

Clayton le Moors Morris Dance

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Clayton le Moors Morris Dance: Introduction

Clayton-le-Moors is a small town two miles north of Accrington in Lancashire. With a population of 8,522 according to the 2011 census, today it is usually called 'Clayton' and was originally two villages, Oakenshaw (bottom end) and Enfield (top end).



St. James' Rose Queen procession, Clayton le Moors, with the Clayton Prize Band and Morris Dancers, picture courtesy of Dave Middlehurst.

Information about this dance comes from three sources: Bernard Bentley, 1954, describes it in handwritten notes, courtesy of the Morris Ring (entitling it Clayton le Woods but later referring to it as Clayton le Moors). Roy Dommett describes the dance from Bernard Bentley in the Morris Federation Archives and some general notes were made by Julian Pilling: the date of these notes cannot be discerned but likely to be around the 1960s.

Bernard Bentley says the team practised every week and was very active in local events, dancing to a band for "dance-outs" but to a concertina for practices. They danced "at the Rose Queen" every year 1903-14. See picture above. Mr. Butterworth, Clayton dancer and another man, of Church, Accrington supplied details to Bernard Bentley.

Julian Pilling's informants include an unnamed gentleman at a bus stop (!) who mentioned Rose Queen ceremonies and that they danced 4 or 6 wide across the road, last dancing out in 1925. Also Mr and Mrs Chamberlain mention that the team they knew was a Sunday School team and the kit was of black breeches, white socks and shirt, sticks with bells on one end only, buckled shoes with bells and a red or possibly blue sash and the team folded sometime after the Great War.

Julian also was informed by “about 6 old fellows on benches at Great Harwood,” that although Great Harwood had no dancers, about 6 men used to go to Clayton le Moors as it “was the place for morris dancing.” NB at one time Great Harwood DID have a dance team (Manchester Morris Men reference in archives).

The kit of the team was royal blue breeches, black stockings and a white shirt with a red sash across the outside shoulder. The leader wore two sashes. Sticks were a foot long and spiral wound with blue, red and white with 2 bells on each end. The picture of the St James Team, Clayton le Moors, below, supplied by Manchester Morris Men, is undated.



The Accrington Observer of July 17th 1906 describes a new team, after a Whalley based earlier team had broken up. This team consisted of 12 young men from St James' School and All Saints School. Mr W. Exton from Whalley was training them and “their efforts were much admired and appreciated.”

A similar team can be seen in *The Accrington Observer*, 16th July 1907, dancing though the report mentions that the rain prevented them from dancing “properly.”

<http://johnnyhaslett.co.uk/gallery4.htm> shows a picture of Clayton le Moors Garland Dancers, 1907.

The following picture, courtesy of Manchester Morris Men Archives, shows a team of young men, with no shoulder sashes, resembling the team from St James mentioned above.



A children's team is mentioned in *The Accrington Observer* of July 25th 1908 and Clayton le Moors Star Morris Teams in an advertisement in *The Accrington Observer* May 18th 1907. *The Lancashire Gazette* mentions the Lancashire Cup (Clayton le Moors) Morris Dancers on 11th September 1909.

In *The Accrington Observer* July 10th 1910, it is mentioned that there was both a boys' and a girls' team at St James'. Interestingly, the above team looks more like a men's team rather than a boys' team.

The plethora of teams, mainly children's or ladies', suggests that morris dancing in general and this dance in particular was a very popular past-time in Clayton in the early 20th century.

Currently this dance is not being performed as far as is known though its similarity to the original Whalley dance might make it a useful way of keeping a more traditional version alive if it were to be performed.

This photo shows Garland dancers in Clayton le Moors also in 1907, courtesy of Dianne Chaffers.



Clayton le Moors Morris Processional Dance

Figures:
• Introduction figure
• Fig 1/Turn (Hitch around)
• Fig 2 corners
• Fig 3 lines cross over
• Fig 4 outsides
• Fig 5 long corners
• Fig 6 insides
• Fig 7 hands across (4s)
• Fig 8 final figure/finish including introduction

Notation for "Clayton le Moors" is from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, *Notes from the Morris*, for which grateful thanks are offered. Roy Dommett's notation is taken from those collected by Bernard Bentley, though differing in minor details. Additional notes are from the Morris Ring, Bernard Bentley 1954.

Sticks with bells at one end only, approximately 12 inches long, are used. The notes suggest 16 dancers and mainly a skipping step.

Introduction

Bentley suggests starting on a left foot for both sides and step on the spot for 8 bars then 2 bars marking time, 2 with sticks overhead moving left to right, and repeat, but Dommett suggests 8 bars stepping, sticks just held up over heads, l r l r in shake movements with hands holding sticks over heads waved out and in about 6 inches in every bar, dancers completing this introduction figure with sticks above heads. NB Dommett just mentions 8 bars moving hands as above and suggests this is the step up, i.e. before every figure whilst Bentley suggests his version is just at the beginning and end of the dance.

The turn (hitch around)/Fig 1, uses 4 turning and kicking steps starting from turning forward then right, back and left and then "unwinding." The hitch around figure turns in first and does a hitch step in every direction and then "unwinds" back, hands up. The free leg "is thrown up."

Corners turn/Fig 2 dancers work in 4s, continue stepping throughout figure, 8 steps per corner action, 32 in total. First corners meet, arm right then left and return to places then second corners do the same: non-arming couples skip on the spot, sticks down by sides.

Lines cross/Fig 3, 16 bars, 8 steps across the set facing up at the end of 8 steps, and the same back, unusually left shoulder cross each time. Sticks held up. Step mentioned as could be done twice.

Outside/cast out/Fig 4, 16 bars, cast out from the front and the returning lines cross inside sticks with partner down the middle.

Long Corners/Fig 5 involves 1 and 16, then 2 and 15 dancers, arming right and left in the middle before returning to places whilst other dancers mark time stepping with hands by sides.

Insides/Fig 6 16 bars: cast in with sticks crossed in middle with partner in the inside part of the figure. Sticks should be up when coming back up the set.

Fig 7/Hands across/fours/ dancers meet with sticks “in a bunch” in the middle, 8 steps each way, then back to places. Outside hand is up also.

Final figure/Fig 8: perform Introduction again (Roy Dommett reports that the dancers form a central line, slip 4 steps to left, 8 to right, 4 to left to centre again after Introduction), move into one long column at end of Introduction, sticks up, left (odd) in front of right (even). Dommett suggests only the 4 steps in to the middle may suffice if the rest does not seem pleasing.

Bar 1 and 2, right toe to side, to front, to side, and behind, left out, then in front, left out, then behind, hands held up, springing onto other foot for each step.

Repeat.

Skip to opposite side of set, 4 steps

8 steps back to place (Roy Dommett reports that the dancers repeat this figure ending with a jump)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7URBRCTaIHSTmhaR2JaeFA3N0k/view> has the Roy Dommett notation online.

Clayton le Moors Morris Dance Compared with The Whalley

Figures:

Clayton le Moors (CLM)	Original Whalley (LR 49) Dommett	The CMM Whalley/Clitheroe Morris Men/Country Fayre	Accrington
Introduction figure	Chorus/step up	Chorus/step up	
Fig 1/Turn (Hitch around)	Turn and cross over	Hitch around	Hitch around?
Fig 2 corners	Corners turn	Corners	
Fig 3 lines cross over	Sidestep	Lines cross over	Crossover
Fig 4 outsides		Lines outside and in	
Fig 5 long corners			
Fig 6 insides	Lines inside (inc lines outside)		
Fig 7 hands across (4s)		Stars/ 4s	Fours/stars
Fig 8 final figure/finish includes Introduction		Lines across stand still	
	Ladies' chain	Hitch chain	
	Stamping	Heel and toe	
			Twos

The Accrington Dance is reputed to resemble strongly the Clayton le Moors and the Whalley (Alex Helm, 2nd October 1958).

Notation for “Clayton le Moors” is from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Roy Dommatt’s notes, reported from Bernard Bentley’s notes for which grateful thanks are offered, and also from Bernard Bentley’s notes from Manchester Morris Men Archives. * “Copyright in these archives will be retained by the Manchester Morris Men but free and unlimited access will be allowed under the Creative Commons 4.0 BY-SA license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)”

Working from Roy Dommatt’s notes of a conversation with Bernard Bentley in the 1950s, strong similarities between this dance and the Whalley can be observed. The Whalley in its original notation (LG 49) is broadly similar but a more recent notation (e.g. Clitheroe Morris Men) differs from both. Notes by Bernard Bentley, 1954 corroborate these views.

The CLM notes suggest 16 dancers whereas CMM Whalley suggests 8.

Both are NW Processional clog dances, use similar sticks approximately 12 inches long with bells at one end and use similar footwork for the chorus/introduction figure though the CLM starts on a left foot for both sides and Dommatt suggests stepping on the spot for 8 bars with hands holding sticks over heads waved out and in about 6 inches in every bar. This Introduction figure is done once and there is no chorus according to Bentley who also recommends 8 bars sticks by sides first.

The original Whalley though starting on the outside foot keeps hands by sides with sticks hanging down for bars 1 and 2 and 5 and 6, then waves sticks over head in and out in and down only in bars 3 and 4, and 7 and 8, very similarly to The Accrington.

The CMM Whalley suggests steps forward for 3 and kicks, and back for three with a stamp, all done twice as the first part of the dance and prior to every figure, starting on an inside foot in mirror image, though the Whalley in old film recordings shows dancers completing a chorus figure with sticks above heads. (<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-empire-day-celebrations-at-whalley-may-24th-1913-1913-online?fbclid=IwAR2zdTkSfvUAJRN19lwfHRM6iASHDdx3oFd36SEUE7TUdAMKySvlkan25Uo>)

More modern performances (CMM) have used “windscreen wiper” movements – in, out, in, up and back, then swing back, forward, back, forward, back again at elbow/chest height.

Broadly similar figures include:

The hitch around /Fig 1/Turn has the CLM using 4 turning and kicking steps starting on the right foot, turn to right and then back and then left pointing up the set, and then “unwinding” whereas the original Whalley hitches inwards round for 4 first and then 4 chassé steps across the set and back, original left side facing up in front both ways, sticks vertical. The CMM hitch around turns in first on inside foot and does a hitch step in every direction and then “unwinds” back as in the CLM dance. The Accrington may, following the Royal Leyland Morris Men (1902) film recording, turn to the right and go round twice the same way.

Corners turn/Fig 2 in CMM Whalley non-cornering couples stand still and in CLM they continue stepping, 8 steps per corner action, 32 in total, sticks down when not arming. In Whalley CMM first corners meet, arm right and go to opposite corners, second corners do the same. First corners arm

left and back to original places, second corners then do likewise, sticks up when arming, down when standing still. The original Whalley notation suggests first corners 4 steps in, 4 right hand turn, 4 left hand turn and back to place facing up, repeat with second corners, outside stick upright throughout. The CLM has first corner arming right and then left and then second corners doing the same, continually stepping.

Lines cross over/Fig 3, 16 bars. In CLM and the CMM Whalley, 8 steps across the set facing up at the end of 8 steps, and same back, left shoulder cross each time for CLM and right shoulders for CMM Whalley, also the Accrington. This figure is mentioned as could be done twice in CLM. The Whalley has "sidestep" 8 chassé steps across further than the original lines and 8 back, right shoulders cross, sticks upright.

Outsides/cast out/Fig 4, 16 bars. In CLM the returning lines cross inside sticks with partner down the middle but the sticks remain individually upright in CMM Whalley. This figure does not appear in the original Whalley except as part of Insides.

Fig 6/Insides 16 bars: CLM: cast in with sticks crossed in middle with partner in the inside part of the figure. CMM Whalley omits the crossed sticks and advises casting in shoulder to shoulder down the middle with sticks down then cast out and move back in shoulder to shoulder back to places, then casting out with sticks horizontally up, then in from the back into a single line, left in front of right back to places.

Fig 7/Hands across/fours/stars are similar in both CLM and CMM Whalley dances, with meeting with sticks "in a bunch" in the middle, 8 steps each ways, then back to places. Outside hand is up also. The Accrington is similar but turns inwards. This figure is not in the original Whalley notation.

Ladies' chain features only in the original Whalley notation and follows on straight from corners turn, in 4s. First corners turn left hands until facing 1 down, 4 up whilst second corner turns left and then turns right handed with neighbour? Then second corner turn by left hand whilst 1st corner go back to place a circle ready to turn their neighbour by the right hand, hands up with sticks vertical whenever possible. Thus

- Bars 1-4, first corners
- Bars 5-8 sides turn
- Bars 9-12 second corners
- Bars 13-16 sides turn, ending up facing up
- As a general rule, keep going the way you were going from one part to the next

The Long Corners/Fig 5 does not feature in the original Whalley or in CMM and involves 1 and 16, then 2 and 15 dancers, arming rights and left in the middle before returning to places as other dancers mark time.

Final figure/Fig 8 also features only in CLM: move into one long column at end of chorus, sticks up, odd in front of even: Bar 1 and 2, right toe to side, to front, to side and behind, springing onto other foot for each step.

Bars 3 and 4: other foot

4 steps out to opposite side then 8 steps back to original place, crossing left shoulders.

Similarly figures of **lines across using sticks, heel and toe** and **hitch chain** do not appear in CLM but do in Whalley and CMM Whalley.

The Whalley Stepping figure is broadly similar to **Heel and Toe** CMM Whalley.

In the original Whalley all dancers single file, left in front of right, hands on shoulder of person in front. Weight is on left foot, and then right to side, cross over, to side, cross behind. Repeat on other foot. Repeat whole but end with a stamp left foot in front of right.

Heel and Toe in The CMM Whalley suggests all line up as before, 4 on spot, 4 to turn, 4 to move into line, 4 to face up by hand on hips, sticks level, weight on left foot spring at right heel touches to side, spring as heel touches centre, repeat on left side, repeat whole 3 times, turn to opposite side, 4 out, 4 turn, 4 back 4, repeat heel and toe move.

The CMM Whalley Lines Across Stand Still:

Stand still and do in out in up chorus hand movements 2 bars

Move into a line left in front of right, 2 bars

Stand still except for whole hand movements of chorus 4 bars

Skip to far side, 2 bars

Repeat stand still, arms in out in up chorus hand movements 2 bars

Skip back to place 4 bars

Hitch chain: the CMM Whalley is performed in 4s. Front couple turn out on inside foot and back on first hitch step, hop and lift outside foot. 4 hitch steps per side including start. Cross right on sides and left as crossing set. Move round a square, 4 steps per side.

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CLAYTON-JELKODRS

Source; collected by Bernard Bentley in 1950's, Related to Challey dance.
Sticks: 12" long with bells at end, probably held at other end.
Both files have the same footwork. 16 dancers in set.

Once to Self : mark time, hands by sides, start with left foot.

Introduction : used at start of dance and normally ahead of every figure.
Mark time for 8 bars facing up. Hands held above head, arms bent and both sticks waved about 6" each way, out and in, in each bar.

Fig. 1 - All dance r/hr l/hl r/hr l/hl with hands up. The free leg on the hop is thrown out straight in front, nearly horizontal. The dancers face up, to right, down and to left in turn, one direction per bar, turning round to right. Repeat going round other way.

Fig. 2 - In 4's. First corners (1&4) arm right the left (8 bars) then second corners (2&3) repeat (8 bars), all using a skip step. Mark time when not travelling, with arms by sides.

Fig. 3 - Lines cross over into opposites' places with 8 skip steps and hands up, turn up to face back and 8 skip steps back to place turning up to face up at end. Right hand column of dancers always pass on up side, left shoulders pass each time. Could repeat to pad out to 16 bars.

Fig. 4 - Outsides (16 bars). Cast out from top, skip with hands up. Return up centre with inside sticks crossed with partner.

Fig. 5 - Long corners. First corners of whole set (1 & 16) skip to meet, arm right, arm left and skip back to place (8 bars). Other corner (2 & 15) repeat. In-active dancers mark time, hands by sides.

Fig. 6 - Insides (16 bars). Cast in down middle from top with skip step and inside sticks crossed with partner. Return up outside with both sticks up.

Fig. 7 - Hands Across. In 4's. Use skip step. 8 bars each way, first right sticks up in centre in a bunch and back with left sticks up in a bunch.

Fig. 8 - Finish. End the Introduction figure all in a single file facing up, the odd of each pair in front of the even. With both hands up, 4 slips to left, 8 slips to right and 4 slips to left, back into centre (8 bars). In the single file all step,

Bar 1-2 right toe out to side, right toe in front, right toe to side again and right to behind left foot. Spring on supporting foot for each change.

Bar 3-4 repeat with weight on right foot, working left toe.

Bar 5-6 as bars 1-2

Bar 7-8 as bars 3-4 but end feet together.

If the slipping in fig. 8 does not seem aesthetically satisfying then it is suggested that something like the following be tried:

Start in the two columns, 2 bars of mark time, all 4 slips away, ie out, then 8 slips into middle into one line.

Sources

Accrington Observer July 17th 1906, describing a new team

Accrington Observer May 18th 1907.

Accrington Observer 16th July 1907, dancing

Accrington Observer of July 25th 1908 Clayton le Moors Star Morris Children's Team in an advertisement

Lancashire Gazette 11th September 1909 Lancashire Cup (Clayton le Moors) Morris Dancers

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Chaffer, Dianne, picture of garland dancers

Dommett, Roy, from Morris Federation Archives as described by Bentley, Bernard, Clayton le Moors

Dance <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7URBRCTaIHSTmhaR2JaeFA3N0k/view>

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Haslett, Johnny, Dowles, Bruce and Janet, Park, Roger, Clitheroe Morris Men Archives

Manchester Morris Men Archives picture of St James Team*

Manchester Morris Men picture of Garden Party*

Pilling, Julian circa 1960, Notes by Julian Pilling. Manchester Morris Men Archives* *"Copyright in these archives will be retained by the Manchester Morris Men but free and unlimited access will be allowed under the Creative Commons 4.0 BY-SA license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

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