

Cotswold Morris

The Bledington Tradition

The Bledington tradition was first collected by Cecil Sharp in 1909; at that time there had been no side for 15-20 years. Bledington was revived by the Travelling Morris in the early 1920's and was seen by the Bledington men who had been Sharp's source. They commented on several aspects of the dance, notably the split capers. By that time Sharp had also collected and published the Sherborne tradition and it seems that in so doing had incorporated Sherborne split capers into Bledington in his revised edition of the Morris Book. Generally, though, the tradition closely resembles that of Longborough without the strong jump and salute that punctuates that tradition. As Bacon comments ... "thus it can easily become fussy and 'excited' unless the movements are neat and precise, and tempo sufficiently slow, and the phrasing emphasised."

The description of the tradition given here is that as currently danced by Dr. Turberville's Morris of Crewkerne, Somerset. The main characteristics are shown in the table on the next page.

The Bledington Tradition

Step	Hand Movements	Feet Movements
Double Step	Hands are held just above head height, circling the wrists, brushing hair forward; 'Helicopters not areoplanes!' two circles for each 1,2,3,hop, brushing forward on step 1 and 3 For sticks, either keep stick vertical swinging arms up and down, or hold stick horizontally and keep arms down beside body	1,2,3,hop, emphasis on getting height i.e. if starting right foot then step right foot,left foot, right foot, hop right. Keep legs straight, kick the free foot forward and up.
Hook Leg	1. held out sideways, 2. circle up above head height and down in front of the body to side, 3. up in front of the body to above head height 4. salute outwards above head	1. For hook leg left, step onto left foot 2. hop once on the left whilst kicking once with the right 3. jump onto the right foot 4. jump onto the left foot
Closed Side Step	When leading right, the right hand circles above head height as for the double step, the left arm is held by the side of the body.	Turn the body anticlockwise to the left so that the right side now faces forward and step right,left,right,hop (if followed by side step left, turn on the hop, clockwise to face right so that the left side faces forward)
Open Side Step	As for closed side step	Keep facing forward, move to the right stepping feet right,left,right,hop
Half Capers (Forries)	1/2. Arms start down and behind body, bring arms up quickly in front of the body to above head height 3. then back down beside the body if followed by another forrie or salute outwards above head	1. Step onto the left foot, leap high into the air. 2. land on the right. 3. change feet quickly but not hastily!
Fore Capers	As for Hook Leg	1. Keeping the weight on the left foot, move the right foot backwards 2. Kick through and forward with the right foot 3. caper onto the right foot 4. caper onto the left foot
Upright Capers	1/2. Twist from the wrist with hands held at waist height 3. bring hands down beside body gathering for the jump 4. bring arms up quickly in front of body to above head height and salute outwards above head	1. Keep the weight on the left foot, cross the right in front of the left and stamp down with the heel 2. repeat left in front of right 3. feet together 4. jump, kicking right foot forward and left back, landing on both feet
Plain Capers	Twist from the wrist with hands held at waist height	Jump as high as possible from one foot to the other
Shuffles	Hands held out sideways, arms slightly bent	Keep feet together, jump backwards sliding ball of feet along ground keeping heels together and twisting heels to the left, the same twisting to the right
Feet together, jump	Bring hands up from side of body in front of body to above head height and salute outwards above head	start feet together, jump and land on both feet

Dances are sets of six, except for jigs, of the usual layout;

	2	4	6
Music	1	3	5

The three dancers numbered 1,3,5 are referred to as Odds, and the other three as Evens! Dancers start facing up to the music (except for the stick dance Black Joker).

The figures for Bledington are;

Once to Yourself; Feet together, jump; this brings the set together ready to do the first figure (usually a Foot up and Down).

Foot up and Down; whole set does two double steps up to the music, starting outside foot, hookleg out turning 180 to face down away from the music; two double steps, hookleg out turning 270 to face across the set.

Half Gip; both sides cross to the opposite point of the set passing right shoulders with two double steps, returning by stepping backwards into a hook leg, through 360 back to place facing across the set. Repeat passing left shoulders.

Whole Gip; both sides come together dancing around their opposite number passing right shoulders two double steps back to place, then hook leg through 360 to face across the set. Repeat passing left shoulders.

Half Rounds; all dance clockwise two double steps hook leg out through 180 returning anti clockwise two double steps to place hook leg out through 270 to face across the set.

Half Hey; figure of eight, numbers 1,2,3,4 move up, 5,6 move down, two double steps hook leg into place. Note for handkerchief dances there is a hook leg, without capers, into the hey; the hook leg is into the set to close the set up breaking out into the double step.

In some dances the phrase '**Hook to Rule**' is used. This means that numbers 1,2,3 and 4 hook up towards the music whilst 5,6 hook down away from the music.

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The Dances

Saturday Night (Handkerchief - processional)

A 'Processional On' dance; dancers join one or two at a time until six dancers are on, then dance a whole hey to finish. This leaves six dancers in a set who remain and immediately do the first set dance.

Sequence; Feet together, jump; 2 Double Steps; Shuffle; Feet together, jump;
2 Double Steps; Shuffle; Feet together, jump;
Open Side Step right; Double Step;
Open Side Step left; Double Step;
2 Half Capers; 4 Plain Capers;

For single dancers the order of dancing on is 1,3,5,6,4,2 (or 6,4,2,1,3,5 if dancing up to the music); first dancer comes on and dances the sequence turning right 360 on Plain Capers to face the second dancer who joins with a Feet together, jump. They then pass right shoulders on Plain Capers and third dancer joins; second dancer does not turn yet but dances alone while the first and third dance to each other. First and third dancer pass right shoulder on Plain Capers whilst the second dancer turns right 360 to meet the third dancer; fourth dancer joins. This is repeated until all six have joined. The sixth Plain Capers is replaced by a Hook Leg into set and finish with a Whole Hey.

For two dancers the order is 1/2, 5/6, 3/4 (or 5/6, 1/2, 3/4 if dancing up to the music). The first pair dance the sequence and turn out on the Plain Capers. The next pair join, and pass outside the first pair on the Plain Capers; the third pair join, the second pair dance on their own whilst the first and third pair dance to each other. The third pair pass outside the first pair on the Plain Capers, the second pair do not turn on the Plain Capers; everyone is now in set facing the correct way for a Whole Hey.

Black Joker (Stick)

Sequence; Once to yourself; Foot up and down; Chorus; Half Gip; Chorus;
Whole Gip; Chorus; Half Rounds; Chorus;

This dance is punctuated by a sticking sequence of Butts, Tips, Butts, Tips whilst dancing four Plain Capers and occurs half way through and at the end of each figure as well as the chorus. This sticking sequence also forms the Once to Yourself and because of this the dance starts with everyone facing across the set instead of the more usual facing up to the music.

The chorus sequence present stick; shoulder stick; hit partner; hit right; hit left; hit is;
partner; hit partner; hit left; hit right; hit partner;
Half Hey; repeat;

Sticks are held two handed for the sticking which is done crisply hitting above head height. For 'present stick', hold the stick upright in front of the body (sizing up the opposition!). Note that the music has been extended to include an extra bar for the 'present' and 'shoulder' sticks. The end dancers will have points in the sticking with no one to hit; either flourish the stick in the air as if hitting an imaginary dancer, or hit the ground to the side.

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Glorishear (Handkerchief)

A 'Leap Frog' dance. Everyone walks round in a circle; on reaching the musician the dancer does a figure. The exception is the last rounds with leap frog. The leap frog order is 1 over 2, 5 over 3, 4 over 6, 2 over 1, 3 over 5, 6 over 4. The rule here is that number 2 goes down first then if the person in front goes down leap frog them, if the person in front does a leap frog you go down! It is important on all rounds to walk with a measured step round the circle; it is very untidy to have 4 or 5 dancers queuing up in front of the musician!

Sequence; Walk round singing and saluting musician; Chorus;
Walk round dance Fore Caper to musician; Chorus;
Walk round dance Upright Caper to musician; Chorus;
Walk round and leap frog in turn; Chorus;

After rounds, all hook leg out through 270, before chorus

Chorus; Facing across the set dance the following sequence;

Closed Side Step right; Double Step; Closed Side Step left; Hook
Leg into Half Hey; Repeat;

The song to accompany the first
rounds is;

Why don't you take a bow sir?
Because I don't know how, sir;
Why don't you take a bow sir?
Because I don't know how, sir;
Why don't you take a bow sir?
Because I don't know how, sir;

The salute comes on the bow/how and is one circle with the right hand above the head sweeping down in front of the body to the left.

Billy Boy (Stick)

Sequence; Once to yourself; Foot up and down; Chorus; Half Gip; Chorus;
Whole Gip; Chorus; Half Rounds; Chorus;

For the chorus; evens present sticks in front of the body at head height holding both ends, odds hit two handed; then evens hit odds, both clash butts, tips whilst dancing two plain capers; feet together, clash tips above head; Half Hey;
Repeat sticking and half hey.

Gallant Hussar (Handkerchief - crossover)

Sequence; Once to yourself; Foot up and down; Chorus; Half Gip; Chorus;
Whole Gip; Chorus; Half Rounds; Chorus;

Chorus; Odds and evens do crossover figure passing right shoulders across the set;
Hook Leg right such that evens face up to the music and odds face down;
Hook to rule into Half Hey;
Repeat;

The crossover figure changes for each chorus;

first chorus	Closed Side Step right; Closed Side Step left
second chorus	two Half Capers
third chorus	two Upright Capers
fourth chorus	two Fore Capers

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William and Nancy (Handkerchief - corners)

Corner dances can be thought of as a challenge between two dancers. In the chorus, first 1 and 6 do a figure to one another, then 2 and 5, and finally 3 and 4.

Sequence; Once to yourself; Foot up and down; Chorus; Half Gip; Chorus;
Whole Gip; Chorus; Half Rounds; Chorus;

Chorus; Pair of dancers do a figure in turn; first 1 and 6, then 2 and 5, finally 3 and 4, then all dance Half Hey;
repeat;

The corner figures are;

first chorus Salute, right hand, circle above head then down and in front of body

second chorus Half Caper

third chorus Fore Caper

fourth chorus Upright Caper

Idbury Hill (Handkerchief)

Sequence; Once to yourself; Foot up and down; Chorus; Half Gip; Chorus;
Whole Gip; Chorus; Half Rounds; Chorus;

Chorus; Facing across the set dance the following sequence;
Closed Side Step right; Double Step;
Closed Side Step left; Hook Leg into Half Hey; Repeat;

Lumps of Plum Pudding (Jig)

Bledington Jigs can be danced with one or two dancers. For two dancers, the first dances a figure while the second rests, then the second dances a figure while the first rests; both dance the chorus. To add interest, the person dancing can dance round in a circle.

Sequence; Once to yourself; Foot up figure; Chorus; Fore Caper figure; Chorus;
Upright Caper figure; Chorus;

Foot up figure	4 Double Steps; Closed Side Step right; Closed Side Step left; Shuffle; Feet together, jump;
Fore Caper figure	4 Fore Capers; Closed Side Step right; Closed Side Step left; Shuffle; Feet together, jump;
Upright Caper figure	4 Upright Capers; Closed Side Step right; Closed Side Step left; Shuffle; Feet together, jump;
Chorus sequence	Closed Side Step right; Double Step; Closed Side Step left; Double Step; 2 Half Capers; 4 Plain Capers;

Hey Diddle Dis (Handkerchief)

A 'Processional Off' dance. Start from set position with six dancers, dance straight into a rounds with number 1 leading off.

Sequence; Once to yourself; two Double Steps; Hook Leg left through 360;
two Double Steps; Hook Leg right through 360;
two Half Capers; four Plain Capers;
(Repeat ad nauseum!)