

**MAIDEN'S PRAYER**

Source : film of Shropshire Bedlams on a number of occasions 1977-81.
Music : Bromsberrow "Three Hand Reel".
Steps : used a sequence of two stephops and a double, ad lib.
Sticks : medium length, carried over right shoulder when not in use.
Set : six dancers in one line, facing in pairs, > < > < > <.

ORDER OF MOVEMENTS - each takes eight bars.

1. **Reel of Six**, once round in eight bars.
2. **Odds Stick**. Evens 'hold and posture'. Odds strike tips with vigour, right to left, left to right, four times a bar, 31 hits in all, while stepping. The swings are long, starting from out to the side of their body, with a good shoulder twist. Both stand still, not stepping.
3. **Odds Circle**. Evens stand still retaining their posture. Odds move to their left, pass their opposite by the right shoulder, and dance right round all the line of evens clockwise, until back by their starting position into which they turn clockwise.

> < > < > <

4. **Evens Stick**. Odds take up the 'hold and posture' and evens strike.
5. **Evens Circle**. Odds stand still retaining posture. Evens move to their left and dance right round the line of odds clockwise back to their starting place.
6. **Odds Stick**. As 2.
7. **Both Circle**. All move to their left and dance a circle, more of an ellipse, round to place clockwise.
8. **Evens Stick**. As 4.
9. **Reel of Six**, passing right shoulders first.
10. **Odds Stick**. As 2, but after the 31st strike, end standing to attention, stick sloped over right shoulder.



FIVE HAND REEL

Source : film of Shropshire Bedlams in the Market Square at Sidmouth, 1980. Appears to have developed from the Three Hand Reel “Speed the Plough” and to have led to the Nine Hand Reel, “The Triumph”. The characteristic of the dance is that it ‘flows’.

Steps : as usual for Shropshire Bedlams.

Sticks : medium length.

Set : five dancers, four in a square and one in the center.

O2YS - stand, all facing same way (towards No 5). At end all dance a small loop on own, anticlockwise.

1
4 3 2
5

DANCE - there are two alternating movements.

1. REEL & CIRCLE.

The first Reel of Three is danced by 1,3&5. 5&3 pass first by the left shoulder, while No 1 waits and then 1&3 pass by the right etc. The other two dancers, 2&4, turn in a small loop to their left, and set off anticlockwise once around the set.

1
4 3 2
5

At the finish of the Reel of Three the ends, 1&5 approach for the first sticking, and the initial centre, No 3, carries on into the circle being made by 2&4 and joins it between 2&4.

2. STICKING.

The pair of facing dancers, stephop on the spot and clash, hitting tips from right to left, for two bars in the rhythm / x - x - / x x x - //.

The first round of sticking has No 5 in the middle. No 5 sticks with Nos 1 to 4 in order, making a quarter turn anticlockwise to meet each. The three dancers circle round the strikers, the leading one falling in to take over from the dancer who has just been hitting, and that one turning to their left and spiralling out to join the back of the circling group. When a dancer has come in and is ready to start clashing, the next in the circling group is usually in the outer circle immediately behind them.

2 4 1

1 1
5 3 3 2 5 1 2 5 5 4 1 5 4 2
 3 3

4 4 2 3

I think that the indicated directions into the hey may be wrong but what I had on film is not logical. The spacing around the outer circle starts at first at about one person per quarter circle, that is, spread over half the circle, but during the dance it reduces often to the three dancers covering only one quarter between them.

CONTINUATION

The next middle is No 2 and the turns rotate, 5,2,1,4,3. The Reels of Three alternate along and across the set, again the direction of the reel rotating 90° each time. The direction faced for the initial sticking in each turn rotates anticlockwise 90° each time.

**GREEN & YELLOW HANDKERCHIEF**

- Source** : film of Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish dancing on the Esplanade at Sidmouth in 1980. Dancers joined in pairs by linked handkerchiefs.
- Music** : "Greensleeves".
- Steps** : stepshops and a setting step.
Heel-&-Toe Setting - two bar movement - start with weight on left foot, touch heel of right foot diagonally forward, touch right toe behind supporting foot, touch right heel diagonally out again, and touch right toe in front or just a little across the front of the supporting foot. Repeats off alternate feet.
- Hands** : free hand up and shaken on first beat of bars in setting. Free arm up and hand shaken on first beat of alternate bars in figures such as the star. Arm loosely down at side for turns on the spot.
The handkerchiefs are held horizontal and usually taut, at shoulder level mostly and over head level during turns on the spot.
- Set** : four dancers, in a square, two facing two, opposites joined by a linked pair of handkerchiefs normally held in the right hands.

One dancer moves under the others' handkerchief and stands at right angles to them so that all are in a square facing in on the diagonals and the handkerchiefs form a cross without being twisted or bent around each other.

1. Heel-&-Toe Setting with right and left and turn clockwise on the spot twice with stepshops. Repeat all but with two anticlockwise turns. 16 bars.
2. Dance the crossed handkerchiefs round clockwise, about 1½ turns, for eight bars, turn in, changing handkerchiefs from right to left hand, and dance back anticlockwise. To change hands, sweep the free hand over and in, as start to turn in. Eight bars each way. At the end the dancer who went under, comes back to place to form two separate pairs with handkerchiefs parallel.
3. Heel-&-Toe Setting and turns as in figure 1 but facing one's opposite.
4. Pairs face and dance forward to meet, handkerchiefs going slack between them, retire to starting place and then change places passing right shoulders. One dancer has to raise holding hand over their head to turn the easy way to face neighbours at end. Pairs face neighbours with a short turn and dance forward and back keeping the handkerchief taut, then change places with the top pair taking their handkerchief over the heads of the other pair. The movements are repeated to original positions with the original bottom pair starting from the top position going over. 16 bars in all.
5. Heel-&-Toe Setting and turns as in figure 3.
6. Pairs Waist Swing, with right arm round front of opposite's waist going round 3½ or 4½ times in eight bars. Turn in and change hands on handkerchiefs and left arm waist swing back with 3 turns only for dancers to end on the 'wrong' side. The dancer who went under at the start repeats that move at the end of this figure. 16 bars in all.
7. Heel-&-Toe Setting and turns as in figure 1.
8. The pair that changed direction at the end of figure 6, dance forward to meet across the others' handkerchief, retire to place and advance again and clap left hands and then retire. They change hands on the handkerchiefs and repeat the forwards and backs but clap right hands with each other. The other pair then repeat it all. 16 bars in all.



BIG SHIP

- Source** : recorded from the dancing of Shropshire Bedlams at Sidmouth, 1977, and at Bracknell in 1981. Their interpretation of the Brimfield stick dance.
- Music** : “The Big Ship Sails on the Alley, Alley, Oh!” played (ABABB)³ABA.
- Sticks** : medium length.
- Hits** : using a one handed hold on the stick, strike tips, right to left, left to right, in each bar, horizontally with rather wide swings, while both are stephopping on the spot.
- Set** : four dancers in a line, facing in pairs, 1> <2 3> <4. At the start and end of the dance the dancers stand upright, feet together, stick sloped over right shoulder.

The Sequence of Movements is the following done four times, except the final time where there is no figure.

- A1 **Napping** - ends hit the centres who “hold & posture”, 16 hits in all.
- B1 **Figure of Eight** - they start with shouting “Ho!” The inactives dance stephops on the spot. The Bedlams track of the Figure has the ends going opposite ways around the figure eight. They pass their opposite by the right shoulder. The ends pass in the centre by the left shoulder first and by the right in coming back.
- A2 **Napping** as A1.
- B2-B3 **Figure**.

The Figures are,

1. **Swing opposites**. Transfer stick to left hand and waist swing, right arm around the front of opposite’s waist, turn in at halfway and transfer stick to right hand, waist swing with left arm in the other direction, eight bars each way. The pairs rotated between 5 to 7 times each way. At the end of the movement the two dancers have changed places. 2> <1 4> <3.
2. **Star**. The middle two dancers, 1&4, turn quickly to their right, clockwise, to face the other way, and all transfer the stick to the left hand and shoulder at the same time. Then the two pairs dance forward to be alongside each other and forming a right hand star, the middle two taking hands as soon as they are within reach and the others joining in as they come within reach. They jump to turn out, to the left, anticlockwise, to come back, and they transfer the stick to the right hand and shoulder at the same time. The pairs change places again during this movement to end 1> <2 3> <4. To come out, the end two, 1&4, break from the star and dance a loop to their right, clockwise, to end in their starting place. The middle two, now 2&3, do a further half left hand turn in the centre to reach their starting places. The movement takes eight bars each way.
3. **Rounds**. Sticks down together, like a low basket, in the middle.



THREE HAND REEL

Source : recorded from the dancing of Martha Rhoden's Tuppeny Dish at Sidmouth, 1977. It is a handkerchief interpretation of the Brimfield dance, and the details related to Big Ship. Called a "Three Hand Reel" because, of the four persons involved, only two do the Figure of Eight!

Music : "Three Hand Reel"

Set : four dances in a line facing in pairs. 1> <2 3> <4.

The Sequence of Movements in the following done four times, except the final time where there is no figure.

A1 **Setting facing.**

Heel-&-Toe-Setting - a basic two bar movement - start with weight on the left foot, right heel touch ground diagonally forward, right toe touch ground (well) behind heel of supporting foot, heel touch ground diagonally forward again, toe touch ground in front and a little across the supporting foot. Start with the right heel and do the sequence four times in all, taking eight bars, off alternate feet, springing to change the weight carrying foot. The dancers do not rotate during this setting. Hands on hips.

B1 **Figure of Eight.** The same track as Big Ship.

A2 **Setting and Turn.**

Kick-Step-Setting - spring on both feet to left, landing feet together and then kick right leg up high (or across), step right, left, right, with no hop and weight mostly on the right foot, to the right while turning a quarter to the right, clockwise, on the spot. Do four times in all for a complete turn on the spot in eight bars. Hands on hips.

B2 **Figure.**

The Figures are,

1. **Swing Opposites**, eight bars each way.

2. **Star**, right and left hands.

The dancers near the end the setting are one quarter turn from facing along the set, 1&3 to right, 2&4 to left. They turn into the start of moving off into the star. The centers 2&3 dance more than half turn to their right, clockwise, to face round clockwise, and dance off ahead of the ends. 1&4 move forward in the direction facing into the right hand star, following 2&4 respectively.

At the end, when the dancers are circling anticlockwise, 1&4 move forward into the center positions and 2&3 overtake them on the outside and turn inwards to the left, anticlockwise, to face in at the ends so that the line is 2> <1 4> <3.

3. **Rounds** to left and back. Start and end like the star.



OLD MOLLY OXFORD

- Source** : interpretation of Steeple Claydon Six Hand Reel with handclapping danced jointly by Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhodens Tuppenny Dish as recorded at Sidmouth in 1977 and 1981.
- Music** : related to the Steeple Claydon tune, which had an A music only, and with some similarity to the Headington Quarry tune B music. (AB)⁵.
- Steps** : the teams usual stepping sequence.
- Set** : six dancers in a file, facing in pairs, > < > < > <.

The dance is alternating Reels of Six (A musics) and Handclapping (B musics) as at Steeple Claydon.

HANDCLAPPING

- Bar 1 both, both, touch the outside of right ankle with right hand twice,
 Bar 2 both, both, touch the top of right knee twice,
 Bar 3 both, both, touch the outside of left ankle with left hand twice,
 Bar 4 both, both, touch the top of left knee twice,
 Bar 5 both, both, clap right hands with opposite twice,
 Bar 6 both, both, clap left hands with opposite twice,
 Bar 7 both, clap right hands with opposite, both, clap left hands,
 Bar 8 both, clap own hands behind back, both in front, pause.

'both' = clap both own hands together in front of own chest.

To touch ankles the appropriate foot is lifted, leg bent at knee, with little bend forward of the body to reach the ankle.

To touch the knee, the knee is raised towards having the thigh horizontal.

On the same beat as the touch the free arm is near shoulder level and out to the side and the hand flicked outwards. On the final pause in bar 8 both hands are flicked outwards.

THE PERFORMANCE

The manner of presentation was of considerable interest. The dance was used as a finish, at Sidmouth with two lines of women between lines of men. The sequence of reel and clapping was done several times, ending with clapping. The dancers, especially the men, inserted extra rotations during the reels, particularly when going round the ends of the set. At the end of the dance all stood still for a while, women with arms outstretched, then the women jumped, turned and ran off, a little while later the men chased after them.



THE BUFFOON or SIX HAND REEL

Source : recording made at Sidmouth 1977 and 1981 of Shropshire Bedlams.
Music : Ilmington "Buffoon" tune, one day played $AB(A^2B^2)^5$ and another A^{20} .
Steps : usual Shropshire Bedlams sequence of stephops and a double step.
Set : six dancers in one line, facing in pairs.

ORDER OF MOVEMENTS

1. **Reel of Six.**
2. **Clapping I.** Pairs stand still and clap with their opposites, for 8 bars.
 / b r+r b l+l / op op op - / b r+r b l+l / op op op - /
 / b r+r l+l r+r / l+l r+r l+l b / r+r b l+l b / op op op - //

b = clap both own hands together in front, l+l = clap left hands with opposite, r+r = clap right hands with opposite, op = clap both hands with opposite, right on left and left on right.

3. **Reel of Six.** Pass right shoulders to start, passing smoothly into,
4. **Circles of Three,** anticlockwise, about twice round in six bars, and each dance a small loop on their own clockwise, outwards, in two bars, ending facing round the set of three anticlockwise. The "loops" in the various figures can take the dancers up to half way round the ring.
5. **Kicking,** facing anticlockwise. Each in turn claps both own hands together, strikes the person in front on the back of their shoulder with their outer hand and, moving forward to be close, knees them up the backside, the recipient leaping up into the air. In this and the next figure each dancer takes two bars for this movement, later in the dance it is done twice as fast. In the last two bars each dancers does a small loop out and clockwise to end facing round the set the other way, clockwise.
6. **Kicking,** facing clockwise. As figure 4, ending all dancing own loop out and anticlockwise going smoothly into,
7. **Three Hand Stars, Circle & Swing.** Left hand star going to the right, about three times round, anticlockwise for six bars, loop outwards for two bars to face back, and circle clockwise back (not a star) about two times round, for four bars. Then pairs waist swing with right arms across the front of opposites about three times round in the last four bars. During the swing they move a little to get into a line ready for the next figure.
8. **Clapping II.** Pairs stand still and clap with their opposites for 16 bars. This starts with the eight bars of Clapping I above then onto slapping faces.
 / b r+r l+l r+r / l+l - slr1 - / b r+r l+l r+r / l+l - slr2 - /
 / b - slr1 - / b - slr2 - / p - p - / p - p - //

slr1 = dancer 1 slaps opposites face with the flat of right hand. slr2 = other dancer slaps. p = supposedly a slap, but usually degenerates into punches.

9. **Reel of Six.** As figure 2.
10. **Circles of Three.** As figure 3.
11. **Kicking,** facing anticlockwise. As figure 4 but taking only one bar per person so that there are six kicks before the loop in bars 7&8. They shout "ooh!, agh!" in each bar.
12. **Kicking,** facing clockwise. As figure 5, at the speed of figure 10.
(Somewhen about here it starts 'getting out of hand')
13. **Three Hand Star** anticlockwise, turn out and **Circle** back, moving into a large circle of six on the turn out.
14. **Kicking,** facing anticlockwise, loop out and end facing round clockwise and kick again, turning out in a loop into,
15. **Six Handed Star,** anticlockwise and clockwise. Turn out at half way with a wide sweep of the arm like the stick movements in other dances. Dancers start to insert some backside kicks to the persons in front of them.
16. **Fighting,** facing anticlockwise, start by every other one kicking once, but immediately the other half of the dancers turn outwards to face back and start to fight or wrestle with the one behind, degenerating into a general melée, eventually the pairs falling over on to the ground.



SPEED THE PLOUGH

Source : recorded from Shropshire Bedlams at Sidmouth 1977. An interpretation of the Upton Snodsbury dance. Developed into a Five Hand and then a Nine Hand Reel concept.

Music : country dance version of "Speed the Plough" tune played AB.

Sticks : medium length. Sloped over right shoulder when not hitting.

Step : usual Shropshire Bedlams sequence.

Set : three dancers in one line all facing up towards the music.
 m <1 <2 <3

O2YS - stationary facing up with sloped sticks.

Dance - there are two alternating movements, repeated six times in all.

1. REEL - A music

The Reel of Three path is a very wide Figure of Eight, the dancers going far out to the side. The first Reel starts progressively from the top with No 1 turning to their left. Other Reels start with the striker in the middle turning away from the last person hit. In both cases the third dancer does not move off until the dancer from the other end of the line of three has entered the third dancer's loop.

2. STICKING & CIRCLING - B music

Sticking the pair that face clash every hit from right to left in the
 rhythm, / x - x - / x x x - / four times through.

First time : 2&3 stick, No 1 dances anticlockwise $\frac{3}{4}$ round, moving in to face No 2 who turns on the spot $\frac{1}{4}$ anticlockwise to face No 1. 2&1 stick while No 3 turns to their left, the long way, into dancing round the strikers anticlockwise to end behind No 2. No 2 turns to their left and passes No 3 by the left shoulder to start a Reel of Three across the set, which ends with No 3 in the centre facing No 1 who is where they were when clashing with No 2.

Second Time: 3&1 stick, No 2 dances anticlockwise $\frac{3}{4}$ round, moving into face No 3 who turns on the spot $\frac{1}{4}$ anticlockwise to face No 2. 3&2 stick while No 1 turns to their left and dances anticlockwise round to end behind No 3, who then turns to their left, that is away from the person last clashed, and they dance a Reel of Three along the set, ending with No 1 in the centre facing No 2.

Third Time : 1&2 sticks, No 3 circles, then 1&3 stick and No 2 circles, going into a Reel across the set which ends with No 2 in the centre.

Fourth Time etc, follow the same pattern.

Note that the direction of the first clash after a Reel is the same as the last before it.

ENDING - sticks on shoulders

A. Rounds - instead of a Reel

The last one hit casts to their left into a circle, followed by the one who had last been circling round and finally the one in the middle who casts to their left.

B. Turn out from the rounds and form a line facing to the left, dance forward, shaking the free hand vigorously, turn to the left and dance to place, turning left to face in the starting direction. Then each does this, dancing out one at a time, while the others dance on the spot. Then all do it together again. End feet



together, sticks on shoulders. Each forward and back movement takes two bars, so probably the first is done on the end bars of the music for the rounds.



GREEN WILLOW

- Source** : film of Ursa Major from Warwick dancing at Marnhull, Dorset, 1990.
Step : stephops, left foot start.
Set : four dancers, facing down in pairs, with U shaped garlands.

ORDER OF MOVEMENTS

1. Dance down and retire backwards, dance a one way back-to-back with opposite passing right shoulders first. Face up and dance up and retire backwards and dance another one way back-to-back with opposite passing right shoulders first. Each element of the figure takes four bars, 16 bars in all.
2. Neighbours dance round each other once anticlockwise in a circle for two. The first corner pass left shoulders in the centre, crossing along the diagonal and turn to the right to circle for four clockwise, coming in behind the other dancer on that side. The dancers who are the second corner cast to their right as the first corners cross the diagonal and dance round the set clockwise. They reach the first corners original positions as the first corners reach the second corner positions. The four dancers circle for four half way round the set. Then the original second corners cross the diagonal, passing left shoulders and turning to the left into a circle for four anticlockwise, while the original first corners cast out and start to circle anticlockwise to place. Carry on the pattern till back to starting place. Each element of the figure takes two bars, 16 bars in all. (check film) End top pair facing down, bottom pair up.
3. The bottom pair dance up between the tops, approaching in one bar, turning the neighbour by the near hand for two bars so that they end face-to-face and dance one bar on the spot facing the opposite direction to the start of the figure. Go back on the same track, turning with the other hand. It takes two bars each way. One way back-to-back with neighbour, passing right shoulders first. All make a $\frac{1}{4}$ turn and repeat with opposites, odds going between the evens, and end with another one way back-to-back passing right shoulders first. 16 bars in all.
4. The first corners cross, passing right shoulders, but upper body turned so that the garlands slide past each other, and turn to their left to face round clockwise, while the second corners turn to their left on the spot and then cross the diagonals, passing right shoulders and turning to their right, so that the four form a right hand star going clockwise, taking four bars. All star once around clockwise in four bars. First corners cross back passing right shoulders and turn to their left (right?) to face anticlockwise, while the others turn left on the spot and then cross diagonally, turning left into an anticlockwise left hand star. 16 bars in all.
5. Turn neighbour by the right hand once round and dance a one way back-to-back with the neighbour passing right shoulders first. Turn opposite by the left hand once round and dance a one way back-to-back with the opposite, passing right shoulder first.
6. Touch knuckles and circle four clockwise and open out into a line of four facing down in four bars. Dance down and retire backwards in this line. Reform the ring and circle four anticlockwise, for four bars, opening out into a line of four facing up. Dance up and retire backwards and end with a bow towards the top. 16 bars in all.



ADDING ANOTHER DIMENSION

No this does not mean leapfrogging or performing in space or underwater but 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.

This collection of over one hundred 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",

$$2 \quad 4 \quad 6$$

$$1 \quad 3 \quad 5 \quad 7$$

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

$$2 \quad 4 \quad 6$$

$$1 \quad 3 \quad 5 \quad 7$$

which can be worked as if it were,

$$2 \quad 6$$

$$4$$

$$3 \quad 5$$

$$1 \quad 7$$

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

$$2 \quad 5$$

$$1 \quad 4 \quad 7$$

$$3 \quad 6$$

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

$$2 \quad 5$$

$$3 \quad 6$$

$$1 \quad 4$$

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

$$2 \quad 5 \quad 7$$

$$3 \quad 6$$

$$1 \quad 4 \quad 8$$

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,

$$3 \quad 6 \quad 9$$

$$2 \quad 5 \quad 8$$

$$1 \quad 4 \quad 7$$

and this suggests another formation for seven,



3 5 7

2 -----

1 4 6

with the odd dancer having 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. Some notations follow.



NINE MEN'S MORRIS

A phrase evocative of Tudor England, Shakespeare and the Betley and Kingston windows, implying a morris team and its supporting characters. Unfortunately many of the known literary references were to the game of Morris or Merrels. This game was reputed to have been particularly popular in the Middle Ages and to have been suitable to play in church during a sermon. At least boards can be seen cut into seats at Norwich, Canterbury, Gloucester, Salisbury and Westminster Abbey. The game is very old, the earliest being in Egypt c.1400 BC, but also found in the first city at Troy, a bronze age burial in Co. Wicklow and a Viking ship tomb of c.900 AD. It is still played in some northern pubs.

The game is akin to noughts and crosses, each player in turn placing his tokens so as to achieve a row of three, or "mill", which allows the removal of an opponents token. After all the tokens are laid, they can be moved one at a time, the players taking alternate turns, to form new mills until one player is reduced to only two pieces. Morris is a family of games with the number of men in the title equalling the number of tokens to each player. More tokens allow more complex boards, usually described by the number of "holes" or intersections of the board pattern. In "Midsummer Night's Dream" Act 2 Scene 2, the reference is to a turf cut morris board. Its occurrence outdoors further confuses the literary references to morris.

3/4 men 6 men 9 men 12 men

9 holes 16 holes 24 holes

These games could not have got their names because the players blacked their faces, so there may have been some association with the dance, perhaps in the moving around on the playing area when out of doors.

We are used to struggling to reach six or eight dancers and often our inventive bent has to go towards what to do with fewer. As a consequence there seems to have been little exploration of what might be done with nine. It allows a symmetry that is denied a lesser odd number, but three columns are difficult when one has been brought up on the two column longways with the idea of partners.

There have been occasions when a Bampton side has done Bonny Green Garters with nine. The order of their dance is Foot-Up, Whole-Hey and Half-Caper off in single file, probably in a spiral, and not the Bonny Green of the rest of the Morris World. The central column mirrors the left hand as does the even side in a six handed set, and the right hand matches the left hand column in the hey. The central man is the last of the file in dancing off.

In the late 1960's the Halsway Manor Advanced Morris weekends used to have a session on the Sunday morning where groups were asked to invent a dance against some set theme or idea. One such was to create an **Essex Nine Men's Morris**. It was so successful that it lasted in clubs' repertoires for several years and this was how it was done at the Blackmore Morris feast on 6.1 73. The tallest dancer was in the centre.

All the figures were done with a single step and ended on four plain capers. The distinctive figure was an Adderbury Hey along the columns followed by a similar hey across the rows. Each hey matched, there was no mirroring.

Figure 1 : **Foots**. Foot North, Foot East, Foot South, and Foot West. Danced on the spot, facing each direction in order.

Figure 2 : **Eight Handed Star** around the dancer in the centre, ruffling hair!



- Figure 3 : **Eight Handed Ring**, not the ordinary rounds but “elephant” rounds. All join hands in the circle and do not let go. One at a time each swings their right leg over their right hand making a $\frac{1}{4}$ turn to the left, so that the right hand is between the legs and the dancer is facing to the left, while other dancers step-hop. The set can be either stationary or circling clockwise. Then break into “conga” rounds with conga step and yells.
- Figure 4 : **Layers**, or All-in. Dance whole rounds and then All-in in threes. Nos 4,5&6 lay down alongside each other with their heads pointing to the left of the set, then Nos 7,8&9 lay across them with their heads to the bottom of the set, and finally Nos 1,2&3 lay on top with their heads to the right of the set.

One would guess there was no definitive version of this bit of buffoonery!

Great Western Morris have a **Nine Men’s Morris**, Fieldtown style.

The distinctive figure was all face up, a crossed sidestep left in front, an uncrossed double step, a crossed sidestep right in front, feet together and jump. The front two of each column then bend forward to be ready for the back row to leapfrog forward over them on four strong beats. Then all hop-back-step and jump, falling back one place so that now the bottom row are at the top. There are three repeats of the distinctive figure so that the dancers end up where they started in the set.

- Figure 1 : **Foot-Up-&-Down**, all galleying on the left in each half and ending all facing up.
- Figure 2 : **Heys**. Half-hey down the columns, half hey across the rows, half hey up the columns and half hey back across the rows. The outer heys turn out to start and the central line follows the right hand line.
- Figure 3 : **Diagonals**. While the centre dancer does fore-capers on the spot, the diagonals cross, first the corners of the set and then the middles of the four sides, and then both lots back again, turning towards the central dancer as they pass and hop-back-stepping out to the new place.
- Figure 4 : **Rounds**. While the centre dancer does upright capers on the spot, the other eight dance rounds, going into the centre at half way and hop-back-stepping out, and coming in to the middle and lifting the centre dancer at the end.



MINDEN ROSE'S NINE MEN'S MORRIS

- Source** : composed for Minden Rose, Alton and worked out one practice night, then later given to Knots of May, from Sussex.
- Music** : jigs.
- Steps** : skips.
- Set** : a square of nine dancers, 3 by 3, with each having two sticks, or handkerchiefs, which are swung alternately. The central dancer of the nine is distinguished by having a U shaped garland. Those at the corners of the square are "the corners" and those in the middle of the sides are the "centres".

ENTRY - The garland holder comes forward and stands in the middle. The rest then follow in single file to form a circle around the garland facing in.

DANCE - This is a series of figures, each followed by a chorus, except the last, which goes straight into a dance off in single file with the garland holder last.

CHORUS - all face up to start. It is in three parts.

1. The top row cast to their right and dance a complete progressive Reel of Three along their columns.
2. The right hand column face to their left and the rest to their right and dance a complete Reel of Three across the set along each row, starting progressively from the right.
3. The four centres reel through the middle of the set by a half right hand star while passing in the middle and dance a loop to the left in the opposite diagonal's place before coming back with another half right hand star and loop to the left to their starting place. The phrasing is one bar into the star, one bar to pass, two bars to loop, etc. The four centres dance the same thing but across the long diagonals, dancing a bar on the spot at the start to left the centres go through and then completing the movement in the remaining seven bars. The garland holder joins in one of the reels, passing left shoulders with one of the centres as they come in to the middle.

FIGURES - the garland dances on the middle spot through every figure.

1. The outer eight dance a circle once round clockwise.
2. The outer eight dance clockwise in a double circle once round, the centres moving forward to dance alongside and inside the corner in front of them.
3. The outer eight dance contra-circles, the centres going clockwise inside once round and the corners going anticlockwise outside once round.
4. The outer eight dance a circular hey or grand chain once round, starting as for the contra-circles in figure 3, but weaving to pass left and right shoulders alternately.
5. The outer eight dance a circle once round anticlockwise and lead off.



THE ALTON FIGHT

- Source** : The dance originally came from Yorkshire Chandelier as filmed and discussed at a workshop with them. It was collected by a dancer watching a team of Basque women practicing. It was interpreted by Yorkshire Chandelier and developed further by Minden Rose.
- Title** : It was renamed because of the changes from the source. The noise of the clashing and the bustle of the movements remind of the scurmish during the English Civil War at Alton on Wednesday 13th December 1643 during which Col John Bolle was killed in the pulpit of St Lawrence Church.
- Music** : "Brighton Camp", written at the time of the Militia Camps on the South Downs in 1758, and now the British Army's traditional farewell music. The polka rhythm must be very marked in the playing to fit the natural movement of the 'step'. (A²B²)
- Step** : dance walk step in chorus, cross over polka step in figures.
- Set** : this is a dance for units of four, with the last figure for as many as are dancing. It makes a good dance for just four. The dancers each have a U shaped garland, and stand facing up two by two, garlands vertical, opposites being fairly close, nearly shoulder to shoulder. Movements to change position, direction of dancer or garland occur at start of a bar not the end of the previous one.

CHORUS - the dance has a chorus before each figure - 16 bars.

All face up, walk forward four steps, smoothly lowering the garland in front by rotating it in the hands from the vertical to below horizontal. Bring the garland rapidly vertical and polka step on the spot for two bars. Retire to starting place with four walking steps, garland remaining vertical. Turn in to face opposite, raising the garlands a little and tilting them forward, holding them with their tops touching, along the centreline of the set, for two polka steps.

All facing across, walk backwards, away from opposite, smoothly lowering the garland as before, then bring upright quickly for two polkas on the spot. Opposites then approach on four walking steps with garland vertical, and finally raise and tilt garlands to touch opposite's for a last two polkas.

FIGURES - polka step throughout - 16 bars each.

1. **TURN PARTNER** - in 2's

All take a half turn to the left so that the left file faces up and the right file faces down and inside knuckles of opposite's are touching. Turn opposite once round by the right, clockwise, using eight polka steps, taking care to be in a single line along the centreline at the end of bars 2 and 6 and straight across the set at the ends of bars 4 and 8, as at the start. Turn in quickly and turn opposite back by the left for the second half.

2. **RINGS** - in 4's

Move in along the diagonals to immediately form rings of four, putting right wrist over neighbour's left wrist, with garlands vertical and forming a "crown". Polka once around clockwise, facing in throughout, taking care to move round only one "place" every two polkas. Circle back anticlockwise once around and move out to place.

3. **DIAGONALS ARCH** - in 4's

The second corner, 2&3, make an arch across the diagonal by raising and tilting their garlands so that they touch at the top, and they stand still while the other two dance around them. The active dancers first pass each other face to face under the arch, leading with the left shoulder, and turn to their left to dance around their stationary opposite anticlockwise with their backs to them, facing away. They pass again under the arch face to face, but with right shoulder leading and then dance around their neighbour clockwise, with their backs to them, to their starting place.

The first corner then forms a similar arch and the second corner dances around them, first passing face to face with right shoulder leading and going around their opposite clockwise and then passing left shoulder leading and going round their neighbour anticlockwise to place.

4. **CLASH IN SQUARES** - in 4's



Dancers start by facing opposites. They polka around clockwise, taking two polkas to move each “place”, making a complete circuit back to starting place in eight bars. The movement is not the same as in RINGS as the dancers face across at the end of each move and clash their garland tops with the current opposite on the first beat of each odd bar. The dancers are halfway between “places” at the start of the even bars, either facing up and down along the centreline or facing across. Note that the clashes are alternately with the original opposite and with the neighbour. Repeat going anticlockwise once around. There are four clashes to each half of the figure.

5. **CLASH & CLASH AND GO** - for all as a complete set - length of music, 16 bars plus, depends on number of sets of four dancing.

- a. In two lines facing opposites the dancers polka on the spot for eight bars, hitting opposite’s garlands on the first beat of the odd bars.
- b. The top pair clash, cast out and go down the outside to the bottom of the set, while the other continue to clash as in a. and move sideways to shift up one place. The next pair casts down after the next clash and so on. This clash and go continues for eight bars or till everyone has had a turn and the set is back in the order that it was at the start, whichever is longer.
- c. The top pair clash and walk down the middle of the set under the garlands which are now still and making arches across the set. Every two bars another pair clash and go under the tunnel and dance off.

The order of figures was once 3, 2, 1 but it proved difficult to get the diagonal arches going well as a first movement.

As given by Yorkshire Chandelier the chorus was polkaed through and the garlands not lowered and the order of figures was 3, 2, 4, 1.

