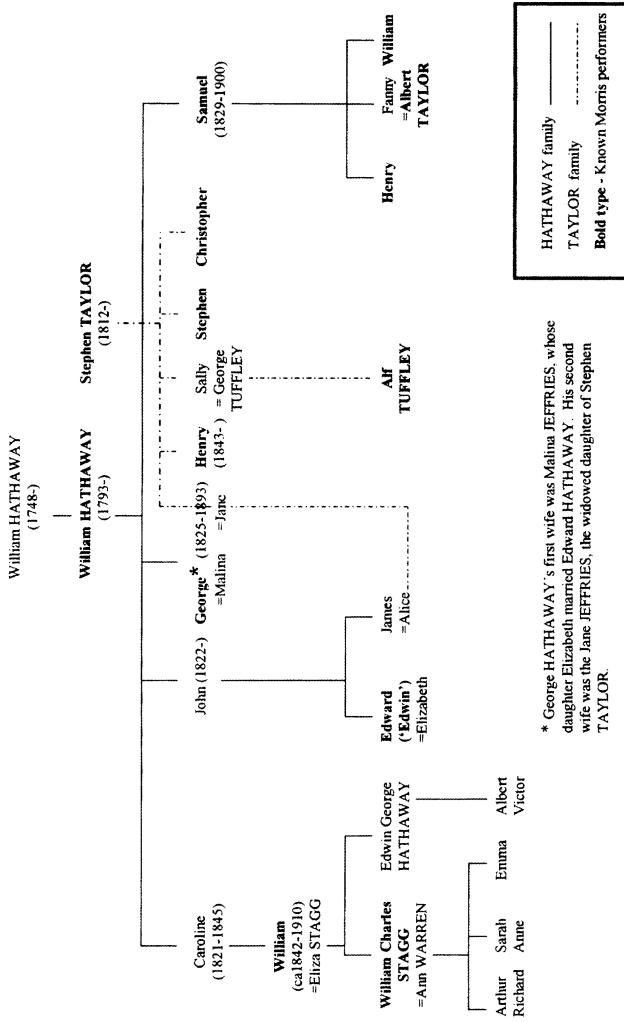


Figure 3 Relationship between the families of Stephen Taylor of Longborough and William Hathaway of Lower Swell

Quarry dances. This scheme never came to fruition because of the physical frailty which precluded Hathaway or Mason from teaching the dances, but there was still hope at this point that the dances could be recovered.

Sharp did not at this stage appear to be interested in the different traditions of dances, merely wishing to note tunes that he could pass on to the Espérance Club for practical use. Dealing with the dances was the province of Neal and MacIlwaine. Indeed, Sharp was still at a point where he would have had considerable difficulties in transcribing a dance, let alone reconstructing a dance from only one team member. Consequently, the contacts that he had

noted remained unvisited until Sharp had gained in confidence and experience. But why did Sharp apparently never pass on the names of Tuffley and the two Taylors to Neal? She had, after all, shown herself quite capable of visiting the countryside herself to arrange for Kimber to teach the Espérance girls and Harry Taylor (as Sharp later discovered) was still a fine dancer, whilst Tuffley was only in his mid-thirties. One possibility is that Tuffley and the Taylors had been specified as Longborough dancers whilst Sharp was under the impression that he had not collected the Longborough Morris dance tunes, but those from Swell. Without the Longborough tunes, dance instructions on



Figure 4

William Hathaway, photographed by Cecil Sharp
Photograph courtesy of Vaughan Williams Memorial Library



Figure 5

John Mason, photographed by Cecil Sharp
Photograph courtesy of Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

their own would have been worthless to the Espérance girls. It is interesting to speculate just what would have happened if Mary Neal had met Harry Taylor at this juncture!

Later, following his rift with Mary Neal, Sharp tried to minimize the importance of the contributions of William Stagg by claiming, in a letter to Neal that 'Neither of the [two men working in the sewer] were able to dance or sing nor has your club danced any of the dances to "grandfather's" tunes',⁴⁷ although at no time does Sharp upbraid Neal for claiming that she had discovered the men.

Sharp was just in time. Eight years had elapsed since the first meeting with Headington, and within five years of his first collecting trip to Gloucestershire both Hathaway and Mason were dead. However, as a direct result of the 'whistling sewer men' Sharp had met his first two morris fiddlers, who had provided him with vital leads on the road to recovering the Morris traditions of Longborough, Lower Swell, Sherborne and Bledington as well as the realization that this was a rich new field well worth pursuing. He never looked back.

Acknowledgements

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the following people: the late Roy Judge, for his help and enthusiasm, his great generosity and for discussing this article with me at various stages. Keith Chandler for starting off my interest in the subject and always providing vital help and information. Malcolm Taylor, VWML librarian, for his great patience, humour and unstinting assistance over many years.

Notes

¹ A.H. Fox Strangways, *Cecil Sharp* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933). For his full description of the Headington meeting see pp. 25–28.

² Cambridge, Archive of Clare College, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, ACC1987/25, Folk Tunes, nos. 957–958, interview with William Stagg of Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, in Hampstead, London, 5 July 1906, from rotograph in London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

³ Cecil Sharp, Notes for lecture 'Collecting Stories (Lecture to Girl Guides)', London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, Miscellaneous material, Box 5, Item 61, F.4.

⁴ Derek Schofield, Booklet notes to William Kimber, 'Absolutely Classic', (CD, EFDSSCD 03, EFDSS, 1999), p. 10.

⁵ Sharp, Notes for lecture 'Collecting Stories', p. 1.

⁶ Fox Strangways, pp. 27–28. Sharp produced two orchestrations of these tunes, 'Suite of Morris Dances for String Orchestra' (September 1900) and 'Suite of Morris Dances For Small Orchestra (Strings, Bassoon and Horn)' (1903).

⁷ Schofield, p. 24.

⁸ A.D. Townsend, 'Cecil James Sharp As Collector and Editor of Traditional Dance', *Traditional Dance*, 5/6 (1988), 53–76 (p. 55).

⁹ Frank Kidson and Mary Neal, *English Folk Song and Dance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915) p. 161.

¹⁰ For a detailed description of this period, see Roy Judge, 'Mary Neal and the Espérance Morris', *Folk Music Journal* 5.5 (1989), 545–91 (pp. 549–52).

¹¹ Mary Neal, Letter to Sharp, 7 April 1909, London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, Correspondence, Box 5, Folder A.

¹² London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Field Notebooks, Tunes, 1906/1 (Morris Dances), inside front cover.

¹³ Townsend, p. 60.

¹⁴ Roy Dommett, 'The background of Longborough', in *Roy Dommett's Morris Notes*, ed. by Anthony G. Barrand. 2nd edn. 5 vols in 6. ([n.p.]: CDSS of America, 1986), 1, i, 426–32 (p. 427).

¹⁵ *Manchester Daily Guardian*, 20 September 1906, p. 6.

¹⁶ I am very grateful to the late Roy Judge for allowing me to publish his research in this section.

¹⁷ Cecil J. Sharp and Herbert C. MacIlwaine, *The Morris Book, Part I* (London, Novello, 1907), p. 26.

¹⁸ Sharp MSS, Folk Tunes, 1148, 1149, 957, 958.

¹⁹ British Library, Add. MS. 69527, Commission Book 11, F.763.

²⁰ In cases where a person was illegitimate, the part of the register where the name of the father is recorded was often left blank.

²¹ P.J. Perry, *British Farming in the Great Depression, 1870–1914: An Historical Geography* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974), p. 129. See also Christabel S. Orwin and Edith H. Whetham, *History of British Agriculture 1846–1914* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1964), p. 317 where they note ‘Over the countryside as a whole populations declined, and in general the more remote the area the greater the decline. The main reason was the restricted opportunity for employment, as farmers cut down their labour force during the depression, while the village crafts associated with agriculture, and other rural industries, contracted or disappeared under the influence of mass production and cheap transport. At the same time an increasing awareness of the world outside, which education, cheaper newspapers and better communications had brought to the villages, produced, in many, dissatisfaction with their own poverty and lack of opportunity, and a longing to get away to the “bright lights of the city”.’ See also D. Baines, *Migration in a Mature Economy: Emigration and internal Migration in England and Wales 1861–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²² Keith Chandler, ‘Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles’: *The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660–1900* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press for the Folklore Society, 1993), pp. 93–95.

²³ Montagu Fordham, ‘Depopulation of the Villages’ *Hertfordshire Express*, 21 December 1889, p. 5: “There is no one left in my village now except old women”, said a shrewd countryman to me when I asked him about the migration of villagers to towns. “All the best and brightest of the lads and girls go; as soon as they get a little education they won’t stay here, and now there’s no one left but old women – of both sexes”, he added with a smile.’

²⁴ Icomb School Logbook, Gloucestershire Record Office (GRO): S185/1, entries for 21 January 1878 and 11 October 1878.

²⁵ Cecil Sharp, letter to Gilchrist, 24 November 1906, London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Gilchrist Collection, Box 14.

²⁶ Cecil Sharp, Notes for lecture headed ‘Espérance Club. Small Queen’s Hall (Nov 15 1906)’, Sharp MSS, Miscellaneous, Box 5, Item 14.

²⁷ Cecil Sharp, letter to Etherington, 30 November 1906, Sharp MSS, Correspondence, Box 1.

²⁸ *The Scotsman*, 28 January 1907: ‘[During his collecting trip, Sharp] was able to place on record several of the new songs which came under his notice late in the visit, but there were several that had to be left unrecorded through lack of time, and as the people who have retained the memory of them are very aged, it is not unlikely that the opportunity of preserving these particular songs will be gone on the occasion of his next visit.’

²⁹ London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, Field Notebooks, Tunes, 1907/3 (27 March–4 April 1907).

³⁰ London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, Field Notebooks, Words, 1907/3.

³¹ Sharp MSS, Field Notebooks, Tunes, 1906/1 (Morris dances).

³² See for instance, Sharp’s initial interview with George Simpson. The first information from Simpson that Sharp notes is that ‘William Hopper was pipe & tabor’. Sharp MSS, Field Notebooks, Words 1909/3, f.2, interview with George Simpson, Upton, July 1908.

³³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Top. Oxon d. 200, f. 79; also *Birmingham Weekly Post*, 3 May 1884, p. 1, both quoted in Keith Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands*, p. 202. The impact that this event had on the area may be judged from its still being referred to in correspondence in the *Birmingham Evening Post* nearly thirty years later. See also Paul Burgess, ‘Changes in cultural tradition in a Cotswold Village during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’, in *Project Reports in Family and Community History*, edited by L. Faulkner and R. Finnegan (Milton Keynes: Open University, 1996: CD-ROM, CDR0008).

³⁴ Sharp MSS, Field Notebooks, Tunes, 1909/6, f. 24.

³⁵ Sheffield, National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, Russell Wortley MSS., File G, Folder V, Item 411, p.v, interview with Charles Jones, Sherborne, 26 June 1938 (thanks to Keith Chandler).

³⁶ Sharp MSS, Field Notebooks, Tunes, 1906/1 (Morris dances), f. 13.

³⁷ Keith Chandler, *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660–1990: A Chronological Gazetteer* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press for the Folklore Society, 1993) p. 10 and p. 203.

³⁸ Sharp MSS, Field Notebooks, Words, 1907/1, f. 56.

³⁹ Sharp MSS, Folk Dance Notes, vol. 1, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Interview with Mr Richens, Stow-on-the-Wold, 27 June 1938, Wortley MSS, File G, Folder V, Item 41h.

⁴¹ Sharp MSS, Field Notebooks, Tunes, 1907/3, inside front cover.

⁴² Ernest Makepeace, letter to Russell Wortley, 6 May 1937, Wortley MSS, File A, Folder V, Item 30a.

⁴³ Sharp used a photograph of Mason which he had taken to illustrate an article in the *Sunday Chronicle*, 8 December 1907; London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil J. Sharp MSS, Press Cuttings Books, 1906–08, p. 81.

⁴⁴ *Daily News and Leader*, 28 June 1912, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Mary Neal, *Set to Music* (n.p.: n.pub., 1907), p. 9.

⁴⁶ Dommett, p. 427, also pp. 427–28: 'Douglas Kennedy met [William Charles Stagg] during a tour by Sharp's men's team in 1912 when [Stagg] played his mouth-organ, and danced Longborough and Bledington dances with the side'. Following this, Kennedy met Stagg on several occasions after the First World War, at EFDS displays in London. Their friendship grew and Stagg eventually gave Helen Kennedy a manuscript book of tunes, which is now missing, although a transcription of the majority of the manuscript still exists. The manuscript (presumably transcribed by Douglas Kennedy) states boldly at the top 'Longborough'. This is then crossed out in favour of 'Stow-on-the-Wold'.

⁴⁷ Cecil Sharp, letter to Neal, 7 March 1909, Sharp MSS, Correspondence, Box 5, Folder A.