

MORRIS MATTERS

Volume 12 • Number 2

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There is a mixed bag this issue, a couple of reviews which will either make you remember fondly (or with horror) the events mentioned if you were there - or perhaps inspire you to go to the next one; some more thoughtful stuff on the history of morris round the world; some ideas for dances; ideas on performance (an interesting insight into members of the team I belong to); a look forward to the year 2000 and a couple of adverts (a book and a workshop, both of which sound fun).

Morris Matters *is compiled by Beth Neill, 36 Foxbury Road, Bromley, Kent BR1 4DQ. Any new or lapsed subscribers are encouraged! (Annual subscription rate is £5 in the EEC, £7 outside EEC; published in January and July of each year) Back copies of some issues are available.*

Any articles related to morris dancing welcomed: views expressed in any of the articles are not necessarily those of the editor.

Thanks to Jill Griffiths for all her help with this issue and to Mary Fox for the cover design.

THE NINE DAIES BLUNDER

We all know that Will Kemp danced the Morris from London to Norwich in nine days, even though those dancing days were spread out over nearly a month, but in what year did he dance it? In 1840 the Camden Society faithfully reprinted the text of "Kemps Nine Daies Wonder" (the original pamphlet is in the Bodleian Library) with a very learned and well researched introduction by the Reverend Alexander Dyce. The cover of the pamphlet, which portrays the well known woodcut of Kemp dancing to Will Slye's pipe and tabor bears the date 1600 but Dyce stated on page six of his introduction "In 1599 Kemp attracted much attention by dancing the morris from London to Norwich; and as well to refute the lying ballads put forth concerning this exploit, as to testify his gratitude for the favours he had received during his'gambols' he published in the following year the curious pamphlet which is now reprinted"

Dyce was not the first to put forward the view that the dance took place a year before the pamphlet was published. Blomfield in his "History of Norfolk" states, "In 1599 ... one Kemp came dancing the whole Way from London to Norwich" (vol ii p250) and in Chamber's "The Book of Days" he says of Kemp's dance, "This feat created so great a sensation, that he was induced to print an account of it ... It was printed in 1600 and the title page is adorned with a woodcut, representing Kemp dancing, and his attendant, Tom the Piper, playing on the pipe and tabor. The exploit took place in 1599 but it was the subject of popular allusion for many years afterwards"

In 1977 when I was organising the Morris Clubs of London's re-enactment of the Nine Daies Wonder for Easter of the Silver Jubilee year, the above learned research convinced us that the dance had taken place in 1599, although with the benfit of hindsight, we should have realised that the lying ballad sellers and Kemp himself would have gone into print as soon as possible to capitalise on a topical event and not waited the space of a year.

It was early in 1977 that I met the actor, Chris Harris. Quite coincidentally he was compiling his one man show 'Kemp's Jig' and having heard of our intended re-enactment, contacted me to see if he could perform his show in Norwich at the same time as our dance. I taught him a few basic morris steps as up until then, he had had little contact with the contemporary morris scene. Unfortunately, his busy schedule prevented him from coming to Norwich then, but a fruitful relationship had been formed since Chris, armed with the Morris Ring Address list would contact the local side in the area where he was performing and invite them to come and give a display before the show. I remember dancing outside the National Theatre with the Wheatsheaf Morris Men when we performed at the Cottesloe Theatre. It made good business sense as everyone went to the show, but I am sure all the dancers thoroughly enjoyed his excellent performance. Chris was a professional clown and made a wonderful Kemp, and the following year I organised, what was as far as I know, the first Morris Fools and Animal workshop, at which Chris taught us many excellent clowning techniques.

As a result of Chris Harris's research for 'Kemp's Jig' he published in a limited edition of 300, "Will Kemp: Shakespeare's forgotten Clown", which included a facsimile edition of the Nine Daies Wonder pamphlet (Kylin Press 1983). In it he describes how Kemp danced to Norwich in 1600 and that "Kemp's statement that during his 'Continuance in the Cittye' he was kept 'at the

common charges' is proved by records in the city archives. A meeting of the Mayor's Court was held on Saturday March 8th 1600 - the day on which he danced into the city - and in the court book of that date it is recorded: 'It ys this day ordered by Mr Mayor and Courts that X15 be given to Kempe, the Lorde Chamberlaine his servant ..'

The confusion over dates prompted Kemp's Men of Norwich (mindful of the fact that their fine city might be inundated with Morris dancers from all over the country arriving in 1999 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Kemp's feat) to clear up the matter once and for all. James Bremner, their bagman, wrote to the Eastern Daily Press (10/2/93) appealing for information. Letters and phone calls flooded in and some people even called in at their practice evening to help sort out the problem. Perhaps the clearest explanation came from Jean Kennedy, the Norfolk and Norwich County Archivist, and I will quote from her letter to the E.D.P. (20/2/93). *"According to my calculation Kemp's dance took place on February 11th 1600, not 1599. Until 1752* in England the first day of the New Year was reckoned to be March 25th (Lady Day) not January 1st, so a date appearing in January 1599 would according to modern reckoning be January 1600. In 1600, a leap year, Clean Lent (which began on Ash Wednesday) started on February 6th, so the first Monday in Clean Lent was February 11th, not the 10th as Chris Harris states in Shakespeare's Forgotten Clown."*

I have since been to the Norfolk Record Office to consult the Norwich Mayor's Court Book for 1595 - 1603 to check the reference referred to by Chris Harris, which was dated (in Latin) 8th March in the 42nd year of Elizabeth, which by today's reckoning would be 1600, even if at the time it may have been considered to be 1599, although the majority of the populace would probably have neither known, nor cared. Therefore the 400th anniversary of Kemp's historic dance will be in the year 2000.

Perhaps I should add here that Kemp's Men have no objections to anyone intending to dance to Norwich in that year (indeed, they were most helpful in 1977 and splendidly danced the last leg of the relay into Norwich with the Squire, Dave Robertson, dressed as Kemp dancing in Kemp's footsteps through the city) but they would be grateful of the courtesy of being informed of any such intentions.

Lest anyone should be sad that nothing might happen in 1999, may I point out that that year is a very significant, if not a more important Morris anniversary, for on December 26th it will be 100 years to the day when Cecil Sharp first encountered William Kimber and the Headington Quarry Morris Men.

** In 1752 the Gregorian calendar replaced the Julian calendar and the infamous 11 days were lost*

Jonathan Hooton

Foreman, Golden Star Morris, Norwich

© May 1993

GOOD MORRIS DANCE PERFORMANCE

I believe that there is more to a good morris dance performance than waving my arms and legs around in an appropriate way and moving my body over the ground in a particular pattern. I have been dancing the morris for over 15 years and have always given my best to each performance. I have worked hard at details of style and form and have always maintained a good level of fitness. Until recently, however, I had never fully addressed the 'sports psychology' aspect.

As part of a management training/ self-development course, I have just completed a project on the internal psychological strategies used by those I consider to be really good morris dance performers. The results are not only interesting to read but are easy to put into practice - for instance when I adopt the successful strategy, I enjoy dancing more and have received feedback from my fellow dancers that my dancing is better! So if you want to improve your dancing while sitting in a comfy armchair, read on!

I distilled the results from personal interviews, each lasting 1 - 2 hours, and completed written questionnaires. I selected five members of my team (Windsor Morris) including the dancers who won first and second* place in the 1992 Sidmouth jig competition. When answering the questions, I directed them to concentrate on occasions when they had performed really well, so that the strategy I elicited gives motivation towards a positive goal. I found that when their attention moved to occasions that were not successful, their motivation became focussed on moving away from something - e.g. I mustn't screw up - a motivation strategy I did not want to model as it is usually less effective, and I know how to do it already!

The most successful strategy is begun before the performer arrives at a gig, and is continued throughout the entire gig, The sequence is as follows:

When getting into kit and travelling to gig
- feel excited and confident of self and rest of team
- feel comfortable and fit
- say to self 'we'll give a very good performance'
- remember previous successes

Before performance at the gig
As above but also the following:
- feel muscles ready
- say to self 'lift and expand posture, no rigidity'
- see team with confident body posture, happy, alert
- see audience watching, interested
- see musician happy
- say to self 'we're going to give a very good performance now'
- say to self 'what position I'll be in etc'
- say to self 'audience/sense of occasion/location deserve it'

* Editor's note, the dancer who came second is a musician for Windsor, he was dancing as a Berkshire Bedlam.

During performance
- feel elated with edge of fear
- feel light in weight, floating, balanced
- see confident body postures, people moving together
- see eye contact and/or smile with dancers and/or audience
- see happy musician
- hear beats and emphasis of music
- say to self 'this is what it's all about'
- note any odd things and think, 'I must regulate to others'e.g. keep in line
- say to self 'audience/sense of occasion/location deserve it'

Underlying all these processes are the beliefs and values that motivate the excellent performer

The following are <u>valued</u>
- enjoyment of athleticism
- using energy with control
- being part of a group pulling together
- perfectionism
- acclaim

The following are <u>believed</u>
- dancing well is an expression of self
- English tradition is worthwhile
- we are strong and capable (particularly effective for women)
- the audience/sense of occasion/location deserve it

The sense of occasion seems to be influenced by the feelings received from an audience, so that influencing the audience even before dancing can have a positive effect on performance. One way of doing this is for the fool to warm up an audience - I feel Windsor have done this successfully for some time.

I have now successfully used the above strategy on three occasions and by employing the strategy, I am unable to engage in other unsuccessful strategies, e.g. tension producing, mind wandering. The result is that I am more 'present' at a gig with more available energy, giving more enjoyment and satisfaction to myself and others.

So now you know what to do, imagine your performance and how you will feel when you are using this strategy - a true example of optimising your potential so everyone gains!

My project does not end here. I want to go on developing the strategy and I welcome your input. Do you use any additional processes? Can the processes be more clearly expressed? What is your experience in adopting the strategy? I would be interested to compare how other sides judge good performance - a project for the future. So please let me know how it's going, either through these pages or directly.

Mary Fox, Windsor Morris June 1993

MORRIS DANCING AND AMERICA PART 3

America had been primed for the introduction of morris dancing by a recent interest in folk dance, beginning in approximately 1905. This was encouraged by the Playground Association of America, founded in 1907 with President Roosevelt as honorary president. In a 1908 essay, Dr. Luther H. Gulick, president of the Association, describes this revival and its rationale. Folk dancing for children was seen as filling a social and developmental void caused by the rapid pace of the modern world.

In 1907 folk dance was introduced to the New York Schools system as part of Physical Education (two years before morris dancing was accepted in English schools). In this city of many immigrants, folk dance was felt to have the additional effect of maintaining children's pride in their ethnic heritage, while breaking down racism between immigrant groups. The revival grew to include competitions between schools and huge outdoor displays [1]

Folk dance was also perceived as beneficial to adults. Helen Storrow (later director of EFDSS Boston Centre and provider of the land for Pinewoods camp saw a particular benefit to stressed urban working women. In a 1911 address, she even anticipated "industrial league" morris competitions: "I look forward to the day when the ribbon counter of the Jordan Marsh Company will dance the ribbon counter of Filene's and the floorwalkers of Macy's will compete at 'Shepherd's Hey' with the floorwalkers of Altman's for a trophy offered by those famous houses" [2]

There is evidence that as early as 1908 morris dancing was taught in the New York public schools, apparently with Sharp's *The Morris Book* and Graham's *Shakespearean Bidford Morris* as sources [3]. In 1909, C. Ward Crampton published instructions and music for the Headington dance "Laudnum Bunches" in his *The Folk Dance Book*, the first such morris description published in America [4]. Crampton (1877 - 1964) was a New York physician who published extensively on Physical Education issues, including the use of folk dance in school.

In 1910, *The Morris Dance: Descriptions of Eleven Dances as performed by the Morris Men of England* was published in New York [5]. This is the first American book devoted to the morris, and is very similar to Sharp and MacIlwaine's *The Morris Book, Part One* of 1907, containing the same eight Headington and three Bidford dances. The author notes that the dance descriptions were taken with the permission of Sharp and MacIlwaine. The New York publisher is noted to be an agent for Novello and Co., Ltd., of London, publisher of *The Morris Book*. It is unclear why the authors and publishers of *The Morris Book* allowed essentially the same information to be published under another title rather than distributing the original work. Nothing is known about the author, Josephine Brower, although it would be reasonable to suspect that she was connected with the folk dance revival in New York.

Elizabeth Burchenal (1877 - 1959) of the New York Public School Athletic League was an extremely influential educator largely reponsible for the popularity of folk dance in American public schools in the first half of this century. She began to teach morris in approximately 1908, although her first written descriptions of morris dance does not appear until the 1913 publication of Dances of the People [6]. She was a prolific writer who also collected folk dances in Europe, including a 1908 visit to Bampton [7]. I leave further details on Burchenal and her colleagues to Jim Brickwedde, who is researching the subject in detail.

To further understand the introduction of morris to America, we must introduce three additional women: a Danish-born professional dancer, A New York City writer and a London Cockney. Adeline Genee (1878 - 1970) was an extraordinarily popular dancer in both Europe and America. From 1897 to 1907 at one London theatre alone, she was the leading dancer in 20 different ballets. Emily M. Burbank (b circa 1869) was a professional writer and an acquaintance of Genee's. Among her works was a series of three articles on woman artists for Putnam's magazine, including a 1908 article on Genee which described her as "the greatest dancer the world has seen for half a century". In 1909 Burbank had been travelling throughout eastern Europe studying folk music and dance and in July was in London to lecture on her findings. There she met Genee, who invited Burbank to a fundraising exhibition by the Esperance dancers. This was probably Burbank's first exposure to morris dancing, and she would soon invite Mary Neal to come to America to introduce the morris there. Neal agreed to a three-month trip and chose Florence Warren to accompany her as dance instructor [8]

Florrie Warren was born April 14th 1887 in London, the child of Thomas Warren and his Irish-born wife, Bridget McCarthy Warren. She was apparently orphaned at a young age and grew up as a poor Cockney working girl, At some point she caught the attention of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, a wealthy social activist whose husband Frederick was a prominent politician for many years. It is not certain whether the Pethick-Lawrences actually took Warren into their home, but it is clear that they were benefactors who closely oversaw her upbringing and remained Warren's lifelong friends [9].

Warren had for years been the leading dancer of the Esperance Guild. MacIlwaine noted the steps for *The Morris Book, Part One* from her dancing and she was to write the dance descriptions for both of the Esperance morris books. By all accounts, Warren was a gifted dancer with a charming personality. Maud Karpeles found her "exuberant and vital". The Times of London described her dancing as "as wonderful .. as anything accomplished by the world famous artists of the ballet. In her trim blue dress, simple white apron and blue sunbonnet, she personifies the grace-in-beauty of English girlhood". Warren was the obvious choice for Neal. She had spent the past five years travelling throughout England, instructing diverse groups such as the urban poor, school teachers, and the children of wealthy Lords and ladies. She had been taught by several of the traditional Cotswold dancers and had been chief instructor at Stratford on Avon in 1920. Neal and Warren set sail from Liverpool aboard the SS Arabic on December 3rd 1910 and arrived in New York eight days later. Immigration records show that they were to stay at

Emily Burbank's home at 137 East 73rd Street [10]

Four days after arriving, Neal and Warren were featured in an article in *The New York Tribune*. The next month, a larger illustrated article appeared in The New York Times. Brief histories of the morris dance and of the Esperance Club are recounted. The theories of the origins of the morris current in 1920 were dominated by the perception of morris as a survival of a pre-Christian ritual. Neal describes the Kirtlington Lamb Ale to both newspapers, with the Lady of that event originally the subject of a human sacrifice, and later coming to represent the Virgin Mary in a miracle play. A later American magazine article notes, "Women dance the morris without prejudice now, though in the earliest times their presence was permitted only as a Druid sacrifice" [11].

Neal's populist views of the morris dance are evident in these articles, as is a very thinly disguised attack on Cecil Sharp, printed in the *The New York Times* article: "(the dances) are not an entertainment given by a few highly trained exhibitors while the rest stand around and stare. The point is that the whole people join in. It is an eminently democratic thing and can live only as long as it preserves this spirit. The introduction of pedantry, of sophisticated art, would utterly kill the movement" At this time Neal also felt that Sharp had been in contact with Americans concerning morris dancing and she is clearly bitter, writing back to England: "Cecil Sharp has done his best to poison people's minds over here. But we are here and he is not! ... I do not think he will ever come now "[12].

One intriguing comment in the Tribune article suggests that Neal found some Americans already morris dancing in 1920 : Miss Neal says that she does not see how the English peasant dances hitherto taught in America can be genuine, for she is sure that she was the first to dig them out from the byways of the morris country" These 'English peasant dances' may refer to the morris taught in the New York City Schools at the time.

Upon arriving in New York, Warren was given the responsibility of training three sides of morris dancers for a major display in nine days: the annual Christmas Festival of the MacDowell Club, to be held on December 20th, 1910 at the ballroom of the hotel plaza, "One of the season's brilliant events". Accounts of the event briefly mention the "merry troupe of morris dancers". Neal was quite pleased with the show, writing back to the Esperance Guild's music director Clive Carey about Warren's 'wonderful debut' where she performed "with distinguished artists of all sorts, won everyone's hearts and had a glorious time at the ball after". Writing from New York in February 1922 Neal mentions that the dancers in the first show were members of the MacDowell CLub. Warren probably gave several other New York City performances that winter, although I can only find specific references to two of them : a January fundraiser for the Bide-a-Wee Home for Animals, and a performance known only though a brief reference in one of Neal's letters,..."our first millionaire show. It was detestable" [13].

Neal and Warren next began to teach morris to school teachers, with one goal being to have a side available to illustrate lectures, Three photos from these early days in New York City are preserved in The New York Public Library. They were used to illustrate a magazine article on the morris dance published March 1911 in New York City [14].

Mary Neal travelled to Boston that winter and gave a lecture on morris dancing to the Twentieth Century Club. Several sources suggest that Warren taught morris in the Boston area sometime between February and April of 1911, although no details are available. Certainly by April 26th Helen Storrow and the Women's Athletic Association were able to sponsor an exhibition of international folk dance that included the morris dances Rigs o'Marlow, Bean Setting and Shepherd's Hey.

Sometime during the winter, Warren and Neal were invited to New Haven Connecticutt, for a function at Yale Law School. At the dinner following her performance, Warren sat at the same table as Arthur Brown, a law student from New Jersey. Brown was immediately taken by her, and in the following weeks travelled to her performance and, when that was impossible, kept in touch by mail [15].

Warren and Neal had agreed to a three-month trip and were booked to return to England in March 1911. The events of the date of their sailing were told by Arthur Brown to his children. Brown was in New Haven, distracting himself from the apparent end of their brief relationship with a game of golf. He suddenly made a decision and left in the middle of his game to take the first train to New York. He boarded Warren and Neal's steamship before it had embarked and asked Warren to come off the ship, stay in America and marry him. She agreed and they were married at the home of Emily Burbank on Valentine's Day 1912. On the same page as her *New York Times* wedding announcement is an article describing her morris dancing at the Waldorf Astoria ballroom, indicating her success in bringing the morris to America [16].

Footnotes

1 Luther Halsey Gulick, MD, "Teaching American Children to Play: significance of the revival of folk dances, games and festivals by the Playground Association" Craftsman, 15 (November 1908) pp192-199. Karpeles, Cecil Sharp, p75.

2. Helen Storrow, "Folk Dancing" (address given at the fifth annual meeting of the Playground andrecreational Association of America) Playground, 5 (August 1911). p161

3. Jim Brickwedde, personal communication, John Graham, Shakespearean Bidford Morris Dances (London: Curwen, 1907)

4. Charles Crampton Ward, The Folk Dance Book for Elementary Schools, Classroom, Playground and Gymnasium (New York: A.S Barnes, 1909)

5. Josephine Brower, The Morris Dance: Descriptions of Eleven Dances as performed by the Morris Men of England (New York: H.W. Gray Co., 1910)

6. Elizabeth Burchenal, Dances of the People (New York, G. Schirmer Inc., 1913)

7. Jim Brickwedde, personal communication

8. Barbara Naomi Cohen-Stratyer, Biographical Dictionary of the Dance (New York:Schirmer Books 1982), p358.
Emily Burbank, "Mademoiselle Genne: the Danish Dancer Who Revives Memories of Taglioni", Putnam's Magazine, 5 (November 1908),pp170-174.
Florence Warren Brown and Neva Boyd, Old English and American Games for School and Playground (Chicago : Saul Brothers, 1915)

9. Death Certificate for Florence Warren Brown (1944), personal communication from Vida Olinick, Dorothy Kosek and Cicely Joslyn.

10. Judge, "Mary Neal" p552.
Karpeles, Cecil Sharp, p73
Warren had personally instructed as many as 400 school teachers in a two week period, according to Neal, The Esperance Morris Book, p1. A fragment of a letter written by Florrie Warren while staying at Lady Paget's home, being waited on by servants, is reprinted in Pethick-Lawrence, My Part in a changing world, p138.
The Times, August 11, 1910, p96. Immigration records for the port of New York City, The National Archives, Washington D.C.

11. New York Tribune, December 15, 1910 p10d
New York Times, January 22, 1911, V:11:1
"Morris Dancing in America" Literary Digest, March 4, 1911, pp406-407

12. Mary Neal to Clive Carey, December 30, 1910 in Carey Collection, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, London.

13. New York Times, December 20, 1911, p13:3; December 21, 1910, p2:3
Neal to Carey. December 30, 1910 (mentions "millionaire show")
The Bide a Wee performance is referred to in The New York Times, January 23, 1911 I:7:5 and January 27, 1911, 11:4.

14. Mary Neal, The Esperance Morris Book, Part II (London:J Curwen and Sons, Ltd., 1912), pxiii. The names of three of Warren's New York City dancers are known: Marcus Brook danced at the MacDowell Club show; Thomas Rector and Rome Richardson went to Albany later in 1922 to assist Warren. Three photos lie unlabelled in a folder of loose clippings and photos on "Morris Dancing" in the Performing Arts Research Center at Lincoln Center. Morris Dancing and America", pp406-407.

15. In February 1911, Neal collected sea shanties at the Sailor's Haven in Charlestown, Massechusetts, where sailors boarded whil in the port of Boston, " a seaman's rest where every week the men sang the old shanties on a specially rigged-up mast and rigging in the platform" according to Neal, Esperance book, part II, pxiii. Mary Neal to Clive Carey, February 24, 1911, in the Carey Collecction. Boston Herald, April 26, 1911, p10.

16. Vida Olinick and Dorothy Kosek, personal communication

17. New York Times, February 23, 1912, p11

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Thanks to Country Dance and Song for permission to publish parts of Rhetts Article, which appeared in volumes 21-22

ADDING ANOTHER DIMENSION

No, this doesn't mean leapfrogging or performing in space or underwater (Ed - so when is someone going to write about these?!) but covers the additional freedom gained in choreography with greater numbers of dancers. It is the common experience that more can be done with floor patterns using eight dancers rather than six, but at the cost of making it more difficult to focus on the individuals' actions. The Carnival Morris which has the flexibility of 16 dancers, a leader and one or two mascots, is the extreme example of complex pattern making.

My collection of dances shows the problems of creating movements for an odd number of dancers. Very little thought has been put into dances for seven. Only the Shropshire Bedlams' Seven Hand Reel, to "Hunt the Squirrel" is effective, but even this is a dance for six plus one. Minden Rose have considered a half "Wain" for seven.

One possible formation is an extended asymmetric "five",

```
        2       4       6

    1       3       5       7
```

Another is to have a "three" embedded within a "four",

```
    2           4           6

    1       3       5       7
```

which can be worked as if it were,

```
        2                   6
            4
        3       5
        1                   7
```

The challenge is the choreography when going to three rows of dancers,

```
        2       5

    1       4       7

        3       6
```

Barley Morris had a dance for six in a related formation,

```
        2       5

            3       6

        1       4
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but the formation was not very exploitable, unlike when there are eight,

```
2          5          7

      3          6

1          4          8
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For the disbelieving there has been a traditional dance in such a formation. One of the set of enhanced Abingdon dances, known as the Royal Morris - because they had been arranged for dancing in front of members of the Royal family at the turn of this century - and some of which were documented for the team in the late 1930's, was Sally Luker for 10! It was like the above for eight but with two extra dancers on the centre line.

Nine dancers allows a simpler symmetry,

```
3          6          9

2          5          8

1          4          7
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and this suggests another formation for seven,

```
3          5          9

2     - - - - - - - - -

1          4          6
```

with the odd dancer having the freedom of position along the whole of the centre line. The problem might be to avoid the odd dancer appearing to be like the morris fool in tagging onto movements.

NINE MENS MORRIS is a phrase associated with Tudor times because of Shakespeare's reference to the outdoor game with this name. There are a few dances for this number, including a pair of Cotswold style dances from Rosewood Morris, Palmerston North, New Zealand and a Nine Hand Reel, "The Triumph" from the Shropshire Bedlams.

Roy Dommett ©1990

This concludes Roy's ideas and observations about dances with numbers other than six. Has anyone got anything to add to these?

DAUGHTER OF DANCING ENGLAND - A WELCOME RETURN

I didn't realise how much I'd missed Dancing England until it reappeared. Until it restarted this year, under the guise of "Daughter of Dancing England" and after a considerable absence, I'd forgotten just how much I enjoyed it. I admit that some of the enjoyment stems from it being an excellent occasion for meeting people I haven't seen since Sidmouth. One of my great pleasures in life is standing around chatting, especially when there's morris to talk about.

By now it should be obvious that I'm biased. Not the most objective position to start a review from, but I hope it hasn't affected my judgement too much. For those who aren't familiar with Dancing England, it's based at the Assembly Rooms in Derby and consists of a Rapper competition, a big display of traditional English dance, plus a ceilidh. There was also a French dance workshop and craft stalls. This year it took place on Saturday, January 23rd.

Another reason for my bias is that Dancing England couldn't have restarted at a better time. Last year, I started a Rapper side. This January, all the side sat transfixed through the Rapper competition which took place in the afternoon. I've since been told that I'm becoming a Rapper bore, but that won't stop me writing something about it here.

The two lasting impressions are the variety of sides involved and the good humour with which it all took place. There were the noisy & energetic sides, the slick & unruffled sides, and the obvious experts who left you gobsmacked and wanting more. And it was so good to see the new & brave sides (especially the school girls from Peckham), who were encouraged to enter the non-competitive "Exhibition Class".

Of course, I didn't agree with all the judges' decisions. I still think Stone Monkey should have won the Premier Non-Traditional section. My notes, made at the time, sum them up - "brilliant". One other disappointment was in how few women were involved. One mixed and one girls' team in the exhibition, and one mixed and one women's team in the "Rest of the World" class. This meant that the prize for the Best Women's Team was a foregone conclusion, as only one team qualified. I can't decide whether the prize is patronising (the obvious question is "where are the prizes for the best men's or mixed teams?") or a good idea to encourage women to enter. I shall ponder that between now and next year's competition, which sadly isn't at Dancing England. It's being organised by Sallyport Sword in Newcastle, with a provisional date of March 5th, 1994.

One other possibly patronising note was the MC's introduction for Plattbridge Morris in the main dance display. Plattbridge are a fine example of a carnival morris team, a type of morris which most other morris dancers (and apparently the MC) are all too ignorant about. Many dancers presume that carnival isn't "real" morris. In reality, it has evolved directly from the

North West morris.

For me, Plattbridge were the highlight of the dance displays, mainly because of my admiration for their stamina, precision and discipline. They "walked" on at a snail's pace, only moving a few inches forward on each step, but they were all well up on their toes with their thighs reaching horizontal on each step. When the music changed (sadly, they dance to recorded music, with the result that one essential morris element has been lost), they started an intricate pattern of figures in polka step, again high on their toes. They all danced together with such cohesion that I couldn't see any variations in how they moved.

I can imagine many of the morris dancers watching would dismiss Plattbridge as "glamour" morris which appears to owe more to American cheer leaders than to morris. I find this view frustrating on two counts. Firstly, it's inaccurate and condescending to carnival morris. Secondly, most morris teams could learn a lot by watching more carnival. I'm not suggesting that morris sides should be glamorous (although there's quite a few who could learn to be a lot smarter - don't they have any pride in the morris?). But there's plenty to glean about presentation, togetherness and sheer impressive stamina. Add those qualities to the live music and expressiveness of the morris we're used to, and the results would be unbeatable - compulsive magic.

The rest of the dance displays were of a varying quality. Rivington were good, with plenty of impact and energy, using the difficult dance space well. Eynsham gave their usual fascinating display, but why did they have to perform all their dances with their backs to the vast majority of the people watching? With the audience on three sides, they chose to start every dance facing the fourth side.

Kesteven Morris women started with an interesting medley of North West dances, an idea which may be valuable for all teams who can't decide which dance to do at the big occasions. They then performed an invented dance, which can best be described as a cross between Cotswold and North West. This blend failed to create a new style of dancing, and instead resulted in losing much of what makes the two different forms of morris forms enjoyable to watch. I confess that I don't understand why people try to bastardise morris in this way - isn't there enough scope within each style of morris?

Kesteven Men were fast and furious, exciting but relentless to watch. The Minehead Hobby Horse seemed at first too far out of place, but ultimately transplanted well to such an alien arena. The Horse was more than reminiscent of a boat, sailing across the dance floor.

Silurian got off to a good start, as they'd obviously thought about how to present the first dance. After that it tended to tail off slightly, with more than a hint of shambling on and off. Their performance survived this but was marred (at least for those of us in the balcony) by the lack of amplification

for the musicians. At one point there were at least 16 musicians, but only the percussion and brass reached us. All the melody instruments were lost in the big space. A few mikes on the melodeons would have let us all get the full effect of a (presumably) impressive band.

For some unknown reason, the advertised Goathland Plough Stots failed to materialise and were replaced by Handsworth - smart, polished, hypnotic. Carlisle Rapper were the other sword side in the display, whom I can only admire for coping with having to follow the Rapper competition. It was a well thought out spot, with special effects (miners' helmets with lights, and a strobe light on the spin) which helped distance it from the competition. In talking to others later, I realised that not everyone approved of the gimmicks. But it is difficult to translate bar room rapper, best suited to small, intimate venues, to a large open space. Carlisle handled the situation nicely.

The last morris side was Seven Champions, who transfixed the audience dancing to the powerful vocals of Steel Bunny. I've seen them dance better, but they were still one of the most memorable sides of the display.

The two non-morris turns were the Chipolatas (excellent light relief) and the Walker Family, who are clog step dancers. I can't comment in depth on them, as I'm not a step dancer and it didn't travel well to the balcony - it's difficult to appreciate it properly from above. Not an easy problem to solve. The ceilidh was a fitting end to the evening, with the floor packed with hundreds of hot sweaty dancers, bouncing and bopping away to Hugh Rippon and Peeping Tom.

How to sum up the event? A most welcome return for an old friend. If you missed it this year, try harder next time. I don't envy the organisers the difficult task of putting together a display representative of the many varied forms of English traditional dance, but I hope they manage as well next year as they did this.

Sally Wearing June 1993

Concerning Clogs

This is a delightful paperback which is a reprint of a book first published in 1973; the revision being that the author has - very conveniently for morris clog dancers and aficionados - added lists of contacts.

His theme, if such it can be called, is that "clogs have souls as well as soles", I know very little about clog dancing but read the book avidly. It doesn't have any specific chapters on clog morris dancing but the background is so eminently readable that I would have thought any interested dancer would glean something that would make their dancing seem even more of a special event.

Did you know the difference between clog dancers and dancers who "dance Morris dances when wearing fancy garments and have clog-shod feet"? Do you know what a cloggers knife looks like? (fairly nasty!) Do you know why clogs are good footwear for children? Do you know what a clog fight involved? Read the book.

There are lists of teachers of clog dancing, clog makers, a bibliography and a list of "groups who dance in clogs", which seems up to date (1993) and while it may not be completely comprehensive (groups can only be listed here if they were first listed elsewhere!) he lists over 200 groups in the UK.

The list of dance groups does not distinguish those who dance in shoes and those who dance in clogs. (Ed: Chas Marshall wrote an article which included this topic in MM volume 11, number 1) None of the present organisations *lists* teams by their footwear. Would it help if they did?

Concerning Clogs can be obtained from the author at

Landy Publishing, "Acorns", 3 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool FY3 0BU.
Tel and fax 0253 886103
Cost £5.00 plus 50p p&p, cheques payable to Landy Publishing.
ISBN 1 872895 13 1 88pp

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE MORRIS

This forms an abridged version of the talk given by Roy Dommett at the Wantage instructional weekend in November 1992.

From the writings of noted authorities such as Sharp, Kennedy and Alford to the many morris handouts there is a similarity, from much speculation to a grasping at straws and with explanations developed from the minimum of fact. There is nothing wrong with speculation based on hints or general principles to provide a range of hypotheses to guide the search for the roots but none of this should masquerade as the reality without some support and even with credible aguments the real limitations of the evidence should be emphasised. We must be cautious in claiming too much and being found wrong later.

The seasonal, dressing up and so-called "ritual" dance has drawn on the social dance where the form allowed it, and it is in the use and exploitation of implememts that the two are separated. The modern international folk festivals bring foreign teams together and, even though the tendency is to show off the peculiar and spectacular, the similarities are too great for coincidence. Where it is possible to see or read of a local European tradition in depth the visual matches to English traditions are even greater.

When and perhaps how did the early dance concepts diffuse?
Fashion, armies, specialist industries, immigrants and tribal movements such as the gypsies are possibilities. There had long been a belief in a Spanish connection and 80 years of the morris revival has failed to substantiate an alternative. Eleanor of Aquataine, John of Gaunt and the Black Prince with the English King's Angevin empire which persisted in Gascony till 1453, Catherine of Aragon and their entourages might have provided the cultural links but there is no hard evidence and the dates seem difficult to reconcile as primary causes [1,2,3]. The morris did appear at the court of Henry VII and he was exiled in Brittany and Paris where the companies of fools and lords of misrule were active; this is a possibility, even though the earliest English references are from 1458 and 1466. Various European countries claim reference to what they interpret as morris or an associated activity before the English sources appear. However there is no examination in English of the early European references or of the etymology of the European words for the equivalent activities to consult.

If the surviving European dances are compared with the choreography of the English dances then the relationship is far less convincing. A common mistake made is in assuming that all the elements of a "tradition" are of similar age and also that descriptive words still mean the same thing today. For example, Bedlam meant mad and now by association with typical behaviour in a madhouse means noise. The early collators [4] found that the dance forms when mentioned were not those to which we are now accustomed. The first expansions of the database reported by John Forrest and Mike Heaney [5] did not change the picture. The dances seemed to include the mediaeval chain dances, the circular dance around a central figure who was often a woman and the processional done two by two. The latter was so common that a later pamphlet [6] ca. 1659 compared Quakers with Morris dancers as they went out on preaching tours in twos. It is not easy to distinguish professional performance in the records. The Earl of Berkeley's players according to the Gloucestershire Notes and Queries, travelled the country between their regular commitments

able to produce plays, bringing in the may, triumphal entries etc. and of course, the morris.

Why is there little pre-16th century?
Even if potential evidence was generated uniformly with time, it is the nature of things that less of the older material would be around, Then what is recorded depends on what is of interest but remenber that social conditions from the Black Death (1349) till the War of the Roses (ended 1485) were different from earlier times and different again after the dissolution of the monasteries 1536 - 40. But it is as likely that it was not there to be noticed. How does one find negative evidence? It is partly by knowing for what one should be looking and partly by showing that the type of evidence did not occur in other fields either. Any hypothesis has to be consistent with the facts.

The advent of the "*Annals of Early Morris*" database [7] is a massive step forward. It provides about 800 instances of some sort of reference to morris. How realistic is it as a statistical sample of the references that once existed? Mentions of the morris are rare. The material is only glimpses and snatches. There are many known gaps in the official record series from which the total notice taken can be estimated, assuming that the known references are representative in numbers and dates, by a simple scaling dependant in each source. These are mostly indications of actual performances. Books and ballad sheets were registered but they are more difficlt to exploit; however they usually refer to a generalised performance not to an actual one. There is a problem in extrapolating the geographical distribution unless there are records from places in the UK that have not been examined yet, perhaps through being stored abroad, but this has been faced and some highly important conclusions have been drawn by Forrest and Heaney which could be used as guidelines. The Annals do not indicate where they have searched, only where they have been successful. Whatever there is still to uncover it cannot alter the picture of the morris that has emerged. However the morris cannot be divorced from its setting and there is much that needs to be understood about its relationship to the Games and the early drama. This has been partly addressed by others when independently interpreting the Robin Hood material[8].

What was "it" called?
The Annals classified the sources over the span 1501 to 1750 under four types: Morris (ending in "s";morris, moreys, mores, morrice, morisse), moorish (ending in "sh"; morish, moorish), moresque (ending in "sk", morisk, moruske, moresque), morisco (ending in "sk" plus vowel; moresco, moresca, morisco). The references are dominated by words like "morris" (728) and not by those that have often been seized upon for origin explanation (116 for the three other groups). It is significant to consider the type of source that uses the more exotic names. From about 1600 many of the uses were found in dictionaries which can be assumed to preserve the less usual words and also to quote from previous publications. An analysis of the actual phraseology of the dictionary entries might be interesting. Incidentally, an 1881 *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* defines "morris off" politely as "get you gone" - making it the equivalent of many rather vulgar modern expressions!

Occasional usages occur thoughout the period considered and do not cluster early as would be expected if the exotic names derived from a recent origin. It suggests that we search for the origin of the morris within the "morris"

family of words and see the other words at best as minor threads.

Where was it performed?

The type of source varies with time and this has been use by Forrest and Heaney [9] to gain valuable insights into the history of the morris, which are summarised thus:

Some venues have more importance than others, Royal and noble locations are paramount at the outset (1510 - 1540), quickly overtaken by urban (1540 - 1600) which in turn are usurped by village (1600 - 1720) with private houses beginning to make inroads as the period ends. The trends for who gives financial support are very similar going from the state, to guilds mostly in the London area, the church, local towns and villages and finally individuals and households. The key role of the church in the transformation of the official attitude to the morris is plain. From being supportive in the 16th century there is an expansion of church legislation against dancing, coinciding with the shift of dancing from urban to village settings, except in a snall area of the south Midlands, so that the later shift to 'private' support appeared largely in the area. There are intimations of a classic pattern of diffusion. From 1450 -1630 there was a general expansion from the London region, then there was a marked thinning over the whole area (1630 - 1690) consequent on a period of some secular (1570 - 1600) and then intense church prosecution (1600 - 1630) followed eventually by a renewed support away from London, most notably in the south Midlands. They confirm the lack of a real link between Maid Marion, the Hobby Horse and Robin Hood.

An early reference [10] has Henry VIII showing off 'Jane the Quene' at the 1536 City of London Whitsun festivities by watching the setting of the City Watch, involving a torch-lit procession of 2000 men and hundreds of constables in scarlet cloaks, as well as morris dancers and elaborate tableaux.

Diffusion as a process for folk activity that requires community acceptance was seen later. Thomas Hardy recalled the Country dance form spreading into the social life at the common level in Dorset about 1840, the Fletts established the spread into the Highlands and Islands in living memory. The National Museum of Wales [11] has documented the spread of the "French custom of Bringing in the May" into mid and north Wales. Some fashions, such as the plaited maypole, have spread very quickly, given the right circumstances.

The late concentration of the morris to the south Midlands is suggestive of the growth of the morris form there as a village enterprise. The zone free of persecution does not match any particular county or diocese. The south Midlands shires were set up by King Edward the Elder in 911-912 for the defence of the realm and although they have engendered much local loyalty more recently they were not well matched to natural or social regions. Until the dissolution of the monasteries (1636 - 1540) the south Midlands was in the Lincoln (formerly Dorchester) diocese then Henry VIII divided it into the new bishoprics of Peterborough (including Northants) and Gloucester in 1541 and Oxford in 1542. The civil war saw the loss of church courts.

Those sources which are from entertainment show a peaking into common parlance from 1590 - 1640, matching the apparent maximum in events, with a marked turn off with the Commonwealth and the Restoration, matching the change from records of a formal role for the morris to a popular entertainment. One difficulty in making comment based on the Annals is that there is no

comparable related material readily available in a similar form[12], for example of other dance forms or drama. Quite a few references cannot be considered comtemporary to an event because of the nature of the source and this makes detailed interpretation of the decadal data suspect. Interestingly nearly a third of the sources after the "set" dance appeared mention that they were mixed!

Playford first published The Dancing Master in 1651 as an answer to the prevailing condition in which many people stayed at home and were cut off from the dancing schools. The books circulated widely in England, France and America. The characteristic form of three introductions followed by a figure repeated or three unique figures has no known antecedents yet nearly 70% of the first edition, in all formations, had this structure, Also they may have been taken for granted and have been used even more frequently than the Playford volumes state explicitly, the interest is that this feature corresponds roughly to the later Cotswold Morris structure as well. There is no linking evidence except the similarity of date and the likely ubiquity of the form in the 17th century, and its persistence till the development of the Assembly rooms which took dancing into a social atmosphere away from the family and servants home environment.

© Roy Dommett 1992

Part two of this article will be printed in the next issue of Morris Matters.

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THE BIDFORD TRADITION

The Figures

Once to Yourself
Face up throughout the A music and start with ftj in the last bar.

Foot up or dance in position
This is danced on the spot without moving forward. Face up and dance six single steps starting with the right, then ftj. On the jump make a quarter turn to land facing your partner. Then dance six single steps and ftj facing your partner.

Back to Back
This is a straightforward back to back. Start right foot, dance two single steps forward, two to the side, two back and ftj. Pass right shoulders first time and then repeat passing left shoulders.

Figure S
This is danced instead of a half gip. It is not clear what source Alan Barber used to create this movement but we like to use it instead of a half gip because it is distinctive and satisfying to dance. Start right foot, pass right shoulders with two single steps then move to the right and make a half turn to the left with four single steps and ftj facing into the set in your partner's position. You will have effectively changed places following a question mark path on the ground. You then return to your original position with a similar movement, passing left shoulders and following a 'reverse question mark' track.



Whole rounds
The whole set dances a clockwise rounds back to position with fourteen single steps and ftj facing into the set.

Half rounds
This starts the same as the whole rounds, dancing six single steps in a clockwise direction. When you are half way round the set make a ftj turning right shoulder back (i.e. into the circle) to face the other way and dance six single steps anticlockwise back to your original position and ftj, right shoulder back, to end facing your partner across the set.

Half Hey
This is a normal morris hey except that at the end of the movement all the dancers make a small turn out of the set and ftj to face your partner across the set. This is like a Bledington half hey but without the hook leg on the final turn out. The middles always go up to the music regardless of the position of numbers 1 and 2.

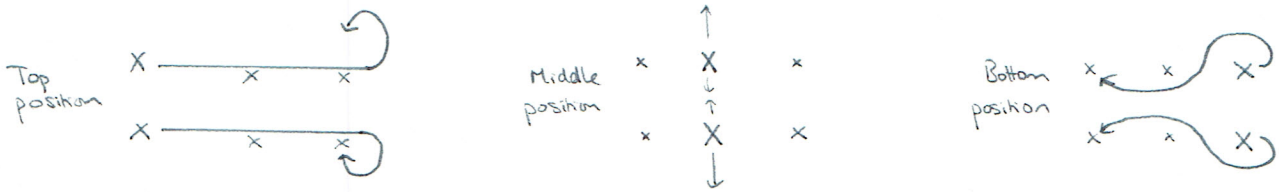
The Bidford Hey

Also known as the In-and-Out hey, this is one of the most distinctive and satisfying of the Bidford movements:-

Middles: 2 single steps approach and dance face to face, 2 single steps to dance backwards out of the set, 2 single steps forward to original position and ftj. Then repeat the movement exactly.

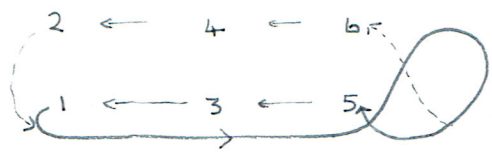
Tops: Make a quarter turn to face down and dance past the backs of the middles (who are face to face) to the bottom of the set and with 4 single steps make a large turn out of the set and back in to end ftj facing your partner. For the second half of the hey, dance what the bottoms did in the first half.

Bottoms: Face down and with 4 single steps make a large turn out of the set then, heading up the set pass outside of the tops and with the next 2 single steps go in between the middles (who have danced apart) up to the top of the set and ftj facing in. For the second half of the hey, dance what the tops did in the first half.



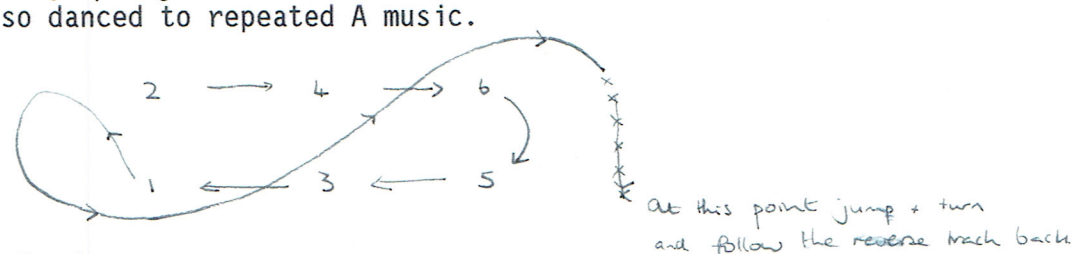
The Spiral

The evens dance on the spot while the odds cast. When #5 has passed #1's original position, #2 follows #5 and leads the evens so that they join the spiral. #1 can then lead off, if this is the end of the performance, or following the diagram below lead back to original positions. #2 will break off and lead the evens back to their original position. Continue to dance on the spot until the end of the next phrase and end with all ftj. This is danced to repeated A music.



The Snake

This is the second version of the spiral which we call the snake to avoid confusion. #1 leads the odds in the pattern shown in the diagram. Evens face down and follow #6 who follows #5. At the end of the second A music all dancers perform ftj and all turn 180° jumping right shoulder back. #2 then leads the dancers back, retracing the route until the side is back in its origianl set formation, except that the odds are facing down, On the final ftj the odds jump right shoulder back to make a half turn to face the music. This is also danced to repeated A music.



ftj = feet together jump

The dances

SHEPHERDS HEY Short stick dance

A (2A's 2 B's x 4) A's

OY;FU; DF½Hey; BB; DF½Hey; IOH; DF½Hey; Fig S; DF½Hey; Spiral

DF: sticking. TTT- TTT- Stepping TTT- followed by half hey.
In bars 1,2, and 4 the tops are clashed at head height R to L, L to R, R to L. In bar 3 the sticks are left stationary and crossed at head height while the dancers complete one bar of stepping on the spot. The number of A's at the end of the dance will depend on the length of the spiral.

YOUNG COLLINS Short stick dance

A (2A's 2 B's x 4) A's

OY; WR; DF½Hey; BB; DF½Hey; IOH; DF½Hey; Fig S; DF½Hey; Spiral

DF: sticking. TTT- TTT- TTT- TTT- followed by half hey.
In bars 1 and 3 the tops are struck on the ground in front of the dancer. In bar 2 the tops are clashed with your partner low down, R to L each time. In bar 4 the tips are clashed at head height R to L, L to R , R to L. The number of A's at the end of the dance will depend on the length of the spiral.

CONSTANT BILLY Hand clapping dance, no handkercheifs

A (2A's 2 B's x 4) 2A's

OY;FU; DF½Hey; BB; DF½Hey; HR; DF½Hey; Fig S; DF½Hey; IOH

DF: Handclapping. F-R- F-L- F-B- F-P- followed by a half hey.
F = clap own hands together in front of body
R = clap partner's right hand
L = clap partner's left hand
B = clap both partner's hands as you complete this last clap both dancers jump into the air clapping both hands together as they land.

ABRAHAM BROWN Handkerchief dance

A (2A's 2 B's x 4) A's

OY; WR; DF½Hey; BB; DF½Hey; IOH; DF½Hey; Fig S; DF½Hey; Snake

DF: Sidesteps. 2 bars long sidestep right , 2 bars short sidestep left, followed by a half hey. The number of A's will depend on the length of the snake.

OLD WOMAN TOSSED UP IN A BLANKET Handkerchief dance

A (2A's 2 B's x 2) 3C's 2B's 2A's 2B's 3C's 2B's 2A's 2B's A's

OY; HR; DF½Hey; BB; DF½Hey; Corners; DF½Hey; IOH; DF½Hey; Corners; DF½Hey; Fig S; DF½Hey; Snake

DF: Sidesteps. 2 bars long sidestep right , 2 bars short sidestep ;eft, followed by a half hey.
Corners: Corner movement danced to the C music (slow A music). Slow caper R, slow caper L then step R, step L, ftj. Cross on the slow capers. then step facing out of the set and on the jump, turn right shoulder back to face into the set.
The number of A's will depend on the length of the snake.

PRINCESS ROYAL handkerchief dance

A 1A 1B 3C's 1B 3C's 1B 1A

OY; FU; Twists; Corners; IOH; Corners; Twists; WR

Twists, 2 bars twist R, 2 bars twist L, 2 bars slipstep R, 2 bars slipstep L, 3 bars stepping, 1 bar ftj. The movement is performed facing into the set i.e the odds and even lines move in opposite directions.

Corners: Corner movement danced to the C music (slow A music). 1 bar step R step L, 1 bar ftj (music normal speed), 4 slow capers (R L R L) to cross (slow music), 3 bars stepping, 1 bar ftj (normal speed). Step facing out of the set and on the jump, turn right shoulder back to face into the set.

IOH Because the B music has 12 bars, after completing a Bidford Hey (with jumps) face in and dance 3 bars of stepping followed by a ftj.

Key

OY	Once to yourself
FU	Foot up
BB	Back to Back
HR	Half rounds
WR	Whole rounds
IOH	In and out hey (Bidford Hey)
DF	Distinctive figure
Fig S	Figure S

© Jonathan Hooton December 1992

THOUGHTS ON THE COTSWOLD MORRIS AT SIDMOUTH 1992

The first couple of 'Advanced Cotswold' workshops at Sidmouth festival last year concentrated on presentation, including speed of dancing, and the points made were interestingly illustrated by some of the festival events.

For the first time, chosen Morris teams were invited to dance around the town at specific spots every day, apparently to fill a gap which has arisen as fewer sides dance informally other than on the Esplanade on Sunday. The Cotswold teams who accepted the invitation are all sides who dance very slowly - Hammersmith, Oyster Women and Windsor - ably illustrating the observation in the first workshop (by Sally Wearing and Sue Swift) that slowing the music gives the dancer(s) time for more precise stepping, more height in jumps and capers and generally more definition to the performance.

However, warnings and criticisms came out of the workshops. One criticism from the floor was "Slow Fieldtown looks boring". At the time I disagreed and replied the Jackstraws' Fieldtown isn't at all boring, but having seen the demonstration by the Great Western duo who were present, I realise that although Jackstraws' Fieldtown is slower than most, it isn't slow "within the meaning of the act!" Great Western on their day are magnificent, but I feel that their style, and that of all the slow, athletic teams, are suited to an arena or a stage rather than the village green or pub. In an small intimate setting, I fear that the "boring" comment have some validity.

A warning sounded by Darryl Hurtt in the presentation workshop was that the set is spoiled if an energetic/athletic dancer is presenting a completely different style to that of the rest of the team. He argued that the team must all dance at the level of the weakest dancer, but I cannot accept that. There must be a standard to which everyone must aim: those who are weaker must struggle to improve, those who are over the top must moderate their style, and if the standard is for athletic extremes, the weak are excluded. The answer certainly is not that seen sometimes, of a Foreman insisting that the whole team dance at a speed (or should I say a 'slowth') which only he (it's usually a he) can manage.

Another cautionary note by Darryl was aimed as much at solo dancers as at teams: don't dance so slowly that you can't manage the capers at the end. Several contenders in the jigs competition were guilty of this to some extent and it's not unknown to see a team capering very leadenly in that final flourish, but worse than that, to me, is the "solution" demonstrated by one of the performing teams at Sidmouth: to speed up the music for those last four capers. Instead of a magnificent finish, the audience gets an impression of rushing, as if the team is saying "we can't do capers, so don't watch this bit".

The competitions at Sidmouth are aimed at raising the standards of dancing and

it's good that they focus attention on factors which can improve performance but the jigs competition gave me the impression that the emphasis is all on athleticism, and not at all on the beauty of the music, and dancing to the music. The judges certainly favoured the slower dances (no doubt because slower music gives room for precise stepping etc, as detailed above), but the jig which won the previous year's competition (demonstrated at the start of last year's) took it to extremes. Andy Jones of Mr Jorrocks Morris danced in so staccato a style that Tim Bull's music was reduced to a string of phrases played alternatively slow and mega-slow, with little trace of the original tune to be heard.

This athletic morris appears to be flavour of the month, and the judges seemed to be impressed by such a " synthesis of dancer and musician", but I would argue that Morris should be dancing to music, not athletics with the musician bending the tune to fit to such an extent that it is no longer a tune. The music - by which I mean the lovely tunes which we've inherited, thanks to Sharp and the other collectors - is important and I believe that an audience is held by good music as much as good dancing. If they can't hear a tune, and see only an unattractive exertion rather than a flowing grace to the dancing, I don't think they'll stay long.

Shirley Dixon December 1992

* RAPPER DANCES *

Just what are you doing? Is there life beyond the "Blackthorn Stick" If you've ever asked yourself these questions, or indeed if you only wanted to but didn't dare, this could be the weekend for you.

Dancing

Discussions

Drinking (optional)

Disputes (probably)

Dancing (again -there'll be a lot of this)

In other words, a weekend where you get the chance to think about your dance and putting it into a context (eh?). The Saturday will be spent on a mixture of discussion of various topics and putting theory into practice, assembling a dance which will then be taken round some pubs in the evening. Sunday morning could include a post-mortem, or might simply turn into a lunchtime session. Topics will include:-

But is it rapper? - innovation and things
Which way is up? - tailoring a dance to suit circumstances
Music (and musicians)
...

But not to worry, this is not an excuse for empty windbaggery - sessions will be led rather than taught and above all there will be a **lot** of dancing.

When? 12th to 14th November, 1993

Where? Long Eaton, Derbyshire

How much? Don't know yet but not a lot

Who for? Anybody who has done a bit of rapper and wants to do more than just regurgitaating what they got from somebody else. It's organised by the Morris Federation, but open to dancers from any organisation or none.

How do you find out more? Ask **Steve Cunio, phone 0942 683484.**