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This volume is a bit special as it represents not only volume 30 – see what a lovely cover Andy has designed to mark the occasion – but also my coming of age as I started at volume 10 back in 1991! It's been a good start with all the exposure to folk traditions on television (see George Frampton's article) and I have just returned from Whittlesey where every aspect of morris and molly dancing seemed to be captured – including quite a few young teams. So there seems to be lots of interest out there, we have the opening of the Olympics next year to think about (morris should be involved!). All we need is some decent weather this year. As always, my thanks to Jill Griffiths for being a second pair of eyes on this issue.

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Retired from the Scene

William Kemp, multi-talented clown, letter-bearer, singer, dancer and stuntman, played the Fool in many of Shakespeare's Elizabethan plays. His name appears fourth from Shakespeare's in the list of performers included in the preliminaries of the First Folio. In his as "*fl.* 1585-1602". His dates of birth and death continue to be unknown, but it now appears that he survived for a decade or more beyond 1602.

"Active" is the proper epithet for Kemp in his prime. He was both an adventurous traveller and an exceptionally vigorous performer. His predecessor as top clown, Richard Tarlton, was so comical in appearance that a mere glimpse of his gurning face peeping through a curtain was enough to trigger prolonged peals of laughter, Kemp, in contrast, used his whole body to captivate audiences. He was a champion athlete and dancer. The comically suggestive malapropisms of his speeches were counterbalanced by the bold precision of his physical movements.

Early references to Kemp, while he was in the retinue of the Earl of Leicester in the Netherlands in 1585-6, include Leicester's payment to him of five shillings "after his leaping into a ditch at Amersfort". During the same period an entertainment performed in Utrecht called "The Forces of Hercules" showcased Kemp's versatility as an actor of outstanding athleticism. Fifteen years later, as David Wiles records, "his leap over the churchyard wall in Norwich was so remarkable that his shoes were nailed to the Guildhall to mark the height. To this day, a plaque on the wall of St. John Maddermarket commemorates the famous leap".

This later leap marked the triumphant conclusion of Kemp's dancing progress from London to Norwich in 1599, during four Lenten weeks when the London playhouses were closed. His own enchanting account, *Kempes nine dates wonder. Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich*, was published in 1600. A single copy survives, among the collections of the great antiquary Robert Burton, now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. It was for this dancing marathon, and his account of it, that Kemp was most celebrated. The stunt also provided him with some financial security, in addition to a reward of five pounds, the Mayor of Norwich "gave me 40s. yeerely during my life, making me a free man of the marchant venterers". But this was nothing like enough to support his more ambitious journeys.

In September 1601 Kemp returned, impoverished and exhausted, from extensive travels to Germany and to Italy as far as Rome. His return to England was sufficiently notable to be recorded in the sober Latin diary of a man called William Smith of Abingdon. Perhaps to raise cash for such freelance ventures at home and abroad, Kemp had sold his share in the Lord Chamberlain's Men - Shakespeare's company - in 1599. But in 1601/2, as we learn from Philip Henslowe's payments for costumes, he was once again working for a playing company, Worcester's Men.

Martin Butler concludes cautiously that Shakespeare's former colleague "may or may not have been 'Kemp, a man' who was buried at St Saviour's, Southwark, on 2 November 1603". He is not the first to cast doubt on this identification, made originally by Edmond Malone. Nevertheless, this death date has become established as received opinion, with Robert Armin firmly characterized as Kemp's successor as Shakespeare's clown. One reason for querying the Southwark record is that by 1603 Kemp was so famous that a clerk in the theatrical parish of St Saviour's would surely have distinguished him from dozens of other Kemps resident in London with a term such as "player". The word "man" merely designated an adult male rather than an infant.

Counting even more strongly against the Southwark entry is the absence of any confirming evidence. When Richard Tarlton died suddenly in September 1588 there was an outburst of allusions and laments for him in plays and pamphlets. An account of Tarlton's final court performance, a piece of post-Armada triumphalism in which he fought ludicrously with a Spanish lapdog and made the Queen "laugh so excessively" that she "bade them take away the knave", even found its way, via Sir Francis Walsingham, into the National Archives. With reference to Kemp post-1603 there are no such allusions. The only surviving literary memorial to him is a poem by Richard Brathwaite (1587/8-1673), "Uppon Kempe and his morrice, with his Epitaph" included in the miscellaneous collection of Brathwaite's verse published under the title of *The good wife . . . Whereto is annexed an exquisite discourse of epitaphs* (1618). Some poems in the collection seem to have been composed a few years earlier, but not much before 1615.

Between 1603 and 1612 there are half a dozen allusions to Kemp in print. In none is he described as dead, and in one, prefaced to *Coryats Crudities* (1611) he is specifically described as being still alive, it occurs in a commendatory poem by Sir John Strangways (1584—1666), a talented young man already knighted when he was admitted to the Middle Temple in January 1611. His family seat at Melbury Sampford in Dorset was seven miles from Thomas Coryat's Somerset village of Odcombe. Strangways sets out to compare Coryat's foot-slog to Venice favourably with Kemp's dance to Norwich:

*Kemp yet doth live, and only lives for this;
Much famous, that he did dance the Morris
From London unto Norwich*

... Though visible in print, this allusion to Kemp as "yet" alive in 1611 has been missed by his biographers. Before citing a further allusion to Kemp as alive, in manuscript, I want to discuss some of the other post-1603 allusions to him in print. None suggests that he is dead, though some have been misconstrued as doing so.

In *The Guls Home-booke* (1609) Thomas Dekker referred to "*Tarlton, Kemp, nor Singer . . . [and] all the litter of Fooles that now come drawling behinde them*". But as George Chalmers pointed out as long ago as 1797, this passage doesn't indicate that Kemp was dead by 1609, as Edmond Malone had claimed: "Kempe may only have retired from the scene". Likewise, in his *Apology for Actors* (1612) Thomas Heywood describes "*Wil. Kempe*" as the man who succeeded Tarlton "as wel in the favour of her Majesty, as in the good thoughts of the generall audience", going on to say that five other players are dead: "*Gabriel, Singer, Pope, Phillips, Sly*". Kemp is not mentioned among them - Heywood must have been well acquainted with Kemp, having worked alongside him with Worcester's Men in 1601/2.

Two further printed allusions invoke Kemp's presence and offer no hint that he has died. One is Thomas Weelkes's madrigal "Since Robin Hood, Maid Marian", included in his *Ayres or Phantasticke Spirits for three voices* (1608):

Since Robin Hood, Maid Marian,
And Little John are gone-a,
The hobby-horse was quite forgot,
When Kemp did dance alone-a,
He did labour
After the tabor
For to dance
Then into France
He took pains
To skip it in hope of gains.
He will trip it on the toe,
Diddle diddle diddle doe.

The first four lines celebrate Kemp's innovatory solo "Morris" dance which far outshines the traditional hobby horse and its six accompanying dancers. This is surely the implication also

of the "hobby-horse" catchphrase used by Kemp himself in *Nine Daies Wonder* - "The hobby-horse quite forgotten" - and by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*: "For O! For O! The hobby-horse is forgot". A brilliant new invention trumps those old May Games. (Readers may hear for themselves a recording of Weelkes's madrigal by The Clerks of Christ Church which demonstrates the escalating pace of its melody.

The second section marks the rapid pulse of the "tabor", or portable snare drum, that accompanied Kemp's leaps.) In a neat synecdoche, his travels abroad to the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Italy and elsewhere are reduced to "France". And like much apparent nonsense in songs of the period, "Diddle diddle diddle doe" actually means something: it enacts Kemp's feat of twiddling round rapidly on one toe. Richard Tarlton was also remembered for a trick of "standing on the toe", as recorded by Henry Chettle in *Kind-Harts Dreame* (1592). But the far more athletic and energetic Kemp appears to have mastered something more like "dancing on point". Neither words nor melody offer any hint that the virtuoso dancer is now dead. Weelkes's *Ayres or Phantasticke Spirits* is rounded off with a melancholic memorial item, but for Thomas Morley, not for Kemp.

In John Day's play *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*, performed and printed in the summer of 1607, "Kempe" appears as a character, visiting Sir Anthony Shirley in Venice. "Kempe" provides Shirley, of whom he may in real life have been a cousin, with an update on the doings of his "fellowes", or fellow actors, back in England, before being left to practise a battle of wits with a Harlequin as a rehearsal for a comic playlet or "merriment" to be performed later. "Kempe" tricks the Venetian Harlequin into entrusting his (non-speaking) wife to his own custody, and dispatches her husband "to Cuckolds-haven". If the real-life Kemp had died by 1607, we might expect mention to be made of this loss, with attention drawn to the miracle by which, through the magic of theatre, a popular performer comes back to life. Au contraire, I think it's possible that Kemp himself made guest appearances with Queen Anne's Men - the company that evolved from Worcester's Men - playing himself, which is what he did best, with a stooge "Harlequin" set up as the butt of his sexual trickery.

Kemp's physical presence in London in the summer of 1607, performing with Queen Anne's Men at the Curtain and the Red Bull, could help to account for the remarkable success of this episodic play on the stage and the speed with which it was rushed into print while the play was still being performed. If this seems a speculation too far, we should remember that the names "Kempe" and "Will Kempe" occur in *Romeo and Juliet* (1599) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600). No one doubts that these names allude to the man who originally played the roles of Peter and Dogberry respectively. Already, in 1599-1600, Kemp's fame partially eclipsed that of the fictional characters he portrayed.

Though in prose, the scene in *The Travels* is a "plot" for a jig in Kemp's favourite vein. It features a three-cornered relationship between two men and a woman, with a fool who neatly tricks another man out of his wife and shows the married man to be the greater fool. As David Wiles observes, all four of Kemp's jigs that survive from the 1590s "are written as vehicles for the clown, who ends up paired with a lady". Clowns, with their bawdy puns and gestures, often appealed especially to female auditors. A popular saying, "Laugh and lie down", suggested that a man who could make a woman laugh was half-way towards pleasing her sexually. I believe that Kemp outstripped both Tarlton and Armin in this art, and had a special talent for involving women in his performances, whether as patrons or participants. This is documented in his published work.

Nine Daies Wonder is dedicated to "his most bountifull Mistris, Mistris Anne Fitton, Mayde of Honour to the most sacred Mayde, Royall Queene Elizabeth". The address includes a mistake and a muddle, though for once not a comic one. Anne Fitton's younger sister Mary was a Maid of Honour, whereas Anne, married to Sir John Newdigate, lived as a virtuous young matron at Arbury Hall in Warwickshire. Her unfashionable insistence on breastfeeding her own children meant that she never travelled far from Arbury. But in April 1600, when *Nine Daies* was entered in the Stationers' Register, Anne's sister Mary was a highly favoured Maid of Honour, not yet in disgrace for her affair with William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Kemp may have known her simply as "Mistress Fitton". There would be no need for him to

distinguish the Fitton girls by Christian name when he entertained the court, since only one was ever present.

A dedication to a Maid of Honour implied an appeal to the Queen herself, who is directly invoked towards the end of *Nine Daies*. "Its good being merry, my masters, but in a meane, and al my mirths, (meane though they be) have bin and ever shall be imploi'd to the delight of my royal Mistris". In the narrative of *Nine Dales* four women of humbler status play significant roles. On his third dancing day, "being Friday of the first weeke", Kemp describes an encounter at Chelmsford in Essex:

A Mayde not passing foureteene yeares of age, dwelling with one Sudley, my kinde friend, made request to her Master and Dame that she might daunce the Morris with me in a great large roome I was soone wonne to fit her with bells; besides she would have the olde fashion, with napkins on her armes", and to our jumps we fell. A whole hour she held out; but then being ready to lye downe I left her off.

This girl might have been a servant or apprentice, lodging with "Master and Dame" who were not her parents. Something similar happened on Kemp's fifth dancing day, "being Wednesday of the second weeke". In Sudbury, in Suffolk, a lusty young butcher offered to keep Kemp company in dancing along his route, but had to give up after only half a mile - "for indeed", boasts Kemp, "my pace in dauncing is not ordinary". However, a "lusty Country lasse" called out that she was equal to dancing the full mile;

I lookt upon her, saw mirth in her eies, heard boldnes in her words, and beheld her ready to tucke up her russet petticoate; I fitted her with bells, which she merrily taking, garnisht her thicke shorte legs, and with a smooth brow bad the Tabrer begin. The Drum strucke; forward marcht I with my merry Maydemarian, who shook her fat sides, and footed it merrily to Melfoord, being a long myle.

Kemp rewarded the lusty lass with drink plus "an English crowne to buy more drink".

His next encounter with a woman was different. Between Clare and Bury St Edmunds,

I was invited to the house of a very bountifull widdow, whose husband during his life was a Yeoman of that Countrie; dying rich no doubt, as might well appeere, by the riches and plenty that abounded in every comer of the house. She is called the widow Everet.

Here Kemp and his three companions, Thomas Sly the laborer, William Bee and George Sprat, names which seem a bit too good to be true — dined in the company of thirty gentlemen also being lavishly entertained. While Kemp had acted as patron to the fat-but-fit Sudbury lass, rewarding her with drink and money, this time he himself enjoyed food and drink provided by the rich widow. Perhaps he sang and danced a little for his dinner. Finally, reaching the market place in Norwich, Kemp had a less fortunate encounter with a woman, though one that had its comic side. Huge crowds of "boyes, girls, men and women" gathered in the market place to witness the end of the dancing marathon.

However, It was the mischaunce of a homely maide that, belike, was but newly crept into the fashion of long wasted petticoats tyde with points... comming unluckily in my way, as I was fetching a leape, it fell out that I set my foote on her skirts: the point either breaking or stretching, off fell her peticoate from her waste, but as chance was, thogh her smock were course, it was cleanly.

The poor girl blushed scarlet with embarrassment. The crowds must have yelled with laughter, but Kemp doesn't ridicule her, merely draws attention to his professionalism. He indicates that the girl herself had stepped "unluckily" into the trajectory of his "leape". Pulling girls' skirts off was not part of his act.

From the six female characters incorporated into *Nine Dales* - Queen, Maid of Honour, teenage girl, lusty lass, bountiful widow and homely maid - I sense that Kemp liked women, and was liked by them. He was skilful in incorporating them into his "turns". Men, often tricked by him into admitting that they were weaklings (like the young Sudbury butcher) or cuckolds (like the Venetian Harlequin) may have been less amused. The mutual affection between Cordelia and the Fool in Shakespeare's *King Lear* reflects such a social/sexual dynamic, with a bond of special intimacy and trust existing between a great lady and a court fool. A more fully delineated example is the rapport between the Countess of Roussillon and Lavatch in *All's Well that Ends Well*.

I now come to a key piece of evidence suggesting that Kemp was alive and still performing as late as November 1610. It occurs in the household accounts of Henry, seventh Baron Berkeley (1534-1613), from which I quote by permission of the Berkeley Will Trust. Lord Berkeley was nicknamed "Henry the Harmless" by his steward and chronicler John Smyth of Nibley. He rarely came to court in later years, residing mainly at Callowden Castle, on the outskirts of Coventry, with spells of hunting on his estates in Gloucestershire and elsewhere. Henry Berkeley was not conspicuous as a literary patron, though Henry Woudhuysen argues that he was the original owner of the manuscript of Sidney's "Old" *Arcadia* now in Queen's College, Oxford. Berkeley's household accounts, extracts from which were published in the *Newsletter of Records of Early English Drama (REED)* in 1983, certainly show him as a man who greatly loved music and plays.

My illustrative examples are taken from the volume of accounts covering the years 1605-1613, which (along with the volume for 1594-1600) seems not to have been available to REED's researchers. Henry Berkeley was in his seventies, and financially overextended because of long-drawn-out litigation over property on top of his continued practice of lordly hospitality. Lawyers' fees occupy half of each year's accounts, yet he continued to spend money on festive entertainments. In October 1605 he gave five shillings to "the Erie of Huntingdon's musiciens" and ten shillings to "the Kings trumpeters"; in January 1606 he gave thirty shillings to "my Lord Mont Egles players", as well as "others per bill"; also twenty shillings to "my Lord Dudleys players".

He celebrated Twelfth Night with a performance by Lord Chandos's Players, to whom he gave twenty shillings. On April 17 he gave a large reward of thirty shillings to one of his most regular entertainers, "John, the blind harper", whom he rewarded again with fifteen shillings on September 17. In February 1607 he gave four shillings "to my Lord Dudleys foole", and in March 1609, thirty shillings to "Swabber the foole" - probably the same individual as "Swopper the Lord Bedfords foole" whom he had rewarded with two shillings and sixpence in 1602.

In late years, Berkeley, as Smyth tells us, regularly economized on his household expenses by going to stay with friends and kinsfolk, taking the opportunity to get rid of various hangers-on. His favourite residences were those of Lady Hunsdon (Elizabeth Carey, née Spenser) in West Drayton, Middlesex, and the Blackfriars in London. Her daughter Elizabeth was married to Berkeley's unsatisfactory son and heir Thomas, and there were two grandchildren, so these were very much "family" visits. In late November 1610, the steward records, "my Lord lay in London" - apparently at Carey Court in the Blackfriars. While staying there he paid "in reward to William Kempe, my Lady Hunsdons man, 4s. 4d". The names "William" and "Kemp" are common. Yet it seems probable that "Lady Hunsdon's man" was indeed the celebrated entertainer, now enjoying the patronage of a lady even richer and more bountiful than the Widow Everet in Suffolk.

Lady Hunsdon (1552-1618) was the widow of Sir George Carey, 2nd Lord Hunsdon, who, as Lord Chamberlain, had been both Kemp's patron and Shakespeare's in the later 1590s. She was a notable patron in her own right; as a young woman she was generous to her distant kinsman Edmund Spenser, as well as to Thomas Nashe and others. Another major beneficiary was John Dowland, who composed at least one piece of music in her honour: "Lady Hunsdon's Puffe", possibly so called because of the rapid breathing its tempo induced in dancers. Berkeley's payment of 4s. 4d. is towards the low end of rewards that he gave to

fools - contrast the thirty shillings given to "Swabber" in March 1609. But Berkeley was trying to economize - and Kemp's performance may have been relatively slight. He can hardly have been younger than twenty when he was rewarded for his great "leap" in the Netherlands in 1585, in which case he was in his middle forties by 1610, and well past that peak of fitness that had taken him a-dancing from London to Norwich in 1599.

Nevertheless, if Kemp was alive and to some extent active between 1603 and 1612, it is theoretically possible that he appeared in some early Jacobean plays, including plays by Shakespeare.

George Chalmers's suggestion that after 1603 Kemp "retired from the scene" seems distinctly plausible. Most of his Jacobean performances may have taken place in private households rather than on public stages. This opens up the theoretical possibility that he was still sometimes to be seen and heard in the exclusive environment of the court. Perhaps he played the part of the unnamed Fool in *King Lear* when that tragedy was performed at court on December 26, 1606.

The early performance history of *Macbeth* is a blank, but many scholars believe that this tragedy also enjoyed at least one performance at the court of Banquo's descendant, James VI and I. The role of the Porter is one to which an older, less fit Kemp would have been well suited. It is brief and in prose; it offers some scope for improvisation (modern actors have often availed themselves of this); and it mirrors what is thought to be one of the earliest "Kemp" roles in the Shakespeare canon. In a rare comic scene in *Titus Andronicus*, a bibulous clown enters, whom Titus believes to be an emissary "from heaven" - that is, from Jupiter - to whom Titus has appealed for justice. In *Macbeth*, by contrast, the bibulous clown imagines himself as "porter of hell-gate".

And if Kemp did not die until 1615 or so, he might even have resumed his old role of Dogberry when *Much Ado About Nothing* was performed at court - twice - as part of the celebrations of the betrothal of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine during the Christmas season of 1612/13.

Katherine Duncan-Jones

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I am extremely grateful to the TLS for allowing me to reprint this article - and to Steve Poole for spotting it in the first place.

Morris in the papersa century apart

The Times of late August 1911 noted "...seaside music is the worst music in the country. The nigger on the sands who blacks his face is a tradition as English as morris dancing" - so neither really got a good press!

From The Times of 6 November 2010 Debra Crane, the dance critic, in assessing the haka as a pre-match display noted that: "Morris dancing has more sophisticated movement patterns, it covers a lot more ground, is usually performed to music and with its accompanying bells and sticks surely means that we can make our fair share of noise too"

Chandlers' Clippings

I am extremely grateful to Keith Chandler for discovering these new "old" newspaper references; for ease of reading I have amended all the old fashioned "f" to the modern "s"

Read's Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer, 12 June 1731, page 2

Northampton, June 7. On Thursday last one Jonathan Butcher, of Letchborough, in this County, about 90 Years of Age was married to a Woman of about 70; which Wedding was celebrated with **Ringing of Bells, Morrice-dancing**, and all other Demonstrations of Joy suitable to so happy an Occasion.

The London Daily Post and General Advertiser, 26 October 1738, page 1

Marlborough, Oct. 19. On Monday Evening last their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales arriv'd at the Angel Inn in this Town, and set out the next Morning for Bath. After the Charges of the House were Paid, his Royal Highness was pleased to present the Landlady with a Purse of Thirty Guineas; and left Ten Guineas for the Servants: His Royal Highness also gave Four Guineas to the Ringers, Two to each Church; and two Guineas to **a set of Morrice-Dancers** and Musick, who met their Royal Highnesses at their Entrance into this Place: His Royal Highness was likewise pleased to give Ten Guineas to the Poor.

The Public Advertiser, 21 June 1753, page 1

Bath, June 11. We hear that Counsellor Provence and Cressel, Esq; intend to stand as Candidates for Wotton Bassett, in Wiltshire. There was a grand Entertainment given by them on Tuesday at Pinkney, near Great Sherston; at which were present above 150 Persons, who, the next Day, went in Procession through Malmsbury, to Wotton Bassett, where they were received and attended through the Town by the Corporation, the Bells ringing, the Musick playing, and **Morrice Dancers dancing before them all the Way.**

The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser, 10 April 1784, page 3

Extract of a letter from Banbury, April 3, 1784.

"On Wednesday we were greatly rejoiced with the arrival of Richard Lloyd, Esq. of Bradenham, Bucks, who had been invited by the principal inhabitants, to offer himself as a candidate to represent this borough; the joy of all the people it is impossible to describe. On Thursday Mr. Lloyd canvassed the town, attended by seven hundred people, all the flags, streamers, and staves of the wool-combers and shag-weavers, **morrice-dancers, fifers, &c. bells ringing, &c.** The people would not allow him to walk, but got a post-chaise, and drew him round the town. It was joy, enthusiasm, frenzy. But finding that the electors were in Lord North's pocket, he published an exceedingly proper letter, and left the town on Friday, strongly recommending that no bodily insult should be offered Lord North.

The Whitehall Evening Post or, London Intelligencer, 26 October 1754, page 3

A few Days ago a **Fray happened between some Morrice-Dancers** at Hilmorton, in Warwickshire ; wherein two of them were so much bruised, that they died soon after.

The Public Advertiser, 14 July 1788, page 3

Cheltenham. - **Troops of morrice dancers** were last week assembling in and near Cheltenham, with ribbands of various colours, and little bells at their feet, to meet the King upon the road. They were practising sarabands, with tambours and castanets. - Frequently young men of good property join the **merry morrice dance**, which was introduced into this country in the reign of Henry VIII. The Fairford dancers are distinguished for their dexterity...

The London Chronicle, 11 August 1792, page 3

The MARQUIS of BUCKINGHAM'S FETE. This entertainment commenced on Wednesday evening at Stowe, when parties of pleasure from the surrounding and distant parts of the country filled the gardens at an early hour. Before eight, five thousand spectators were assembled.

...Not far from the grotto, was a temporary bridge of three arches, decorated with lamps in the form of crowns and other devices, while different ornaments were interspersed among the trees, which hung over the water. On one side was a **company of Morrice-dancers**, and, on the other, a party of Savoyards, singing and dancing with a tambourin, horns, and other rural sylvan instruments...

John Bull, 26 May 1828, page 168

LADY OF THE LAMB. - Anciently, the season of Whitsuntide was distinguished by hocking, raffling, the pigeon holes, bull and bear-baiting, horse-racing, &c. At Killington [*sic*], in Oxfordshire, on the Monday after Whitsun week, a fat lamb was provided. Young women, with their thumbs tied behind them, ran after it, and she who caught it with her mouth was called *Lady of the Lamb*. It was then killed, dressed, and, with the skin hanging on, carried on a long pole before the *Lady* and her companions to the Green, attended with **music and a morrice-dance of men, and another of women**. The rest of the day was spent in dancing and festivity. The next day the *Lady* and her companions, with music, presided at a feast, made of the lamb, part baked, boiled, and roasted.

The Derby Mercury, 28 April 1830, page 2

COMMEMORATION OF SHAKSPEARE [*sic*]. *First Day - Stratford-upon-Avon, April 23*. The procession moved through the principal streets, followed by an immense throng, who highly admired the regularity and precision with which the affair was conducted...

Second Day - Saturday Night, April 24... During the day bands of music paraded the streets, together with groups of **morris dancers in their fantastic apparel**, itinerant songsters and story tellers; some of the tales of the latter were most marvellous, and of a length that tired the motley assembly collected to hear them.

The Lady's Newspaper, 30 August 1856, page 135

BANQUET TO THE CRIMEAN GUARDS. The Crimean battalions of the Guards - numbering over 2,000 men - were entertained on Monday at a public dinner in the Surrey Gardens... The soldiers, on reaching the air, soon dispersed themselves all over the grounds...The bands commenced playing on the lawn in front of the concert-room; two or three acrobats went through their postures for the amusement of the bystanders ; Ethiopian serenaders danced and sang on a raised platform for the same end ; and, in one or two places, old soldiers gave practical evidence of their rustic origin by a **vigorous exhibition of morris dancing, barring the sticks and the ribbons**, but with fife accompaniment, to the amusement of the lookers-on, and to their own profit, some silver coins being occasionally flung into the midst of the arena at the close of the performance...

The Birmingham Daily Post, 2 July 1884, page 5

A COVENTRY WOMAN SENT TO PENAL SERVITUDE.

At the Banbury Quarter Sessions, yesterday...Ann Maria McClure, an elderly woman, a native of Coventry, was charged with stealing a purse and £2 15s. from a woman named Amy Grantham, at Banbury, on the 1st of May. Mr. Stockton prosecuted. - The prosecutrix was holding a child up in Banbury market place **to see some morris dancers**, and she felt a tug at her dress. On looking round she saw the prisoner moving away, and followed her, when she found she had her purse in her hand. She accused her of stealing it...*The sentence of the Court is that you be sent to penal servitude for five years.*

Where Was The Cotswold Morris?

The first point is that the known 'Cotswold' morris territory is the part of the South Midlands that lies between Cirencester in Gloucestershire and Towcester in Northamptonshire, and is mostly on the limestone belt that runs from the sea in Devon up to Yorkshire which is followed by the Fosseway. It provides good building stone, which varies significantly in colour along it, that is well used for the vernacular architecture. As a geographic region 'The Cotswolds' is normally taken as from Bath to Stow on the Wold. As a social region it is the country of nucleated villages with houses clustered around its church and pub.

The morris area is bordered by the clay basins of the Vale of the White Horse, the Buckinghamshire plain, the Bedfordshire brickfields, the Nene Valley of Northamptonshire, the Vale of Evesham and the Vale of Gloucester, although there is some spill over onto the edge of the clay. The clay has been the home of larger estates and often closed villages dominated by major landowners. Another reason for the withdrawal of the morris from its possible former territories could have been the growth of local industries whose independence negated the need for extra economic inputs such as the boot and shoe trade in Northamptonshire, bricks in Bedfordshire, and clothing in East Gloucestershire.

Looking at the morris from internal evidence suggested that the local styles can be divided into two groups, those around the forest and those on the stone. The former in the nineteenth century appear more elaborate in steps and choruses, the latter rather simpler and including greater use of sticks. It seemed reasonable to deduce that the morris which revived after the Restoration could have started from around Wychwood Forest and Stow and spread north simplifying as it went and overlapping with the Bedlam Morris and its sticks drifting south from the Midlands. A possible indication of such a diffusion was that the distribution of the surviving teams has mostly been around the edges of the heartland.

However that was not so, David Underdown¹ says, 'The New Wells also saw commercial possibilities in more traditional entertainments, promoting the 'famous Bath morris-dancers' after they had come to the capital to perform at Bartholemew Fair. The date appears to be 1744. D'Arcy Ferris wrote to Cecil Sharp before WWI remembering the morris in Bath, so it may have existed there for a century. Underdown also mentions the morris at Bletchley (Stony Stratford) about the same time, and Russell Wortley met its aged last foremen of a side, so it also could have lasted over 100 years. Alex Helm reported morris-like dancing from North Somerset. Perhaps no one has looked thoroughly for mentions in the 18th century which might show that at one time it stretched further.

It is part of the folklore that the morris existed in the villages, however this identification owes much to the modern redefinition of places which were once considered to be small towns with markets. Even where they were not, they were close to one and it must be assumed that the morris was part of that place's social life.

Roy Dommett
Updated December 2010

¹ *Start of Play - Cricket and Culture in 18th Century England* by David Underwood, (Penguin Books) 2000, p 77

In Some Far Field – a Short History of Helsinki Morrisers

For most readers Finland is undoubtedly a distant and remote land, despite entry to the EU in 1995, the same year that saw the start of the country's only morris active side. Some features of the country are distinctively Scandinavian, others somewhat Slavic. And the language? It has been said that to read the back of one of their cereal packets over breakfast can be considered a major intellectual achievement...

Are Englishmen essentially repressed exhibitionists?

Does separation from one's mother country intensify repressed cravings for national identity?

Are any other than this author and a few like-minded Brits interested?

It seems the answer to all the above questions must be 'yes' if the experience of the morris dancers in Helsinki is anything to go by. Led by two long gone-native Brits, the side was started in 1995 along with a handful of Anglophiles and has established itself as the only locally based, independently funded, vestige of a British 'living tradition' in eastern Scandinavia - no British Council funded speakers expected here! Tea drinkers in Alma Bator may sip away in private, beer quaffers in Kuwait may enjoy some public renown, but morris dancers in Helsinki do their thing in public, and occasionally even for money!¹ Things started up when an amalgamation of interest among six somewhat like-minded individuals concurred with the availability of a video camera for a short loan. Two English teachers provided the native ingredient, along with a fellow local teacher of English. One of their students was dragooned into the group, and finally two partners came along for good measure! I must confess it was my enthusiasm after playing Irish music in Helsinki for some time, and seeing the pleasure the audience got from dancing to live music, that fanned the initial interest. Contact with the closest side, Eken Morris in Stockholm, had taken some effort, following an article in the Folk Song and Society magazine by their Squire which led to a spate of phone calls, eventually taking me to the Ring's Information Officer in Bristol. I think it must have been John Maher to whom we owe that considerable debt! Oh those tough pre-internet days!

Helsinki 2004 Arctic Ale - in front of the Cathedral in Senate Square



The consequent overnight trip to an Eken practice led to 60 minutes of videoed dance which was then scrutinised intensely. Practices were held in a private language school, with the six individuals faithfully copying the Swedes' every move, incorrect or otherwise, and using the same audio track as the video, copied dutifully from tape to tape. Public performance was never really much of an option – though the mists of memories from summer 1995 suggest a performance in the British Embassy garden to those same tunes from our faithful tape recorder. That autumn however our ship came in, in the form of a visiting Dutch student who offered his highly competent fiddle services. From that time on, performance was the carrot that welded the

¹ In fact a second side in Turku, the old capital on the west coast, is struggling through similar birth pangs as I write. See Turku Morrisers on Facebook; as well as <http://helsinki-morrisers.tripod.com>

side into an act! More to the point it enabled the still very shaky troupe of six the option to

consider travelling to Stockholm again, but with a view to genuine street performance. It was in fact the birth of the Arctic Morris Ale, June 1996, with Helsinki Morrisers hesitantly following the Swedes for the annual summer tour of the centre, ending up with a massed Severn Stick Dance in Stor Torget in the centre of the Old Town. It's a tradition that continues today with alternating visits to the capital cities across the Baltic.

The 15 months between the initial inception until our first street performance revealed some features that over the subsequent 15 years have been one of the most consistent characteristics of the side – inconsistency of membership. It's no use whingeing about it, since the lack of any native tradition of street dance in Finland means that people have come to the group out of a variety of different reasons: for social fun or fitness, for linguistic betterment or personal self improvement, even if over the years all those original members have left, bar one (guess who?!). There has always been a major but mutating representation of foreigners, currently Dutch, American, English and Finnish. In fact the constant turnover of participants has been the side's weakness as well as its strength. The repertoire is considerably dictated by the weakest or newest dancers, leading to boredom among the most competent. Talk of establishing a 'core inner-circle' some years ago now seems prescient, since all of those keen to really improve their skills have since left. The left-overs still try to hold on to the old dances, though some of the grander molly dances we picked up in our prime have had to be dropped due to numbers. On the other hand necessity has bred adaptations of these same dances (the Ouse Washes' Strange done with 4 dancers, requiring all to 'change sex as well as topographic direction with each stage of the choreography') and to develop our own dances to fit numbers and abilities. The newest was set to a song by New Model Army, 'Vagaponds' as many Finns pronounce it, which certainly suits some of our mercenary, as well as multi-ethnic, inclinations.



In Central Helsinki in a pre-Red Nose Day promotion event - November 2009

around, swap some gossip, and eventually polish up some dances. The seasonal program can vary out of all recognition, depending on who seeks our company. Over the years it has included one rather prestigious Finnish dance festival, numerous summer folk festivals, many serious or pseudo 'British Cultural Activities' in schools and the like, and even a local St Patrick's Parade or two. However there is one day in the Finnish calendar that Helsinki

Inattention to detail is also something of a hallmark, no doubt aggravating some readers as much as it probably did the notional 'inner core'! But without any regular contact with fellow dancers there is no monitoring process. Hence Severn Stick is now danced border style to a single step, though we still do the dance usually in Cotswold costume. Lack of ritual is another tradition, since in fact we are defying the essence of the idea by importing the tradition to Finland.

The bottom line is to enjoy meeting up with the active practitioners, see who is

Morrisers do claim as something of their own ritual, despite the many thousands of other local participants – May Day!

It is of little consequence to most of those that a handful of dancers calling themselves 'maurs' or 'maurice' or even 'morris' have been doing something similar back in the UK for more than 500 years. Indeed to most locals on the streets of Helsinki for this Finnish annual spring carnival, 'Vappu', we are just another group of somewhat gaudily clad characters frolicking in public as a presumed consequence of alcoholic disturbance from the previous festive evening. Originally a fixed point in the calendar of trade unions throughout Scandinavia, the previous night is more famed now for student inebriations, though for the less youthful Helsinki Morrisers the following day's public holiday provides a perfect opportunity to emulate their English counterparts, albeit at a more tolerable hour. At around midday the side joins in the general street-side meandering or melee, kicking off its season of sporadic outdoor dancing, imparting to any inquisitive Finnish questioners the significance of gyms and heys in the scheme of modern, traditional street theatre.



Stockholm 1998 Arctic Ale gathering – meeting of 2 Beasts (Helsinki and Eken).

To me it has also offered the first opportunity to be thoroughly involved in this very Scandinavian spring tradition. Whether marching or meandering, for the Finnish population throughout the land, white hats are worn on this day by all the high-school/sixth form graduates, which in a more strictly class segregated society might seem to be flaunting one's educational prowess. But in this rather egalitarian society it only reflects the distinction of those more enthusiastic for educational success. Whereas in earlier days the educated celebrated and the workers marched, nowadays the streets of most Finnish towns are thronged with people of all types, though mainly with only one style of hat! There are bright white ones of newly qualified high-school 'students', assorted off-white and cream headgear of the middle aged, a smattering of unhatted heads (and presumably less educated) among family groups and parties, and then the stalwartly sported, faded weather-beaten relics worn by pensioners or elder graduands. Is this the carrot that motivates the country's pupils to perform so well in those PISA¹ tests I wonder?

In between this assorted throng, the prance of a flower-decked Helsinki Morriser keeps the spirit of the home-fires glowing, a vestige of the English folk tradition cavorting, if not quite the flag flying. That is not the overt intention, but in a country where immigrant cultures are only gradually becoming visible, and this only in the capital area, it's a small drop of intercultural colour added to the pot. We have been paid to perform alongside belly dancers from Egypt, grandmotherly singers from Russia, as well as leggy samba dancers from Finland, and often in the name of the newly multicultural society here. In 2004 the side even organised an Ale of four visiting British sides², along with Eken, to put the Morris firmly on

¹ The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide evaluation of 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance, performed first in 2000 and repeated every three years. It is coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with a view to improving educational policies and outcomes. Finland keeps coming out on top - for a complicated variety of reasons!!

² They were Chippenham Town, England's Glory, Chanctonbury Ring & Mr Wilkins Shilling

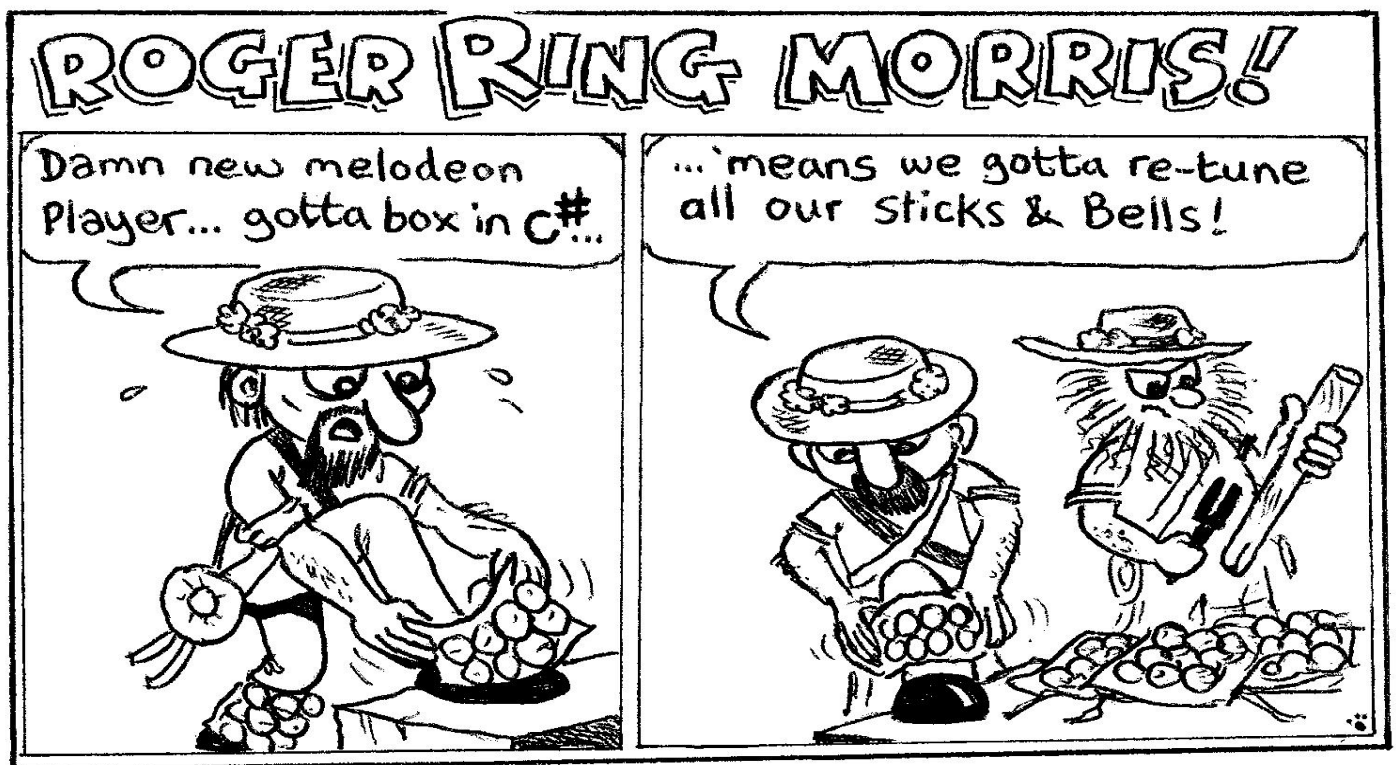
the cultural map. But, in the way of the world, the most interest this promoted was among the British tourists off the cruise boats in Helsinki harbour that weekend! Occasionally the website prompts contact from a visiting dancer, who probably goes back home telling tales of off-kilter heys and gyms transformed into 'small circles', but in this country of deeply founded Eastern and European roots the Helsinki Morrisers are something of a reminder of the multicultural mix that is at the heart of our own rather modern tradition and bear a reasonable resemblance to what is going on back in the UK, we hope.

Post Millennium Addendum

Although our birth preceded the widespread use of the internet, and hence had pretty strenuous pangs, we have definitely grown up and benefited from the phenomenon – viz regular distribution of updates to the Manual which one of the previous Squires lovingly created (thanks Siv!), notifications by email etc – but there are definitely 'downsides'. I for one no longer browse the infinite number of sites available where sides show themselves off: photos, phone numbers, even notations of their own dances to emulate. It makes it even more appreciated to receive good old fashioned paper copies of very readable and varied texts, pre-selected and packaged in nice bookshelvable size, now with colour inserts along with the occasional side-splitting graphics. Many thanks Beth – and you rest, please keep the contributions coming!

Anthony Shaw
September 2010

(all photos: Anthony Shaw)



The Keys of Heaven: the life and work of Revd Charles Marson, socialist priest and folk song collector

by David Sutcliffe

I had not imagined Charles Marson, the friend with whom Cecil Sharp was staying when he heard John England sing 'The Seeds of Love' and was inspired to note down the first of his collected 'folk songs', to be anything other than a scholarly 'squarson', an ephemeral figure in the story of Sharp's revitalisation of traditional song and dance. This rich biography has shown me how very wrong I was, Marson having been not only a pivotal figure in that story but a most complex, fascinating character, a fearless rebel against the conventions of Victorian England, even at the expense of his own career.

Marson's confrontational attitude led to many a dismissal, and his poor health entailed other moves, so that, as the author points out in his summing-up, he had fourteen different jobs in twelve years (1883-1895) – most of them in London slums, but the longest tenures in Kent and in South Australia. He thought deeply about the choices before him, and was never afraid to publish his opinions. Brought up in a Protestant dissenting household, he grew to question religion but came to have confidence in the rituals of 'High Church' Anglicanism; his experiences of the lives of the working classes led him to advocate socialism as the only way to achieve a true Christian society of people valuing each other. All the places and the individuals peopling them are brought vividly to life.

The author takes us through the ideas and arguments, the social and intellectual relationships (if you think the folk world is inter-connected, you should study the world of Victorian Christian Socialism!), writing clearly and with pace. He appears to be very well qualified to tell this tale, being himself the son of a clergyman and having studied theology and sociology and worked in a far-off land (in his case Papua New Guinea) – and being now a resident of Somerset and a Morris dancer! He has drawn on a wide range of sources, and selects from them to produce succinct and yet telling pictures. Marson's story encompasses the grim slums of London, the isolation of the country parishes, the agricultural depression, the origins of the Labour Party, trade union struggles, religious disputes, the rise of feminism, the growth of Australia, and of course the 'folk revival', showing the impact of all on this concerned individual.

Of particular interest to readers of Morris Matters is the last of these, of course. Marson's life paralleled those of Mary Neal and Cecil Sharp – he determined, as Neal did, to try to help the huddled masses of the cities; he was fascinated by folk tales and songs when they were still of interest only to a few and even published a book of his own fairy tales. When he met Sharp in Australia, they found they had much in common, and back in London he helped and advised him in his search for folk songs – as well as officiating at his wedding and acting as godfather to his first child. Sharp and Marson worked together on two books of 'Folk Songs from Somerset', but quarrelled while preparing the third. Unfortunately, the correspondence between them on the subject of their disagreement was destroyed, and so we will never know the truth of the matter, but Sutcliffe sets out clearly what evidence survives. He quite rightly steps back from discussing in detail the arguments there have been over the years about Sharp's attitude towards the people from whom he collected his songs and dances, but he has certainly illuminated for me the context in which both Sharp and Neal were working and many details of their efforts to get traditional dance known and performed.

A draft biography survives, written by one of Marson's long-standing friends, as do many letters collected for it, and Sutcliffe's book is enlivened by his quotation of many passages from them, and the reproduction of illustrations including charming cartoons drawn by Marson for his daughter. Sutcliffe writes in a style accessible to a modern audience, calling his protagonists by their first names and occasionally making comparisons with modern life. His tale is slightly marred by repetition of detail when individuals in his rich tapestry

reappear. For example we are told on p.74 that the Reverend Stewart Headlam had been the founder of the Guild of St Matthew and on p.75 that he was sacked from his post, and educated at Eton and Cambridge, all of which we knew already from p.41; biographical details of E Nesbit are repeated on p.81 from p.79; and Marson's father-in-law is always referred to as 'Chloe's father Peter Bayne' – even if the reader cannot remember his name, it is not necessary to know it. However, these are minor quibbles in a work which tells an immensely rich and varied tale extremely well, and provides much to ponder relevant to our own century. Marson is quoted as writing 'My heart aches and burns here at the degradation of village life. These poor folk of mine are...sweating to produce £1,500 a year for one person and similar sums for others, and their own children go short and are half-clad, and they none of them have time to read, think, dance, play music or games. They are mere mill horses; and all they do - can do - to amuse themselves is sotting and fornication. Yet these are men and women made in the image of God, and co-heirs with all of his children of the earth and the fullness thereof... they are so tied down that they do not even know what Liberty is. How can we help them?'

The problems of 21st century society may be caused by commercialism rather than such extreme poverty, but they seem pretty similar to those troubling Marson in Kent in 1888.

Shirley Dixon
January 2011

The book is available from the author at www.charlesmarson.co.uk or on 01460 281440 – it looks like a good addition to anyone's bookshelf.

Letters

Fieldtown (MM 29-2)

The article by Roy Dommett on Fieldtown is very interesting, I read, many years ago, in an old EFDS journal, that Fieldtown dancers were noted as much for their fighting as their dancing. Apparently they had a punch up with any other dancers who danced on their patch. Also, a gaol was built in Oxford for Fieldtown Morris who poached the King's deer. It seems strange that - as they lived in the Wychwood - there are not more Fieldtown stick dances! Also where did they get the large handkerchiefs that Roy mentions?

Wassail:
Norris Winstone
August 2010

Ribbon Dancing – reply to George Frampton (MM 29-2)

Well done George, it proves that there is still more to be found. A simple ribbon dance was surprisingly common over the South of England in the 19th century and notes on them occur in several collectors' manuscripts, mostly unpublished, because it never seemed desirable to record repertoires only one example ever appeared in print. The most likely variation was in whether the ribbon was held throughout or only for part of the sequence. However the various manuscripts do include other ribbon dances, often by the comment that certain social dances could be danced holding ribbons. Instead of ribbons, they could use a kerchief or a pair of pocket handkerchiefs knotted together. I once saw a photograph of young women wearing large Edwardian hats and linked by ribbons at East Coker dancing what they called the East Coker Morris Dance as it was being performed on a special occasion. It attracted Cecil Sharp's attention.

Roy Dommett
December 2010

The Collectors Meeting Some of the Morris

This account formed part of a conference paper which is not very accessible to dancers. It covers some of the early contacts with traditional dancers and helps illuminate the times.

The Non-Event

In the autumn of 1885 D'Arcy Ferris, then living at Cheltenham, began the well-known revival of the Bidford morris. In the 1880's Ferris was involved in organising 'revels' up and down the country: in 1886 he was Master of the Pageant for the Ripon Millenary Pageant which brought the Kirkby Malzeard longsword team to fame, and also, Julian Pilling claimed, included a Lancashire Morris although no documented reference has been found. His first attempt in raising a morris was a troupe of boys for revels at Lord Wantage's in August 1884. From subsequent events it can be deduced that it was hardly a proper morris, probably with no attention given at all to tradition. It is likely that this episode was well received, yet criticised for not being "morris", as he almost immediately set to the task of obtaining genuine dances. With the aid of Dr Fosbrooke-Powers he found in the autumn of 1885 William Trotman, then aged forty-five who came from Idbury near Bledington and who had danced the morris in his youth.

Ferris was the first person to write down morris dance detail and tunes with all the attendant difficulties of being a pioneer. Much of his manuscript is now in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML). To help improve the dancing standard of the troupe of youths, Ferris contacted many morris men in Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. The evidence from letters covers Bledington, Brackley, Bucknell, Idbury, Ilmington, Longborough, and Wheatley and his address list included Blackwell, Brailes, Honington, Newbold Pacey, and Preston-on-Stour. It is impressive that in 1885 he could find a dozen places which had or recently had a morris. Harry Taylor had been,

"... asked to dance for- `em at Jubilee time for a week but squire wouldn't let him, he said it was all nonsense."

By 22nd January 1886 the youths from Bidford were ready to perform at the Bidford School Room with Ferris lecturing and dressed in his costume as "Lord of Misrule" from the Billesley Old English Fete of 1885, see *The Pictorial World* for the 4th February 1886. They danced to an old tabor bought from Tim Howard, a Brackley dancer and to Robbins on a fiddle. The episode was repeated at Alcester, Stratford-upon-Avon, Evesham and other near villages and later at Cheltenham, Bath, Clifton and London. The "circus" paid for itself and allowed a small wage for the dancers. Harry Taylor did not think much of the Bidford dancers: they were too clumsy and too heavy on the ground.

The Bidford men danced occasionally after 1886 - for certain in 1887 and 1896 - but in 1904 they were approached by the secretary of the Shakespearean Celebrations for that year, then a Mr Evans, a vet working in Stratford-upon-Avon. Evans also collected local songs and oral history using an early Edison phonograph. This Bidford side was still comprised of some of the men who had started dancing in 1886-7 and was seen by Sharp and Macilwaine when dancing at Redditch in 1906. That was the first time they tried to collect dances from active traditional dancers. Before then, the Headington dances had been taught directly to the young women of the Esperance Club and then notated from the dancing of the chief instructress, Miss Florrie Warren.

Ferris received a bad press from the early days of the Revival, yet without him realising the possibilities inherent in the growing antiquarian interest in folklore there might not have been a Revival. He seems to have coincided with the start of the modern habit of reviving old customs and traditions for national celebrations, thereby making them respectable, as at Queen Victoria's Jubilees. The interest aroused was decisive in maintaining the Ilmington

tradition. It is uncertain if it played any part in Percy Manning's involvement and the Headington Quarry morris renewal in 1897 and hence its discovery by Cecil Sharp on Boxing Day 1899.

Cecil Sharp

Sharp began his independent collecting of morris music and dance with John Mason at Stow on 29th March 1907 (see *English Dance and Song* for Spring 1967, p 23). From Mason, Sharp obtained a Constant Billy, Marriage Vow (an alternative name for Saturday Night) and Maid of the Mill, which he later published in his collection of Folk Dance Airs in 1909 as from Lower Swell. From the same source Sharp learnt of William Hathaway, a lame shoemaker, then living at 8 Burton St., Cheltenham and a former Lower Swell fiddler. Sharp saw him on the 30th and 31st of March and the 4th April and again on 9th August 1909. From the ages given to Sharp, William must have been born between 5th April and 9th August 1840, Charles Hughes of Naunton had sold Hathaway his first fiddle in exchange for a pair of boots worth 3s 6d (17½p). William Spragg was a great friend of William Hathaway and had copied out for him at some time his tunes from Sharp's notebooks. Sharp often allowed this practice. Many years later Spragg gave his tunebook to Helen Kennedy. It included tunes eg, Jockey to the Fair, presumably written out by Spragg, but with very poor barring.

Hathaway and Mason had both played for Taylor amongst others. Mason knew "Bill" Hathaway well enough to be able to give Sharp a version of the tune Black Joke as played by Hathaway. When asked about his Princess Royal, Mason said. "I began persuading it about", but Hathaway claimed for his, "this is absolutely correct". From Hathaway, Sharp learnt of Alf Tuffley and Harry Taylor at Longborough and Albert Taylor of Lower Swell, but he did not follow them up until 1910. Clive Carey noted Albert Taylor as a Bledington dancer. A brother to Charles Taylor, he was born in Oddington and married a Bledington woman, living there briefly in the 1860's. Sharp met another fiddler, on the 1st August, James Hathaway, who also played for the morris near Stow.

Cecil Sharp was not immune to criticism. Frank Kidson attacked him in *The Musical Times* of 1st January 1908 over his remarks on Country Gardens and Constant Billy. Lucy Broadwood took him to task in the *The West Sussex Gazette* of 2nd January 1908, over misquotes on singer's repertoires. Sharp subscribed to a newspaper cuttings service that extracted relevant articles from national and local papers, and this collection survives at the VWML.

Sharp entered his prolific phase of collecting morris dances in 1910. He spent Christmas 1909 with Miss Ella Leather in Herefordshire where he saw traditional country dancing and the Brimfield Morris team at Orleton (see *English Dance and Song* for Autumn 1969, p 98). He returned to London visiting Billy Wells of Bampton, the Howards and Stutsbury at Brackley, Cadd at Yardley Gobion, and seeing the older scratch side at Eynsham on the way. In March *The Morris Book vol.2* (first edition) and the first volume of *The Country Dance Book* were published. For most of March 1910 he stayed near Oxford with Mrs May Hobbs, better known as Miss May Elliot, a noted concert pianist, at Kelmscott, the former William Morris place. He was visiting George Simpson at Upton near Didcot, cycling over from Didcot railway station, to learn the Sherborne Morris, e.g. on 5th, 24th and 31st at least. George had a young team of boys and one of girls aged 10-11 years old and a local young woman as fiddler, but Sharp ignored these, although they were filmed for a two reel rustic epic in 1908 (Wortley), or perhaps 1913 (Rollo Woods), unfortunately now lost! A photograph of Simpson in his Sherborne costume with the children appears in Keith Chandler's book. On 23rd April Sharp wrote to Mrs M L Stanton of Ladle Farm, Armscote, near Stratford-upon-Avon, about 2 miles from Ilmington,

"I had a great find in an old morris man whom I traced from Sherborne in Gloucestershire. This man is the sole survivor of the last side... He is full of knowledge and full of dancing and I have been steadily emptying him... I have learned more from him than anyone else so far. His dances are quite lovely and the tunes are very jolly. I have seen him four times already."

There is another photograph of George Simpson in *The Dancing Times* of April 1925. Born in 1850 he died of cancer in 1915. Fred Hamer was told that the Simpson brothers had been in the police for a while. James was a police constable at Stonehouse, near Stroud, in 1881 when aged twenty four.

Sharp saw the Abingdon side in Ock St. Abingdon on 1st April with Mary Neal. He lectured in London on the 20th and at Retford, Nottingham on the 25th, and was staying with Mrs Stanton on the 27th. From here he wrote his first letter to the press to start the public dispute with Mary Neal, attacking in particular Sam Bennett's Ilmington side and the Abingdon dances in *The Daily News* of 29th April.

"... in the process of revival, many of the most beautiful and essential parts of the dances were lost, as anyone conversant with the attributes of the traditional morris, would see at a glance."

The cause, course and justice of Cecil Sharp's dispute has been treated elsewhere. Mrs Stanton was a frequent companion of Sharp's at this time. She took the local traditional country dancers, the 'Armscote' dancers, who in fact came from Honington, to the Stratford-upon-Avon Festivals (See *English Dance and Song* for Autumn 1966, p 100).

Meeting Harry Taylor

Cecil Sharp and a friend set out on a tour on the 27th April 1910 through Blackwell (one mile), Ilmington (two more miles), Brailes (six more miles), and then on to see the boys team at Chipping Campden (seven more miles). (William) Denis Hathaway had trained a set of boys, because the men's side, who had performed in Chipping Campden in 1896, perhaps for the first time since the 1850s, would not dance for Sharp. The boys included Don Ellis who in later years became the side's leader and, like many a leader elsewhere, a local councillor for a while. Denis told Sharp that his dances were practically Longborough dances, but a certain amount came from his grandfather-in-law, Thomas Vaile, an old Campden dancer. The connection looks tenuous when watching the traditions being danced, but there are certain stylistic features in common. The dance to the tune Young Collins, used for a stick dance at Campden, was then called Longborough Morris.

The cyclists went on to look for Harry Taylor at Longborough. They found him over the hill from Longborough at Condicote, Denis Hathaway's home village. Harry had gone over for a haystack thatching job according to Fred Taylor his son in 1964. In *Merrie England and the Morris Dancers* published in *The World's Work* in August 1912, Mrs Hobbs wrote,

"Another dancer, whom Cecil Sharp discovered pulling mangels, was asked for particulars of a certain dance. The veteran took Cecil Sharp behind a haystack and the pair capered together, the old man singing the tune at the pitch of his voice, until the data necessary for the perpetuation of the dancing were in the collector's notebook. In the middle of the dancing the farmer came on the scene at hedge-gap and sat down thunderstruck. At length he approached the dancers, spoke appreciatively of the entertainment he had been given unseen and reproached his servant not for leaving his work, for he was on piece work, but for having been with him for so many years and never let on he could dance".

In Sharp's lecture on 31st May (as reported in *The Morning Post* on 16th June) he described his visit to Taylor on 2nd May. He told how one pouring wet day he bicycled six miles from a station to interview a former morris man, seventy years of age, who worked as a farmhand in one of the highest parts of the Cotswolds. There under the shelter of a haystack, using wisps of hay in lieu of the orthodox handkerchiefs, Mr Sharp and "Old Harry", as the man was called, danced a 'Pas de Deux', the ancient one whistling the tunes, of which, along with the steps, notes were taken and afterwards pieced together. The first dance gone through was Constant Billy, because of its possible relationship to the Campden dance, then Country Gardens, Taylor's favourite tune for the sidestep dance, and onto Hey Diddle Dis, the processional.

"Hey Diddle Dis, my backside you may kiss,
And away goes the Longborough Morris"

Fred Taylor had the same story of his dad having a dance with Sharp by a stack. The demonstration side at that lecture danced some then very recently collected dances: Shooting from Brackley (note **not** from Hinton-in-the-Hedges), Constant Billy with two sticks from Sherborne, and Brighton Camp from Eynsham.

Sharp was fifty years old and on the brink of public recognition for his work. Sharp returned to London at the beginning of May and fired some more public letters to the press about Mary Neal on the 9th and 10th. On the latter day in *The Morning Post*, Sharp refers to the recent Queen's Hall show with a Northants Beansetting and an Ilmington Maid of the Mill...

"Survivors of the old Ilmington side would have told Neal that the dances 'had not been handed on in a correct form' and that the steps were as untraditional as they were uncouth; that the figures were incorrect and the tunes untrustworthy".

On 25th May, the paper had another letter.

"Cecil Sharp has all Sam Bennett's dances in his collection, but he would not dream of publishing them."

In fact he recorded them under "Stretton-on-Fosse" from the place of the flower show at which he saw them, rather than give them the dignity of being called Ilmington.

On 13th August 1912 Sharp's letter said,

"The traditional morris of the Warwickshire village of Ilmington was difficult to get, since it had not been danced for a long time, and there were only to be found two old villagers and a railway worker at Birmingham who had taken part in it. The information extracted from them on repeated visits was ingeniously pieced together and the result is a beautiful dance of some historic importance."

His reconstruction was a perception of the Ilmington of about 1867, the last "proper" outing being a visit to the Tysoe Club, but which was itself a revival, and he largely ignored the subsequent dancing. Following Sharp's criticisms, Sam Bennett went back and established from the older men to his satisfaction an authentic form, which he was teaching at least in the 1940's, and which was inherited by Oxford City through R Kenworthy Schofield, after he had moved to Oxford from St Albans.

Cecil Sharp was back with Taylor on the 13th May 1910. Fred Taylor was eighteen at the time of Sharp's visits and recalled his dad teaching Sharp the steps. Sharp first wrote down the tune of a dance and then, while whistling or singing it, learnt the steps and figures by dancing opposite as No. 2 and mimicking Taylor. This was Sharp's technique both at Sherborne and Fieldtown as well and as all three traditions were published very soon after being collected, it is not surprising that some of the "points" of the dances as published in his Morris Books do not appear in Sharp's papers. As he taught the dances immediately to the "demonstration" side, "points" of style have come down through the EFDS teaching that also do not appear in the Morris Books.

The only other collector that Sharp appears to have trusted was George Butterworth. He and Tiddy visited Gibbs and Wright at Bledington and gathered the steps and dances that Sharp used in his revision in his Morris Book. The music is in the Butterworth collection in the VWML. Miss Sinclair, Ralph Honeybone and others confirmed that these two were the source of the material for the EFDS. At Bucknell the collecting difficulties defeated Butterworth and he had to call on Sharp.

Joynes the Fiddler

For some of the time at Longborough, Sharp had the assistance of the local young fiddler George Joynes, then aged twenty three, who had had no connection with the morris but who could read music. Until then Joynes had had no idea that there had been a local morris, so well had it died since the early 1890's. Sharp visited Taylor on 13th April 1911, and noted to his great delight his version of London Pride. Douglas Kennedy met Taylor for the first time on Sharp's mens team's Cotswold tour in 1912. Clive Carey visited Taylor on 22nd March 1913 during a follow up visit to the Cotswold survivors on behalf of Mary Neal.

Mr. Joynes was fired with enthusiasm after Sharp's visits and wrote out some tunes played by Harry's eldest son Henry, also a fiddler. He intended to give them to Sharp when he next saw him but they never met again. Joynes lived at Longborough with his sister. A gardener most of his life and a clock and watch repairer in his spare time, he had also worked on farms, as a shepherd and in the Donnington Brewery just two miles away. He had assembled a collection of morris tunes from libraries and other places but they were stolen just before World War II by a woman visitor who had been stopping locally in a caravan.

Rolf Gardiner

In 1923 Rolf Gardiner went on a walking tour across the Berkshire Downs and up through the Cotswolds with Christopher Scaife, then at Oxford and later to be a professor at the University of the Lebanon. They met several singers but only two morris dancers, Harry Taylor of Longborough and Charles Taylor at Church Icomb. Rolf remembered Charles doing a few steps for him. He could not be stopped, despite his daughter's efforts; he being partially blind and it being a rough stone floor and he knocking into furniture. The meeting with Harry was overlaid with memories of subsequent visits with the Travelling Morrice. What he learnt then was also re-gathered by the Travelling Morrice later.

There was a lot of dissatisfaction amongst the Cambridge undergraduate morris men just before this visit, which found expression in Rolf. He wrote in *Youth* Vol.2, 1923, p.52,

"If you plant them in artificial conditions where vulgarity is rife, all the more so if you spray them with the germ-killer of a spurious traditionalism ... the dance subjected to the anatomical treatment of text-book legislation too is a corpse ..."

He continued by proposing a ten point programme for changing the character of the EFDS, from Classes to Festivals.

- 1) No public demonstrations
- 2) Discourage women's morris
- 3) Divide the work clearly between, a. proselytising. b. artistic
- 4) Proselytising - five area groups with freedom of action, to tour villages, like the Travelling Morrice in character, perhaps with the morris restricted to public shows and boys and mens organisations
- 5) Artistic - dramatic work instead of displays (Old King Cole)
- 6) Encourage experiment but be relentless in criticism
- 7) Meet continental dancers in England
- 8) Send English teams abroad
- 9) Masques, processions, pageants in public, everywhere,
- 10) Rename as the English Festival Society.

For this view, which was fifty years too early, he was asked to drop out of the Festival team for the King's Theatre, Hammersmith, 2nd to 7th July 1923. He then expressed his views on the EFDS and morris in *The Challenge* issues for 6th and 17th July 1923.

"Cecil Sharp got dances chiefly from old men, greybeards of sixty and eighty, men with stiffness in their bones and rheumatism in their joints. He saw the dance as it was performed by the men who had danced in the hotness of their youth and now remembered it like a half-forgotten dream. Out of his notes and conjectures Cecil Sharp gave us back the

English Dance. One wonders at the [judgement] "decadent" [applied] to Rose Tree from Bampton?

... the technique of the morris as performed by the members of the EFDS was derived from an application of theories conjectured by Cecil Sharp ... I did not think it necessary to explain further that when Cecil Sharp set out to collect the dances he knew next to nothing about dancing technique and that he has never been a proficient morris dancer himself, that certain movements, such as the galley, I have seen him demonstrate in a way diametrically opposite to that described in his books.

Only a few weeks ago as a guest at the house of Mr. Taylor, once captain of the Longborough side, I learnt something of the method by which Cecil Sharp collected the dances of that particular village and was able not only to correct some minor mistakes but to collect some new dances from Mr Taylor and another octogenarian of the same name who danced for the Oddington side, This experience proved to me the supreme difficulty of gauging movements accurately when demonstrated by limbs withered and lacking flexibility and when one man had to represent a dance intended for six."

Few of the Travelling Morrice went all the way with Rolf's views. Many were very orthodox and these continued with the Travelling Morrice for many years and exercised a decisive influence on the morris in the early years of the Morris Ring.

Rolf became friendly with Mary Neal. As reported in *The Globe* for 22nd April 1919, she had disbanded the Esperance Club during the war years, the male members joining the army, the girls going to war work and the children having to be kept at home because of the perceived risk from the air raids. She became a secretary, a senior civil service grade, in the Ministry of Pensions. She said that some of the teachers were still active though and she was hopeful of starting again. However she resolved never again to fight publicly with the EFDS and encouraged her workers to associate with the EFDS branches springing up everywhere in default of the Esperance organisation. She gave Rolf some background newspaper cuttings, that she had thought valuable and kept in order to help him in his debates with Sharp and his followers. In an interview at the Farmers' Club on 27th October 1961 Gardiner expressed the belief that the Karpeles sisters were jealous of Mary Neal, and took Cecil Sharp away and fostered the bad feelings.

She and Rolf joined "Kibbokift", an apolitical movement concerned with open air camping, woodcraft and the love of all lores of nature. Miss Neal was "Keeper of the Open Hearth" at "The Cottage", Amberley, Sussex and Rolf was "The Ranger". Kibbokift was founded by John Hargreave on 18th August 1920 at a time when he was HQ commissioner for Woodcraft and Camping to the Boy Scouts. He later became political and turned a portion of the movement into "The Greenshirts" or New Social Credit Party.

Gardiner wrote in 1928 a brief account of the Travelling Morrice which was published in his own magazine *North Sea and Baltic* for High Summer 1938.

"In the spring of 1924, two of the morris men [Gardiner and Heifer] conspired to give the side [Cambridge] a taste of the real thing. They poisoned the imagination of their fellows with the charmed names of Longborough, Bledington and Sherborne. It was like talking to the home stranded Crusader about Jerusalem and the Holy Land. In this mood the Travelling Morrice was born."

Arthur Heifer was probably the key motivator. They had first met at Chelsea Polytechnic when Rolfe was 16. Heifer had just finished at Oxford and was going to Cambridge to run the family book business. He had been educated at Perse School, a cadet at Sandhurst and commissioned in 1918 into the Royal West Surrey Regiment. He was severely wounded and invalided home. He gained a second class degree in Modern languages as an army student at Queen College, Oxford. Arthur died of pneumonia on 1st November 1931, aged 32.

Roy Dommert
Updated December 2010

Of Great Aunt Dorcus

"An early martyr to the cause of women's Morris"

It seems that the Morris Ring never said that women could not dance Morris. This may seem news to some of you but I have it on very good authority that it is an urban (or even a rural) myth. Of course I have known about this for some time and only family honour has kept me silent, however it is so long ago now and those involved are long since gone. I think now it is time to speak out on the truth on this matter.

According to family papers my Great Aunt Dorcus was something of a rebel in the early thirties. Having been introduced to Morris dancing by a group of West London bohemians (the lifestyle not the nationality), she came to specialise in dancing solo jigs – mainly because nobody else would dance with her. To tell the truth she was a "big lass" with a penchant for men of a nautical persuasion and no sailor tying up at Wigan pier was safe from her. Ultimately she settled down with a young sailor by the name of Johnson who she had met on a ramble somewhere between Plymouth Sound and Dover.

You should understand that there was a prejudice then against "large people" dancing Morris. This, plus her very enthusiastic style dancing, meant that no team would dance with her: at least not after the nasty stick throwing incident - though to be fair the musician did survive the impalement.

However it was her taste for adventure and showmanship that finally did for her in the eyes of the Morris Ring. Not content with dancing solo jigs, Great Aunt Dorcus was driven to undertaking a number of increasingly dangerous escapades. She it was who introduced the idea of dancing on an upended barrel and of jig competitions, though with increasingly bizarre conditions (such as doing the Bacca Pipes over crossed pipers).

This culminated in the great Thaxted Disaster when she attempted a three minute jig on a powder keg with a four minute fuse to celebrate the inaugural meeting of the Morris Ring. It was while the Ring members were debating a motion that "no woman should dance the Morris in a manner that endangered life and limb". Unfortunately the ensuing explosion cut short both the debate and the then secretary, so only the first part of the resolution was ever written down.

That was the last of her known dance escapades though not of her association with Morris. When last heard of Great Aunt Dorcus and her sailor lover were offering boating holidays on the Grand Union canal for large Morris men and women. If you lived near the canal you might have seen their boat emblazoned with their company name – the Outsize Capering Cruise.

However, we suspect that Great Aunt Dorcus did continue to dance the Morris and had further brushes with the Ring. Some indication of her later activities is hinted at in a song still popular in her home village. Traditionally it is sung outside the pub on May Day by the young girls of the village after they have stolen and drunk the Morris men's beer.

The Female Morris Man

When I was a young girl I thought I'd take the chance
I dressed in men's clothing the Morris for to dance
The Bagman recruiting me said I was a nice young man,
"I think you'll make a dancer, so step it if you can"
So step it if you can, so step it if you can,
I think you'll make a dancer, so step it if you can.

When I was at Ring meetings we would lie down to sleep,
And lying by a Morris man I would my secret keep,
In pulling off my baldricks it often made me smile,
To think I danced the Morris but a maiden all the while.
A maiden all the while, a maiden all the while,
To think I danced the Morris but a maiden all the while.

My legs were long and slender, my waist was thin and small,
All for to dance a solo jig I did amaze them all,
I danced upon a barrel head while the musician played
I danced upon a barrel head but still remained a maid
But still remained a maid, but still remained a maid
I danced upon a barrel head but still remained a maid

I was sent up to Sidmouth to dance in a display,
And there I might be dancing yet unto this very day,
But a young girl fell in love with me, I said I was a maid
And straightway to the Morris Ring my secret she betrayed.
My secret she betrayed, my secret she betrayed
And straightway to the Morris Ring my secret she betrayed.

So fare thee well, dear Bagman, you have been kind to me,
And likewise dear comrades, I'm not forgetting thee,
And if your side it should be short for want of any man,
I'll put on my bells and baldricks and I'll dance a jig again,
I'll dance a jig again, I'll dance a jig again,
I'll put on my bells and baldricks and I'll dance a jig again.

Long Lankin
October 2010

Still Folk Dancing After All These Years! – a review

Joy, oh joy! Five hours of folk music on the Beeb in December? Unprecedented! There was 'Folk Britannia' a few years ago, spread over three instalments. But one hour of calendar custom? I only recall The Spinners devoting an entire programme to Mayday at Padstow superimposed on one of their Bolton Octagon concerts in the 1960/70s.

The aspirational parts of the press release read: "... Sisters Rachel and Becky Unthank take a journey around England from Spring to Autumn 2010 to experience living folk dance traditions in action. Themselves Northumberland clog dancers, they explore a shared passion for dance that comes from a place, a people or a season and make some moving and unexpected discoveries. ...They discover the most surprising dances, ceremonies, rituals and drunken antics that mark the turning of the seasons and the passing of the year. The Unthinks learn about the evolving history of the dances, whether connected to the land and the cycles of fertility, or to working customs and practices in industrial towns. ... As (they) complete their journey, they reflect on the curious but vibrant world of local dances which flies in the face of modernisation and sometimes of ridicule, to keep the traditions and the steps alive." So, did it do what it said on the proverbial tin? Was it worth watching? Was it a valid documentary of twenty-first century culture?

In answer to that, one has to analyse what the documentary set out to do, considering its limitations. It was never going to be a definitive guide: such things could never do the subject justice in one hour. It focused purely on spring and summer traditions involving dance – so no Molly, Border, or longsword. Rapper only snuck in as the initial point of interest from the interrogators' perspective, since their father George Unthank is himself a dancer. The point was made that "it is difficult for English people to grasp they have their own traditions..." but possible "...if you know where to look."

The narrative started on Easter Saturday in Bacup. I recall the sense of expectation with absolutely no ceremony as the small brass band and single line of Bacup Britannia Coconut Dancers stepped down the town street on their way from Rochdale. Nothing had changed since 1985. Traffic roaring alongside. No bunting. No accompanying gala. Nothing! Club secretary Joe Healey was interviewed, who told them a little of their history – the unifying feature of the men quarrying, then dancing by way of 'relief for one day in the year' – also other local teams with similar customs. Without questioning, we were told about 'Moorish pirates' being the inspiration behind the original dance (albeit so far inland), and the blacking being a 'fertility tribute to Springtime', but the Unthinks' role was never to cross-examine such beliefs.

Ah, Mayday! Wilmington in East Sussex with Long Man morris "making sure the sun would come up". One minute of that, and even less of the Hastings Jack in the Green festival, then off to Padstow. Surprisingly, little time was spared on that topic either. Doc Rowe was interviewed, describing the scene and feeling of community, and I recall him once remarking how this was a very public party celebrated by the people of this Cornish fishing port for themselves. So far as the dancing was concerning, the mannerisms of the teaser relative to the horse were noted with reference to the overcrowding of the narrow Padstonian streets. The Spinners recalled the never-ending May song throughout the day, which is my abiding memory of my visit in 1995, but the documentary gave little opportunity to explore further.

Moulton in Northamptonshire has a May Queen custom that emanates from Victorian times. There is a May cart – a wagon with a bower of decorated hoops which acts as a throne room for their queen, all based on a photograph from 1922. Moulton Morris equates with the Care family. Former Morris Ring squire Barry Care, now acts as their fool, and was interviewed giving factual information. A little more baloney was espoused by Robert Care (grandson?), who did admit that "most people knock it because they don't know what it's about, because of the beer bellies" ..."(but) we put everything (effort) into it most of the time ... the crowd lift you." Some gender issues were raised which amused the Unthinks, fortunately without

dwelling on it. The sisters were taught the Brackley stick twiddle: A-level stuff at the speed the Moulton team do it!

Over to Bampton. The incredulity of three teams in an Oxfordshire market town taxed the Unthanks' imagination, as it once did this author writing in the forerunner to 'fRoots' a long time ago – and I'm not going to get my hands burnt over the evolution of all this or utter the names Shergold, Wixey, or Woodley overlong. Tom Daniels and David Townsend of the Bampton Traditional Morris (BTM) and Bampton Morris respectively were interviewed to try and enlighten us, to say nothing about the other team: the Traditional Bampton Morris. The emphasis was that the town has a 'living tradition' which continues to evolve: "three teams with three different styles which change with the times", and Harry Pearce of the BTM spoke about the importance of "getting your steps right". One such change is that of dancing location, simply because the number of pubs in Bampton has now dwindled. I recall Matt Green once saying to me "at this rate, we'll be dancing in the Co-op car park!" The Unthanks were seen scampering up an alley which may well have been the one leading from the Square to the former Eagle to find the next venue. Emphasis was made on how and why the teams dance in the gardens of the bigger houses. A number of residents passed comment on this and the community feeling engendered on the day.

Discussing Bampton cannot usefully be done without reference to the roots of dance: enter Cecil Sharp and multiple archive footage. Librarian Malcolm Taylor talked facts rather than fancy. He showed them Sharp's 'Music Notes' detailing his early attempts at notation as though such things could be directly interpreted from the printed page. There was also some comment about teaching dance in schools based on "something (preserved) in stone in a library" whilst recognising that tradition 'endures' without remaining static.

In justification that 'new' traditions can be started by enthusiasts based on lapsed ones, our next visit was to Penzance for the Midsummer fire festival, Golowan. Merv Davey was interviewed how this new festival started in 1990 feeling the need to forge a Cornish identity following their incorporation into the League of Celtic Nations in 1904. Recent footage was shown of masked people parading, many in fancy dress, massed accordions playing a schottisch, and someone dressed bearing a horse's skull. There was also some kind of dance by the community all holding hands and simply snaking round the town's streets. This was curious in itself, as it was the Unthanks' first example of a dance not performed as a set dance by differently costumed delegates of the community (e.g. morris dancers). In all, the dance concerned didn't look any different from that seen at a ceilidh.

I'm no expert when it comes to step dancing – I can't even manage the basic shuffle, not through want of trying! Travellers Percy West, Billy West, Mo Allen, Leo Temple and others have been seen at festivals in 2010 as an informal team. To me, stepping or clog dancing is largely a solo affair tied to the stage or competition, be it theatre or a public bar floor. The scene chosen here was (presumably) the Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket, and Simon Ritchie, Katie Howson and many others familiar to festival-goers could be seen among the spectators. The emphasis here was the stepping was peculiar to the travelling community rather than any locality. The Unthanks, who are familiar with the Northumbrian style of clogging, tried to emulate Billy West's stepping with some success after some practice.

Back on more familiar soil to the world of Morris was the Saddleworth Rushcart Festival revived in the 1970s at Uppermill. I confess that, although I've heard of it and seen many photographs over the years, I have never witnessed any rushcart revival first-hand. Richard Hankinson spoke about cutting rushes in early August to spread on church floors, as indeed they were in the days before pews. Peter Ashworth was interviewed as a founder member of the Saddleworth men who were formed in 1974, with a certain amount of pride at the way the festival had progressed during his time, and the current squire David Biggs commented on the magic of the sparking of clog irons on the ground. I know that rushcart festivals became a feature of the Northwest Morris revival in the 1970s and 80s, and hope that another reader of 'Morris Matters' will update us on progress. (*there's a challenge!* – Ed)

And lastly to Abbots Bromley for their September horn dance. No mention was made of the quaint costumes based on characters in the Betley Window in the Victoria & Albert Museum, or the role of D'Arcy Ferris¹ in the nineteenth century. When surmising the longevity of calendar custom one is cautious in dating it beyond the existence of the printed word. So, in taking down the antlers from the parish church, the initiative was taken to have them carbon-dated revealing them to emanate from 1050! To me, this proves that them to be 960 years old, and the jury is out on the dance itself. We were then treated to the gory reality of the manufacture of a fool's pig's bladder. Interviews were made with some of the participants, including 21-year-old David Sweeting who first took part when he was 4 years old. Now the bearer of the hobby horse, he was once the juvenile archer who periodically emulated firing a bow and arrow at the horse. Some footage of the dance in action was shown, plus the interminable procession (partly in a minibus) to the tune 'The Captain With His Whiskers'. Some of the spectators were interviewed, notably the Bagot family who own Blithfield Hall, and farmer Richard Hall who saw it as "his duty to continue the custom." Some spectators were said to be aghast at seeing females take part! In fact, the Farrell family, who have long nurtured the custom, comprised six daughters but no sons so the onus was to continue the custom through the female line. As was commented, this was a 'tradition safeguarded by families... rules (were bent) to fit circumstances, yet didn't threaten to dilute the tradition'.

So, back to my original questions; did it do what it said on the proverbial tin? Yes, undoubtedly. It was satisfying in a way that the odd five minutes on 'Country File', 'B Road Britain', regional news item, or other contribution leave you wanting more. Was it worth watching? Yes, it looked through informed eyes without ridicule or trivialising anything. Interviewees were chosen to avoid any embarrassing stereotypes, but balanced between factual details or fanciful where the latter prevails. There were omissions. It could have been presented differently which might have given a different spread of detail: Helston, broom dancing at Dartmoor – each good examples where dance is embraced by the locality rather than as a public spectacle by people not immediate to that community, which is perhaps why Rochester Sweeps and Hastings Jack were excluded. Absolutely nothing was said about private or public barn dances or ceilidhs. (*Hey, reviewer. We only had one hour!*)

That said, we are led to believe that this was purely a personal selection by the Unthanks. Was it a valid document of twenty-first century culture? Partly, as what was familiar to me seems timeless anyway. Much was made about how 'tradition' evolves rather than remains static, and how it must embrace the community to survive. Never voiced, but of more concern, is the progress of popular culture via the media to the detriment of on-street entertainment – may be in fifty years time, the three Bampton teams won't have a pub to dance outside anymore, what then? Will it interest people enough to join a Morris side? The trickier ones, eh?! This wasn't meant to be a recruitment tool, but who knows where it might take us? The promotion by the Unthanks may attract younger people, so we can but hope. Where should programme makers go from here? Repeat it on BBC1 or BBC 2 to begin with. Then, hopefully, BBC4 or some enterprising documentary maker might take the initiative in a 'Tradition Britannia' series: for the purist, that wouldn't be enough, but at least it would be a start!

George Frampton
January 2010

¹ He was also known latterly (1880's) as D'Arcy de Ferrars - Ed

National Folk Archive Launches Online Catalogue

The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML) is launching an online catalogue at midday on 25 January 2011. This is the first phase of an on-going programme to enable anybody around the world to access information about items held by the library and even browse a library shelf. The catalogue will be found at <http://koha.efdss.org>.

This first phase will make available the Leslie Shepard Collection. The Shepard collection was chosen as a pilot project to test and tailor the system to meet the needs of our unique library. Following this pilot, VWML will continue to convert and upload existing electronic data, as well as converting its card catalogues and add new additions directly onto the system.

The Leslie Shepard Collection

Leslie Alan Shepard (1917–2004) was a passionate collector of books and printed ephemera on a variety of subjects, including folk song and broadside ballads. Born in East London in 1917, Shepard moved to Ireland in 1969, settling in Dublin where he died in 2004. He was a world authority and prolific writer on street literature, early moving images, the paranormal, and many other subjects. Towards the end of his life and after his death, Shepard's books and printed items were dispersed. His Bram Stoker collection was given to the Dublin City Library. He donated material of Irish interest to the Irish Traditional Music Archive shortly after its foundation, and his books relating to the subjects of broadsides and printing, folk music and street literature were kindly bestowed on the VWML in 2002. With the help of several volunteers, this extraordinary collection of 1,471 items was transported to London, organised, labelled, and catalogued in an internal database.

The Catalogue

In 2010, with the support of Arts Council England, a project to migrate the Library's internal databases to a fully integrated web-based library management system was begun. Cataloguer Elaine Bradtke, and IT expert and EFDSS trustee Doug Kingston collaborated on implementing *Koha*, an open-source system which was developed in New Zealand (<http://koha-community.org/>). The literature collection was deemed the first priority and VWML will continue to convert and upload all existing electronic data, which currently amounts to an additional 13,500 items. In due course, catalogues for all media will be made available online.

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library houses a unique multi-media collection of material on traditional arts and culture, including books, manuscripts, off-prints, pamphlets, periodicals, serials, press cuttings, broadsides, prints, paintings, line drawings, photographs, slides, artefacts, ephemera, records, reel-to-reel tapes, phonograph cylinders, videos, cine films, CDs and audio cassettes. Along with various other recent initiatives (e.g. *VWML Online* and the *Take 6 Archive*, both accessible through the EFDSS website at www.efdss.org), this web-based catalogue is part of an ongoing project to bring information about the contents of this library to a wider audience and make them more accessible. It represents a major change in the library's working methods and is the first step in converting the catalogue to a more user friendly and accessible system. The Leslie Shepard Collection itself is a significant contribution to the library as it augments and supports the existing subject areas and collections.