

BRIMFIELD - Hereford

Other Morris 3.

tune:-any polka - sometimes schottisches played rather slow.
sticks:- short about 6 to 8" x 1 1/2" dia.

Start 4 men in a line facing in pairs 1-2,3-4. 2 & 3 hold their stick in both hands resting their hands on the midriff; 1 & 4 strike these held sticks from side to side as in single stick for 8 bars in rhythm with the music.This is "napping".Then 1 & 4 dance a "figure 8" (not a hey) around 2 & 3 who remain in their place marking time.No.1 passes partner first by the right & then 1 passes before 4 in going between 2 & 3 All call "Ho!" before start of figure 8 and use plain steps or hopsteps.Instead of figure 8 can do

i.swing in pairs(arms round waist).ii.setting to right & left.
iii.link arms first right & then left.Suggest the following order-

Nap/figure 8/nap/set/nap/figure 8/nap/arm/nap/figure 8/nap/swing.

Cawte says 4 hands across - 8 bars each way - as well.

from R. Donnets "Other Morris"

BRIMFIELD MORRIS DANCE

Miss Leather and Cecil Sharp saw Mr Trill's morris men from Brimfield, between Ludlow and Leominster, Herefordshire, at Orleton on Boxing Day 1909. Mr Trill had "learned his dancing Chepstow way" but his "morris dancing" at Brimfield. As far as they knew it had always been done at Christmas, as was all the morris in the Borders. "They never missed. People said it was no Christmas without the morris men". The troupe were six, four dancers, with medolian and tambourine men. There was nothing particular about the number, sometimes they had more and sometimes less than six. When there were more, they were able to introduce Country Dance figures into the dance.

In 1909, as the photographs taken by Miss Leather show, the men wore fancy dress, has their faces blacked with white painted patches, but had no bells or handkerchiefs, only short thick sticks. These were six to eight inches long and one and a half inches diameter. The dancers had box hats and the musician a large hat with feathers. The men said that they remembered when the dancers wore smock frocks, breeches, white stockings and gaiters with soft felt hats - "Jim Crow" hats after the style of the clerical hat of the time. They used to have a separate fool whose tunic and trousers were made of any gaudy stuff.

The melodian player had no fixed music for the dance, polkas were preferred but sometimes schottiches played rather slow. They used to have a fiddler, Tom Payne, but he had played since 1895 for the side at Richards Castle, two miles to the west. The dancing stopped at Brimfield with WWI.

The dance that Sharp saw was similar to the Four Handed Reel, except that when the dancers faced they did not "step" but clashed their sticks together.

Set : four men in a line, facing in pairs, 1) <2 3) <4.

Steps : simple, but suggest use step-hops throughout without any jumps

NAPPING : 2 and 3 hold their stick in both hands, resting their hands on the midriff, and keeping the stick steady during the tapping. 1 and 4 strike these stationary sticks from side to side as in "single stick" for eight bars in rhythm with the music. That is, in general hitting from right to left on the first beat of each bar and from left to right on the middle beat, but phrasing it overall according to the particular tune played. All step-hop (4/2 step), marking time during the "napping".

FIGURE EIGHT : alternately between nappings, 1 and 4 dance a figure eight not a hey or chain, around 2 and 3, who remain in their place marking time. 1 starts by passing his partner by the right and 4 by the left, and 1 passes before 4 in going between 2 and 3, so that both 1 and 4 follow the same track. All call "Ho!" as they start the figure eight and use plain steps (4/1 step) or step-hops (4/2 step) taking eight bars to complete the move.

Instead of the figure eight the following can be interpreted as also having been used, although the mss is not clear that they are truly distinct moves.

1. "Swing in Pairs" : usual clockwise direction, either with right arm round partners waist, facing opposite directions and waving free hand, or facing partner and using a "cross-hands" hold.

2. "Setting" to partner to right and left for eight bars. Presumably more elaborate "steps" could be used and this would make it more compatible with the character of the rest of the dance.
3. "Link Arms", first right and then left, taking four bars each way.
4. Dr Cawte was told - Right and left hands across, ie a "star", eight (sic) bars each way. This is best started by 2 and 3 taking a pace to their left away from the middle of the set and 1 and 4 taking a pace towards the middle of the set to allow an immediate joining of right hands in the centre.

SUGGESTED ORDER :

Nap / Figure 8 / Nap / Set /
 Nap / Figure 8 / Nap / Arming /
 Nap / Figure 8 / Nap / Hands Across /
 Nap / Figure 8 / Nap / Swing.

A personal suggestion is to use the arming, hand across or swing to change places with one's partner so as to share being on the receiving end!

With more dancers available the dance becomes quite different in character. Mr Griffiths told Dr Cawte in 1957 that they lined up in a longways set and the leader called out the figures. He especially remembered a "rounds".

Sources :

1. E M Leather "The Folk Lore of Herefordshire", p. 130. 1912.
2. C Sharp Mss Folk Words No. 2191, Folk Dance Vol 1 p.95,
Field Note Book 1910 no.1
3. E C Cawte "Morris Dance in Herefordshire, Shropshire and
Worcestershire"
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