



MORRIS MATTERS

VOLUME 10 NUMBER 1



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EDITORIAL

Welcome back to those subscribers who left us at Volume 9, issue 2 back in 1988. To remind you where we left off, there was advance notice of the morris injuries survey, several reviews of foreign tours, a bit of letting off steam about teams who cancel at the last moment, guidelines on writing articles for magazines (budding contributors please read!), a suggestion that people write their morris biographies (to be lodged with the Morris Federation) and an obituary for John Gasson.

So, what's happened since then?

The morris injuries survey has been published (contact the Morris Federation for details), several teams have travelled abroad or hosted visitors and in memory of John, the Solo Jig competition was inaugurated at Sidmouth Folk Festival in 1988. And a very stimulating event it has become. The 1990 contest was won by Darryl Hurtt (Hammersmith) and Mary Jo Searle.

NOW READ ON!

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Now that its back in print, would you want to miss out on your copy of Morris Matters? If you're not already a subscriber, then reach for your pen and cheque book.

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HUMOUR IN THE MORRIS, part 1.

The Morris never took itself too seriously. However, dancers can't always bring themselves to think of themselves as entertainers or to be larger than life; in other words they won't make fools of themselves. Personal experience suggests that morris dancers are more prone than most of society to do anything that is suggested and to think about it afterwards. It is not surprising that there are a number of common comic ideas and routines in circulation; some have become well loved classics like some clown routines. Silly or fun dances have their place, often late in the day as it gets dark.

SPONTANEITY

It is not uncommon within any social organisation to present skits and stunts on party nights and in this respect the morris is no different. They are usually ephemeral ideas, specific to the occasion, such as ales and end of tour parties, which often do not bear much repetition. This is probably because they are not normal 'dance' concepts but pantomimic, ludicrous or vulgar and, like all fooling for fun associated with the morris, needing an element of spontaneity. It's like all joking in the morris dance; rehearsal can make it look more professional, as long as you do not see it a second time done in exactly the same way. It always loses its

impact if it's been seen before. Humour today is expected to appear spontaneous, although hoary chestnuts can be greeted with delighted groans! But an important point is the value of passing good ideas on, without widely broadcasting them. Some clubs have a tradition of creating them, like Great Western who printed a book about their attempts.

INSPIRATION

Good yet simple dance ideas are hard to come by. Small variations on existing movements are produced all the time, but they seldom catch the imagination of other teams as a preferred alternative. Too often 'new' dances are complicated. A good judge of quality is whether the idea appears to another side as worth stealing. It is just as well that good ideas are rare, with the number of sides in the world we could be swamped by them. There is always the problem of judging what is 'not morris'. At Bampton Jinky Wells introduced dances such as "Under the Old Myrtle Tree" which did not catch on because it included elements that were too much of the country dance.

Good dances are based on movement; neat or vigorous are the terms that should spring to mind. They are very seldom based on dramatisation or representation and the collectors did a disservice

to the morris in relating some movements to agricultural actions, when all are very abstract, even Kemps 'beet-topping'. What dances can have is a structure and a climax, eg Anstey Mill, by Minden Rose.

The older tradition had the Buffoon. Not just the Adderbury one but the Ilmington dance with the physical assault associated with the "Three old mens dance" from Lancashire. Another is "Old Marlborough" from Fieldtown to the White Joke tune and "Jug by the Ear", with a chorus of rounds in which the dancers grasp their neighbours nearest ear. Physical actions fit with the 19th century lack of sophistication in its humour. The Longborough fool would wear a padlock and chain instead of a watch and when asked the time would hit the enquirer and say "just struck one!". Abingdon dance Jockey to the Fair with a jump forward at one point in which they attempt to, or give the impression of attempting to land on their opposites toes. Headington have "How do you do" and "Willow Tree" which are amusing played straight.

It is a pity that the collectors and revivalists largely ignored the performance and entertainment of the morris in seeking authenticity and the recovery of an old art.

The problem with comic ideas built into dances is that the performers often want to ham it up to restore spontaneity after the constant repetition, forgetting that

the audience may then miss the inherently funny part altogether. In the dance the audience has to know what is properly intended before they see the humour, otherwise it is all just mucking around. It is not the place of the ordinary dancers to clown; such action should be left, say to the middle pair. An example is the Farnborough Morris "Banbury Bill" in which the middles dance round each other an increasing number of turns at each repetition of the chorus. The team should leave it to one person or pair, letting the laughs arise from the action, such as in the Shropshire Bedlams dances "Buffoon" or "Maidens Prayer".

© Roy Dommett 1990



OTHER AUTHENTICITIES; THE OCCASIONAL MORRIS

A summary of a paper presented to the "Evolving Morris" conference at Crewe and Alsager on 20th October 1990.

The Morris revival started from a mixture of motives; academic research, sharp eyed showmanship linked to the Merry England craze of the Jubilee and romantic folklorist views of the past and the lower orders. It was driven by the middle-class earnestness of the EFDS, eager to teach the working class an uplifting alternative to the pub.

Soon there were attempts to re-create the past that never was - the purity of the male fertility rite - and the morris club was founded to enable men to dress in silly clothes and escape their wives. Inevitably in the last twenty years, the wives have taken their own steps, until today we have a vast selection of different teams - male, female and mixed.

All modern teams however, whatever their make-up, have inherited from the past a way of thinking - that they are maintaining a tradition from the past - and a structure. They are all social clubs: a group of people who meet weekly (and sometimes weakly) throughout the year.

This has benefits - team

closeness and coherence creates a club style and a uniformity of movement, and costs - after a time, mid-season blues can last all year. The tradition is mere shared habit: too many teams seem after five or six years, to be going through the motions, like weary swimmers beyond the sewerage outfall. Such teams we can call "ten years married" teams, a couple married this long know one another well but their lovemaking cannot capture the intensity and dazed thrills of their first experience together.

If we turn to the past for guidance it becomes clear that such continuity, such persistence over time and relentless 52 weeks a year intimacy, is uncharacteristic of the tradition. Most teams of the best documented period before the revival, the late 19th century, were intermittent and seasonal, arising from an occasion (e.g. the Jubilee) or the enthusiasm of an individual. Practice was sketchy: a short intensive period leading up to, for instance, Whitsun rather than once-a-week meeting.

Modern Morris pursues authenticity - through the bible of the Black Book or researching kit or field notes of collectors. This pursuit is for me flawed, it relates to a past which never existed and it focuses on the wrong things.

Hence teams of chartered accountants and marketing consultants in Brighton or Barrow declare that the only essential attribute for those upholding the tradition of dancing originating in Cotswold villages is a penis of ones own, teams with Hi-tech shoes dress up in Victorian headwear and medieval sword belts.

For me, the only authenticity that matters is street credibility: the ability to appeal to those who do it and those who watch it on the streets of 1990. The teams I am about to describe break the normal team rules - they meet rarely, don;t elect officers, practice is skimpy, - but they derive from their infrequent and consequently periodically renewed enthusiasm for dancing.

The first category is close to the ten years wedded team - it arises from it, in that its core is a ten year wedded team which does something outside its normal repertoire at a particular time of year - typically Border, Molly or mumming. Kit is a general theme rather than fully detailed, the team is joined by others for this period only and may dance under a different name. Examples are the East Anglian Molly teams, Leicester Morris who became Red Leicester Morris and so on. The teams retain much of the social club ethos of the ten years wedded team, but also create an excitement from the novelty and stimulation of dancing in a different form. The change of place and role creates new

zeal and passion: thus we may call these teams "*second honeymoon morris*".

The second type of Occasional Morris is *Morris Interruptus*, capturing the excitement and invigorating tension of an affair carried out in bursts of powerful energy interspersed with long periods of being apart. *Morris Interruptus* teams draw members from a wide geographical area but meet only two or three times a year. Repertoire is typically small, practice brief (a Friday night before a Saturday's dancing) and kit elementary (a sash, a rag-coat). Such teams include Duns Tew Morris, Scratch Morris and Madcap Morris.

The third type of occasional Morris is the team which never practises, attracts different dancers each time it meets and makes a virtue of diversity. As it resembles sleeping around or partner swapping, we may call it *Casual Morris*. Kit, dancing styles and repertoire are varied and many: hence its prime examples are Motley Morris and Scragenz Morris.

Enthusiasm and verve replace coherence and unity, indeed the most interesting aspect of *Casual Morris* is the way it makes a virtue of what the rest of the Morris world sees as a fatal flaw. Motley boasts that it presents the variety of Morris dancing within the same set, Scragenz has taken it further with a speciality dance of Scragenz Trunkles, where each figure is from a different tradition and each corner pair dances a

different tradition.

These different categories of Occasional Morris differ in detail, in coherence of kit, degree of practice, consistency of membership and repertoire - but all possess the spontaneity and unpredictability which arises from their occasional nature and constantly renewed challenge, and which infuses their performances with an enthusiasm to which audiences respond.

We shall never know the origins of Morris, nor would it help us if we did. The early revival gave us a bewildering variety of explanations : none of them matter. In so far as an eccentric activity such as Morris dancing matters at all, the important thing is the creation of moments of awe, excitement and pleasure on the pavements where it is danced.

" Dancing serves no necessary purpose", William Prynne remarked in the seventeenth century: if we want it to be more than a museum exhibit or a quaint tourist trap, we must value those aspects of it which make audiences admire or thrill or laugh with it on our streets. A balanced Morris embraces the depth of the ten-years relationship and the intensity and fun of the unexpected and new. Occasional Morris breaks a few stereotypes and is honest and enthusiastic and alive. That for me is the only authenticity that matters.

Tony Forster.

MORRIS

THE YOUNG MENS DANCE (DOUGLAS KENNEDY).

OH REALLY? (GEORGE FRAMPTON)

During the last eight years, I have become depressed at the demise of the folk club scene, and regret that more wasn't done to encourage the next generation to share my love of it. One criticism heard was the lack of professionalism shown by some of its performers. I fear that the same thing might happen to the world of morris dancing unless we act quickly.

Chris White echoes this theme in Folk in Kent (Oct 90), suggesting ways in which performance could be improved to be in harmony with Cecil Sharp's recipe for good dancing in the Morris Book. Sharp notes agility and vigour to be a requirement. Douglas Kennedy in "Englands Dances" repeatedly describes the morris as a young man's dance, which is a point Chris omits.

No-one owes us a living. Unless the morris dancers of today entice new blood from younger generations, the whole thing is going to grind to a halt sooner or later, without the aid of Heineken's counter-publicity! Historically, Keith Chandler and Mike Heaney have proven that what was once thought of as tradition in the Wychwood forest in the 19th century probably only lasted twenty

years at most, then passed on to another village through the agency of a musician or foreman. Even today, history repeats itself; witness the standing joke of; how do you know when Hugh Rippon has moved house? (Answer, because a new morris team has started up in the area). The point is, at least the tradition was kept going with new blood.

In Kent, most teams I know have had constant memberships built around a hard corps of dancers of similar ages. The problem is, the members have grown up together, and each approaching year pushes up the average age to the tune of one! Only the varying degrees of agility, enthusiasm and corpulence change.

In tackling the key areas of music, style, technique and performance, Chris White in his article fails to address the one reason why some/most of Kents dancers fail to dance "as high as that table"; they are incapable of it! Douglas Kennedy, in interpreting Sharp, Shakespeare etc, calls the Morris the young mens dance. Well, where are they?

Adults attitudes to younger dancers isn't a new problem. It was one area in which Cecil Sharp and Mary Neal

disagreed during the Edwardian revival. Sharp won because his crack team of EFDS dancers from Chelsea Polytechnic were perceived as the real thing, set against Neals Esperance Guild of working girls, never mind the argument about how bent the knee should be. The rest is history. In the 2nd edition of the Morris Book, Sharp sanctions the use of the morris for children, with the proviso that it may be harmful to the immature and should be used with discretion.

At Sidmouth in August 1990, Tim Radford chaired a brains trust and one of the questions led to discussion on children dancing the morris, which evaded the problem about where the next generation is coming from. The conclusion was that it was OK but they shouldn't be made to do it by their parents. Above all, it should be fun. When I think of the next generation, I am hardly thinking about my own two infant daughters, I am thinking of the next ten years and hoping that the high profile teams of today might still be a creditable force then with newer dancers. There are times when I believe pigs may fly!

Let's start with success stories. I immediately think of South Downs Morris. Phil Everitt has now trained two generations of sixth form students to finesse and it is refreshing to see them dance. It tickles me pink to view Clive and Wilbur as the old hands and still in their early twenties! John

Kirkpatrick was similarly successful when he was recruiting for his original Shropshire Bedlams.

The Bantam Cocks are the best case study of a group of young dancers who grew up and matured together, and are today one of the briskest, tightest teams in the country. Personally I am no fan of clubs who prefer to dance more than one style but I cannot fault their rapper, Bledington or whatever else they take in hand.

One reservation that Roy Dommett expressed at the 1988 Sheffield conference was that the diversity of club styles would serve to put new recruits off. To an extent, I understand his concern but fail to see why, e.g. Jockey to the Fair (Brackley) and Queens Delight (Bucknell) in the Ring repertoire are preferable to, say, Pogles Panic (Oyster) or Glorishears (Jorrocks) or why a nationwide repertoire of dances serves the purpose better than one sides chosen style.

It's taken a long time to engage the interest of the next generation. Hopefully, by accident, Andy Kershaw and Folk Roots are supplying back up to youngsters more interested in the restless Beat of Soweto than any kind of beat in Stow on the Wold! Ian Anderson and Maggie Holland (as Hot Vultures) once put gig time aside specifically so they could entertain at local sixth form functions. However, today university folk clubs seem to be having their own kind of

recession. Perhaps this is the chance for one of the high profile morris dance teams and/or folk performers to go out and give 'them' the best possible impression of 'us'.

It has been suggested to me that interest in something as esoteric as folk music only crops up in alternate generations. I don't accept this and even if this was true, my critic infers there to be some kind of chance element. Heisenberg would probably agree with him, but I'm not so certain! This is an easy area in which to be negative but I would invite the success stories to reply. As I've hinted before, if we don't act within the next few years, teams like Old Spot, Seven Champions, Mr Jorrocks, Windsor etc will all be memories or pale shadows of their former agile selves. Only John K. and Phil Everitt will have reserved their places in Heaven!

George has some further thoughts on young dancers and his comments on primary school age dancers will be published in a future issue! He wishes to point out that his views may not be endorsed by any team of which he is, or has been, a member!

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Give an indication of your level (beginner/competent/versatile) and what instrument you play. This will help Alan to plan the day.

Some of the ideas that could be covered are:

Role of the musician in a team, putting YOUR point of view!

Liaison with the foreman.

Finding where the lift is or should be, in the dance - and putting it into the music.

Energy levels, emotional impact, atmosphere or lack of it.

Performing in public.

How to knit the set together and which dancer to play to.

♪ ♪ SEE YOU THERE! ♪ ♪

HANDKERCHIEFS

The Cotswold Morris needs handkerchiefs. Some of the old references call them kerchiefs as in neckerchiefs, or the cloth used to wrap food or belongings and carried on the end of a stick, rather than pocket handkerchiefs and photos, eg Kimber in the Morris Book, showed that when held by a corner, the other corner about touched the ground. This suggests that the traditional implement was of reasonable size.

The standard sizes for handkerchiefs, before hemming, are traditionally and not surprisingly, 12" by 12", 18" by 18" and 24" by 24". The smaller sizes have $\frac{1}{2}$ " hems and the larger 1" so that they are sold as 11, 17 and 22 inch squares, giving diagonal lengths of 15.5, 24 and 31", being called "Ladies", "Gentlemens" and "Large Gentlemens". The middle size is just about long enough for an averaged height person, if the corner is knotted and held between the fingers but the larger is needed if a good grip is required or the handkerchief looped. Beware the economy or bargain priced gentlemens handkerchiefs which are often only 16" by 16".

Made up handkerchiefs are not cheap and consideration should be given to cutting them out and hemming them oneself from roll material sold by the metre. The widths of materials vary from 175 cm to 275 cm. Allow for natural materials shrinking a little when first washed in estimating needs.

The materials offered include Polycotton, Percalé (brushed cotton/polyester mix), pure cotton, heavy Boston twill, unbleached cotton (calico) and, for extravagant or discerning dancers, pure Irish Linen. The latter costs about ten times more than ordinary cotton but is very long lasting. Not many people like calico.

The material also comes in various dyes, or can be dyed locally into club colours or hemmed with an alternative colour.

One suggested supplier is Limericks Linens of PO Box 20, Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex. IG6 1QQ (phone 0268 745 106/206)

Roy Dommett.

Bedfordshire - Brussels, Bricks, Beer and Byng?

Bedfordshire is one of England's smallest counties and has relatively few claims to fame. Two of its products taint the nostrils, as those living downwind of the brickworks or amid the Biggleswade brassica fields will testify. Our biggest native brewing family is the Whitbread one, whose legacy of attractive estate houses is surely finer than the contemporary policies of closing regional breweries. The Whitbread family home is in Southill formerly the property of the Byng family.

The Byng's might have been missed by history were it not for Admiral Byng. He had the misfortune to lose the battle of Minorca, against the French, in 1756. Recent historical research suggests that the government sought a scapegoat and framed poor Byng for cowardice. His demise was unique. As the senior officer present, he had to order the execution party to fire its deadly salvo, which he did by dropping a white handkerchief.

Admiral Byng's nephew, John, was born in 1742 and became 5th Viscount Torrington in 1812. He married Bridget Forrest in 1767 and later lived in Manchester Square, London. Like many 18th century gentlemen, John Byng

enjoyed touring. Not for him, however, was the Grand Tour of Europe; he kept to England and Wales. Like other contemporaries, however, he kept a journal. This was rescued from obscurity by Bruyn Andrews who edited *The Torrington Diaries* into 4 volumes that were published by Eyre and Spottiswood in 1934.

What's he drivelling about? Three paragraphs and the nearest that we have got to Morris is a white handkerchief at an execution! Well, John Byng was an acute observer.

Morris must have been both familiar to him and in decline in the late C18th, as his first, record shows [his spelling and punctuation is retained]:

Wallingford 3rd June, 1781
(Vol I p5) *During our short stay at Wallingford a set of morris-dancers pranced away in the street; these, with other old rural sports I fear'd had been lost.*

It was just over three years before he noted seeing Morris again, but perhaps he would have been content if this side had been lost:

Cheltenham 28th June, 1784
(Vol I p124) *... I attended to a troop of Morrice dancers*

headed by the buffoon; but to me, their mummery appear'd tedious, and as little enjoy'd by the performers, as the spectators: the genius of the nation does not take this turn. There is a fearful hint of familiarity in those words!

Notwithstanding the uninspiring performance at Cheltenham, Byng seems to have sought Morris in a leisurely fashion and after another three years he was to be found in **Chepstow on 28th July 1787 (Vol I p272)**. On my enquiring of Mr J[ames] about harpers and morrice dancers, he inform'd me that the latter yet existed in the Forest of Dean, whence they issued, as formerly, at Whitsuntide; and (from what he cou'd explain,) in every antient device; (except that of the hobby horse;) the Maid Marian, and the clown being preserv'd:- as forests still retain, with their wild looks, some wild manners, these will, probably, extinguish at the sale of the Crown lands. What did happen to the harpers? Did they play for the Morris? There is a Forest of Dean side now, but what happened in the intervening 200 years?

Two years later, Byng was in Derbyshire at **Normanton on Saturday 13th June 1789 (Vol II p29)**. We were upon our horses by half past nine o'clock, and rode thro' Normanton, a village, where May Pole was, as others of this county, richly adorn'd by garlands, composed of silk, gauze, and mock flowers; and around which (a

woman told me) they danced in the Morris-way; but not in honour of the goddess Maia on the 1st of her month, but, rather in memory of the Restoration, upon the 29th May [the birthday of Charles II].

Few today would consider leaving a Maypole decorated two weeks after its use especially one so much more ornate than the bowdlerised beribboned ones of today. While his informant was a woman, Byng tantalisingly fails to inform us whether they who danced were men, women or children. Morris-way could simply mean that it was the customary way to dance with Morris coming from the Latin mores (=customary) or there were other ways of dancing around a Maypole; in which case, what?

His last reference to Morris was recorded a few miles from his family's Bedfordshire home, at **Silsoe on Saturday 30th May 1789 (Vol IV p100)**. The Cottagers, every where, look wretchedly, like their cows; and slowly recovering from their wintry distress: Deserted by the Gentry, they lack Assistance, Protection, and amusement; However my landlord [of the George Inn] says that in May, there are Mayers (alias Morrice Dancers) who go about with a fool, A Man in Woman's Cloaths (the Maid Marian), and Musick. Times must indeed have been hard for Morris to be the sole means to lighten the distress of winter! Silsoe has changed somewhat since 1789, although the

George Inn still serves in its old capacity. Byng showed an enlightened approach to eating in Silsoe: *the brown Bread excellent (white I always discard), nor was the sage cheese amiss*. Today's cottagers are likely to be commuters, but Morris dancers still visit Silsoe (I can think of 10 sides in the last 5 years), especially the stately home of Wrest Park, which now houses a research institute, where I work.

Byng gives us some glimpses of how the aristocracy saw Morris in the late C18th. It was clearly sufficiently familiar to him to recognise the major elements of it. It appears that the Maid Marian was as standard as a fool (who might as easily be termed a clown or buffoon) and hobby horses were established (even though he did appear to record any sightings). May was reported to be the most active month for dancing, however, the Morris he actually saw occurred in June. May 1st (considered by Byng to be a Pagan occasion) was not especially favoured for dancing and the late May festivities of Whitsun and Restoration Day seem to have taken precedence; one wonders if the two became merged.

Sadly he does not tell us how many dancers there were, what kit they wore or what music was used - I cannot really believe that the Forest of Dean reference to harpers was to them playing for the Morris. We can be pretty sure that Morris was sufficiently

unusual for him to record it when he saw it and the tenor of his enquiries suggests that he perceived it to be approaching terminal decline.

John Byng continued the journal of his travels into 1794 and died in 1813. He might have chosen a quote from his own journal as a epitaph, but the age of reason prevailed, and this was left to his journal's gentle readers: *...of all the tours I read I like my own the best, (Well said, master!)*.

Adrian Williams
November 1990

AN APPEAL FOR PERFORMERS

The National Youth Folklore Troupe was founded in 1990. Its aim is to give young people with special skills, the chance to meet others to form a performance group to represent their country at folk festivals. In 1990 the programme included country, Morris, Long and RapperSword, Clog, step, and broom dances. The music was performed by members of the troupe with only a little adult help.

For 1991 we hope to receive applications from singers as well.

We have set out to be a National troupe, not a 'southern end of the nation' troupe but so far have received no enquiries from north of Birmingham. Come on folkies in the North, let's hear from you.

The age group for 1991 is 10 to 16 as at 31st July. In 1992 we hope to be able to have two troupes; one for 10 - 13 and another for 14+.

We have a one week residential course at Easter, which includes a lot of rehearsals as well as outings most afternoons. Riding, ice skating and swimming were included in 1990. Accommodation is at a Youth Hostel near Wantage. Arrangements are made for getting all participants to and from venues. Our special needs are for more BOYS to apply.

The only other restriction is

the funds we have available. Next year we can really look hard for commercial sponsorship but for now we ask for support from those with an interest in folk, who believe, as we do that by showing young people performing well, especially if we can get some TV coverage, it will encourage all those youngsters who see us to have a go, or at least take folk music, song and dance more seriously.

More details and application forms from Peter J Mayes(secretary), N.Y.F.T.E. 24b Bedford Grove, Eastbourne, BN21 2DU. sae please.

Donations to N.Y.F.T.E. 11, Sadberge Grove, Fairfield, Stockton on Tees, TS19 7RN.

INCOMPLETE SET

This was the title of a workshop run last year and it is a problem most teams will have encountered. Over the next few issues we will look at some ideas and would welcome any solutions not mentioned.

It is not an uncommon experience for a foreman to find that there is a need for dances that can be performed by less than the club's regular number. There are three classes of solutions.

a) find ways of using a maximum of the content of the existing club repertoire, but with fewer dancers.

b) adapt the dance ideas so that the result looks choreographed for the number of dancers available. Some dances could then always be done by four!

c) learn dances that are traditional or have been composed for fewer dancers. Unfortunately most of such that I have seen are in the "Street Dance" or "Border" styles.

Here is a general survey of dances for any permutation of numbers.

SINGLETONS

Dances for one are solo jigs. A fairly comprehensive list

includes Morris jigs, Fools Jig, Captain Pugwash, Baccapipes, Crossed Sword dances, Broomstick and related dances, Egg and Candle dances, Isle of Man Dirk dance, All the 4 Winds, step dances including hard shoe and clog of various styles, Sailors Hornpipe, Highland and Irish dances, Sword or Cutlass drill (eg Forest of Dean), Baton Twirling, Rhythmic gymnastics with apparatus (eg a stick and ribbon) and jiggling by Hobby Horse (eg Minehead) and Jack-in-the-Green.

There have been some improvised dances seen using such long apparatus as a Friendly Society stave or a pitchfork. Most of the above can be performed by more than one person simultaneously. There are suitable jigs from abroad such as those danced by the Basques. Many need practised skills just as do comparable circus activities like stilt walking, uni-cycling and juggling.

DUALS

Dances for two include the double jigs. Morris jigs can be danced by both persons together, with or without an element of competition, or by taking turns, either walking round between to fall in behind, or by facing and alternating as in Bledington "Shepherds Hey", or even by dancing different movements

simultaneously as in the Sherborne tradition.

Most of the solo dances mentioned above have duet versions. In the past I have seen two dancers from Chipping Campden and I have heard of two dancers from Eynsham creating a double jig by dancing as much of a set dance as the two could manage. There are a few display mixed couple dances, eg from the Isle of Man. There are comic or fun dances from Europe, eg "The Ox" or "Student" dance from Scandinavia and the Fools Jig-like dance from the Baltic states for two sharing one long pole. The choreography of Irish pair dances is worth study for inspiration. There are also free form traditional dances such as that done by the Teaser and the Hobby Horse at Padstow.

THREES

There are a few recognised morris dances for 3, eg "Shepherds Hey" from Lichfield, other than 3 dancing a solo jig in a ring, facing inwards or outwards and a number of Three hand Reels. Some of the Ducklington dances are in effect jigs done as set dances with only one half of a team dancing.

FOURS

There are a large number of variants of Four Hand Reels, including those usually done today as social dances, eg the "Sidbury Reel", but also

several that were done with various sizes of sticks. The Dual Morris jigs mentioned above can be done 2 by 2. There are ways of cutting Cotswold dances for 6 down. Using a different number of dancers could be a way of having more than one version of a common dance in the repertoire eg like "Trunkles". Headcorn Morris have a complete tradition for 4 dancers.

Some dances for 8 can be done in half, such as the stave dances and other dances where the basic active unit is actually a group of four. The Lichfield "Nuts in May" can be split down the middle. "Lively Jig" from Ilmington, the "Faggot Dance" from Great Wishford and a "Four Handed" from Beaminster are older dances. There is "The Buffoon" with sticks or swords from the early Tudor period.

There are comic dances such as the Scandinavian "Skobo" and the Victory Morris "Four Old Men's dance" and traditional stick dances from the Sussex Mummers like "Over the Sticks" and Scan Testers "Walking Stick Dance". There are a number of composed dances for 4.

FIVES

There are a few dances that are arranged for 5. "Bunch of Fives" from Mary Rose is one. Five Hand Reels were not uncommon in social dancing and such have been found in Dummer, Dorset and the Lakes. Morris double jigs can be done with one

dancer in the centre and four others facing inwards at the corners of a square.

SIX AND MORE

Of course these are not for reduced sets, unless one dances with 8 or more normally! But why miss some good ideas? "Limpley Stoke" is a version of the Bampton jigs done by sets of 6. All morris jigs can be done in a circle for as many as will. The Shropshire Bedlams "Seven hand Reel" is a good dance in one line that should not be missed.

Amongst country dances there are a few that were done at special occasions, eg. the Six Handed dances from Wiltshire; "Haste to the Wedding", "Wiltshire Six Hand Reel" and the "Wiltshire Wedding Reel".

Finally there are a number of folk derived items primarily with words and sometimes dance elements including Mummers plays, Crossing the Line Ceremonies, The Recruiting Sergeant and various Wicked Squire skits.

..to be continued.

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IT'S UP TO YOU NOW!

So now, what do you want to read about next? We've had a few ideas which we'd like to form the basis of series of articles; but it would make the magazine more lively (and easier to produce!) if we got some outside ideas.

Here are a few of the subjects we will be covering, and would be glad of any thoughts you have on these.

Musical instruments: sources of tunes, use of PA, what sounds good?

Identifying with the community, local history and creating traditions.

Running big events (ales, festivals)

Competitions: judging, aims.

Morris kit and associated paraphernalia (hats, programmes, garlands, bells, collecting boxes etc)

Instructionals

Morris and the media

Dance notations (what works well, interpreting traditions etc)

Crises and how to deal with them (inadequate numbers, casualties, cloudbursts, stray animals, drunks etc)

And, of course, letters on anything you feel strongly about that can remotely be connected with morris.

All contributions to Beth Neill, 36 Foxbury Road, Bromley, Kent. BR1 4DQ.

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