

M R R I S / M A T T R S

Volume 5  
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## Sarah Jarrett

Anyone who knew Sarah Jarrett will have been shocked and grieved to learn of her untimely death. She died on Monday 28th March, after several months of illness.

Her involvement with WMF went right back to its start and, later on she was the first Technical Officer, holding the post for a year from October 1977.

Her morris-dancing history began in the Autumn of 1971 at Bath University where she studied Pharmacy. She was one of the original group of girls gathered together by Betty Reynolds following Roy Dommett's morris workshop for women at the Sidmouth Festival. The group went on to become the Bath City Morris Women and Sarah was their first Bagwoman ("Baggy Sarah" to those who were there!). She was Squire the following year and was both dancer and musician during the rest of her time at the University.

After graduating, she started work in West London, eventually settling at Kew, just into her native Surrey. It was during this period that Strand-on-the-Green Morris was formed, Sarah being a founder member.

Only last year she made the break away from the London area, moving to Derbyshire. Here she made contact with Holywell Cross Morris and looked set to continue her morris-dancing career with them.

Sarah was a lovely lady and a fine dancer. She will be sadly missed.



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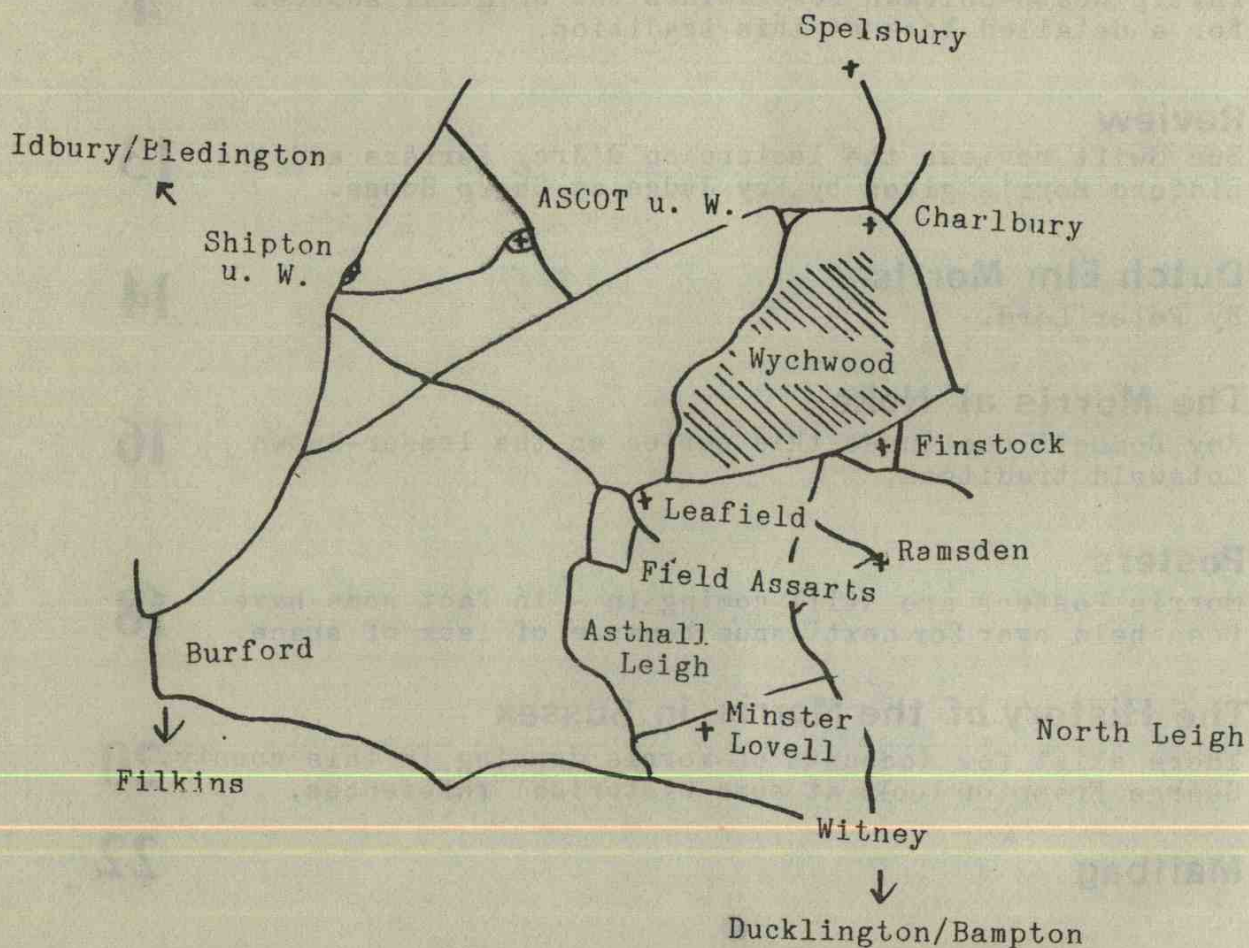
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# Morris Dancing at Ascot under Wychwood

P.S. Heath-Coleman



I have elsewhere described Ascot when Sharp visited Ascot on 15th September 1911, he was told by an old dancer, Benjamin Moss (born 1827<sup>(3)</sup>), that there had been two sides at Ascot in the latter half of the 19th century - an 'old man's side', with which Moss himself had danced, and which had given up 30 years before (i.e. c1880<sup>(4)</sup>), and a younger men's side, which had lasted "a few years longer"<sup>(5)</sup>. It was from a member of that side, William Pratley, then aged 72, that Sharp collected the tunes and two other tunes, 'Jockey to the Fair' and 'Shepherds Hey', and the stick dance 'Balancy Straw', as well as the other tunes<sup>(6)</sup>. His notation is as follows:



JOCKEY TO THE FAIR

William Pratley

Foot up

r l r hr l r l hl r l r hr l r l hl

ss lb — rb — cross step

Detailed description: This section contains two staves of music in G major. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. Below the staff are the letters 'r l r hr l r l hl r l r hr l r l hl'. The second staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. Below it are the letters 'r l r hr l r l hl rb fa lb fa rb ft' and the instruction 'ss lb — rb — cross step' with lines connecting 'ss lb' to 'rb' and 'rb' to 'cross step'.

Side Step

ss r l r l r l r hr l r l r l r l hl

lb — rb —

r l r hr l r l hl r l r l r l

lb — rb —

R L R L R L R L

R L R Ju

Detailed description: This section contains four staves of music in G major. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. Below the staff are the letters 'ss r l r l r l r hr l r l r l r l hl'. The second staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. Below it are the letters 'r l r hr l r l hl r l r l r l' and the instruction 'lb — rb —' with lines connecting 'lb' to 'rb' and 'rb' to the next staff. The third staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. Below it are the letters 'R L R L R L R L'. The fourth staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. Below it are the letters 'R L R Ju'.

Capers. Piu Lente

r L r Ju l R l Ju r L r Ju l R

db db db

l Ju r l r hr l r l hl lb fa rb fa lb ft/Ju

db ss lb — rb — cross step

Detailed description: This section contains two staves of music in G major. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets marked with a '2'. Below the staff are the letters 'r L r Ju l R l Ju r L r Ju l R'. The second staff continues the melody, ending with a double bar line. Below it are the letters 'l Ju r l r hr l r l hl lb fa rb fa lb ft/Ju' and the instruction 'db db db' and 'db ss lb — rb — cross step' with lines connecting 'db' to 'db' and 'db' to 'cross step'.

Two Dancers, A & B

Foot up A

Foot up B

Sidestep A

Sidestep B

Capers A

Capers B

Sidestep A

Sidestep A & B with capers facing one another and pause.



SHEPHERD'S HEY

William Pratley

0 = clap both hands

rl = strike right ankle with right hand

ll = strike left ankle with left hand.

In succeeding figures strike thighs, breast and head as in Kimber's version.

BALANCY STRAW

William Pratley

0 = dib, X = tap.

Foot up: 6 bars 4/3 facing up; two bars cross step, jump and face front.

Sticks: Partners hold sticks in middle like pen. In first bar dib (0) three times with butt ends; in 2nd bar strike butt ends together three times (X); in 3rd bar dib as in 1st bar; in 4th bar strike tips three times.

Half Hey: Turn out, two bars 4/3; 2 bars cross step, jump and tap with partners.

Half Gip: 2 bars forward 4/3; 3rd bar cross step; 4th bar galley and turn c.cl. (L(?) odds). 5th and 6th bars 4/3; 7th and 8th cross steps, jump and tap across. (The letter before 'odds' is unclear in Sharp's mss.)

Whole Gip: 2 bars cl. 4/3; 2 bars cl. to places, cross step, jump and tap across. Same repeated ccl.

Back to Back: 2 bars fwd. 4/3; 2 bars back cross step, jump and tap across. Repeat in reverse direction.

Half rounds: 4/3 step throughout, with jump and tap across at end of 4th and 8th bars.

Half Hey and Caper Out: End with 4 capers. On last caper partners face, evens hold sticks at each end horizontally while odds strike them in the middle.



In view of the 'inconsistency' of the Ascot information it is worth pointing out the following features of Pratley's dancing:

1. His half-capers (spring-capers, forries) were Rlr/Lrl like Bledington etc., not Rll/Rll like Morris Book Bampton.

2. His sidesteps were closed (there is nothing to indicate they were crossed), not open. The long sidestep sequence was ss(rt)/4/ss(lt)/4/.

3. He did some kind of cross back-step.

4. The notation of 'Shepherd's Hey' shows that a 'short' foot-up was known at Ascot. This may, however, have been peculiar to 'Shepherd's Hey', for the dance was never, to my knowledge, noted with a 'long' foot-up.

5. Note also the singular notation of the slows (see Appendix).

No hand movements are given. This may be because they were what Sharp might have regarded as 'regular', - down and up with the double stepping, for instance. It is particularly unfortunate that there is no indication of the hand movements which accompanied the 'cross-step'. This could mean that there was no overhead movement, for otherwise Sharp would surely have thought it worth noting. It could also be argued, but to my mind less plausibly, that Sharp thought an overhead movement the natural adjunct to any kind of cross back-step.

Benjamin Moss had not thought much of the younger men's side, for he told Sharp: "Nothing of a Morris that wasn't". He evidently danced for Sharp, who noted: "Benjamin danced a few steps to me in quite the normal manner, straight leg etc.". Moss further told Sharp: "Never dance flat-footed, always on your toe".

Mary Neal also met Benjamin Moss, and was told that 'Brighton Camp' had been a 'side-step and half-hey' dance. He also told her that the figures whole-gip and back-to-back had followed the pattern of (William Pratley's) half-gip, to wit the dancers had turned full circle with a galley in the fourth bar (see Sharp's notation of 'Balancy Straw' above).

Although we have no real reason to believe that the dancing of the old team was similar to that of the younger team, Moss's descriptions of the figures does suggest a measure of commonality in the face of nearby Field Town (as danced by Sharp's source Henry Franklin), for instance.

Benjamin Moss also gave Sharp a list of dances, together with some information about the dance-type (though here again it should be noted that the repertoire of the younger team was not necessarily the same):



## ASCOT DANCES

CONSTANT BILLY - stick dance  
LADS A BUNCHUM - Handkerchief dance  
MARLBOROUGH (heel and toe)  
GLORISHEARS (leap frog)  
OLD TRUNKO - corner dance  
BLUEEYED STRANGER  
MOLL IN THE WAD - stick dance  
BANKS OF THE DEE - stick dance (sticks over head as Fieldtown)  
POLLY PUT THE KETTLE ON (stick dance)  
DEAR IS MY DICKY (double dance, i.e. cross over etc.)  
VALENTINE - cross corner dance  
OLD WOMAN TOSSED UP - cross corner dance  
BRIGHTON CAMP (sidestep and half hey see above)  
MAID OF THE MILL - handkerchief dance  
GALLANT HUSSAR - single dance  
BALANCY STRAW  
PRINCESS ROYAL  
FLOWERS OF EDINBURGH  
HIGHLAND MARY  
BLACK JOKE  
JOCKEY TO THE FAIR  
OLD OXFORD  
SHEPHERDS HEY was a stick dance, but if danced as a jig was clapped.

Benjamin Moss also told Sharp that they had used to 'make their obedience' in initial and concluding dances, but not in special dances. This suggests there was also some kind of Morris On and Morris Off.

The repertoire is largely what one might expect in the area. The presence in the list of 'Marlborough' and 'Dear is my Dicky', names which were otherwise only recorded at Field Town, may indicate that the (old) Ascot team's closest connections were with Wychwood area dancers or musicians (although the latter tune was also known at Sherborne, of course, but as Lads a Bunchun).

This is, in fact the case, for Benjamin Moss told Sharp that the musicians at Ascot had been two whittle-and-dub men from Finstock, Thomas Langford and Stephen Dore (b 1804). Both had also played for Finstock, and Dore may also have been the Finstock foreman. He had also played at Field Town<sup>(7)</sup>. There were close family connections between the Finstock and Field Town morrises, and Sharp's notes of his meeting with Henry Franklin, his source for the Field Town dancing, suggest that the dancing of both was similar, if not as good as identical (see note on Glorishears below). Franklin furthermore told Sharp that the Finstock Morris was "like a nature with Field Town Morris"<sup>(8)</sup>.



Sharp's limited descriptions in the list are not wholly consistent. Corner dances are distinguished from handkerchief dances, and a single dance from a double dance - but both distinctions are needed in respect of an individual dance for us to know quite how it was performed.

It is interesting that Balancy Straw, which William Pratley gave to Sharp as a stick dance, appears in the Moss list as a jig only. Pratley also told Sharp that 'Polly Put The Kettle On', a stick dance in the Moss list, was used for the 'Bacca Pipes' dance, although when he danced it for Sharp he sang a version of the more usual 'Greensleeves'.

Although Sharp only noted three dances from William Pratley, the combination of a side-step jig and a stick dance is the best possible for helping us to imagine how he would have danced the rest of his repertoire. A straightforward side-step jig gives us most of the 'foot-work' - stepping, slow capers, plain capers, (and in the case of 'Jockey to the Fair' also spring capers), as well as the side-step sequence (important in respect of the side-step-and-half-hey dances, and of corner dances). The stick dance gives the common figures and the manner of ending a dance, as well as the way to hold and clash sticks.

Comparison with practice in nearby villages, especially for the reasons given, Field Town, suggests the following dance-types for the titles in Benjamin Moss's list:

**CONSTANT BILLY:** a stick dance as Constant Billy, Field Town?

**MARLBOROUGH:** heel-and-toe to the tune White Joke as Old Marlborough at Field Town.

**GLORISHEARS:** leap-frog to the tune used at Field Town. Henry Franklin told Sharp that his Glorishears was really a Finstock dance<sup>(9)</sup>, and the fact that both known Ascot

musicians came from, and played for, Finstock suggests that the same tune may have been used (rather than the 'true' Glorishears tune found at Bledington and Headington<sup>(10)</sup>).

**OLD TRUNKO:** as usual (Trunkles). The dance was not collected at Field Town, but George Steptoe, born c1823 and once foreman, told Sharp that they had done it in his day<sup>(11)</sup>. Salutes presumably two double steps then fall back to place, either with cross step or turning with a galley (cf Ducklington, Minster Lovell, Bampton and Bledington of relatively nearby teams<sup>(12)</sup>): note that the kick in the 'Trunkles' salute was restricted to teams to the east of Oxford - Headington, Kirtlington, Hinton). Corners cross presumably with side-step, spring capers and slow capers successively.

**BLUE EYED STRANGER: ?** a side-step and half-hey dance to the tune 'Morning Star' as at Field Town?

**BANKS OF THE DEE:** a stick dance, "sticks over head" as 'Bobby and Joan' at Field Town? Or perhaps, as there is no mention of turning, as Constant Billy?

**DEAR IS MY DICKY:** as Field Town ('Dearest Dicky', cf also Sherborne 'Lads a Bunchun') - corners cross 'strutting', with plain capers, and with slow capers, repeating each immediately to place if my interpretation of the term 'double dance'<sup>(13)</sup> is correct.

**OLD WOMAN TOSSED UP:** a corner dance to the tune 'William and Nancy' as at Field Town?

**BRIGHTON CAMP:** side-step and half-hey, according to Mary Neal. Benjamin Moss told Sharp that the Ascot dancers often sang the following words when they did this dance:

Let the night be ever so dark  
Be ever so wet and windy  
I'll return to my own true love  
The girl I left behind me.



GALLANT HUSSAR: by analogy with Bledington, partners cross with side-steps, spring capers and slow capers and then half-hey successively. Not repeated to place if my interpretation of the term 'single dance' is correct (14).

SHEPHERD'S HEY: when a stick dance as Field Town (Bacon p.152)?

As we know Brighton Camp to have been a side-step and half-hey dance, the simple annotation 'handkerchief dance' in the Moss list may mean that 'Maid of the Mill' and 'Lads a Bunchun' were similar. Those titles ('Polly Put The Kettle On', 'Moll In The Wad') described as 'stick dances' with no further qualification may likewise have been of the basic stick dance type exemplified by William Pratley's 'Balancy Straw'.

The jigs may be compared with those done to the same tunes in nearby villages.

It is hard to tell when either the 'old man's morris' or the 'young men's morris' would have been active. It would be unwise to take too literally Ben Moss's statements to Sharp in 1911 that the old men's morris stopped "thirty years before", or to Carter in 1894 that he himself stopped dancing thirty-five years before. However, as William Pratley was 72 in 1911 he is unlikely to have danced before about 1860, so it is possible that the two teams co-existed at least during the 1860s. It seems that at one time there was no team at all at Ascot, since the Longborough men and the Field Town men once fell out over the right to dance there (15) - which could hardly have happened had there been an independent local team. It may be that the earliest Ascot team was actually raised by

outsiders, but there is no evidence of this.

Something remains to be said about the early revival dancing at Ascot. According to Roy Dommett, a team was first raised by Reginald Tiddy at Ascot in 1912 (16). A Miss Sinclair came (from the EFDS?) and taught them Headington, and then Bledington. They also knew William Pratley's jig 'Jockey to the Fair', which, however, they had from Sharp. They did nothing derived at first hand from tradition, and most of the traditional dancers in the village and around ignored them. Their existence was, in fact, frowned upon or even opposed by elements in Ascot itself. They stopped about 1916 because of the war, although there was a team again between about 1920 and 1925.

Tiddy himself tells how once, when he was demonstrating some stepping to a friend in the presence of some old dancers, one of them jumped to his feet, telling Tiddy in no uncertain terms that he had "got it all wrong", and proceeded to dance himself (17). As Sharp had seen Benjamin Moss step "in quite the normal manner, straight leg etc.", as I have already described, and as Tiddy would presumably have stepped in the EFDS fashion, that is in Sharp's 'normal manner', one wonders whether the old dancer was objecting to Tiddy's use of Headington-style cross back-steps instead of the somewhat more relaxed (if cross) back-stepping we would expect in the Wychwood area (it is almost received wisdom that the cross back-steps in revivalist Ascot are due to the influence of Headington: it should, however, be noted that Sharp's notation of William Pratley's 'cross-step' is exactly the same as his notation of William Kimber's 'cross back-step'). Another possibility is that it was the (slow) capers which Tiddy had "got all wrong".



Having thus been earnest at some length about the small details of morris dancing practice in one west Oxfordshire village in the mid-nineteenth century, I feel I should perhaps end by putting things into perspective by quoting an Ascot dancer. On one occasion Reginald Tiddy had an old dancer, then in his nineties, to tea, over which Tiddy asked what the old man had liked best about the old dancing days. His answer? "The fighting"!

#### APPENDIX - The Ascot 'Slow' Capers

Sharp noted William Pratley's capers as:

r L / r Ju / l R / l Ju /,  
db db

where db must stand for 'draw back' as described in vol. IV of his Morris book (1911): "DRAWBACK. Sometimes, especially in caper movements, a step is made backward instead of forward, as the context would otherwise suggest. In such cases the letters d.b. (drawback) will in the diagrams be placed under the steps which are to be made backward..." (p17). In MB IV, the abbreviation is used in the description of the Field Town half-capers (Bacon's forecapers, the so-called 'beetle-crushers'):

l t f l R l / r t f r L r /.  
db db

Here, in accordance with Sharp's practice elsewhere in the Morris Books, capital R, L, like Ju, signify the beat of the landing after a caper/jump. In the Field Note Books, Sharp in fact noted Henry Franklin's capers, in December 1910/January 1911, as:

ft l  $\curvearrowright$  r l / ft r  $\curvearrowright$  l r /.  
l r

Thus the notation in MB IV, as well as bringing the notation of caper stepping into line with that in earlier volumes (cf MB III, 1st edn 1910, where the Bledington dancer John Hitchman's forecapers are given as: r t b Ju / r L / l t b Ju l R / etc), shows that Sharp had further analysed Franklin's stepping, and introduced the concept of the 'draw-back' between January 1911 and its publication later that same year. His use of the term 'db' makes it seem likely that Sharp was following his own practice in the Morris Books when he had noted William Pratley's dancing in September 1911. If so Pratley first capered off the right foot (r) to land on the left (L), and then brought back his now free right foot alongside the left to jump and land feet-together (r Ju),  
db

i.e. the right foot is not drawn back to a position of rest, but to push up in the jump. In Bacon-style notation the whole movement would be something like R l ftj / L r ftj etc.

I have thus argued that there was no 'toe-back' movement in William Pratley's capers. The Travelling Morrice noted the following slow capers from Arthur Longshaw, a member of Tiddy's revival side: R L / r t b Ju. This is the basis of revivalist Ascot practice, and may derive ultimately from an explanation by Sharp of his notation, or by William Pratley of how he danced. Both, however, seem unlikely. Sharp's system of notation was adequate to describe an 'rb' or an 'rtb' (his terms after all) if he saw one, and Ralph Honeybone, as I have mentioned, told Roy Dommett that the revived side danced nothing derived at first hand from tradition.



### Footnotes

- (1) Morris Dancing at Filkins In English Dance and Song Vol.44 No.1, Spring 1982
- (2) Bacon, Lionel. Handbook of Morris Dances.
- (3) Chandler, Keith. Biographical Index to Traditional Morris Dancers....Morris Matters (MM) Vol.3 Nos 1-4. See especially entries under Moss and Prateley (sic.)
- (4) Moss told Thomas Carter in Aug. 1894 that he had danced 35 years before, that is c.1860 (Manning mss)
- (5) All Sharp's mss information about Ascot is in his Folk Dance Notes II, 41-45. The relevant Field Notebooks containing both interviews and tunes are now missing.
- (6) Sharp mss. Folk Dance Tunes nos. 2675-6, 2682-4. The other tunes are 'Highland Mary' and 'Polly Put the Kettle On' and are as in Bacon pp25-26.
- (7) Sharp mss. Folk Dance Notes I, 258.
- (8) Dommett, Roy. The Background to Longborough (unpublished)
- (9) Sharp mss. Folk Dance Tunes no.2749.
- (10) See Heaney, Mike in The Morris Dancer, no.8, Nov 1980
- (11) Sharp mss. Folk Dance Notes I 258. Steptoe is described as foreman in the Manning mss.
- (12) See Bacon's 'Handbook'; also my Notes on Ducklington In MM Vol 5 No.1
- (13) Notes on Ducklington op.cit. and additions in MM Vol.5 nos.2 and 3.
- (14) See note 13.
- (15) Information given to the Travelling Morris in 1924, cited in Schofield, R.K. Morris Dances from Field Town In Journal EFDSS 2nd series 1928, no.2.
- (16) Information from Ralph Honeybone, a member of Tiddy's team.
- (17) Tiddy, R.J.E. The Mummers Play. Oxford, 1923.
- (18) Carey mss. VW Library, Cecil Sharp House.
- (19) Sharp mss. Folk Dance Notes II 84.
- (20) Sharp Field Note Books: Words 1912, I (Helm transcription, University College Library, London. The wording is slightly different from Sharp's own transcription in Folk Dance Notes II, 84).

P.S. Heath-Coleman,  
March 1983



## The Bidford Morris

A lecture given by Roy Judge in the RVW Library, London, on Friday 21st January, 1983.

This lecture was one of a series arranged by the librarian, Malcolm Taylor. The room was packed and many prominent researchers were present. Roy, with an excellent style of delivery, spoke of his findings in the Ferris manuscripts. He had meticulously pieced together an assortment of material to form a clear picture of the revival of the Bidford Morris in 1885/6 by D'Arcy Ferris.

A group of 'Rustics' were employed by Ferris with 2 older dancers - from Bidford and Idbury. Other sides were contacted for advice and equipment. The team, under contract with rules on discipline and behaviour danced as part of a lecture/display indoors. They practised for only a few months before appearing in public and at one point the repertoire seemed to have expanded from 8 to 20 dances in 5 weeks. Roy was

able to make a calculated guess as to which were the older Bidford dances, those apparently coming from the Ilmington tradition and one probably 'not genuine'.

The morris revival project ended within one year due to lack of public demand. However, the team continued and were definitely recorded as dancing 10 and 18 years later. Contact with Sharp was limited but Bidford was noted in "The Morris Books" (Sharp and MacIlwaine) as well as "Shakespearean Bidford Morris" (John Graham). Sharp made an embarrassing mistake over the tune "Staines Morris"....but the details can wait for the present as Roy hopes to publish his findings in the Folk Music Journal. If the lecture is any indication, the published article will be well worth reading - to the academics for the accuracy of his information, and to non-academics for sheer entertainment.

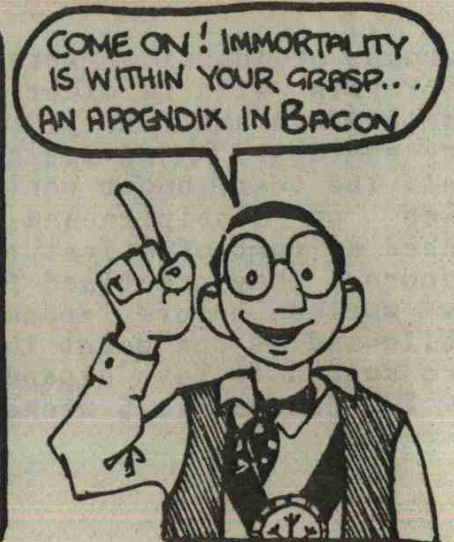
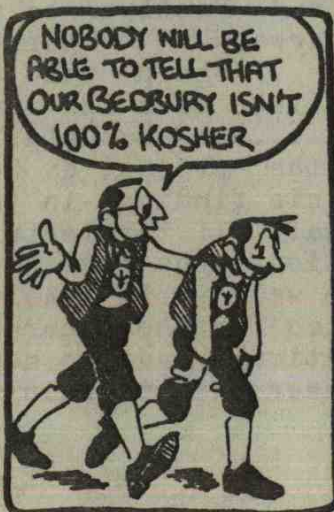
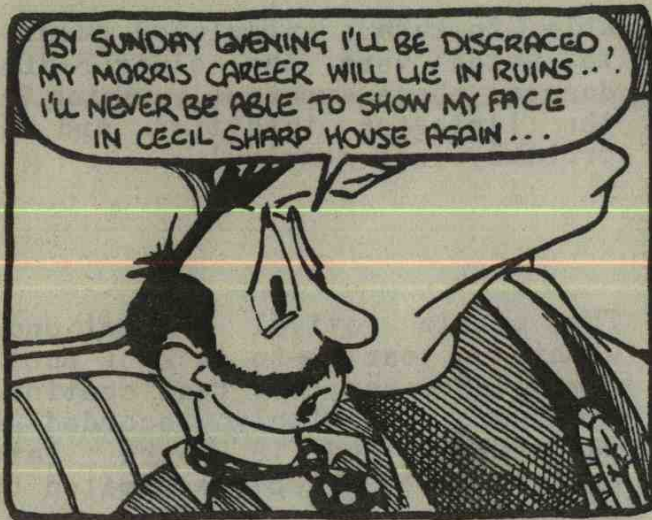
Sue Swift



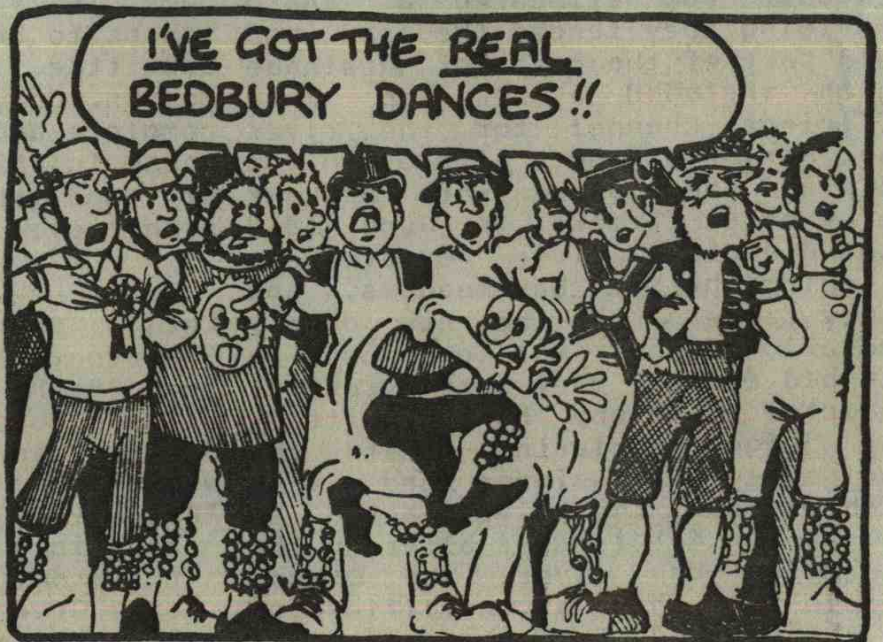
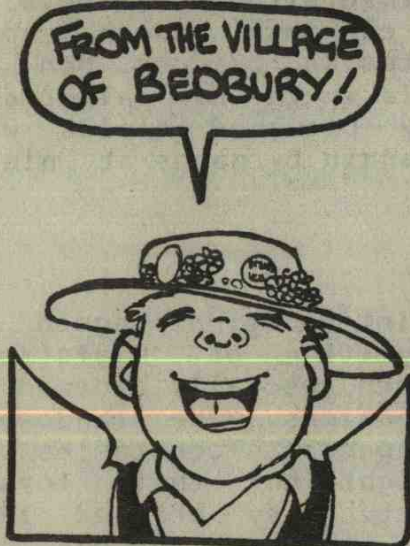
# DUTCH ELM MORRIS

Peter Lord '83 #11

IT'S A BIG DAY FOR RON VOALE AND THE DUTCH ELM MEN. THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY TO THE FOULSDANE RING MEETING, WHERE THEY PLAN TO UNVEIL TO AN ADMIRING PUBLIC A DANCE IN THE BEDSBURY TRADITION WHICH MANY BELIEVED WAS LOST FOREVER. RON WOULD FIND IT EASIER TO RELAX IF THEY HADNT JUST FINISHED INVENTING THE DANCE (AND THE TRADITION) TWO DAYS AGO .....









# The Morris at

## NOKE

Roy Dommett

Noke is a village NE of Oxford, a few miles north of Headington and Marston. It was one of the "Seven Towns" surrounding Otmoor, which was about 4000 acres of wetland, on which they had right of commonage. Enclosure and drainage was first suggested by Sir Alexander Croke of Studley Priory in 1781, and the Duke of Marlborough petitioned Parliament in 1801, but the men who tried to put up the notices to that effect on the doors of the parish churches were prevented by hostile crowds. Nothing came of it then because Lord Abingdon, who was paramount over the seven villages so far as the moor was concerned, was opposed. In 1815 the local landowners tried again but the legal processes dragged on till the final award made in 1829. Each commoner was allocated a share providing they fenced the land and paid part of the cost of drainage which included a new and more efficient channel for the river Ray. Many could not afford to do this and their shares were brought up by other farmers. In June 1830 the diverted river overflowed, flooding the best hay meadows, and angry farmers cut the new dykes, and allowed the river to go back to its old course. They were arrested, indicted of felony but acquitted, the judge declaring that the Enclosure Commissioner had very much exceeded the power granted to him by the Act in thus altering the course of the river. The Otmoor people took this as nullification of the Act and for the next few years fought against the enclosure vowing "to have the Moor" again. As many as 150 men would gather at night, blackened faces or black scarves, armed with guns, tools or sticks, to cut down hedges, smash fences, gates and bridges. Men let loose cattle in the new allotments and freshly ploughed fields were turned in again by gangs at night.

Shots and intimidation plagued the Otmoor Committee of magistrates that had been specially formed by Quarter Sessions. The landowners employed special constables to watch at night but their loyalty was suspect. They offered large rewards for information but none came. In 1832 Sir Croke asked for troops to be sent, but the special committee brought police from London. Only when the fencing was complete and the ploughing going ahead in 1835 did the rioters give up, and the story enter folk mythology.

Cecil Sharp saw James "Jas" Somerton at Noke on 27.4.1909 when aged 78. He gave Sharp 2 tunes, Balance the Straw and Bonny Green Garters. In his Field Notebooks he wrote,

"Balance of Straw  
Face in a circle, backwards and forwards, then balance the straw  
Bonny Green Garters  
Always starting dance."



In his formal write up, Tune Book to Studley Priory to the accompaniment of morris dancers where Lady Croke gave the bearers 10 shillings. The dancing, but not the garland, stopped by 1863. Perhaps the dancers were drawn from all the "towns".

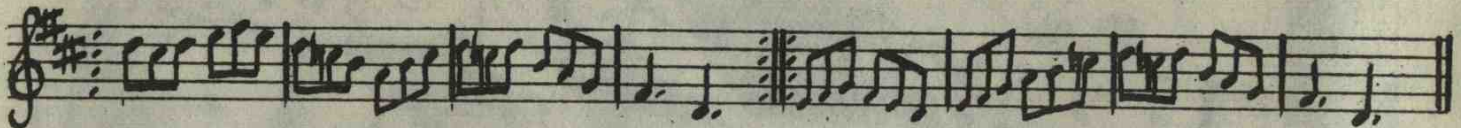
2186, he wrote,  
 "Bonny Green Garters  
 The Noke morris men always came on to Bonny Green Garters (first a ring, then backwards and forwards, then a ring) and then broke into Balance of Straw."

Later that day Daniel Shirley, aged 76, gave the tune of Greensleeves and mentioned Leapfrog and Old Rosin the Beau.

Old Tom Hall, the pipe and tabor player lived in Noke for a while and then moved in the 1860's to Islip. Hall played for Headington Quarry and Charlton-on-Otmoor until replaced by Frank Cummings of Marston about 1840/50 and was playing for Wheatley about 1860. He was known at Bucknell and was one of the teachers of Joseph Powell of the Bucknell side.

It is not sure that Somerton and Sirley were dancers from Sharp's notes. There was a morris at Charlton-on-Otmoor less than 3 miles away. At least, each year a garland was carried across the moor

**BONNY GREEN GARTERS**



**BALANCE OF STRAW** First for her stockings and then for her shoes  
 And then for my bonny green garters.



A man's very weak as can't balance a straw,  
 He must first get his bread and then wag his jaw

\*\*\*\*\*  
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# DORSET BUTTONS morris





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Western  
Morris**  
will be dancing

at

on

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# Notes on the History of the Morris in Sussex

## George Frampton

One only has to read either of Bob Copper's or Tony Wales's books or listen to Tony Engle's Topic archive records to fathom the depth of Sussex folklore. It will therefore come as a surprise that, despite the diversity of such cultural ephemera, research into folk dance and morris in the County has been largely overlooked.

Before the Regency interest in the South coast as a holiday resort, Sussex was in a sense isolated from the remainder of the country. Compared to neighbouring Hampshire and Surrey, instances of the morris are isolated before the Interregnum. In fact only at West Tarring (near Worthing) in 1561 do we learn that 5s. was charged for 'morys beyls that wey have in stoyr'. The same churchwarden's accounts mention other sundry payments to 'mynssterylla' and a 'Drownne pleyr'. Other accounts mention similar remuneration to musicians elsewhere in the County. At Horsted Keynes, for example, a fiddler and a bagpipe-player were rewarded for their services at weddings during the reign of Charles II.

However, like the rest of the country, the continuity between this period and the Modern age is sadly lacking in detail, and only clues are obtainable.

Earlier this century, the Peverend K. H. Macdermott, the rector at Selsey, undertook the task of writing to his fellow incumbents in the County, in an attempt to elicit details of Church musicians who performed much as Thomas Hardy's 'Mellstock Quire'. The response resulted in a major article

published in the 'Sussex Archaeological Collections' and a book 'Sussex Church Music in the Past'. Both records indicate that many of the musicians involved were active performers for village dances, and it is hoped that Vic Gammon's book on the subject will soon be available.

One such musician was Michael Turner (1796-1885) of Warnham, whose fiddle and tuning-fork (and formerly his clarionet) are on public display at Warnham church. His tombstone was inscribed by Macdermott thus:

'His duty done, beneath this stone,  
Old Michael lies at rest,  
His rustic rig, his song, his jig,  
Were ever of the best.'

Possibly Turner had some talent as a step-dancer. It is elsewhere stated that "... between times, he would perform a first-rate jig playing his fiddle the while."

One of Macdermott's informants was the folklorist Lucy Broadwood of Lyne House (now Surrey) near Rusper (definitely Sussex). She related how, in the 1870's, she had seen a man with a blackened face dancing in a circle, leaping high in a curious caper. As he danced, he blew on a cow's horn. It wasn't until later, she realised her solitary itinerant may have been a morris dancer, she thought him to be a 'modernising country lad imitating the Christy Minstrels' at that time.

The other main source of Sussex step-dancing comes via Lewis 'Scan' Tester of Horsted Keynes. Peter Kennedy's 'Folktracks' cassette (FSA-45-085) contains two step dance tunes which resemble 'College Hornpipe' and 'Pigeon on the Gate', a broom dance to a variant of 'the Oyster Girl', plus oral descriptions of the performance of each dance. Both the step dances and the broom dances could be performed in a set of four.



'English Country Music' (Topic records 12T296) describes a nineteenth century, the Jack in the four-handed reel where 'all the Green danced on May-day at dancers stood on four corners of a Brighton, Hastings, Henfield, square; there being one phrase of Horsham, Lewes and Rye, much as in walking, changing in a figure eight other parts of the country. The so that each dancer steps to the 1880 Hastings account says he was other three in turn.'

A better-known example of step-dancing in a set is 'Over the Sticks' documented in Mary Neal's 'Espérance Morris Book'. Two versions of the dance were collected by Clive Carey from Frank Albery of Chithurst and Frank Dawtrey of Iping, two Rother valley villages west of Midhurst. The dance comprises four dancers stepping over and around crossed flails to the tunes 'the Roving Heckler Lad' or 'the Oyster Girl'. When the dance was 'traditionally' performed is not recorded, but by the 1920's it had been taken into custody by the Mummers or Tipteerers as part of their Christmas play. The dance was certainly adopted by the Boxgrove Tipteerers who are photographed in action in 1936, and elsewhere we learn of a sword dance or bacca pipes jig as part of a play at Hastings, and a sword dance as part of the Steyning play earlier this century.

Actually, the Boxgrove players had adopted the Sussex dance in preference to an old Northamptonshire molly dance from Crick. This dance comprised a set of eight, four of whom represented women. Handkerchieves were used, a right-hand star formed one of the figures, and the tunes used included 'Greensleeves' and 'Off She Goes'. The dance was part of Plough (Monday?) custom, a second Sussex-based example being described where 'they dragged a plough round an' asked money at every house'. The prettiest girl in the village was always chosen to sit at the head of the table at the Plough supper, and she was always called 'Bessie' (and may not have been a girl at all, but a man in grotesque female clothing).

Elsewhere in Sussex in the nineteenth century, the Jack in the Green danced on May-day at Brighton, Hastings, Henfield, Horsham, Lewes and Rye, much as in other parts of the country. The 1880 Hastings account says he was accompanied by 'a company of Morris dancers', perhaps mis-identified sweeps or their representatives.

Clive Carey's other visits unearthed country dances from Terwick and Knapp villages as well as those from Iping and Chithurst. He also made contact with a Mr. Paddon at Minsted, but the dances recorded in his notebook, are more likely to be Devonian in origin as he elsewhere intimates.

The English Folk Dance and Song Society have recently produced a leaflet of Country dances from Heathfield.

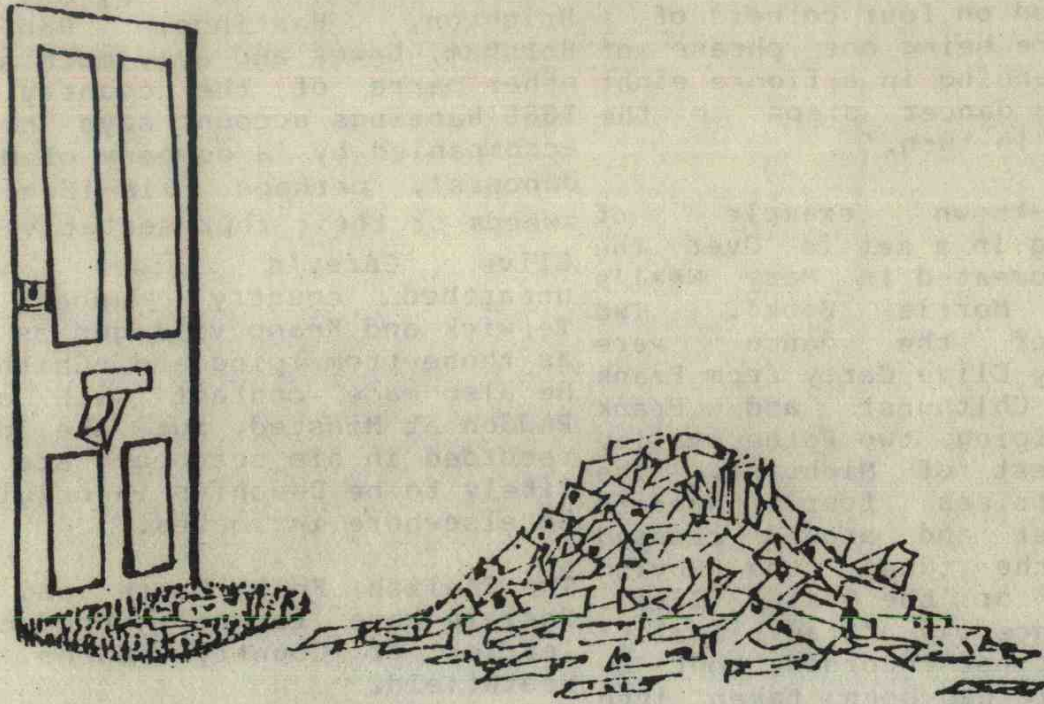
A spurious account relates the discovery of a hobby-horse in an Uckfield attic in 1922, and whose actual use remains open to doubt. A photograph of a May-day procession at Sompting in 1908 shows a boys' morris side resplendent with bells and peaked-caps, possibly a Folk Dance Society revival.

One or two clubs are currently attempting to create a Sussex morris tradition. The Broadwood Morris men and Magog ladies are instrumental in evolving their own 'Horsham' tradition with their dances 'Lucy of Lyne', 'Dick's Jig' and 'Lucy's Garland', and I noticed that one of their members had devised and taught a garland dance to a local girls' school side who danced at the 1981 Crawley folk festival. In the Brighton area, Ed Basford has formed a north-western branch of the Chanctonbury Ring morris men and is busy researching, adapting and teaching north-western dances. The Knots of May too, have performed their dances at Lancastrian rushbearings. Long may they all reign.

George E. Frampton,  
Thursday 24th. December, 1981



# MAILBAG



## Morris Ales

Dear Editor,

In reply to Mike Heaney I plead the problem of condensation for a magazine article. The one in question was originally twice as long and that did try and preserve the flavour of the original language. The sources I used were all transcribed in the early 1960's and copies exist in the Vaughan Williams library. I have been trying to condense the rambling material into a suitable precis for many years as a general interest article. Additional references that contributed were,

"Chalgrove - a Sketch" by Laura Gammon in Pelican vol V, no. 25 Feb 1883,  
Roy Dommett

"Chronicles of the Royal Borough of Woodstock" by A Ballard, p80 pub. Oxford 1896,  
"Confessions of an Oxonian" by Thomas Little in 3 vols, Vol 1, pl69-173, 1826,  
"History of Kidlington, Yarnton and Begbroke" by Stapleton, Sharp's MSS F.D. vol 1, p44 from Mss of Mr Horne of Chipping Camden, and of course various materials in P Manning Mss, Bodleian Library, OXFORD, Ms.Top.OXON.d.200. which contains much of the above and Mike's references.

However if anyone is making a serious study they must start with, "Whitsun in 19th Century Oxfordshire" by Alun Howkins, History Workshop Pamphlets, History Workshop, Ruskin College, Oxford, 1973 which says a great deal more and puts it better than I can.



# MAILBAG

## Cause for Alarm

Dear Morris Matters,

Betty Reynolds sent in a copy of a newspaper article "Spring in their Steps" (MM V,3). Cause for alarm perhaps, but the whole style of the article was light-hearted and enthusiastic and probably aroused more interest from the media than a serious piece with less mythical overtones.

However the book entitled "Folksong and Music Hall" by Edward Lee (published Routledge and Kegan Paul 1982) does give considerably more cause for alarm. Included in the chapter on dancing are 8 paragraphs on "Ceremonial dances" (p120-123). Much of the information given is at best dubious but one of the photographs and its caption is so awful that I cannot let it pass without comment. The photograph (p123) shows 5 dancers (presumably of a set) variously displaying a remarkable lack of vigour and an apparent disregard for "lines", starting foot and position of handkerchiefs. Part of the caption reads "Notice the bells on the legs - a charm against bewitchment by fairies."

What a pity that the morris should be degraded by the publication of such material in a popular and widely-distributed book.

Yours sincerely,  
Sue Swift  
KESTEVEN MORRIS.

## General Monck

Dear Editors,

A couple of points arising from Roy's piece on General Monck in the latest Morris Matters (vol.5 no.3).

The Belle Isle March title for Monk's March dates from 1763, when it surfaces in several places (e.g. Universal Magazine for June 1763; and see British Museum Catalogue of Printed Music). The title undoubtedly commemorates not the retreat from Belle Isle off Brittany in 1795, but the capture of the island by the Corps of Marines in April/May 1761. We do not know, of course, if the Brackley Belle Isle March had the same tune.

Twenty Ninth of May was first recorded in 1667 (see Chappell) and the substitution of the Balance the Straw tune at Headington was probably quite late, as the Traffords gave both names as names of dances to Manning's collector Carter. William Kimber once said that the tune was changed to avoid giving offence to would-be providers of largesse.

Bob Bushaway (By rite) points out that the original celebration of 29 May soon died out, only being revived as a mark of support for the Pretender after the Jacobite Rebellion. But the tune seems to have retained its popularity throughout the period, appearing in every edition of Playford from 1686 to 1728.

Yours sincerely,  
Mike Heaney

## UK Tour

Dear Friends,  
This summer we will be arriving in England on Aug. 10th, and will be with Bampton Traditional MM on the weekend of 12th-14th Aug. Then we will be at the Saddleworth Rush Cart August 19th-21st. Perhaps we will see some of you there. Arnold Woodley of Bampton is our contact man.

George H. Utter,  
Westerley Morris Men,  
Rhode Island, USA.



# MAILBAG....

## N.Z. News

Dear MM,

...The New Zealand Morris scene came of age during last summer with the visit of Tubby and Betty Reynolds over the New Year. I hope you will ask Tubby for an article concerning his NZ visit.

He arrived in Christchurch in time to be whisked down to Dunedin for the New Year Folk Festival. From there they travelled with the Tussock Jumpers of Lincoln College and other visitors from other sides in NZ and Australia around the central lake and mountain resorts of Otago. Tubby made a great hit with the Mayor of Arrowtown and plenty of dancing was done to raise the spirits of holiday makers frozen by the coldest summer in years which had brought snow down on all the mountain tops but which left sun shining on the dancers (as is usual if you play your cards right).

Then back to Christchurch before tripping up to the North Island for the Summer Dance School at Massey University and then a tour with combined NZ sides and Australian Visitors to Auckland for the final meet at the Auckland Folk Festival.

Four weeks of intense activity for Tubby and Betty and the combined NZ sides but all very well worth while (and financed by the NZ sides).

So just over six years after Erewhon was established in Christchurch, the morris movement of NZ has expanded to cover the whole country, and was able to finance and support the visit of one of the UK's leading morris men to come and see exactly what the NZ morris scene is all about.

All the best,

Bob Crowder,  
Tussock Jumpers,  
Canterbury,  
NZ.

## Thanks

Dear Morris Matters,

... I'd like to thank all the sides that wrote to me each year and asked if it is OK to dance our area. We find contrary to Christine Bishop's problem (MM Vol. 5 No.2) that 90% of sides let us know; we suggest the numbers of times and where they dance. Herga Morris has been super with a very detailed programme and have contacted Police and County Council as well - good for them!

Roger Green,  
Hageneth Morris Men.

## How we do it

ROGUE MORRIS - WOMEN'S BORDER  
MORRIS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Though it's not because of the opposition in the area that we dance Border, it certainly makes life easier for this women's side in Traditional Cotswold country. In fact, apart from an Oxford City man leaving a tour a Christmas, when he saw what sex we were (and apparently he's never back to practices since!) we are on pretty good terms with nearly all the local sides after almost two years in existence.

When Jill asked me to write an article for MM I spent some time thinking about 'the problems of women dancing in Oxfordshire' and I can list quite a few. With two other local women's teams wearing breeches and trousers, and our wearing T-shirts and tattered skirts, we have more of those 'crowd problems' we know so well (and, it seems, particularly from other morris teams!). Have many other sides had newspaper problems



## MAILBAG

though? I remember the Mirror article about Bourne Bumpers Bouncing Beautifully - we had our picture in the local free paper, standing in a semi-circle with our sticks pointing into the centre (posed by the photographer, not us, I hasten to add). We said we'd stand like that for him if they'd publish a feature about us, but needless to say the details they took down about us made a very small paragraph under the large headline 'Stick 'em up!' and one of the women whose name and phone number were included in the article as a contact for new members had three days worth of obscene phone calls from men who - among other things - wanted us to hit him with our sticks for great sums of money. Any other ways of boosting club funds also gratefully accepted - but other sides beware!

We have had some good days though. The highlight I think has been dancing at Blenheim Palace, on the quad in the middle of the palace buildings looking out over Blenheim Park, but I don't think the others agree, as it was raining at the time, and the administrator coming out asking us to keep down the noise didn't help. We have however been invited back next summer with a free tour of the palace thrown in, so things aren't too bad.

So far we've travelled up to Newcastle for a weekend, and had Bollin Morris for a weekend down here, apart from local events with sides around here. We were very proud to be out in force at Greenham Common on December 12th, and 'Rogue Morris' is now woven in bracken on the fence to go with the baby clothes and Peace symbols to frighten off anyone thinking of installing Cruise Missiles there!

At the beginning we made a policy decision that we wouldn't do fetes as we didn't think the money outweighed the free Saturdays and the boredom factor (ours and the audience's). However, we still don't seem to have many free Saturdays left in June/July. As far as the money side is concerned, apart from having my name taken by a policeman in Oxford who didn't believe I'd arranged the tour with the police ("as far as I know one of the domestics might have taken your call!") we seem to do OK on shopping centres and pub tours (though our treasurer might not agree). There may be a case for dancing at fetes, and it might be quite snobby to eschew them, but we're quite happy about it - anyone disagree?

Another policy decision we took at the beginning was to try to do without 'officers', all of us taking on a different event to organise and at first all of us having our own stick (apparently very traditional according to your illustrious contributor Mr Chandler). However I'm so bossy I ended up teaching most practices even when I'd asked other people to do it.

But we have a lot of fun and hopefully are getting better and better...we've been booked for two festivals this year (does this mean Fame and all that goes with it, i.e. leg warmers and U.S. accents?).

And just for the record, our first public performance of note was dancing on BBC Radio Oxford!

Fiona Frank.



# MAILBAG

## Dancing Speeds - 1

The review of the dancing at Sidmouth Folk Festival 1982 in Vol 5 No 2 was kinder to some sides than others. Still they're all big boys and can look after themselves. What has prompted me to write is the implication in the review that "very fast" dancing is "out-of-date" and the trend towards "vigorous and energetic" (which in my translation is slow and vertical) dancing is both up-to-date and somehow more correct.

In an early "Morris Matters" (Vol 1 No 2) Roy Dommett discusses the speed of playing for the morris and includes the following information: (i) the normal speed for the morris is 96 beats per minute, (ii) this speed has been found all over the Cotswolds, (iii) it is possible to dance as slow as 72 beats per minute, (iv) a tempo of faster than 80 beats per minute is stimulating, while if slower than 75 beats it is saddening. Lionel Bacon's "Handbook of Morris Dances" quotes metronome figures for dance tunes from Sharp's Morris Dance Tunes. On a quick flip through, the slowest I found was 72 (Monk's March - Sherbourne) and the fastest 132 (Bacca Pipes - both Bampton and Hinton). These are certainly not typical, other Sherbourne dances, Old Woman Tossed up and Cuckoo's Nest are given as 100, as is Swaggering Boney - Longborough!! So how fast do teams dance? I hadn't the foresight to take a stop-watch to Sidmouth but sometime ago we did roughly time Kesteven (probably faster than Albion

definitely "very fast") and the typical speed was - would you believe it - 96 beats to the minute.

Now, I've no doubt that there's masses of evidence for teams in the 1880's not only capering as high as tables but dancing at 70 beats per minute (why not 60) and of course I'm trying to provoke comment. I'm also aware that during the 1970's some teams started dancing very slowly (and more importantly with much vigour) as a deliberate reaction to the very poor, lifeless dancing of many established revival teams. However to go on from that to insinuate that dancing very fast is of itself a bad thing and that any up-to-date team will dance to a slow tempo could be doing many teams a grave disservice. I would give three reasons for this:-

(i) the standard of most dancers in most teams is such that if really pushed hard they could meet the increased demands on ability and physique. But how many perfectly good dancers would be totally alienated by an over-serious approach when a less demanding style can be just as effective and a lot more fun.

(ii) the dance derives its effect from the contrast between the ordinary steps and the jumps and capers. Leaping into the air off every step distorts this effect and in extreme cases gives quite a bizarre appearance to the dance;

(iii) speed makes the dance look and the music sound more exciting for the general public so if yours is a team whose main kick is from interaction with a good audience, I would suggest that speed is for you. Fast dancing can still be vigorous and energetic, so why not give it a try, turn up the wick,



# MAILBAG

get the musician to step on the gas, it could be a whole new experience for 1983.

Yours sincerely,  
John Swift  
(Squire - Kesteven Morris)

P.S. Can't resist one passing comment on that review concerning teams changing their style to keep up with trends. Personally I didn't notice much change in Bampton's "dancing style and presentation" compared with when I first saw them (actually in 1971 - a bit of a coincidence - the year Albion formed). I think it might be something to do with the traditions of dancing.

## Dancing Speeds - 2

Being the MM typist sometimes has its perks - you have a chance to answer back during the same issue!!

The Morris Matters stop-watch was present during the last few seasons and the following timings were observed:

Range (beats/min)	Team
60-70.....	Old Spot
70-80.....	Windsor
.....	Great Western
.....	Frome Valley
.....	South Downs
.....	Adderbury
80-90.....	Bampton
.....	Bantam Cocks
90-100.....	Broadwood
>100.....	Albion

Perhaps the reader may draw his own conclusions regarding dancing speeds - thanks for throwing down the gauntlet though, John.

Jill Griffiths.

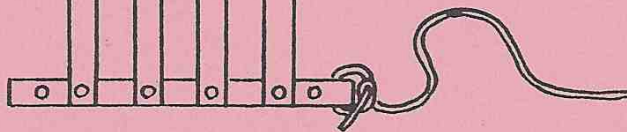
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