

DUCKLINGTON TUTORIAL

These are notes made at the Workshop in Ducklington Village Hall, led by Ducklington Village Morris, on Sunday April 5th 1992. The interpretation is consistent with the available mss sources. The material has been taken in its collected non-Bampton form and the gaps filled by relating to the knowledge of the Wychwood traditions.

It was clear that the tradition as it has been interpreted was consistent, that it required a different approach to that for the Bath City development because of the slower dance speed, and that the teachers did not fully understand the mechanics behind what they were describing. In general this note records what I think was said, with an attempt to catch the manner, with my personal comments in italics. This is independent of the notes circulated by the Duckington Village club.

THE STEPS

Double Steps : The basic step was danced with not much of a bend of the knee. The tensioned leg is important to the style taught. It is difficult for newcomers to it to relax between movements. The Ducklington Village dancers had discovered where and how to put the relaxation in the dances and they found other traditions difficult to dance, particularly if taken faster. Familiarity allows some muscle relaxation during the stepping at this speed. The normal rule is for a left foot start. The drive in any figure is always on the first beat of a bar. The dancers lean back a little and this is also considered essential to the style. *It can degenerate into a kicking forward style of step rather than lifting off of the ground, if not associated with travel.*

The slower speed leads to larger movements to fill the time available, therefore do not practice with small ones! The down-and-up arm swing with the morris step took the hands from the forehead level, and no more, to just back of the thighs. *The plain capers are danced with a noticeable hesitation between each of them.* The waves with the plain capers are from the elbows with a lot of wrist movement to drive the handkerchiefs around. The dances end with two plain capers facing towards the music, but then the hand movements are a double dip of both hands outwards, like the sidestep movement, ending not too wide apart.

Sidesteps : The normal sidestep stepping is an open lateral movement. There is no turn or twist of the body to either side in the sidestep movement. The hand movement to the sidestep is up to the face to start and then a dip, down to shoulder level at least, out to the side to end at nearly full stretch. The body must follow the arm's extension. The long sidestep is one bar moving to the side and the next in the spot. The "salute" movement also includes sidesteps, it begins with two short open sidesteps to the left and to the right. When used in the salute figure in Trunkles the sidesteps are done a little diagonally forward and backwards, not exactly laterally, but still keeping within the set boundaries.

Half-Capers : The first movement is a step forward onto the flat foot with a dip, it is not a spring but a "plant". Most of the travel forward is on the spring, and the left leg is swung well forward. The arms are accelerated upwards to help the lift. The arms start not straight and somewhat out to the side of the body and are swung up so that the hands/wrists meet together in front of the face. *The "pose" achieved is held while in the air.* Half-capers on the spot require a rocking of the body achieved by scuffing the foot backwards on the landing and its hop.

Galleys : The movement is related to the half-caper. They "back off", ie rotate a little in the opposite direction to the galley turn, before going into it. It starts with a "plant", leaning into it a little, and with the hands out to the side. A spring follows the plant. It continues with two twists of the free leg with its thigh horizontal. Desirably they aim to "power" the free leg into the galley, letting it lag to start and then swinging it forward. As in the half-caper, this is akin to kicking a football with a good follow through. They always seem better when done off to the left! The toes of the free leg during the galley's hops are

kept a little up, not pointed down at all. They are clear hops not just a shuffle round. The galley is finished or followed, depending on what is considered to be the galley movement, by two plain capers. There is a feint step or hop on the weak beat after the plain capers to keep the movement going. The middles sometimes need a feint step to change weight in order to get onto the left foot ready for the next figure. Occasionally they all have to make a lot of travel on the galley. The hands are not swung up high on the fourth beat at the end of the previous bar when going into a galley, but moved into the out position.

Squash Beetles : There are two preparatory movements. The first is a “fall-back”, the weight usually going onto the left foot with a step, not a spring. The body is then lifted and lowered by the supporting left leg, to tap the free right foot in front without lifting its leg. The movement is completed with two springs, with most of the energy going into the last, with the spring onto the 4th beat. The dancer “gathers” himself and leans forward to go into the spring. *They use a strong vertical fore and aft plane body rotation to help them into the spring.* During the two springs the arms do one large gesture, making a big sweep round, from out at the side, down and up in front, over the top opening out, and down out to the side and in again. There is no “snatch” back of the hands anywhere in this interpretation of the tradition, but a flow round or “scoop”. The reminding call for the complete caper is “1 2 three 4” and “out, out, over the top”. Repeats have alternate footing. To carry on there a need for a “feint-step”, or hop, at the end.

Uprights : This caper has been created to fill a gap in the tradition which has not been preserved, and it draws loosely on the second Fieldtown slow caper. The first preparatory movement is as above, dropping into a backstep. The second is also made behind but with the legs very close and twined, and with a low spring. The feet retain the same turn out angles and the toe of the rear foot is placed against the outer side of the instep of the forward foot. Then the spring comes with a bringing of the feet together and jumping. This is the only place in the tradition where there is a jump off of the two feet. On landing the “working” foot is kicked forward, ie the right the first time etc.

THE FIGURES

The dancers need to anticipate what is coming next, and this leads to smooth modifications of the ends of the preceding movements.

Foot-Up : This figure leads with the “outside” foot, left for odds, right for evens and danced essentially on the spot. There is a controversy about the best direction to go in the preparation for the galley, forward, back or in!

Rounds : All dance off onto the left foot. Until recently they moved round a clockwise circle about one place, aiming to emphasise height rather than distance in the stepping, but they found that it was difficult to keep an even spacing, so six months ago they decided to move round 3 places to the opposite diagonal place, however this means moving forward on the galley. The path of the rounds circumscribes the set and the middles move out a little at the start to enable it.

The Village have interpolated two intermediate figures, Half-Gyp and Whole-Gyp, feeling that this would be consistent with the local traditions.

Half-Gyp : The first step of the first double step should take the dancer a long way across, because of the preceding feint step from which to push off, so that the “2 3 hop” is nearly on the spot. It is essential to get across the set very quickly. There has to be a contrast between the strong moves and the relaxing weak moves. The dancer must start to turn back on the second hop, in fact be leaning backwards at that hop, with the galley being done sideways back to place. The dancers should be about back to back on the second bar hop going into the galley. Having the “weight” back means having the shoulders back, and

therefore almost falling backwards on the second double step. The arms are “out” at the end of the second double step ready for the galley and not swung up.

Some of the explanations given were actually correct but with the objective and the effect were reversed in the verbal descriptions! The lean back of the trunk and the leg up was Old Spotish, but is an essential part of the club style. Correct balance and unbalance as appropriate is essential at their dancing speed. The dancers claim that the movements undulate in intensity.

Whole-Gyp : The first double step takes the dancers past the set centre quarter turning to the right, to be side by side, facing up and down the set, and there they “hesitate” or have a “hiatus”. During the next double step they rotate around together in the same direction, remaining side by side, to end facing the other way ie down and up.

	at start	end bar 1	end bar 2
	evens		
music		odds>	evens>
at top		<evens	<odds
	odds		

Then they galley out to place and turn to face across. There are three points in the move where there is a momentary pause, the first at the start, the second and third at the ends of the double steps. The arm movements were “out-&-up” before going into the galley. There was the space to do it!

There are three levels of knowledge to communicate,

Choreography : *the highest level of order and the normal for the notation,*

Stress : *the timings and emphases, which are difficult to write down,*

Expression : *the personal content, which does not need description.*

The Hey : The hey is a variant of the conventional Cotswold morris movement. It is danced with two travelling sidesteps, akin to Fieldtown. 1,3&6 start on the left foot, 2,4&5 on the right. They turn out on the “1 2 3 hop”, making a loop round to face down at the start of second sidestep. They form a small box in the centre of the set. The box builds up in a tightly controlled manner. 1&2 must be shoulder to shoulder at the end of the first bar, the rest must be only a little behind, 5&6 into the box half way through bar 2 and 3&4 into the box at the end of bar 2. This order clearly depends on the different distances to be travelled. They are then facing thus, with four facing either down or up the set,

		4	
	6	—	2
top of set			
	5		1
		—	
		3	

It is very important to get into the tight group. The arm movement for these sidesteps is only with the leading arm and moves nearly straight up, not a dip. Each half hey finishes with two “shuffle-back” steps. The first shuffle is back against the direction facing in the box, the second is out from the centre line to place.

Ending : The dances end with four plain capers, all facing up.

THE DANCES

The team dances are divided into 3 classes,

1. Set Dances.
2. Corner Dances - which do not include the half-gyp or whole-gyp figures.
3. Six Men Jigs.

The team distributed notations which were as the previous workshop plus additional notes on the newest dances. Order of movements and details of choruses are covered in the separate Ducklington Workshop Notes along with other interpretations of the tradition. The following notes are key points on the individual dances taught specific to the Village style.

“OLD TYLER”

Foot-Up : face across on the first plain caper and down on the second.

Salute : cross left feet with opposite corner person, while suppressing the last hop of the second half-caper.

Crossing : to four sidesteps, the first two on the spot in place and the other two to cross over along the diagonal.

Rounds : turn into the half-rounds on the second of the two plain capers of the galley. All face back at half way.

Crossing : to half-capers, facing back on the diagonal at the end.

Uprights : the spring forward is on the feet-together-&-jump.

“OLD WOMAN TOSSED UP”

A way of considering the structure of the chorus is that it has three parts.

- (a) Corners in turn dance a long open sidestep to left and to right, then cross the diagonal with two double steps and a galley left. It is important to get moving forward into the double step off the final sidestep hop. This helps the drive into the first double step.
- (b) Corners in turn dance two slow capers (either the squash beetles or uprights) on the spot and then meet in the centre with two half-capers and kicking left feet together instead of the last hop. They then bring their arms down and walk backwards to place, in time to the music, if possible!
- (c) As (a) back to starting place.

The full dance with repeats of choruses and the other two figures takes 8 minutes with 6 dancers and 5 minutes with 4 dancers.

The ending of the dance is a face and ground the free heel at the end of the fourth plain caper.

“JOCKEY TO THE FAIR”

The figures and the chorus end with two half-capers danced all facing up.

The dancers have to do a half turn to face across for the long open sidesteps to the left and to the right. The travel in the half-hey is with two half-capers to form the box, then backstep out, two half-capers for the other half-hey to form a box again, backstep out and two half-capers to finish the music. The ends have to

drive into the half-hey to get there with the half-capers. The middles have to start coming up the middle early otherwise they will not make it round, so they have to turn on the previous hops, and be facing back by the end of the second half-caper. The second half-hey is difficult to start. *No much anticipation was seen, but they went off very quick!* The backstep in this figure is **four shuffles** not two shuffles and two plain capers.

“GREEN GARTERS”

The second half of the half-caper rounds starts on the right foot.

They change the lead foot for each squash beetle. Therefore the “outside foot” rule is **stronger** than the left foot lead rule.

A video was shown made from film taken 10 years before in Ducklington and at Mayor’s Day in Abingdon.

20 May 1992, R L Dommett © 1992