

BLENNERHASSET DANCES

Morris dances from Cumberland collected by Sue Mycock.

Information from Sally Rowlinson, Beech House, Blennerhasset (of dancing circ. 1920), and Miss Hilda Lawson, Woodbridge, East Green, Blennerhasset (of dancing circ. 1910). Visits to the above, winter 1977/8.

There were two dances performed in the carnival each year: a garland dance and a morris (hankie) dance, both performed by young girls. There was also a ribbon Maypole dance done. The dances were done at least from 1909 to 1920's, and the teams were apparently trained by a Mr. Jack Martin (now dead) of Blennerhasset at the school. Also, possibly taught too by a Mrs. Ginnie Lightfoot of Harriston, Aspatria, and a Mrs. Tinnion of Pringle, Aspatria (now dead). Mrs. Bessie Dalton played melodeon for dancing.

The girls wore white knee length dresses, 2 tiered, and had bells around wrists and a frill around the wrists. Also, in 1910 at least they wore a ribbon baldrick tied at the waist. They sometimes wore bells on a garter round the ankle, and ribbons round the hair, or bows in the hair. The handkerchiefs had a bell sewn on each corner and a loop in the middle to suspend the hankie from a finger. The garlands were cane hoops covered with flowers and/or ribbons. In the earlier dances (circ. 1910) some dancers used tambourines instead of garlands. Not all the garlands were broken hoops? some were complete circles.

All dances were done to the tune "100 Pipers". In the later dancing - 1920's - files danced four abreast, but in the earlier days - 1910 - they danced only two abreast. The music was provided by a local brass band.

BLENNERHASSET MORRIS DANCE

Music: "100 Pipers".
 Set:
 Step: 1-2-3-hop (country dance-type double step, corner crosses over, cf. Wigton dance).
 Implements: handkerchiefs.

PROCESSION:

2 steps forward (start R. over L.) and 2 steps back. Repeat.

Hands:-
 going forward { down to left front and shake hankie (bending at waist rather).
 down to right front and shake hankie.
 going back { up in air, throwing arm back from wrist, shaking hankie, twice.

(All this done with right hand only).

FIGURE 1:

As PROCESSION, but facing partner.

FIGURE 2:

Right and left hand stars.

Figures are alternated with Procession/Chorus figure repeated as often as needed.

BLENNERHASSET GARLAND DANCE

Music: "100 Pipers".

Set:

Step: same step as above.

Implements: garlands, usually half-hoops covered in flowers/ribbons.

PROCESSION:

4 steps forward and 2 back, swaying garlands to left, then right, left then right, while going forward. Hold still in front on back steps.

(NB. According to Hilda Lawson, in earlier version the garlands were swung to L. and R. low down, upside down, as well as held up. Also, some dancers had tambourines and swung the tambourine above their heads and beat it with each step).

FIGURE 1:

Turn to face partner by doing 2 steps on the spot, swinging garlands to left and right. Then, 2 steps towards partner, still swaying to L. and R. with garlands. 2 bows to partner (in middle of set) and then 2 steps backwards - garlands held still - back to place.

PROCESSIONFIGURE 2:

Turn to face partner. Bow slowly to partner twice, and dance across set to change places with partner (4 steps). Turn to face again, and repeat, foregoing to place.

PROCESSIONFIGURE 3:

In 4's - chain, by crossing with partner, then changing along sides of set. Half-way through, i.e. at diagonal point of 4, pause to sway to L. and R. Continue chain: cross set, then sides change to place.

There was also a mummers play performed at Christmas in Blennerhasset. The children - boys and girls - used to go from house to house performing it. They wore old clothes, eg. parent's clothes, and blacked their faces. Text mostly from Joe Lawson, helped out by his sister Hilda.