Roy Dommett
and
Morris Matters

Articles by Roy Dommett in Morris Matters

These articles are fundamentally as published in Morris Matters – bearing in mind they were originally produced in the 1970's [typed up and formatted using genuine 'cut-and-paste' technology] and have been reproduced with minor typographical errors corrected and some attempt at imposing a degree of house style. One or two images did not reproduce well but can be seen in original scanned versions of Morris Matters available through the Morris Federation website.

Note: abbreviations for dance notation used in Roy's articles are generally those used in Lionel Bacon's 'A Handbook of Morris Dances' ('The Black Book').

Beth Neill March 2017

The Future and the Morris

The public acceptance of the Morris by men and by women shows that it has a place in today's society. Tastes change but the Morris is basic and it should take as large an upheaval of society as happened before to stop it again. Today's Morris is in the 1970's and moving forward. It is time to stop the mental separation into the "tradition" and the "revival". Already many 20th century sides have existed longer than 19th century village teams. Most traditional sides now have the characteristics of revival clubs, proof that it is a viable adaptation to present conditions.

It is still important for all to be aware of the roots in the villages and it is essential to have available what is actually recorded about the Morris of the 19th century and to have a detailed baseline description of the dances and their style of performance. A detailed authentic, 19th century notation can't be provided, only an account of current practice as handed down. Even then the character of a 'tradition' that appears in any particular performance is an interpretation by the group doing it and is dependent on the skills, experience and techniques available within the group. That this varies with the personnel is obvious when seeing the adjustments made at Bampton from year to year. Acceptance already exists for more conscious developments. A good interpretation of a tradition, whether an attempt to recreate from manuscript or an extension on artistic grounds, is stimulating, as with Jockey Morris Men's Ilmington or Russell Wortley's Sherborne. An appealing analogy is with Shakespeare's plays, where the inherent quality of the material allows endless orthodox and avant-garde presentation.

So far there has been little deliberate invention. Perhaps the known existence of a large amount of unpublished and therefore inaccessible traditional material has been inhibiting. Invention usually works within self imposed constraints as to what is 'right', although the recorded material indicates that the old dancers felt less constrained in what they introduced, like coconut shell halves for hand clapping. Good, simple and original ideas are hard to produce. It is easier to adapt dances from one style to another.

Invention must not be complex. Morris is not elaborate pattern making nor is it exotic stepping. It is interesting that no one seems to have imported or invented steps from outside the known corpus. Invention is parochial. It is to meet the team's needs and to make the team different, not for the whole Morris world and posterity.

Morris succeeds when it belongs to its territory. Local references in titles are good, if they are significant to the dancers or to the audience, but it must be recognised that the relevance can be ephemeral. Facetious or clever names are lost on an audience; it is difficult enough to explain traditional titles. Abingdon once called the Squire's Dance, the Aeroplane Dance during WWII Wings for Victory fund raising, possibly because of a fancied resemblance of the distinctive figure to two propellors. Originally named Greensleeves, it was renamed when the title became an embarrassment.

A viable, balanced repertoire is necessary to maintain the interest of the dancers. Experience ex-tradition suggests about 24 set dances and jigs, enough to support 3 shows without repeats. The common situation of a lack of knowledge, experience and inventive talent is a justification for a club maintaining two contrasting traditions.

Thought must be given to how much can be added to a 'tradition' before its character is affected unless achieving uniqueness is an aim for the club. The doubling of the number of dances available for public performance by Abingdon has contributed to the changed overall 'feel' of the tradition.

When deciding what to do, sides should consider their good points and exploit them, for example Cardiff women with cross-back-steps and Bristol men with capering. The converse is also true, to a point, but standards will only rise by setting technical challenges, In general, women's sides are poor at capering. There is no physiological reason why they cannot be athletic; the explanation is probably sociological.

In the future there must be a more general awareness of technique, not only of good dance, but also of good teaching. The real technical difficulties in each tradition can be recognised by bringing together the experience of many foremen. Between them they probably have the understanding for ensuring effective learning. The idea that sharing experience and learning from good teachers will lead to stereotyped morris is surely wrong. By the nature of the facts teachers can appear to be definitive but they cannot be dogmatic even if the recognised authority in a tradition.

What one does as a side should be a conscious choice. Morris as a hobby has to allow self-expression or it holds little attraction. This is not to mean the toleration of individual deviant performance because the Morris is a group activity. The number of sides will continue to rise rapidly and the national organisations must rethink their role. In recent years the Morris has been opened up to a wider part of society and grown faster than the available informal method of training potential leaders can work.

It takes time to develop dance skills and to gain experience and knowledge. Why do we not have a rule of thumb for the average number of hours on the hoof? There is a strong obligation on established sides to help even though there may be some mutual incomprehension. It should be in their own self interest to avoid bad performance of the Morris in their own vicinity.

It is reasonable that under modern conditions many sides may have short lives. Dancers will change clubs frequently. With sides thicker on the ground, this is probably a better way of broadening experience in the dance and may slow down the constant urge to do so by introducing too many dances into a club's repertoire.

I hope that the prejudice remains against mixed morris. Why do we never have to worry about the odd man dancing in a women's side? There are a few women who dress like the men and can dance like the men but these should remain exceptional. A more difficult question is that of having a musician of the opposite sex. It is very desirable that musicians have experience of the dance to be able to play with an understanding of movement. Without it, a side cannot dance well. The subtleties of rhythm and phrasing are the difference between good and average dancing.

With the increase in club numbers, there will be a growth of interest in the byways of the tradition, both to be different and to be local. For most parts of Britain there is not the same wealth of material as exploited by the Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's from the Border counties but local material does exist if looked at without prejudice and preconception. Of course the number of known Molly dances, Ribbon dances, Garland

and Stave dances are limited.

Clubs will have to turn to contemporary social dance material as did the original 19th century performers. With care, some dance form repertoires can be augmented by using similar continental dances as they are also based on the same 19th century international social dance fundamentals. The legitimacy is a problem for each individual club. It will depend on whether it is a necessity because of constraints that the club has set itself or whether its motivation is to preserve local ritual or does not mind becoming in effect a folklore troupe. Often a local ritual is more a question of the custom and the costume rather than the content of the dance, as at Salisbury and Shaftsbury. The dance form can be relatively unimportant. In the final analysis is it right to transplant some forms outside their original regions and not others?

I believe we could be entering a golden age for the Morris with more morris, better morris and more diverse morris than ever before. Morris is developing and sides exist today who could not have been conceived 25 years ago when I first met the Morris.

1978 (MM 1-1)

On Playing for the Cotswold Morris

The Tunes

The collected traditional tunes did not necessarily come from musical people or from a good memory, nor were they noted simultaneously with dancing. This explains poor variants of the tunes. However, experience suggests the unusual variants are likely to be authentic. Better variants can be used to improve the presentation of the Morris but special versions can only be used with caution because of the false impression that can be given, especially when the tune is well known to the public (e.g. Brighton Camp)

It is important in considering variants to remember the instruments originally used, such as a fiddle - at Bampton or Fieldtown, a pipe and tabor - at Brackley or Bucknell, or a melodeon as at Abingdon.

The instrument puts a character onto the tune to reflect its own strengths and weaknesses. It affects the intervals and range of the tune rather than the rhythm which is dictated by the dance. For example Harry Thomas of Abingdon adapted tunes to suit a one row melodeon from the singing of older Abingdon dancers who remembered tunes played on a fiddle. The old village sides were often short of musicians. Good players did the rounds of local sides and anyone who could play a few tunes was pressed into service.

In a period when people prized individuality the old players expected to have to play their own version of the common tunes wherever they were and they sometimes gave collectors the way other musicians 'turned' the tunes.

One has to consider whether some dances are really wedded to their tunes or the tunes are just easy to dance. There are some 20 tunes that can be considered as universal throughout the Cotswolds. As the known village styles are all different, obviously the tunes are adjusted to suit the tradition and this is a justification for calling the collected tune the 'correct' version. The aim is however to know why the tune is played that way as good playing needs the understanding of the dance.

Each Cotswold side had a few, and only a few, tunes unique to itself. These often turn up as alternative tunes for common dances.

The character of a dance is somewhat dependent on the tune. The most extreme example is the Heel and Toe dance around Stow on the Wold which was danced to 'General Monk's March', a hornpipe, 'Oh Susannah', a polka and 'We won't go home till morning', a jig. More common is the occurrence of multiple tunes for the handkerchief or sidestep & half hey dance as at Bampton where variation in speed as well as rhythm is used to provide contrast. Consciously dancing to the tune makes each dance a different experience, Old sides may well have had to make do with whatever the musician could play. In some villages there was no direct relationship between the stick tapping and the tune, the foreman varying it at whim to suit the rhythm offered.

Tempo

The normal speed for a Morris is 96 beats (or 48 bars) per minute or a 4 bar phrase in 5 seconds, which is easy to follow on a clock or watch with a second hand. This speed has

been found all round the Cotswolds. Slightly higher speeds have been observed e.g at Bampton, "Brighton Camp" seemed to be played faster. Some dances have been collected somewhat slower, down to 80 beats a minute or 4 bars in 6 seconds. It is possible to dance as slow as 72 beats a minute given a "large" energetic step, usually a single step, as done, for example, by the Shropshire Bedlams. To dance slower requires control and it is desirable to practice slowly so as to produce large emphatic movements and to develop style. However this is not necessarily the best for public performance as while control is being developed, the optimum effect may be produced at higher speeds where the appearance of faults is minimised and the speed of the music itself is exciting.

Music is a physical thing. It has immediate effects on blood pressure and pulse rates, pumps up the adrenaline levels and makes breathing quicker and more irregular, without having to do anything. Tempo itself can be used to excite or tranquillise. For most people a tempo of 75 to 80 beats a minute is neutral. If faster than 80 it becomes stimulating; if slower than 75 it is saddening. This normal tempo is obviously connected with a whole group of body clocks, that control such operations as heartbeat at about 75 to 80 beats a minute.

The body clocks of young people tick faster than those of adults and they will remember things as having been 'slower' when they were younger when actually they were not! An exciting speed is when the heartbeat and so on from the exertion matches the speed of the music. Experience means both better control and less overall exertion, conversely beginners have less control and therefore over-exert and hence react better to higher speeds.

We all know that music is used in ordinary life to promote effects on us and to provide Pavlovian triggers to elicit right movements and right attitudes. We also know that there are tricks with melodies to induce emotions. Thought should be given to why some tunes are so satisfying to dance to and also why there are not that many Morris tunes anyhow. It is a common experience that recalling the tune is the best way to remember the movements, although the opposite is more difficult. This must be conditioning because in different villages quite different movements are fitted to nominally similar tunes.

Bands

Tempo is not the only way of controlling excitement. Volume and quality of the sound is also effective. Playing for the morris is traditionally a solo activity in the Cotswolds but not in the Border Counties or the North West. With percussion or a brass band the instruments provide different interlocking musical parts or rhythms and as long as the volumes are balanced there are few problems, Care is needed when more than one melody instrument is played together.

Perceived volume is logarithmic in effect, so doubling the sound or energy increases the effect only by 40%. Balance is still important. A good player can be allowed to dominate but a poor one just annoys the dancers and irritates the audience. The major problem that is often not recognized is the blurring effect of melody instruments playing together. Some players try to exert their presence by extending the notes and even running them together. This is a negation of playing to the dancing. Even with care,

different musicians do not play exactly the same and, to produce the same overall effect, each must play more staccato. As this normally allows the player more punch on each note, the volume level benefits as well.

Clarity is needed for the dancing, the music being an adjunct to the dance. In a group, the tunes will normally be played in simpler versions and the rhythmic subtleties already described will be submerged. Is it worth it? With "boxes", basses should be simpler as well.

Great care is needed in playing with someone from another side, especially when it is not your side dancing. The nuances will be different, as it is a different group of dancers, and one musician has to lead. Do not assume that another musician plays either the collected tune or your version for the dance. Always ask to join or wait to be asked to play together. Do not expect to play at a dance instructional as the arranged musician is probably fully occupied making the effort to provide exactly what the instructor is doing of demanding and is providing for the ease of the dancers all the fine detail of rhythm and emphasis which the person learning the tune has not started to be aware exists. An inexperienced or differently experienced musician just clogs up the air.

Learning the Tunes

The first step is getting to know the melody. One should avoid playing from written music for dancing except perhaps in the very early days of a side practicing a new dance. Even then poor playing can kill the side's enthusiasm for the particular dance by making it uninteresting or even difficult to dance. Knowing the melody means being able to whistle it or sing it without being committed to a final rhythmic interpretation and not being wedded to a bit of paper. Choose an easy key for the instrument. Most people play in G, and most collected tunes are written down in G regardless of how they were actually found. A few are usually played in D, where it is necessary to keep within a restricted instrument range.

Style

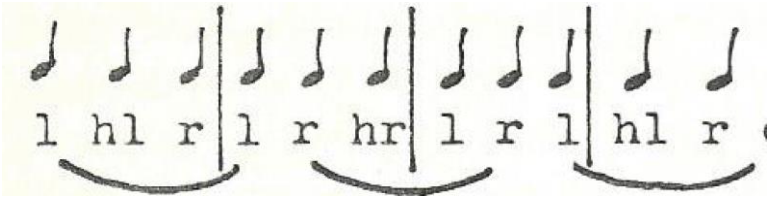
Melody is not really the important factor – instruments are played for the rhythm. It is difficult to extract the tune from a pipe and tabor sound. Traditionally the pipe provides the rhythm and the tabor or dub is "rolled" or "tattoed" to generate the excitement. To do this, players would use a short two-headed stick.

Sharpness is most easily provided with a fiddle by the nature of the action of the bow although classical techniques may have to be unlearned. A box is played with the bellows. Accordionists like to play "interesting" runs on the basses, probably because they are otherwise embarrassed by the proliferation of buttons. It usually distracts. The melodeon with its very restricted basses is effective for morris and accordionists should be encouraged to emulate the style of this instrument.

Rhythm

As a general rule, there should be a note for every step in the dance and probably for each hand movement. It is not true conversely that every note has a step. Carried to the extreme was the Abingdon "Maid of the Mill"; properly a jig with 6 notes to a bar, it

was played for a while in 3/4 so that the "1 hop 2 3"went across the bar.

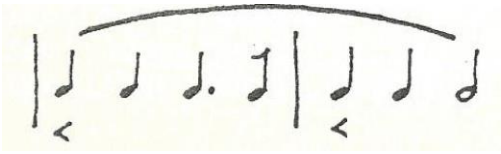


This does not mean that jigs are all played as single jigs i.e.

rather than

although this is an acceptable simplification when desired.

Care must be taken to emphasise the right phrasing when playing polkas. These were originally written and played in 2-bar phrases:

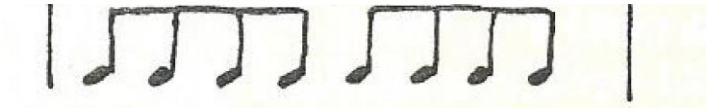


First there is the normal emphasis on the first beat of each bar. It is a strong beat for the dancer where the main effort of drive is made. If the music over-emphasises this, it can drive the dancer into the floor producing noise rather than lift. The effect is then similar to "on beat" drumming.

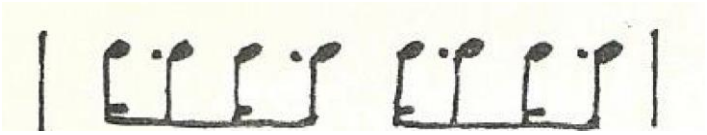
Second, the final beat of the bar and hence the step is de-emphasised or even suppressed. The danger here is that the body "lift" at that point might be lost. The second and fourth beats in a bar are the "weak" or "off beats" but are significant because they are where the lift or elevation of the dancer occurs, particularly on the last beat of a morris double step.

Most morris tunes are in 4/4 (common) time and use a hornpipe rhythm.

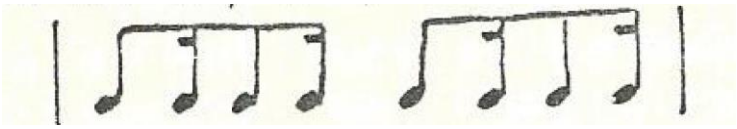
Bars are thought of as divided into 8's



but are played broken. Musical notation normally indicates this as



But it is seldom played as broken as that except at Chipping Camden. The better representation is a half-way form in 12/16



ie without the dots. This produces the good jaunty playing of Kimber or Wells.

A good musician allows one to dance comfortably, i.e. the music fits the natural rhythm of the movement rather than forcing it. Even the above implies too great a regularity because the four beats in a bar are actually not evenly distributed. Not only are the weak beats retarded towards a jiggy rhythm but the amount depends on the strength of the dancer's preceding movement. Thus it is impractical to write down as it would be too complex to follow. It is better to examine the mechanism of the body motion.

Body Movement

Body movement is not even within a bar because there is the continual starting and stopping from the reversals of vertical motion at the contacts with the ground. It takes longer to rise up off the ground than to fall back. This is why jigs are more exciting than reels for Country Dancing- the music is a better fit to natural movement. The degree of brokenness is related to the effort being put into the dancing or to the effort being demanded by the playing.

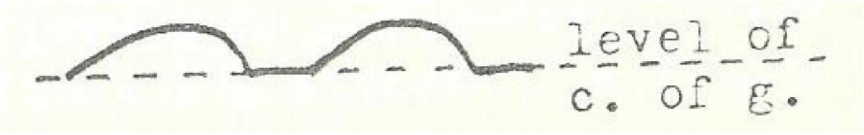
Start by considering the simplest basic movement; 2 springy jaunty dance-walk steps per bar with the weight on the balls of the feet, heels not touching thre ground. (Judges of jig dancing competitions sometimes placed their hands under competitors' heels to be sure they were properly off the ground.) Increasing the effort for height develops the movement into "capers", producing "plain capers" 2 plain capers per bar. Alternatively accenting the off-beat with a body lift or inserting a hop produces the hop-step or 'single' step.

Try dancing in a room in front of a window with cross pieces at eye level and observe the bar movement against distant objects as a measure of vertical movement of the head and hence body centre of gravity. It is difficult and unnatural to move so that the eyes remain steady. Comfortable dancing makes full use of flexing the instep.

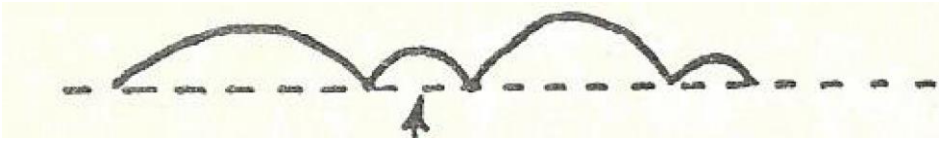
Diagrams show how the centre of gravity of the body alters in level during various

movements

Ordinary walk



Dance walk – jaunty



Body lifts by flexing foot still touching ground

Hop

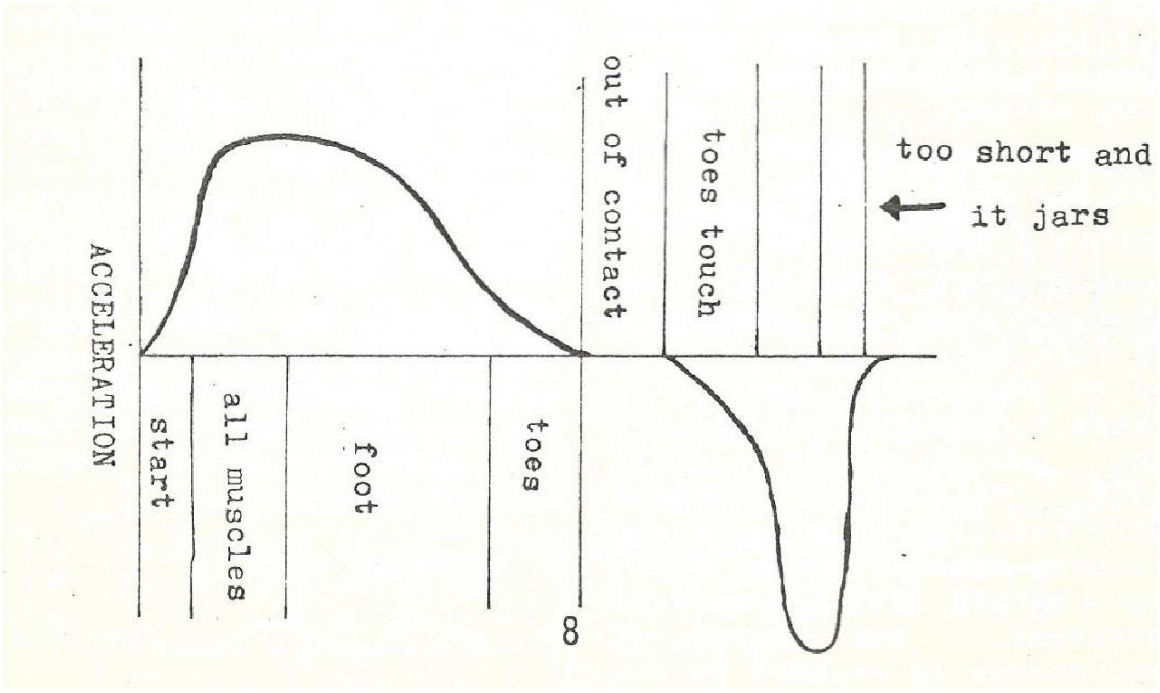
Sink to get full lift from foot to ankle…. not a full drop

Morris double step

Really:


(image)

The exhilaration is in the peak of the movement in the air.



Movement is determined by contacts with the ground. Newton's laws of motion apply. The higher one goes the longer it takes. The converse is that the slower one plays the higher one should go, not the longer one stays in contact with the floor. The stopping of the downward motion, the reversal of direction and the acceleration up off the ground is done primarily by the spring in the foot and ankle. (The thigh and knee contribute more to the larger, longer capers.) Absorbing energy and stopping motion can be faster than acceleration where one has to produce force and do work. The conventional static position is with body upright, heels together and toes turned out and weight distributed so that heels are just touching the ground. The basic dance position is on the balls of the feet with the heels off the ground and the body leaning forward a little, shoulders back and head upright.

Sink

Some traditions allowed a sink down on the first strong beat of a bar till the heel almost touches the ground. The knee also bends a little, but rotation of the knee or thigh joint by its nature does not produce much up and down movement. The drop allows a 'stronger' lift, Fieldtown and Sherborne are often danced this way.

The techniques used to teach at Ilmington and Longborough and the style expected aimed at making the first 2 steps of a double very similar and the drive on the first strong beat was indicated by concentrating the forward movement of the travel on this beat.

Single steps

Single stepping essentially allows more lift than double stepping and the music tends to be slower and the halves of bars played similarly.

Some village traditions have their own characteristic basic step, each needing its own

rhythmic subtlety. The essential differences found in just the single steps (1hop 2hop) are:

Brackley, Hinton, Headington – stiffish legs

Bidford –on the hop, foot drawn back & lifted to give "back-pedalling"

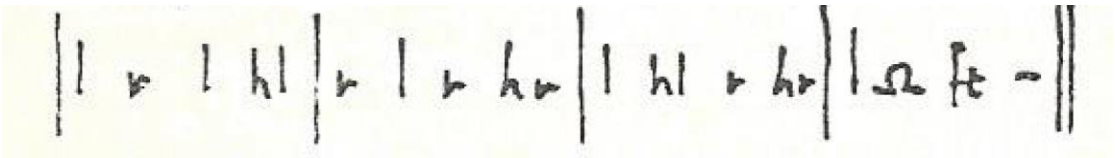
Bampton, Chipping Camden - raise free foot on the step & kick forward on hop.

All differ on the degree of hesitation on the weak beat and thus the brokenness needed in playing.

A few traditions consist of long sequence of basic steps, perhaps with a break of 3 or 4 strong beats, but most consist of strings of different movements. The finishing action of a figure (called a 'break' after the term in step dancing) may be in the same speed and rhythm as the basic step as at Brackley or Eynsham. If it is a simple jump or a very emphatic pause and jump as in some Abingdon or Chipping Camden dances, the movement takes longer and the musician has to allow the dancer 'air'. This explains why it is not useful to practice following a metronome – the musician should fall behind in discreet bits and 'stretch' the music to fit the movements.

Phrasing the Dance

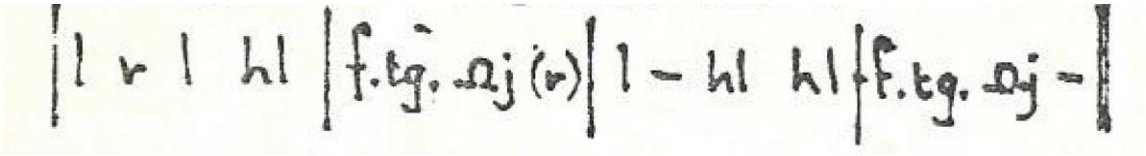
The most common dance phrase is 2 double steps (1 bar each), 2 back steps (step and hop; ½ bar each) a step and a jump to land with feet together i.e.



l,r,l, hl/ r,l,r,hr/ l,hl,r,hr/ l, _, ft tog _//

The rhythm of the double step is not quite that of the single steps. The single step is in this case a back step, which normally contrasts in style, energy and hand movements to the normal basic step. With the jump in the fourth bar there must be small variations in pace throughout the phrase.

A more complex set is:



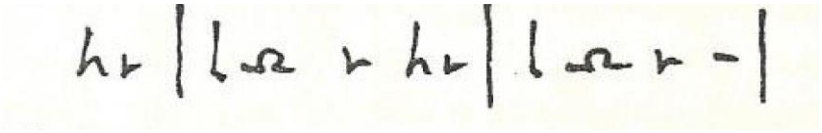
l,r,l, hl/ ft tog _ j.(r)/ l _ hl hl/ ft tog _ j _ //

The springs in bars 2 and 4 and the rhythm of the galley in bar 3 depend on the tradition. At Longborough and Fieldtown the movement of the galley goes through smoothly and the beats are very regular, even if the tune is written in 6/8. At Sherborne the galley is a step forward and then a turn on the hops so that there is a spring through

the weak beat and the hops are emphatic. Note that there may be a de-emphasised step or hop on the final weak beat of a bar preparatory to the next movement, especially if it is a particularly strong one. As it is small, it needs to be delayed, i.e. be late. This shows in a series of spring capers – single capers, thus

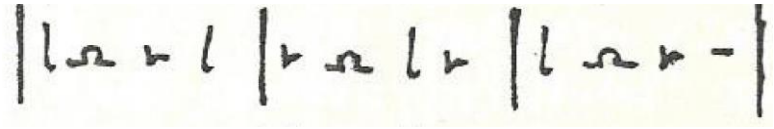
/l _ r _/ l_ r_/

In practice they often include a preparatory hop ("half capers") or a change step ("furries")



hr/ l _ r, hr/ l _ r

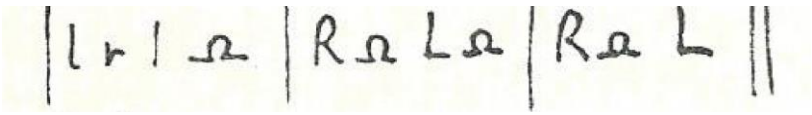
or



/l _ r, l/ r _ l, r/ l _ r, l/ r _, l_/

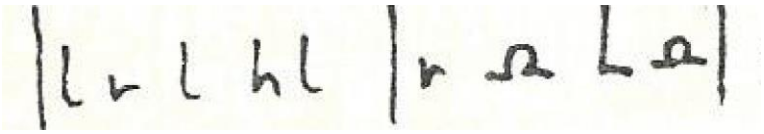
noting that the last of a series only has the preparatory hop or change step if there is something immediately following. The height and rhythm of the half caper depends on the tradition and its quality is related to the associated arm movements.

A tradition like Fieldtown makes a great deal of these preparatory movements throughout the dances. Others liked to be "clean" and unfussy. A caper is a high spring <u>onto</u> a foot, while the free foot does something. A subtlety with 4 plain capers at the end of a movement is whether they are really 4:



/l r l_/ R _ L _ / R _ L _//

or 3:



etc

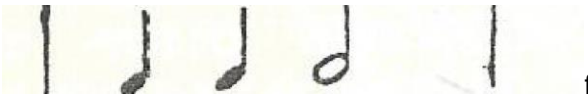
l r l hl/ r_ L/ R _ L _//

and play it accordingly.

Notation

These small differences which help the dancers through are not reflected in musical notation. For example when corners cross in Trunkles the playing depends upon whether they dance morris step, sidestep or half capers. Even if the fine differences escape the musician, the music can be played as

 for the morris step

 for the sidestep

 for the half capers

Slow Capers

Each sequence of movements takes 2 bars worth of time. The music is usually the normal tune played at half speed. How much it is slowed depends on the tradition and the caper. Each caper has a preparatory movement and a high spring. As the spring is higher than others in the morris it needs more time. It is necessary to follow the dancers in this. This is not a problem normally as only one or two dancers are doing them together. When a side does a dance like the Rose where all the dancers do slow capers together it must be expected that they rehearse to actually be together with a standardised timing.

Jigs

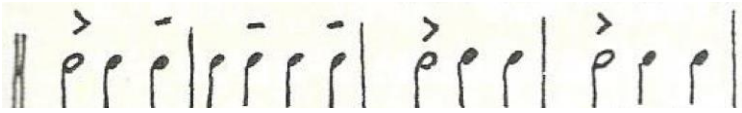
Although jigs are essentially a display of the dancer's skill, the musician has a key role. There needs to be an understanding before the music starts on who is leading whom, because the musician and the dancer cannot both follow – this is an unstable situation! Normally the musician should expect the dancer to follow, except on the slow capers. Some people learn dances by rote, responding to the specific tune. They can have trouble following an unfamiliar musician. Many dancers like to cover a fair bit of ground in a jig and the music needs to be slower to allow this, otherwise it will degenerate into a run around.

Stick Dances

There are two problems generated by the dancers which ought to be removed at practices but often are not.

First – speeding up during the tapping

The dancers need to develop larger arm movements to fill up the music. If the musician follows the dancers, they will gallop away with the dance. Sometimes the dancers can not hear the music because of the noise, concentration and fun. The musician must be prepared to say something, to hold them back by emphasizing key beats and hesitating, for example a typical Shepherds Hey.



Second – Moving off

As the tapping sequence is usually done when either stationary or stepping on the spot, the dancers need time to accelerate into the next movement. It is necessary to hold off the music a little. Otherwise the rhythm of playing follows the size of movement called for by the chorus.

1978 (MM 1-2 and 1-3) considerably expanded in 1990

How it all began

In 7500 BC at Stone Carr near Scarborough, early post-glacial Neolithic hunter/gatherers were becoming adapted to a forest environment. The site gives the earliest example of artificially felled trees and of a domesticated dog in England. It also has red deer horns that appear to have been worked so that they could be worn. The site was occupied only by 5 or 6 families but the need could have been disguise in the hunt or ritua1. The earliest known reference to a linked chain dance is depicted on rocks in the open air in a valley NW of Luxor in Upper Egypt dated c.3400 BC, showing 7 girls holding hands. This was before metal was introduced into Egypt and therefore before the first sword was made. Nine skirted women are shown dancing round a naked male in a rock shelter in Catalonia. About 2000 BC a small carving was made in Sardinia of 3 naked women dancing a wild dance round a stone. Stone circles were built in Britain from 3300 to 1500 BC. Many have an associated legend of dancing maidens turned to stone. It is generally believed that these circles were dancing areas, rather as the sites in the mountain states of the USA were used by Red Indians at a similar level of civilisation.

However to talk of pre-Christian roots to what we do is pure speculation. It implies a continuity of form of culture and social environment that did not exist. It confuses with the survival of superstitions and folklore which are individual and not community activity. There are certain characters and activities which have forgotten ritual roles but these have nothing to do with the morris as a dance form or as an entertainment. Significance cannot be hung on the simple fact that people have always danced and done things in due season. Where are the comparable dances of the Celts, Saxons or Dance in other countries? In any case the "old religion" is witchcraft. The pan-European dance is the hilt and point sword form and a very suggestive correlation has been made with the distribution of early mining sites. However the earliest references are in Nuremberg, 1350 AD, and Dordrecht, Holland, 1392 AD and subsequently in mediaeval towns in that part of Europe that were developing an independence and a new culture. The earliest British references are Edinburgh, 1590 and Lathom, Lancs, 1638.

Early records

The earliest records are where records were kept, so were the guilds adopting something already existing in the villages or did the villages come to adopt what was done in the towns? There is ample evidence that most of folk culture was survival from earlier more sophisticated levels; also that things pass either up or down and when one part of society adopts something from another, the originator drops it. Like evolution in animals, society does not reinvent something already eliminated: the potential is not there - that is excluding our present time with its novel awareness of the past. The first Morris or Morisca was staged in Lérida in 1149 at the betrothal of Petronilla, the young Queen of Aragon to Ramon Berengeur of Barcelona in the form of a Moors versus Christians battle as one of the court celebrations. The Moors had been driven from the town the year before. The form spread through Spain as it was recovered and along the south coast of France into the northern Italy plain where the Moors never invaded. Perhaps John O'Gaunt really did bring back a performance of the Morisca to England in the mid-14th century. The Morisca evolved in different ways, different places emphasised the martial movements, the two lines or subsidiary characters like the young bride.

The Mediaeval Church had a feast of fools which when expelled from the church was welcomed into towns, law-courts and universities. In France the Sociétés Joyeuses were associations of young men which existed from the mid-15th to the mid-16th century with some surviving to the mid-17th. The Parisian societies Enfants-sans-Souci and the Kingdom of the Basoche, first mentioned in 1442, were law clerks associated with Parliament in Paris who celebrated traditional festivals and acquired considerable reputation as comic actors and organisers of pageants. They were frequently summoned to act farces at court, to devise Royal entries, Masquerades and Morris dances.

The English imitation was led by a Lord of Misrule and one appeared at Court from the reign of Henry VII (c.1500) to the death of Edward VI (1553) and still existed at Oxford in the early 17th century. The first English mention of Morris was at Court in 1494 and for a few decades appeared where the Royalty frequented such as Kingston on Thames, Richmond and Reading. About the middle of the century it began to be picked up by the town guilds, for example Abingdon 1554-92, and towards the end of the century it had descended to the lower classes. The first known morris competition was at Middleburg, Holland in 1525.

Analysis

An analysis has been done of all the English references up to the early 17th century. There is no evidence of a fertility-ritual origin. The performances were arranged for holidays and important events. There is no reference to the blacking of faces although this was common in the masques. Bells were universal. The costumes were expensive, uniform within a team, and valuable enough to be left as major items of property in wills. Parishes would hire costumes if they could not afford them, e.g. Marlow. Fees for dancers were initially high, £5 to £25, c.1500, suggesting professional performers. Even in Gloucester in 1553 Master Arnold's Servants, a company of players, were paid 5/- [1] for providing the May Day morris dancers, but incidentally 20/- for Bringing in the May, another newly arrived fashion from the continent. It is possible to distinguish two types of early dance. The first and most popular involved a female character and is best called a Ring dance and included pantomimic elements and has a recognisable relationship to children's games. The other form is a processional, in a column two by two.

By the reign of James I the morris was waning in interest and it was called out in the Book of Sports as needing restoration to its previous position along with archery. It had been very popular. In the 16th century Phillip Stubbes told how morris dancers sometimes entered the church during a service and how the congregation would mount up on the forms and pews after divine service was finished to sing and dance in church on certain holy days and festivals. In 1571 the Archbishop of York had to prohibit Christmas and May Games and morris dances in churches and church yards during the time of divine service or of any sermon. Kemp's Nine Daies' Wonder, pub.1600, showed that interest could be generated.

Decline

The decline in the morris and the maypole is shown in the little protest at their loss

[1] 5/- is 5 shillings (20 shillings to the pound)

during the Commonwealth although there was no prohibition against dancing in general (after all it was the period of the first of many editions of Playford's Dance manuals), although it suited later generations to blame it on the Puritans. The restoration of Charles II through the negotiations of General Monk, of the famous march, in 1660, led to an outburst of reviving Merrie England. Spring bonfires, maypoles and May games were enthusiastically restored even before his arrival in London on the 29th May, his 30th birthday, especially in Oxford and the surrounding districts. The event left such an impression that many seasonal celebrations were transferred to Oak Apple Day in perpetuity, not to change again till the Bank Holiday Act of the late 19th century. There are several very local dance forms in England now called Morris. They were often calendar customs and once kept alive by particular groups, but they were all associated with the concept of good luck visiting and therefore were part of the community and dependent on the existence of a suitable social environment. Such a countryside existed since the late 17th century, with independent farms and the houses of the minor gentry. The form of the dance varies markedly over the country, each fossilising a social dance style appropriate to its initial peak of popularity.

The Cotswold morris was as Kemp said in the old form with napkins and bells. It would be better called Wychwood as the teams showing the most complexity and uniformity are almost contained by the Royal Forest boundaries defined by Henry II. The forest focussed on the Royal Palace at Woodstock, a favourite residence for kings up to Charles II and often forming part of the dowry of the reigning queen. The technical detail is that of Society dancing of 1600, simplified as one might expect of a revival half a century later but showing little subsequent influence from the developments in social dancing, and therefore having quickly became a dance of the people, who were uninfluenced by the Country Dance till the 19th century. The tradition diffused up the dissected plateau of the main Jurassic Cuesta into northern Oxfordshire and Southern Warwickshire and Northants losing characteristic elements, but did not catch on in the surrounding vale farming lands. In Northamptonshire it overlapped with the Midland or Bedlam morris which appears to have spread from Northampton to the Welsh Border and the Vale of Evesham to Shropshire. This was a midwinter activity and tradesmen maintained, with the chief characteristic of the regular clashing of sticks.

The combat aspect of the Morisca had developed in Italy into the Matachin and spread in popularity to France, Spain and then England in the latter half of the 16th century. The first English references at Court are in 1582-3 to 1590. A description was published by Arbeau in 1589, showing the use of simple fencing movements and clearly a forerunner of dances shown by continental sides today. In Northamptonshire in the 18th century the two forms were clearly distinguished but use of sticks in the Cotswold dance diffused southwards.

In the 18th century all popular antiquities, as they were then called, were viewed as survivals of classical mythology. In the 19th century they were all given Scandinavian origins. The folk revival looked for history that was indigenous and lost in the mists of time. Today we are not surprised if fashions come and go. But fashion is innovative whereas the traditional process is selective. The origin is not important but the use to which it is put is.

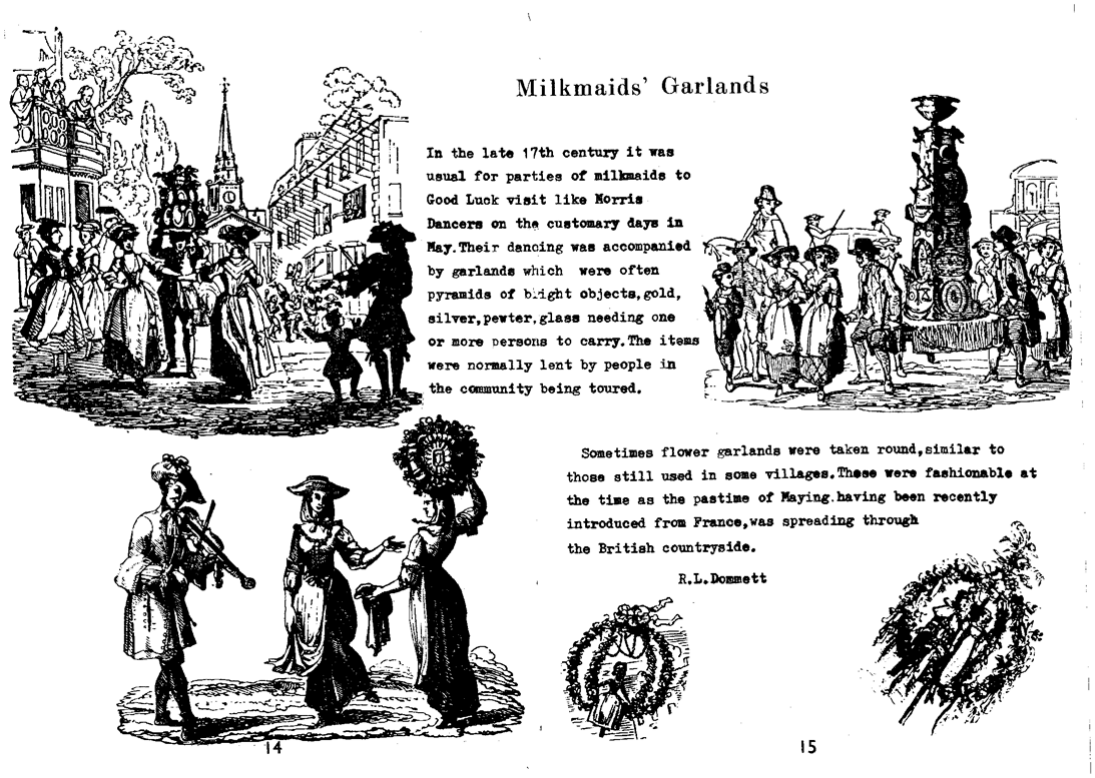
1978 (MM 1-4)

Milkmaids Garlands

In the late 17th century it was usual for parties of milkmaids to Good Luck visit like Morris Dancers on the customary days in May. Their dancing was accompanied by garlands which were often pyramids of bright objects, gold, silver, pewter, glass needing one or more persons to carry. The items were normally lent by people in the community being toured.

Sometimes flower garlands were taken round, similar to those still used in some villages. These were fashionable at the time as the pastime of Maying, having been recently introduced from France, was spreading through the British countryside.

1978 (MM 1-4)



Cotswold Basics

Good technique is the basis of good dancing. There is a school of thought that traditional dancing does not need a conscious grasp of fundamentals. It might be true where there is a small intake into a group of skilled dancers, but many of the old leaders, like Harry Taylor of Longborough and more recent ones with the traditional sides were most insistent on style and standards, whatever they lacked in analytical knowledge.

It starts, before you move, with good posture. One stands poised with weight over the balls of the feet, not also spread back over the heels, a stance that has arisen since people got used to substantial heels. All the time taken to accelerate and move off balance is life lost from the dance.

Good posture is having the head, shoulders, arms, ribs, hips, legs and feet in correct relative position, Bad posture can result in slump, with the pelvis pushed forward with rounded shoulders and drooping head or a sway, with pelvis pushed back and a hollow look to the lower back. The alignment is achieved by having the buttocks firm, the abdomen pulled up and feeling flat and raising the ribcage. The shoulders should be low but not pulled backwards. The eyes look forward, not down, and the eyes should not wander around.

From the 17th century (c. 1620) the morris acquired a turn out of the feet, obtained by rotating the legs outward from the hip joint. The turn out helps easy movement off to the side or the diagonal. It arose at first because of a style of movement of the leg, requiring a curved path of the foot. The circular movement is preserved in the swing and swagger forward steps and in several types of backstep. The angle between the feet should be 30 to 40 degrees. The balls of the feet will be far enough apart to be appropriate for a rear-up, cross back steps or shuffles.

The basic step can be traced back to the 1400's in Northern Italy where with the

appearance of smooth dancing floors a technique of dancing developed based on the rise and fall of the body called elevation, from the instep. An effect of lightness is obtained by the control of the rise into the air and the smooth lowering through the instep with the weight over the supporting foot. The quality of resilience in the instep is developed by practice. Regular practice by oneself outside the weekly club meeting is essential in early days rather like learning the piano. The rise and fall is so fundamental that it was called 'The Movement'.

There are three body skills to be developed:
1. A firm muscular control of the hip girdle. Many people have never tensed these muscles. This is the thing usually difficult to describe about very good dancers.
2. A pulled up knee with the leg not just straight in the ordinary sense but the knee joint locked by contraction of the quadriceps, the big muscle on the front of the thigh. With a relaxed leg one can move one's kneecap, with the thigh muscle tensed you can not. The braced knee allows the transmission of the thrust from the foot directly up into the back without risk of wobble or deflection. 'Weak-kneed' is an old English phrase to be recalled.
3. The sprung foot – the elastic strength in the combined ankle and instep which allows the feet to be used as the natural levers and shock absorbers they are.

Basic stepping owes much to the 16th century technique of bracing the knee keeping the leg straight and to the 17th century when all movement of the leg was provided from the hip and all vertical movement of the body was from the instep.

The Morris step is a quick change from one foot to the other. The free foot is moved about the foot's length forward. Too far and it looks all legs and tends to appear grotesque. The foot is not particularly pointed but it is at least kept parallel to the ground. The change of foot should be practiced initially starting slowly and then gradually speeding up before introducing the hops. In the 17th century people were taught to get the correct feel of the movement in exercises taking the body weight by placing their hands on a table. Traditional dancers spoke to Cecil Sharp of doing this hanging onto a beam or the sides of sheep dips.

The movement of the foot is forward and back and not driving into the ground. Full use is made of the resilience of the instep and ankle to minimise the shock and hence damage to the knee. Dancers who affect a tapping style often develop physical

disabilities, Beginners usually are too tensed up and attempt to limit motion by excessive muscular restraint and still tend to 'flailing'.

Quite important is to remember proper warming-up exercises as the vigour of the Morris can lead to strains and pulled muscles. Any movement in the Morris that gives the impression of driving down into the floor is unlikely to be authentic. Good stepping has a clear sound on the bells. Practice basics wearing them.

All jumps, leaps or hops require a bend of the knees for the push off into the air and again after the jump to cushion the landing to allow the thigh muscles to contribute. In the air the body should be aligned, the feet fully arched. Most spectators will notice how well a jump is done more often than the height reached. The knees and instep act as springs so that the jump appears light and bouncy. Do not anticipate the floor by relaxing the points of the feet until they have just touched the ground. Land from toe to heel.
Some exercises are:
1. Take small jumps on spot with feet side by side aiming for soft landings and no noise.

2. Jump from two feet onto one and back onto two etc, aiming for balance.

3. Slow lope around the room going for height not travel.

Jumps

Usually the arms are raised on a jump. It is important to get the correct timing of the lift with respect to the spring. The arms do appear to help in getting height because the lift does encourage the right movement of the rest of the body. One way to practise is to jump and reach high as if trying to grasp something above or to touch the ceiling. Often a jump is done to round off a movement sequence but of course leading into the next.

Good Morris has a drive or surge on the first strong beat of a sequence. To capture this the body has to be off balance to go into it. The trick is to land with the feet about half the foot's length behind the take-off position. To make say a complete turn in place on a jump it helps to use the technique of ‘spotting'. The head is erect and the gaze should stay momentarily on a fixed point straight in front of the body at eye level as the turn begins. The head then leads the turn arriving at the same fixed point before the rest of the body. This enables a dancer to turn without becoming dizzy. Watch a good ballet dancer. If it is not found to be easy, practice by revolving slowly in place while taking small steps on both feet.

There is a great variety in the backstep, almost every side had its own interpretation and care is needed to clearly distinguish between them. There is one common element, the weight goes down on the strong beat whereas in the morris step it rises. Also the body should lean forwards not backwards. The biggest stylistic danger is dangling the free foot in front. Too often vigour is translated into kicking forward rather than rising off the ground with the feet underneath the body and it is not surprising that the effect is of a Can—Can version of Knees Up Mother Brown,

Sidesteps

A sidestep is open if the first movement is to the side and separating the feet even if the

next step brings them together again, and it is closed if the first movement is across so that the leading or working foot is in front of the other, The essential features of the movements in Cotswold Morris are that during the sidestep the relative angle between the feet is maintained. The rear foot is not allowed to rotate to be parallel. The sidestep stepping is expected to be rather energetic and showy. Traditionally there was very little turn of the body. Dancers who exaggerate the turning lose the true emphasis on the step.

Starting foot

The oldest mediaeval rule for starting foot was left foot going forward and right foot going backwards arising from the times when dances were often in a circular formation and these were the natural leading feet. In the days of symmetrical dances this became left foot first half and right foot the second half. Step and jig dancers should always lead off on one foot and then repeat the sequence off the other. The Cotswold Morris has preserved this left foot lead although some teams applied it to both halves of a movement.

In the 19th century morris competitions the points judged were the starting foot, the direction of turns and any very obvious boobs. When the rule on starting foot was incompatible with a later movement such as a galley, one either adjusted the stepping to be on the correct foot by the time one got to the later movement by suppressing a hop or changing a step to another hop or one slipped in a fudge step.

Traditional dancers frowned on the fudge and liked the stepping clear and with no fussiness. After all the fudge made the bells ring and it could be heard!

In jig competitions judges would place their hands under the dancers' heels and dancers would be eliminated for touching. In Baccapipes dancing the floor would be sprinkled with flour or sand and the winner judged on who got closest to the centre without disturbing the pipes.

The dances are a sequence of movements. As they are demonstrated they should be imitated using the minimum of energy at first so that muscles do not tire as they help to learn the movement. Traditionally it was right to use a simpler practice step to conserve energy and this is of particular value when working up spatial awareness of one's position in evolutions and learning to keep spacings and lines.

Do not expect to learn several points simultaneously but expect to have a structured learning plan,

Beware of developing bad habits when filling in the bits of movements or sequences that have not been taught yet.

1979 (MM 2-1)

On competitions

Many dancers like the morris because it is currently not competitive and there are no examinations. Yet there is a concern for standards and the achievement of excellence. Anyone who has been on a joint tour knows the needling that can develop and most dancers respond to the stimulation of dancing against others. There was a place once for competitions. The objective of a competition is the encouragement of sides and individual dancers in the pursuit of excellence in the Cotswold morris style of dancing by the following of those standards known to have been observed by the older generations of Cotswold dancers. Experience with other competitions, stepping or sword, is that there must be no ambiguity in the rules and no area of interpretation unclear to competitors. There must be no change in the rules once the competition has been announced.

Judges

The judges need to have been dancers. There need to be 2 or more. They must appear to be independent both of the organisers and of each other and their names need to be announced at the first notice of the competition. They should score independently. Because of the importance of rhythm one judge should concentrate on listening to the bells.

Competitors should have the right to ask for spoken or written comment on their performance and to be able to ask for a written explanation of judging policy if it is unclear, but the judges' policy is not to be challenged. There should be a channel of appeal but only on the interpretation of the rules. In general the judges' decisions are final on what happens during a dance. Frivolous or disruptive objections should lead to suspension.

Classes

There are 4 classes of dance that need to be encouraged.

1. Set dances in traditional form to nominated tunes.

2. Solo jigs to recognised Cotswold morris tunes.

3. Baccapipes

4. Original dances of own devising.

The relationship of dancers to music is very important and all entries must be encouraged to provide their own musician, If they have to use one provided by the organisers they must be given facilities to practice,

The question of 'traditions' is difficult. For many such the exact form is unknowable and individual interpretations should not be penalized. Even the well known 'traditions' with recognized characteristics are subject to several authoritative versions differing in the detail that could become issues in a competition. It is believed that the consistency and quality of movement of a true tradition will bring its own reward artistically and technically. Organisers could consider allowing competitors to hazard some marks against the judges' understanding of a nominated tradition.

Some Rules for Set Dances

1. Traditionally the tunes were nominated and also whether they were to be handkerchief or stick dances. Of course particular variants of a tune cannot be demanded. As an objective is preservation it may be adequate to ask for a variant of any tune in a recognised authoritative book such as the 'Handbook of Morris Dancing'
2. The performers must declare beforehand the rules they are adopting for starting foot and direction of turns. For example left foot start or first half left and second half right are common forms. If the declared rules are complex the side must accept the risk of the judge making an error. The judges' ruling is final and the judge does not necessarily give the dancers the benefit of the doubt. A side that tries to avoid this by declaring no rules will lose heavily on artistic grounds!
3. Traditionally feint steps were frowned upon – they could be detected by listening to the bells and technical merit should be recognized by skill in avoiding them.
4. Entry and exit is part of the dance and its presentation and should be judged as part of the performance.
5. Mistakes should carry a fixed penalty, say 5 points (out of 100 at risk) and the judges should list them for the befit of the performers

Jigs

1. In any class the points that can be awarded should be divided according to some declared plan.

a. Dance technique – say 50 – to cover the quality of stepping, arm movements, posture, height.

b. Artistic impression – 30 – to cover the linking of movements, pure excitement, internal self consistency (authenticity).

c. Technical difficulty – 20 – inclusion of shuffles, capers, slow passages, galleys. It is believed that the dancer attempting more complex movements has the greater chance of mistake and poorer quality of movement and should have the chance of scoring higher.

2. A solo dancer should score a bonus if they can dance each movement leading off with either foot as this was considered a prized skill in the Cotswolds.

Baccapipes

1. The floor on which the dance is performed is to be covered with sand or flour before each competitor tries his dance to allow the judge a measure of where the foot grounds.
2. The pipes may be of any material but at least of a certain length and diameter. The specification would have to be like: at least ⅛ inch diameter and bowed at least 1 inch. The pipes are to be supplied by the competitor.
3. The pipes are to be placed over a reference point, marked on the floor, by the dancer to the satisfaction of the judges to an accuracy of about ⅛ inch.
4. A dancer retires if in the opinion of the judge the baccapipes have been touched during the dance.
5. The judge checks at the end of the dance whether the baccapipes have been moved relative to the reference point.
6. The dancers are expected to use during parts of the dance a true 'heel and toe' step and to step over the baccapipes using both toe and heel taps at different times.
7. The winner is that one judged to have touched closest into a vertex of the crossed baccapipes as measured by the closest smudge of the floor dusting to the reference point.

The above include all the known features of the old competitions. They should allow equal opportunity for simple dances done well and for 'traditional' sides.

1979 (MM 2-3)

The Ring - what's gone wrong?

The Morris Ring, as is the EFDSS, is often abused without examining its objectives and achievements, on the basis of the views and behaviour of a few individuals. The objectives were stated well by Arthur Peck in 1949 whilst Squire:

'It was the purpose of the Ring to provide a means by which the Clubs could be brought into touch with each other and so receive mutual encouragement, and this has remained its fundamental object throughout, based on the belief that, as in the old days of the Cotswold Morris, the dance can flourish as it should only in the atmosphere of a club whose members are closely associated together. There is no doubt that the Ring's existence has fostered the Club spirit and has been responsible for the formation of Clubs which otherwise might never have come into being'.

'It was no accident that the Ring was first instituted at one of the Thaxted meetings, for Thaxted had been for several years the place where Morris men gathered to dance together; and it was also natural that after the Ring had been founded the annual Thaxted gathering should be counted as one of the important annual fixtures of the Ring. In many ways this Thaxted meeting is a model of what Ring meetings should be, for there it is the Thaxted men who are the hosts and make the necessary arrangements for the meeting, while the other clubs are their guests. Similar meetings have been arranged by clubs in other parts of the country and I hope there will be many more, To provide a more central place of meeting for those clubs who cannot easily get to Thaxted, regular meetings once or twice a year were instituted at Cecil Sharp House. The value of such gatherings cannot be exaggerated; it is universally agreed. Yet the size of them cannot grow beyond a certain limit without defeating their object, for the Morris cannot be danced in hordes or it will lose its character; and it is not in these larger gatherings, valuable and inspiring as they are, but in the Clubs and in their regular meetings that the true spirit of the morris is to be found. Another function of the Ring, which I hope will be developed more than it has been, is to provide an opportunity for experienced members of Clubs to meet and discuss anything concerning the welfare of the Clubs and of the morris generally; and there may be many further ways, not yet attempted, in which the Ring can help the Clubs in the future, always preserving the essential relationship between the Clubs and the Ring. For the Ring is in no sense a 'super-Club'; it claims no right to prescribe policy for the Clubs that belong to it, nor has it ever been suggested that every Club should follow a standardized pattern. Every Club associated in the Ring retains its own independence and through its association in the Ring each Club contributes to the well-being of the others. There is not, and I hope there never will be, a 'Ring style' of dancing and if the Clubs ever begin to feel that the Ring is something over and above and superior to themselves, then it will be failing of its purpose'.

Dr Peck would never be considered as a particularly progressive Squire but as a founder of the Travelling Morris, a founder of the Ring and its recorder for many years, his views must reflect the vision that the Ring founders had. But why has it gone wrong and what is the Women's Morris Federation doing to avoid the same failings?

1979 (MM 2-4)

Women's dancing - some common faults

(co-authored with Tubby[Tony] Reynolds)

If you are honest, who on earth wants to watch second rate morris through choice? Excuses about spirit and enjoyment and gaining experience are just excuses not a justification.

Too many dances too soon

It takes time to make a dancer; it is not fair to burden the memories at the expense of working on basics. Who wants to watch a load of mediocre dances?

Interest is maintained by novelty. Initially this can be achieved by variety in the material, but altered by the variety on the occasion on which the material is used. An understood structured programme of learning should overcome the need for endless dance fodder. Keeping a balance during learning requires skill. New sides and new foremen must realise that they need help, advice and guidance.

Principles are no substitute for good dance basics. Most cant about the 'tradition' ignores that the tradition had very good and experienced examples to copy and that the teachers in the traditional sides, this century at least, have been insisting on good grounding. Dancing out is part of the making of a dancer. It should not be delayed but introduced with care.

Set too small

A Cotswold set should be spaced at outstretched fingertip length in each direction. It should be necessary to stretch out to clash sticks in figures. One should have to take a positive step forward for hand clapping with one's opposite.

A small set is often due to how the side fits into its practice rooms. In this and other things a set should practice deliberately as it intends to perform in public.

A narrow set can be due to laziness in practice. It also goes with little effort and slow acceleration into figures so lacking life. In other words, 'dull'. Cotswold Morris is dependent for its effect on jumps, capers and drive and this does not necessarily mean speed.

Weak stick tapping

The stick is an implement, not an extension of the hand like a handkerchief. It should be wielded like a tool, with confidence and vigour, with a good preparatory swing but no follow through. Accidents happen through this particular lack of control. If this is thought to be unfeminine then you do not understand the Cotswold Morris and you probably play lousy tennis and cannot chop wood.

Stick tapping should be seen. The impact point should be head level or above – the audience stands behind the dancers and needs to see what is going on – it also reduces the chance of accidents.

Weak posture and Fitness

Pulling the stomach in and raising the rib cage gives the dancer a sense of elation as well

as elevation. Slack body leads to slack mind and to slack dancing.

To put height into stepping requires strength and this has to be developed in the correct muscles. It takes time and understanding in training. Stretching, exercises and warm-up as well as cool down must be appreciated and exploited as needed. Do not be afraid to ask experts in other than morris dancing.

Tucking the head down in jumps is common and obvious to the audience and bad. One should have a straight proud back, not a curly one – it comes back to raising the rib cage and not being afraid to raise the arms away from the chest.

A constant review of basics is important as dancers do improve and can be upgraded. In stepping, the curling of toes up - that is, not rotating the foot at the ankle so that the sole of the foot is nearly parallel to the ground - looks comical!

Self Discipline

Can you recognize the following faults?

Talking in set and delaying Once to Yourself or missing calls.

Arguing in public especially having post mortems as soon as the dance stops.

Temper.

Sloppy on and off.

Begging the sixth dancer to come and dance.

Behaviour in pubs - it's not your pub – you have obligations. Who likes to see women the worse for drink? Whatever your personal belief on sexual roles and positions in society, the morris is no place to sail against accepted conventions.

Too much dancing by an individual or a side in the summer is 'over-dancing' – to lose the 'magic' of an event, to get bored so the numbers drop – is not worth it. The traditional dance season was short and in the late spring – do not overdo a good thing.

Caring

Because it is considered that people dance better and make a better show if they care about their dances, it is allowed that sides go their own way, make their own choices of how things should be done and develop club style. This was never intended as a manifesto for anything other than better dancing. Sometimes it is used to justify abuse of our heritage.

The way dances are sometimes passed on makes one wonder – we all know of workshops that reflect more of the leader's own ideas than tradition – often people are not honest about what has been changed or developed from the original – finally care is not taken to see that the dance has been learnt, noted etc, accurately even when the learner actually wants a particular interpretation.

It is surprising that sides do not often choose local names to identify themselves, nor introduce local associations into dance titles. The dance movement is not wedded to a

tune otherwise there would be only one tradition.

The public announcing of the village of origin of a dance that has some resemblance to the one to be performed still mystifies an audience – are the dancers ashamed of not having dances of their own?

Costume

The 'costume' – the choice of the word is reflecting an attitude, as does 'kit' or 'regalia'. It is seldom chosen with the needs of dancing in mind. Often it is fixed before the side can dance and know what is suitable. It is not often related to the clothes one practices in

A good skirt is as effective as a second pair of handkerchiefs. Petticoats prevent seating - round buttocks may be nice but they do not need to be emphasized! Petticoats, an apron or a long-lined tabard provide the weight to prevent distracting riding up. If the skirt is very long it restricts the choice of movements and removes the point of others. Usually something has to be deliberately done to compensate – noise with the feet, emphatic jumps.

A well-designed costume can emphasise the upright posture needed to NW morris.

Should women wear breeches or jeans? Bums are extra fat that develops at puberty. Women's dress has evolved to cover this shape attractively. We remember the ribald comments when women first started to wear pants - the observations are still true. Sides that go for trousers are not all slim – do they have policies of dieting, exercise etc? It must be admitted that some sides manage to look gorgeous!

Shoes

Height in the heel of shoes throws the weight back and this is wrong for the Cotswold morris. To maintain the appearance of the morris step with the soles parallel to the ground (that is not to curl up the apparent shape and look comical) requires that the toe is 'pointed' downwards which strains the leg the wrong way. A heel reduces the shock-absorbing travel of the foot and ankle muscles in landing in steps, jumps or capers. The strain on muscles is greater, the risk of injury higher, the stepping looks abnormal and there is not the distance for acceleration to get the body up off the ground or smartly into movements and the 'guts' goes out of the morris. Look at the height of a character shoe.

Wobbly fat

The advent of the bra liberated women by allowing them to participate in active sports without embarrassment or discomfort. We do not believe anyone can come up with a good aesthetic reason why breasts should fly around in the Morris. Wobbly fat is distracting wherever it is on the body. There is the choice of tailored bodices (Irish), good waistcoats (American Morris) or coveralls (tabards) and pinafore tops to provide control. This is the way chosen by most genuine European folk costumes. There are other ways – please recognize it as a problem. Women appear to move in a way protective to their breasts, thus inhibiting good arm movements, good clapping and good stick tapping. Arm movements should always be large and expressive and the hands

well away from the body at hits, claps etc. The technique has the same objective as stage movements, to look normal to an audience it has to be exaggerated in performance.

These comments are based on the long conversations we have in going to and from instructionals although this was written over a plate of spaghetti in an Italian restaurant in Bath.

1979 (MM 2-4)

How did you think it was? The political background to the folk revival

Most people have an idyllic impression of the early days of the revival when in reality it was a very turbulent period. Some may be aware that Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) gave his first public lecture on Folk Song on 26 November 1903 and that he crusaded to get Folk Song and then Dance accepted by the Board of Education for use in schools. However the personalities involved were closely bound up with the burning issues of the time, especially Votes for Women. They were portrayed in the six-episode BBC Series "Shoulder to Shoulder" in 1974.

Mary Neal (1860-1944) worked with Emmeline Pethick (1867-1954), who had been born in Weston-Super-Mare and brought up a Quaker, at the Methodist West London Mission from 1890. Miss Neal came from a Manchester manufacturing family. The Mission seemed restrictive and not providing the help needed so they founded the Esperance Girls Club in 1895. It is difficult now to imagine how restricted were the lives of the leisured middle classes in the last decade of the 19th century. The very idea that women should leave their homes and live in the comparative freedom of a community, in order to carry out rather subversive principles of social sharing, was a bombshell to the large mass of conservative, low-church and non-conformist opinion. Both accepted a gospel of Socialism as it was practiced then by Kier Hardie.

It is also difficult to imagine the conditions of the poorer classes in London. No canned entertainment, no travel, no access to the country - only the public house and the life of the street. Overburdened motherhood, overcrowded homes, drunkenness, dirt, starvation and brutality were the common experience and gave little chance of happiness. The girls of the Club had the high spirits of the young and the recklessness of the repressed. They were out for any excitement that was to be had - they could not tolerate anything less vivid than the life of the street.

Esperance

Mary Neal and her friends were pro-Boers, believing, with good reason, that international financiers wanted the Transvaal gold mines and were using British lives and money to get them. They were involved in many rowdy public meetings. The Esperance Club became well known for its "national dancing" and Emmeline met Frederick Lawrence at a club display in 1899. Neal made all the wedding arrangements at Canning Town Hall in October 1901. Lloyd George came. Herbert MacIlwaine became musical director of the Esperance Club following Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's wedding.

Miss Neal founded the Esperance Club and Social Guild for girls with Emmeline as President, a senior boys club under W.G.Pearce, a junior club under Lady Katherine Thynne (later Lady Cromer), and "Maison Esperance", a dressmaking establishment in Wigmore Street with wages of 15/- a week, nearly double current rates, and a 45 hour working week providing work all the year round, not just during the Season. The name with its associations of progress to a better state of affairs was suggested by the battlecry of Henry IV - "Now, Esperance! Percy! and set on!". It was not the custom in the trade to have holidays, but Neal bought in conjunction with a Jewish Girls Club a

house at Littlehampton and named it "The Green Lady Hostel" from a reference in the poems of Fiona Macleod. The Lawrences built a guest house for London children next to their own, "The Mascot", Holmwood, near Dorking, Surrey, calling it "The Sundial".

MacIlwaine found that the girls did not enjoy singing the available art music and having read the review of Folk Songs from Somerset and tried the songs out they wrote to Cecil Sharp to ask if there were any dances as well. He was only able to give Neal William Kimber's name and a vague address from six years earlier. Neal sought Kimber out and invited him and another to London. On his first visit he brought his cousin and on subsequent visits a different dancer each time. The Esperance Club gave a public performance at Christmas 1905 which Miss Margaret Dean Smith, onetime EFDSS Librarian and Britannia Book of the Year indexer, remembered attending.

Christabel Pankhurst (1880-1958) formed the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) on 10 October 1903. Her mother Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst called on Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence in February 1906 saying that Kier Hardie, whom Mrs Pankhurst was campaigning for at Merthyr Tydfil, had told her that in her she should find a practical and useful colleague who could develop in London the WSPU founded in Manchester. She went away disappointed, but when approached by Annie Kenney (1882-1960) - the militant mill-worker - and asked to be Treasurer, she and Mary Neal went to a meeting at Sylvia Pankhurst's lodgings in Park Walk. They there formed the London Committee.

Arrests

A campaign of active intervention in by-elections against government candidates was started and the first arrests occurred, including Annie Kenney on 19 June. The Pethick-Lawrence's flat at 4 Clement's Inn became the centre of operations for the next few years and Frederick, who was the editor of several Socialist Publications including the "Labour Record", became editor of "Votes for Women". Parliament reassembled on 23 October 1906 and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was arrested with the deputation to the House. She was sentenced to two months but nearly had a nervous breakdown and was released after two days so her husband took her away to Italy. Her husband took on her job and acted as adviser to women arrested.

Public opinion, which had at first been outraged, began to change and three distinguished women writers, Elizabeth Robins, Evelyn Sharp and Beatrice Harreden wrote articles defending the actions. A delegate conference in the September formed a national committee with Mrs Pankhurst as Chairman, Mrs Pethick-Lawrence as Treasurer, Mrs Tuke as Secretary, Christabel Pankhurst and Mary Neal and, to represent the outside world, Miss Elizabeth Robins, the novelist and playright who had made her name as an Ibsen actress.

Evelyn Sharp was Cecil Sharp's youngest sister and she knew well Max Beerbohm, Thomas Hardy and Lawrence Housman. She played hockey and went to the gym of the Chelsea Polytechnic. After the death of her father in November 1903 she became a full-time journalist for the Manchester Guardian. She was reporting the annual Conference of the National Union of Women Workers when the session on woman's suffrage fell on the day Mrs Pethick-Lawrence appeared in court on the charge of obstruction outside the House of Commons. She joined the WSPU and became assistant editor of "Votes for Women" in October 1907. She became the editor in 1912 after the Pankhursts ditched

the Pethick-Lawrences. Evelyn did not join in the militant activities at first because of a promise to her mother but eventually she got 14 days for breaking windows at the War Office in a militant demonstration in Parliament Square on 11 November and another 14 days for refusing to disperse from outside the Houses of Parliament in 1913. Unlike most others who had refused to pay taxes without representation she did not pay up at the start of the war and was made a bankrupt. She danced with the Karpeles sisters and the embryo EFDS and went with the EFDS team to the Basque Festival at Bayonne.

Mrs Mabel Tuke had lived in South Africa and met Mrs Pethick-Lawrence when returning to England after her husband's death in 1906. Some months later she wrote to Emmeline and spoke of her loneliness and asked to find something to fill her empty life. She came to stay with Emmeline. Anyone less like a militant could not be imagined. Charming and pathetic, she touched the hardest of male hearts. Tuke collected the Abingdon dances for Neal from the Hemmings family, which were published by Neal and she remained an active worker for the Esperance Club to the war.

MacIlwaine and Sharp collected the Bidford dances at Redditch in 1906. Because of the popularity of the morris they published a book of instruction in July 1907, with a dedication to the Esperance Club.

From October 1907 the suffragette campaign intensified. The first stone throwing was on 30 June 1908. When Mrs Pankhurst was released from prison in March 1908 there was a massed meeting at the Albert Hall. The government candidates were defeated at Peckham and North-West Manchester (Winston Churchill) due to suffragette action. Rallies were large: 250,000 at Hyde Park (26 June), 20,000 at Clapham Common (15 July), 30,000 at Nottingham Forest (18 July), 150,000 at Manchester (19 July) and 100,000 at Leeds (26 July). On 29 July 1908 Lloyd George was very effectively heckled at the International Peace Conference in Queens Hall. The colours purple, white and green were adopted to signify justice, purity and hope. But the WSPU were not the main suffrage movement. By the end of 1906 it had lost the working class women and by the end of 1907 the Independent Labour Party. Militancy in 1905 seemed an inspired idea but each act has to be more violent and it only attracts interest not support. On 2 July 1909 Miss Wallace Dunlop was sent to prison for a month and started the first hunger strike. She was released after four days. It soon became the general tactic. On 24 September the government instituted forcible feeding.

Lady Constance Lytton (1869-1923) was the second daughter of a Viceroy of India. Her godmother died in 1905 leaving some money which Constance decided should do something useful. By chance she heard of a piece of social work that "contained an element of spontaneous joy" which contrasted with the "oppressive jackets" of ordinary philanthropists. She made the acquaintance of Neal and attended the Esperance Club. She was asked to the annual holiday in 1908 at the Green Lady Hostel of friends and comrades of the Esperance Club as a special guest along with the Kenney sisters. It was several days before she discovered she was among suffragettes but one wet Sunday the Club begged Jessie Kenney to tell them of her experiences, having just been released from prison.

There was a sensational government defeat at Newcastle in September and a mass meeting was held in Trafalgar Square. On 31 October most of the committee was

arrested and Lytton no longer held back. She was imprisoned for stone throwing, but being a lady of title she was examined before being forcibly fed and found to have a weak heart and was released. Knowing she had received preferential treatment she disguised herself, cutting her hair short, and threw another stone under the name of Jane Warton through the window of the prison governor. She was forcibly fed after four days: with her weak heart she collapsed. A week or two after release she had a heart attack which left her with a paralysed right arm. She had been a fine pianist.

Cecil Sharp went to Winster in mid-1908 but did not start to collect the dances effectively till he got William Wells of Bampton to come over to Stow in August 1909. This started a two year intensive collecting period. MacIlwaine left Neal in 1908 because of the Votes for Women campaign, publically pleading ill health, but they remained friends and Mary Neal adopted his son Anthony when he died. MacIlwaine was replaced as musical director by Clive Carey.

Sharp last lectured with Esperance dancers in 1909. That year the Board of Education syllabus of physical exercises recognised morris dancing. Between 9 and 25 May 1909 the suffragettes organised a "Woman's Exhibition" at the Princes' Skating Rink, Knightsbridge. There were daily morris dancing displays by Neal's girls. Also in that year at the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, Cecil Sharp judged the folk dance and song competitions. Cecil Sharp was a theoretical Socialist of the Fabian sort and had sympathy with many progressive movements although cautious in public pronouncements and conscious of social position. He had been able to dedicate the first volume of Folk Songs from Somerset to the Princess of Wales, later Queen Mary, and had given musical instruction to the royal children in 1904-7. He did support political functions and when he had a men's side in 1911 he had them dance at a Fabian Society soiree - it was teetotal but served ice-cream!

Mary Neal ran a major dance event at the Kensington Town Hall the night before King Edward VII died and Sharp sent the first letter of complaint to the press, the Daily News of 29 April 1910, about Sam Bennett, the Ilmington Morris he ran, and the decadence of the Abingdon Morris, lack of standards and why it was acceptable for women to dance the morris. Mary Neal ran the vacation school at Stratford in 1910 but Sharp took it over in 1911. There had been classes at the Chelsea Polytechnic and Sharp contacted them which led to the founding of the EFDS in December 1911.

The Liberal's struggle with the Lords led to an election in 1910. A truce existed till November while a bill for suffrage was in Parliament. On 18 November 1910 a procession from a meeting at Caxton Hall to the House was met with great brutality by the police. It became known as "Black Friday". For five hours Parliament Square was the scene of battle; 117 were arrested, 50 were laid up with injuries received, 2 died later from heart attacks. All cases were dismissed to avoid the happenings being discussed in court. A memo was sent to the Home Office by the WSPU about the violence, the methods of torture, the acts of indecency and the after effects. The memo was widely reprinted.

When the government put the bill off yet again, the Committee decided on 1 March 1912 to end passive resistance and at 5.45 pm window smashing started at shops. Mrs Tuke and others went to Downing Street and broke windows there, getting two months imprisonment. On release there started a conspiracy trial. Mrs Tuke was acquitted,

others got nine months. In October the Pankhursts disbanded the Committee, drove out the Pethick-Lawrences and started a new policy of even greater destruction.

It is not surprising that Sharp with his ideals and hopes did not want to be associated in any way with the later lunacies but then few people were and certainly not Neal. Many people at the time, except for the hard core of the EFDS, considered that Sharp behaved rather shabbily towards Neal, her efforts and achievements in order to establish the artistic value of the folk tradition. It should be remembered that the "revival" was made possible because of what both of them did.

1980 (MM 3-3)

Morris at North Leigh

North Leigh is about 2 miles from Witney and called "Nor' Lye" by the locals.

Cecil Sharp met two old dancers, William Bartlett, aged 79 in 1910 (b.1832) and Fred Gardner, aged 80 in 1912 (b.1833) and living in Corn Street, Witney.

The morris ceased between 1860 and 1870. They were taught by Billy Brown (b.l819) who used to play pipe and tabor and came from Hanborough, the next village. They danced to the playing of John Lansbury, the Ramsden fiddler, who also played at Ducklington. The fool was Charles Green (b.1821) who had his face blacked. They wore white trousers and had ribbons on their high hats and bells. Fred remembered 20 morris teams meeting at Woodstock. First they danced before the Duke, then repaired to a booth in the town where they competed; Nor'lye of course winning. This was at a Lamb Ale which only took place once every seven years

William danced the ordinary and sidestep with a straight leg - "you must step out forward. Got to shiver your legs in the capers, Fetch out the sweat on you". William said of Fred, "He was as lissome as a cat, out and out dancer, like on wires." They called a galley a hook-leg, a back to back a gypsy and half gip, half hands.

William said Handkerchiefs only - not sticks - but Fred claimed they had a lot of stick dances and also used coconut halves. "You took a coconut, sawed it in half, scraped out the kernel, bored two holes in which you put a ribbon. That you passed your hand through like the strap of a concertina and then clapped them together or against those of other dancers. Mrs Kasey was a tune to which this was danced."

Partlett referred to Mrs Kasey, Princess Royal, Jockey to the Fair, Greensleeves, Constant Billy, Old Woman Tossed Up and Old Tayler, really Trunkles. Jigs were danced by two men who stood still between turns rather than walking round.

Fred said that the Old Woman was sometimes called "The Threadneedle" and indicated a movement with handkerchiefs something like the ribbon dance in which partners joined handkerchiefs together. This (was) performed by the morris men. They had a stick dance in which tapping in the 4th and 8th bar was done as in the Fieldtown dance Bobbing Joe (Bobby and Joan) over the head. Often they would stop before half rounds and whole hey and kipper out and standing in their places sung a verse of the song through and then finished off the dance.

Cecil Sharp noted of Partlett's Princess Royal that the steps were almost exactly as Mr Taylor's of Longborough. He gave the order as Foot Up, Sidestep, Half Capers, and Upright Capers to the "usual slow" time.

The North Leigh tune 'Boys of the Bunch' is given in Bacon for the Ascot dance. The Ascot Black Joke from the Williams manuscript is so close to the North Leigh tune as to make one wonder about the sources of the Williams tunes. The Ascot Mrs Casey is also close to the North Leigh Mrs Kasey. Sharp had a fragment of the 'Sweet Highland Mary' tune and a Princess Royal with a shortened A music.

It may be presumed that the dances started with a Foot up and continued with half-gip, back to back and then singing followed by half rounds and whole hey and caper up. Mike Heaney suggests the following words for Mrs Kasey,

"Your rhino rattle, Come men and cattle

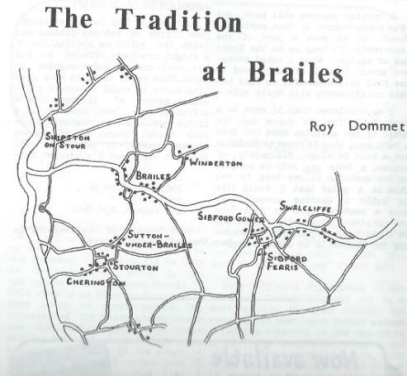
Come all to Mrs Kasey

Of trouble and money, My jewel my honey

I warrant I'll make you easy."

1980 (MM 3-3)

The Tradition at Brailes



Brailes is 2/3 miles east of Shipston on Stour on the road to Banbury in Warwickshire. Cecil Sharp met two old dancers, Edwin Clay who was not very helpful, and William Stanley, aged 81, b.1831. Stanley, like many of the Cotswold dancers, had been found for him, this time by Mrs Stanton of nearby Armscote. He believed he was the last surviving dancer and was in 1912 living in Shipston on Stour. He, unlike most dancers, had not started the morris till aged 40. He danced in the middle but only for 2 or 3 years till the morris broke up. Two or three dancers came from Sibford, the next village down the Banbury road. Earlier they used to dance against a Sibford side who were reputed good dancers. They did not go beyond the bounds of their parish to dance. The dancing had stopped about 1874. As soon as the weather and ground was fit in the spring they used to meet and practice in a meadow after work in the evenings.

Clay said that they wore gaiters and bells, rosettes and caps with red ribbons. Stanley said that they wore white shirts but anything they could wear, some of them were very ragged in dress. The leader wore a long skirted coat, the collar of a different colour to the rest and he wore a box hat, white if he could get it. He carried the spare bells on his hat. The music was a tin whistle till the last few years when they rose to the dignity of a flute. They never had a drum.

The man who carried the money box as called the King or Mester. They had a man dressed as a woman in a long petticoat with girt big sleeves and a slouch bonnet and ribbon on his shoulders. This character ran in and out among the others and also like the fool made jokes for the crowd. The fool wore a battered box hat and blacked his face. He wore trousers but no bells. He had 3 or 4 coloured ribbons on his shoulders. The fool had a piece of a calf's skin tied on with string over his shoulder with ragged hairs and legs hanging down in front The boys would come and catch hold of the legs and try to pull them off. When he was pestered by the boys he would pull the skin in front by pulling the string and thereby wallop the lads with the tail which he had hanging down his back. He had a stick with ribbons on one end and a bladder tied to a hole in the other with string to give about a foot's play. The fool was remembered for saying, "I don't say but what I'm not fond of you but I specially like you a lot better if you'll give me a copper or two". The fool ran in among the dancers when they were busy dancing, then the dancers would cuff him and knock him out of the ring. He had a stick and would pretend he was lame and would have to lay down and then would jump up after the boys.

They had both stick and handkerchief dances. The sticks were plain and about 2 feet long and a good inch in diameter. They had about half a dozen dances. One was a hand clapping dance to the tune The Jolly Waggoners. Clay mentioned Constant Billy and Shepherd's Hey and that some danced jigs. Stanley added Trunkles, Blue Eyed Stranger and that sometimes they danced over the Bacca pipes. Molly Oxford was danced as a jig.

The dancers always walked round first. As soon as they were prepared the foreman would say, "My men, I want you to enjoy yourself and I want these other folks to enjoy themselves." They had a running dance called 'Galley Out' with which they always began. They ran round the ring at a fast pace 2 or 3 times before they settled down to the dance. In Shepherd's Hey they clapped with their partners and then whole rounds. The dances lasted as long as they liked, but at the end they all closed in in small circle like the Headington 'All-in'. Stanley talked of 'Hey Away' and remembered the galley and sidestep when Sharp did them.

The Ilmington men said that it was a fight with the Brailes dancers on a speculative tour in 1867 following dancing at the Shipston on Stour flower show that led to Joe Johnson leaving the village and the morris stopping.

1980 (MM 3-4)

The tradition in the Forest of Dean (Mayhill, Cliffords Mesne, Ruardean)

Mayhill

The following notes were mostly gathered by Cecil Sharp about 1910. Thomas Phelps, aged 73, of Mayhill was an old morris dancer. He gave it up about 30 years before, dancing for the last time at Guim's Mill. They had always danced a full week at Whitsuntide, from Monday to Saturday and at the Club feast. One year they went to Gloucester, then down the other side of the Severn to Newnham, crossed and spent the night and so back to Nottswood where they held the wake.

They wore a tall hat decorated with ribbons, around the band, the top and diagonally. The shirts were covered with ribbons of all colours, both back and front. Over the shirt went two sashes crossing diagonally and hanging down the sides of the dancer. They wore Ruggles on each leg, like Bampton, a mass of ribbons fastened onto strips of leather and tied to the leg, with yellow ribbons but without any bells. The trousers were black. He always bought new ribbons each year.

The Mayhill side had six dancers. They did not use sticks or hand kerchiefs but did clap hands. They had several dances including Greensleeves, which was used for both a clapping dance and for dancing over crossed pipes. Mayhill always used a fiddle. Phelps remembered Williams playing. They had a fool and a ragman. The fool had a tail on the end of a stick about 3 or 4 feet long. The dancers marched from place to place in pairs, the first two carrying the flag and a pair of swords. The flag was about 3 or 4 feet square on a pole about 4 or 5 feet long.

The flag had the initials of the flagman "R"(ichard) "W"(illiams), Gonders Green embroidered on it and was striped red and white. The foreman of the Morris was always the flagman. The swordsman danced with the swords, Phelps said crossed on the ground but other informants said held in the bands as at Ruardean. Someone else described the flag as white, a yard square, with blue round the edge, "RW" in red and something white that they could not remember. "We didn't go for money, we went for sport".

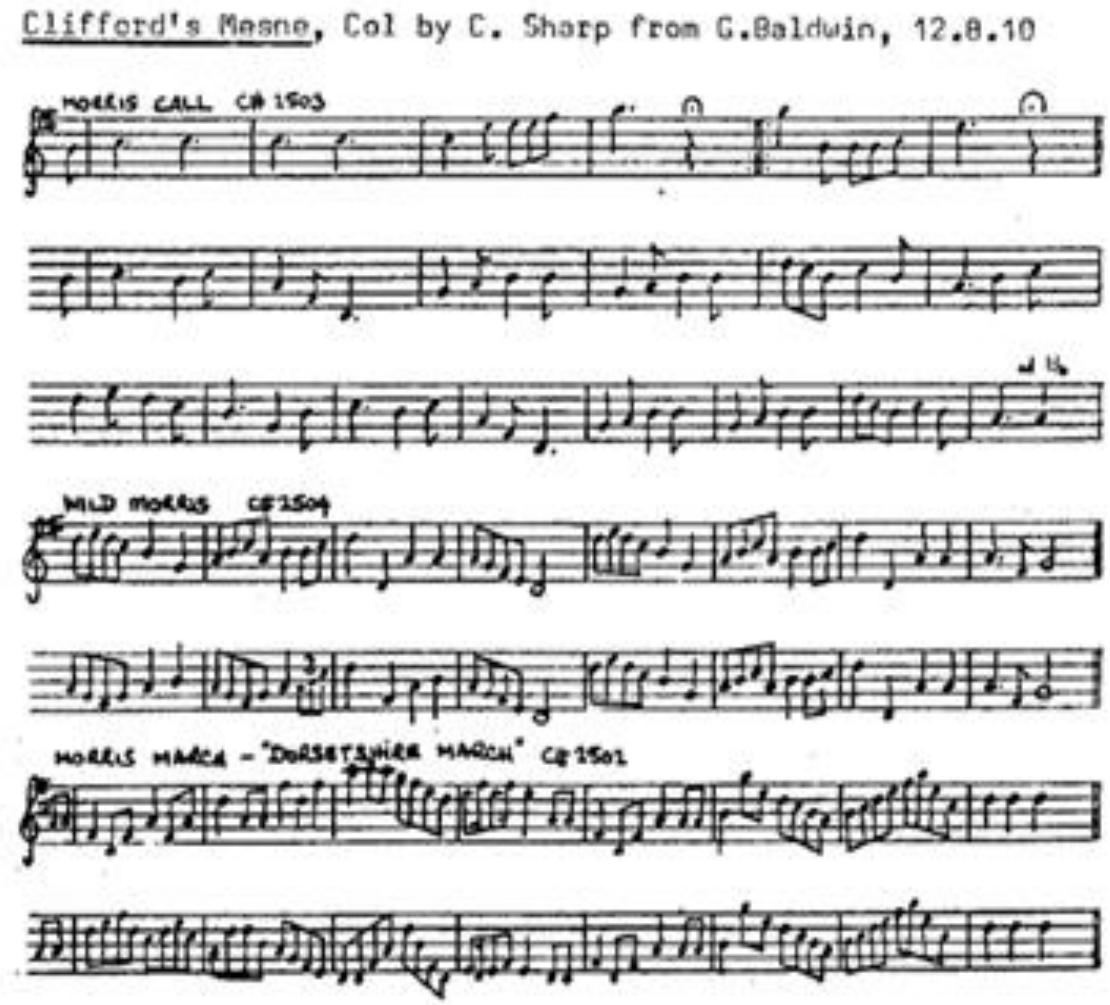
Cliffords Mesne

George Baldwin, aged 88, a charcoal burner then living in the Alms House. Newant used to be the fiddler. The fool or bladderman, Thomas Philpotts and John Alpin and other dancers were all dead, it being 40 years since it had lapsed.

As at Mayhill they processed from place to place in column two by two led by the flagman, top left, and the swordsman, top right. The flag was peculiar to the village and was waved in time to the music. The swordsman had two swords which he whistled round his head with the lilt of the music. He also danced the sword dance with the swords on the ground to the tune of Greensleeves.

Baldwin used to play at all the wakes. He gave Sharp three special tunes for the morris: The Morris March for the procession, The Wild Morris to play them off the green (they went off as they came on but dancing instead of marching) and The Morris Call to call

them together. Baldwin remembered going to the highest place in the village street at 6 am on the Monday morning and there solemnly playing the call to summon the Morris Men. The purpose of the little snatch of dance melody was "just to excite 'em" and "to entice 'em to dance".



Ruardean

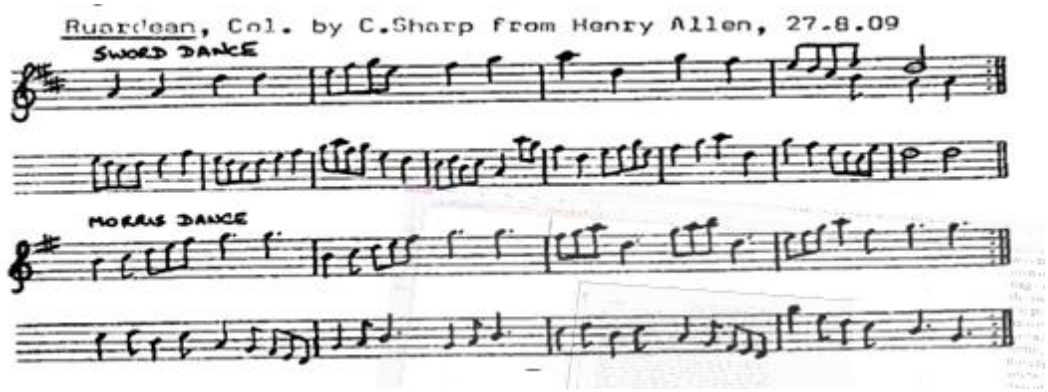
Mrs Anne Roberts, aged 85, said there were six dancers, a fool with the swords, a flagbearer and a fiddler. They danced a full week at Whitsuntide and at 3 other wakes in adjoining villages. She described a procession with flag and swordbearer as at Mayhill. It was a white cambric flag, about a yard square, trimmed with ribbons, with a large rosette in the centre and 4 smaller ones of different colours at each corner,

The dancers wore high box hats trimmed with ribbons, white shirts tied with black ribbons about 2" broad at wrist and elbow and 4" ribbons pleated all over the shirt back and front. They wore velveteen breeches and white stockings. They danced with handkerchiefs and not sticks. Mrs Roberts directed her daughter and grand-daughter, Mrs Watkins, in making a Forest of Dean short that was given to Cecil Sharp. It was similar to that made by her mother when she used to dress 3 morris dancers every year, the flagman G Harris and one of the Penns. She told her grand-daughter that there was a fight at Pump Hill in which one of the morris dancers got killed and that there was no

more morris dancing after that.

Henry Allen or Arthur, aged 90, of Stratford on Avon, said he played at Ruardean until 1871/2. The team had a fool or 'merriman', a flagbearer and a swordbearer. The flagman "cut" the flag. The swordsman held the swords in his hands and manipulated them as he danced. It was very difficult and complicated. He played a tune called the Morris Dance which was always the opening air 'to call 'em together'. This fiddler was the man from whom Sam Bennett of Ilmington got his very old fiddle.

Russell Wortley met Martin Penn at Ruardean, August 1946 and April 1947. Peter Ward at Joy's Green in August 1946 and John Penn. one time fool, in Newport, Monmouth in April 1847. They had a processional to the tune 'Speed the Plough' and three dances. These were Haste to the Wedding, Greensleeves and Soldier's Joy, a hand clapping dance of which the hand clapping was collected by Russell Wortley, They danced at Whitsun and went to such places as Ross-on-Wye and Mitcheldean, The side they belonged to only went out two or three seasons and last danced in 1884. Peter Ward remembered the swords being twisted in the air in front and above the head in the procession.



1981 (MM 4-2)

Information required- follow up to Chandler Biographical index

Roy Dommett has pointed out various omissions in Keith Chandler's Index. We reproduce his list here in the hope that readers may be able to help.

ASCOTT

There are photos in Tiddy Hall in the village. Local people or the OUMM (Oxford University Morris Men) may have more dancers' names, or they may, perhaps, have been reproduced in local papers at the time. We do not have any names of the girls or whether they did the morris.

BADBY

The Ring archive has a photo of an otherwise unknown dancer. What is the source of the photo and what else do we know about him? Butterworth got tunes from two other people at Badby - were they dancers?

BIDFORD

John Masterson may be able to give the names of local dancers in the 1955 to 1961 revival. We need more of the facts about the relationships and teaching of the 1904 side.

DUCKLINGT0N

We met the son of a dancer in the '60's called Jervis or Jarvis (not Jerden) who said they used to have occasional jig dancing sessions in the pub. Joe Buckingham had a Ducklington tune from a Wiggins (Biggs manuscript)

EYNSHAM

It is not certain who the dancers in the '30s were.

LEAFIELD

Who were the boys who danced before and after WW I, some of whom were met in 1962?

HEADINGTON QUARRY

Who was in Cox's and Kimber's side c. 1910?

Who taught the Headington men who went on to Oxford City before the Headington revival in 1948?

ILMINGTON

What are the names of the people who danced for Bennett after WW I? Sam's son Sam, for example.

KIRTLINGTON

What are the names of the revival side in the 1920's, one of whom was seen last year at Kirtlington?

It is believed that for posterity it is important to record the EFDS inspired classes in the traditional villages.

What about the mixed classes such as at Sherborne?

1981 (MM 4-3)

A brief history of Dover’s Games

Robert Dover was born in 1582, seventeen years after Shakespeare, the son of John Dover of Great Ellingham, Norfolk. He studied at London's Gray's Inn during 1604-5. He became the second husband of Sibella Sanford of Stow-on-the-Wold, the daughter of Dr Cole, Dean of Lincoln in 1610 and the widow of a Bristol merchant. They lived at first at Saintsbury, where Dover practiced as an attorney. In 1613 they were in Chipping Campden, and then at Childwickham, where he was Steward of the Manor of Wickhamford from 1632. He died in 1652 and was buried at Barton-on-the-Heath. He became a royalist captain in the Civil war. He had two sons. A grandson, Dr Thomas Dover rescued Alexander Selkirk in 1708 and invented *"Dover's Powders",* a sedative still in use.

Dover and his friends of the stage and the Inns of Court in so far as they had any aim beyond that of just enjoying themselves, sought to keep the imagined lingering spirit of rural mediaeval England alive by both reviving and modernising its country sports and pastimes which to them meant relating these activities to classical mythology and the Renaissance culture, whilst also linking them with the throne and the King's Protestant Church. The Olympick Games opened about 1612. The games were a conscious protest against the Puritanism of the age. Dover probably took over games which had been celebrated for some years as a joint Whitsun Ale and community jollification for the parishes of Weston-sub-Edge and Campden whose boundaries met along the ancient White Way near the Kiftsgate stone, the moot point for the Saxon Hundred.

By combining the current ideas of the Olympic festivals of ancient Greece with the Cotswold Whitsun Ales and enlarging and organising the games, Dover created a festival which was unique and which made Chipping Campden famous throughout the Shires and even at Court.

The policy of James I was confirmed in his *Book of Sports* of 1618 and reaffirmed in 1633 by Charles 1.

And as for our good people's recreation; our pleasure likewise is that after the end of Divine Service, Our Good People be not disturbed or letted or discouraged from any lawful recreation, such as Dancing, Archery, Leaping, Vaulting, or any other harmless recreations; nor from having May games, Whitsun Ales, and Morris dances; and the setting up of Maypoles and other sports therewith used, so as the same shall be had in due and convenient time, without impediment or neglect of Divine Service.

Among Dover's friends were Ben Johnson and Endymion Porter, born at Mickleton in 1587. Porter as a great patron of the Arts played an important part in forming Charles I's great collection of pictures. Through his position at Court in the service of the half brother of George Villiers, the King's favourite and later Duke of Buckingham, Porter was able to obtain not only James' leave for the Games with the help of Sir Baptist Hicks, but was given a hats, ruffs and other clothes cast off by the King, and in these Dover used to dress when he rode on the hill officiating at the games which were attended by the nobility and gentry from as far as sixty miles away. It is thought that Prince Rupert attended in 1636.

The Games were begun on the Thursday of Whit week and lasted three days. Dover usually opened them by riding up on his white horse to a portable castle built of boards that he had had erected on the hill, and firing off a salvo from the castle's mimic battery of small cannons. Prizes of value were given and yellow silken ribbons were distributed as "Dover's Favours". Wood said that five hundred of the gentry wore such favours the year after one celebration. At this time the whole of the top of Dover's Hill, then known as Kingcombe Plain was unenclosed land, a great flat open plateau of five hundred acres within the parish of Weston-sub-Edge. It was ideal for the steeple chasing that remained the major attraction. The games also consisted, according to adverts, of bull-baiting, card games and chess in the tents, cock-fighting, coursing the hare with greyhounds, basket handled cudgel, back-sword and single-stick bouts, dancing by women, football and handball, handling the pike, hunting the hare with hounds, leapfrog, leaping, music, pitching or throwing the bar or hammer, quintain, quoits, racing on foot and running in sacks, shin kicking, shovel-board. skittles, walking on hands and wrestling. The games continued till 1643, then they were stopped, probably at the instigation of Campden's puritan minister, William Bartholomew. The last open battle of the Civil War was fought up the slopes of Dover's Hill.

The Campden Games were revived again after the Restoration of 29 May 1660, and they continued with varying degrees of popularity and success until 1852, when, largely through the influence of Canon Bourne the rector of Weston-sub-Edge, they were finally stopped.

William Somerville, a highly cultured country gentleman published his poem, *Hobbinol, or the Rural Games* in 1740. Its main interest is the vivid description it gives of the atmosphere of Dover's Games. In 1772, the Rev. Richard Graves "the younger" of Mickleton, aged 57, published '*The Spiritual Quixote'* (reprinted by OUP in 1967) a satire on the Methodists of his day. Graves imagines his hero setting out to convert the world and going to Dover's Games. The account of the scene gives an idea of the taste and flavour of an 18th century country gathering, no better or no worse than any other.

Towards the end of the 18th century the games seem to have declined. Rudder, in *A New History of Gloucestershire,* of 1779, merely said '... there is still a meeting of young people upon Dover's Hill, about a mile from Chipping Campden, every Thursday in Whit week'. The Games were no doubt still pretty rough and disorderly, but they were part of 18th century way of life, and an important and essential part. There also were events such as the urban public executions at which large crowds of people of all classes gathered.

In Campden at the start of the 19th century the past was still present, symbolised by the slow revolving year and the annual event of Dover's Games, with their crowds, junketings and confusions. A poster exists from 1806 showing that they were chiefly conducted on the initiative of the Campden innkeepers.

The new world of piety, self-improvement and progress was yet to come! Hunting, coursing and shooting and the annual Dover's Games were the recreation of the gentry and some of the larger farmers, although the district around Chipping Campden seems to have lost the fashionable repute that it had in the 18th century for sport and social interactions. Of the meeting held in 1826, *The Mirror* (No. 199) wrote that it was 'still a

great holiday for all the lads and lasses within ten to fifteen miles of the place, and is attended by numbers of gentry and people of respectability in the neighbourhood'.

The same writer described the Cotswold Morris dancers as '... spruce lads sprigged up in their Sunday clothes, with ribbons round their hats and arms, and bells on their legs, and they were attended by a jester called Tom Fool, who carried a long stick with a bladder tied to it, with which he buffeted about to make room for the dancers, while one of the best looking of the men was selected to carry a large plum cake, a long sword run through the middle of it, the cake resting on the hilt. On the point of the sword is a large bunch of ribbons with streamers, and a large knife stuck in the cake, and when the young man sees a favourite lass he gives her a slice.'

The coming of the railway was an event which caused much local disturbance. The intrusion of large numbers of "navigators" brought a fresh element of disorder and lawlessness into the district. Shops, public houses and bookmakers benefited, but Dover's Games became more and more rowdy and were attended by larger and larger crowds. Grosart in the introduction to his edition of of the *Annalia Dubrensia* of 1877 said that during the five years (1846-52) that the Mickleton Tunnel was in progress, a body of navvies converted the gathering into a riotous and dangerous assembly. With the opening of the railway from Oxford to Wolverhampton and Birmingham in the spring of 1853, the Games became more the resort of the toughs and undesirables from as far away as the Black Country. From the beginning of the railways, excursions were run, even if there was still a long walk by today's standards at the end of it.

Vyvyan in his 1878 edition of the *Annalia Dubrensia* said that the Games became the trysting place of all the lowest scum of the population which lived in the districts lying between Birmingham and Oxford. Sometime before 1851, the Rev. G D Bourne, later a Canon, the wealthy and powerful Rector of Weston-sub-Edge from 1846 until 1901, whowas also a magistrate, saw over 30,000 at one of the gatherings and was much concerned at the drunkenness and the general license that prevailed. To stop it, an enclosure act of Parliament for the Weston-sub-Edge parish was obtained with the help of the Earl of Harrowby in 1853-4 for the parish. The hill was divided into fields leaving no space big enough for the crowds or the steeplechases and athletic events. The last official meeting was probably in the summer of 1852.

The Games had not only occupied Dover's Hill, in Campden there were cock fights, plays and balls and the final wake on the Saturday with booths, stalls and roundabouts in the street. By 1887 this side had expanded to be known as Scuttlebrook Wake, a festivity which continues today on the Saturday after the Spring Bank Holiday. A part of the Hill became the property of the National Trust in 1926. The old custom on the hill died hard, for much later in the 19th century there were still gatherings of young people for sports and games, either on what there was of open space or on Mile Drive, which was probably part of the old race course.

The advertisement for 1852 mentions dancing for ribbons but this was unlikely to have been a morris competition. However the morris was still present in the 1850's. There was a meeting at Stow beforehand for sides to compete for the right to dance on Dover's Hill at which the winning side would be able to sell the yellow Dover's favours. At one of the last celebrations the team from Guiting Power competed with four other sides,

Sherborne among them, as to who should have the right to stay on the hill for the day and won the contest. The manuscript history of Mr Horne of Chipping Camden written in 1898 said that the last year the meeting was held the morris dancers came from Longborough. The competition at Stow was so successful that it continued for years after its primary purpose had ceased.

1981 (MM 4-1): vastly expanded version later published in 2006 (MM 25-1 and 25-2)

Video

Re: Chris Brady's letter in MM 4-2

I have some limited experience of video and the morris and I would not be so enthusiastic yet.

l) The equipment is expensive; £880 to £1000 at least for colour camera with sound, recorder, player, display and a machine for copying. Hiring equipment might be cheaper.

2) It's a lot of hours of cine before video is cheaper overall - so it needs someone who has access to the equipment bought for some other reason.

3) Video is cheap per hour of tape. Tape is not the best archive material it needs recopying every few years but it is the best medium for teaching and learning.

4) The equipment is bulky compared with cine - the operator intrudes at any function - archiving is all very well, but the process of doing it can offend, and needs some control over what is happening.

5) Nowadays crowds are so large and stand so close that good filming is impossible - what standard of record is tolerable?

6) Video makes good copy of cine film and saves wear on the originals and this should be the main way of propagation.

7) Video standards are related to local television systems, for example the USA is incompatible with the UK and equipment to change from one standard to another is not cheap or easily available.

8) There would have to be an organisation like that for the Ring's music tapes to copy on demand and send. I am not convinced about hiring because the charge must be related to postage and usage - how often will a tape be wanted, especially of the less likely traditions and customs?

9) The problem with either medium is the effort needed to produce the raw material. It takes a number of people and a lot of commitment to go around and see teams and record them. So many groups have floundered before because of their inability to be so dedicated. If the load is spread over a lot of people we have a lot of amateur material. Who knows of professionals who would record a day of dance for £50, say?

l0) Have you tried to get dances, especially stylistic things, off of film etc? A visual record does not replace analysis, understanding and an ability to communicate it afterwards. Coaches would soon otherwise be unnecessary!

The correct argument is to reduce the morris etc to a standard recognised dance notation such as Laban. It is not much of an intellectual effort to learn, when compared to trying to do the same thing any other way, unless you think that all the things you do not know about dancing are not worth knowing about.

1981 (MM 4-3)

More New Morris - Stick Dances

(Beansetting, Bold Arethusa, The Bull, Country Gardens, Greencoats, Happy Man, Three Musketeers)

Good, invented dances are usually simple in concept. Such ideas are not so easy to come by, but occasionally a dance such as Balance the Straw (Fieldtown) occurs with nearly universal appeal. The old sides often got new dances via their musicians who would play for more than one team. The turnover of ideas is one significant part of the tradition. Here are some dances that have been seen which can be adapted into almost any traditional style.

Beansetting

Tune - Brackley Beansetting

Source - Dorset Knobs and Knockers, Stalbridge, Dorset.

Bars 1-2 Opposites cross over. Approach with three dibs and hit butts forward with opposite.

Bars 3-4 Pass right shoulders to opposite's place and turn to right to face front with 3 more dibs. Then No.1 hits No.3's stick on mid beat of bar 4.

Bars 5-6 3 hits 5, 5 hits 6, 6 hits 4, 4 hits 2 on successive main beats, hitter hits down with a big swing, receiver holds stick out to be hit.

Bars 7-8 Twirl stick through a figure 8 and hit opposite stick with tips as end of Beaux Badby chorus, feet still.

Repeat to place.

Bold Arethusa

Tune - Princess Royal

Source - Sheffield MM

Bar 1 Start to cross over with 1 double step, passing right shoulder and hitting tips left to right and then right to left on the main beats

Bar 2 Continue with a step and jump landing feet together in opposite's place facing out.

Ban 3-4 Galley right to face front, ending with step, feet together and hitting tips from right to left.

Bar 5 Standing still hit tips - partner left to right, person diagonally to right, right to left.

Bar 6 hit partner right to left and person diagonally to left from right to left.

Bars 7-8 Repeat bars 5 and 6

Bars 9-12 Half hey

Repeat to place.

The Bull

Tune - The Archers signature tune from the radio

Source - Great Western Morris

Bar 1 Middles face down and hold sticks horizontally overhead.

Tops hit middles' sticks with tips while bottoms clash sticks (tips) across the set.

Bar 2 Middles face up and bottoms hit them while tops hit across.

Bar 3 Bottoms face down and hold sticks horizontally over heads and middles hit them while tops hit across

Bar 4 Tops face up and middles hit them while bottoms hit across.

Bars 5-8 Half Hey

Repeat mirror image of above to place.

Country Gardens

Tune - Country Gardens

Source — Windsor Morris

Bar 1 Hit tips high from right to left, then low from left to right.

Bar 2 As bar 1

Bar 3 Both hold sticks as for Headington dances. Odds hit evens stick which is held still. Odds tip hit evens tip, odds butt hit evens tip, odds tip hit evens butt, odds butt hit evens butt.

Bar 4 Odds hold stick still and evens hit. Evens tip hit odds tip, evens butt hit odds butt and both clash tips together.

Repeat, or half hey and repeat all.

Greencoats

Tune - Brighton Camp or Rose Tree

Source - Abercorn Stave dancers, Hants.

Danced in units of 4. Hold sticks as Adderbury "doubles".

Bar 1 Beat 1 Nos 1 & 4 hit middle of 2 & 3's sticks with tips (respectively) across set.

Beat 3 Nos 2 & 3 ditto to 1 & 4

Bar 2 Beat 1 Nos 1 & 4 hit middle of 3 & 2's sticks respectively along sides of set

Beat 3 Nos3 & 2 do same to l & 4

Bar 3 Beat 1 Nos 1 & 4 change places, both turning to their left, so they pass back to back, and hit Nos 2 & 3 respectively as they pass.

Beat 3 Nos 2 & 3 who have not moved, hit Nos 4 & 1 respectively across the set.

Bar 4 Beat 1 Nos 2 & 3 change places across the diagonal, turning to their left, so as to pass back to back, and are hit by 4 & 1

Beat 3 Nos 2 & 3 hit Nos 4 & 1 along the sides of the set.

Repeat to place. Could elaborate and progress around an 8-set like Lichfield hey pattern.

Happy Man

Tune - Adderbury Happy Man

Source — Bath City Morris

Figures - danced through without hops and a heavy step on the first beat of each bar.

l r l / r l r / l r l / r l r / / l r l / r l r / l r l /r l r / /l r l / tog --/ /

Forward.... .Back…….. Forward….. Back……. on spot

Chorus - following Bacon's notation

o e e / o e e/ o e o /e x -/e o o/ e o o/ e o e/ x - - / /

Three Musketeers

Tune - Brighton Camp or Young Collins

Source - Wheatsheaf Morris Men

This has spread to the USA as well as around the UK and several sides now claim to have invented it.

Danced rather aggressively, like a sword fight.

Normal formation is 2 4 6

1 3 5

Bar 1 Leap into new formation and hit tips high right to left and low left to right, 2 with 4, 1 with 6 and 3 with 5.

4

2 6

1 5

3

Bar 2 Leap into another formation and hit tips high & low as bar 1

1 with 3, 2 with 5 and 4 with 6

1 2 4

3 5 6

Bars 3-4 Face across to usual opposite in normal formation and hit tips high right to left, low left to right, high right to left and high left to right.

Half Hey and repeat to place.

It helps to impress the public to shout a bit and stamp the leading foot at the clashes.

Thanks are given to each side from whom a dance has been ’borrowed’.

1981 (MM 4-4)

Morris in the South - response to May Day in Guildford

George Frampton 'May Day in Guildford' (MM 4-3) slightly mis-quotes Ruth Dugmore's 'Puttenham Under the Hogs Back' (published by Philimore 1972) perhaps because of the fanciful reconstruction as an illustration on page 83 and this could mislead readers more used to the team dancing of the Cotswold Morris. The source for the book was the papers of the Rev Charles Kerry, curate in Puttenham 1868-74, now in the Derby public library. The book says, 'at the end of the 18th century this was a favourite pastime and Puttenham was famous locally for the skills of its dancers. Furlanger, the carter, wore bells on his legs and ankles and was always loudly cheered as he danced down the street. On one occasion he and two of his friends took a load of carrots to London. At the house where they stayed the night there was a morris dancing competition and Cranham won the prize. Apparently Furlanger was the only dancer who wore the bells and when he died this picturesque custom was stopped.' It is important to note there is no mention of a side.

Daryl Dawson of Derby Crown has been going through the Kerry papers and there is a section 'Morris Dancers' in a collection entitled 'Fairies, Pharisees & Night Hags, Spells and Divination'. Pharisees are bad fairies. From Volume III, p121 & 123 "Puttenham like most other places had its morris dancers in former times but no-one of the present generation remember having seen the performers with bells as was the ancient practice, But Mr Hudson states that Thos. Furlanger, his father's carter, wore them in the dance – that he was the best dancer in the whole neighbourhood the bells on his legs & ankles keeping wonderful time with the music.

Master Strudwick was one of the most famous of the modern school although he danced without the bells. Cranham says that when he was young they went to London together with a cartload of carrots for the market having looked to their horse & made all things right for the night they came to a house where they had agreed to sleep. Here they found a cockney dancing to the strains of an old blond fiddler. After a while Cranham informed the company that there was a countryman present who although he had walked with him 35 miles that day he dare 'back' against the Londoner. The challenge was at once accepted & it was agreed that the fiddler (being blind) should be the judge (the parties of course not being made known to the musician). Accordingly Strudwick having taken off his shoes danced first, when he was succeeded by the townsman. When all was over the blind fiddler declared that the first man had beaten the second 'out and out' both in precision and delicacy of step. The countryman won the day – from Cranham 1869, then 79 years old."

The fuller version gives quite a different impression to the book. Where is being cheered down the street? Strudwick not Cranham won a challenge for a bet not a competition. According to the Broadwood Morris handouts, apparently quoting from the publications of the Sussex Archeological Society, most of the dancing Lucy Broadwood, the folk song collector, would have seen was of the social kind at harvest homes and the like. The only occasion she recalled a morris dancer was on May Day 1870 when 'I was lunching alone at Lyne when there appeared on the carriage drive at Lyne a man with blackened face. He had a white shirt and ribbon and fringes of paper on him. He danced in a circle,

leaping high in the curious 'caper' which seems traditional in many countries, one leg tossed in the air with a sharply bent knee. As he bounded in this circular fashion he blew on a cow's horn. Later, I realized that I had seen my one and only Sussex morris-caperer'. Miss Broadwood provided a drawing of this strange character.

It is tantalising. Dancing down a street, dancing without shoes, capering. It does not suggest what we would recognize as step-dancing. It reminds one of the most usual form of the morris in the 15th to 17th century which was described as highly exotic, acrobatic, savage and danced by a ring of men, each dancing alone for a prize from a lady. Perhaps the south did preserve the oldest form of the morris in England, The earliest illustrations show grotesque gestures and movements – perhaps references to morris in the South are being missed because attention is being given to solo performances which include bells, leaps and grotesque movements, or they are being confused with step dancing.

The more usual form of southern celebration is mentioned by William Marshall, the 18th century agricultural historian who wrote 'The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties' (1798). To quote from 'Historic Farnham' by Ashton Booth, 'another time was Hop Sunday, when the celebrations led to various' excesses' and the parade of hop pickers…. The finishing frolics exceed even those of Kent. The pole puller is given a shirt (ie linen cloth to make one) by the pickers. This he wears sashwise, ornamented with a ribbon. The women likewise decorate themselves with handkerchiefs, ribbons, finery and the companies then parade through the streets of Farnham - a fiddler at their head - singing and shouting in tones of true licentiousness. The evening is closed usually with dancing and always copious libations. Next morning those living at a distance are sent home in wagons, their various colours flying, forty or fifty in each with a fiddler in the midst and with altogether a sort of glee and merriment which in these decorous times (1791!) is rarely met with'.

Has anyone more of these local titbits to build up the picture?

1981 (MM 4-4)

The second Traditional Dance Conference, Alsager

Held at the Crewe and Alsager College of Higher education on Saturday 13 March 1982 and organized by Theresa Buckland [2]. She is, what is all too rare, a professional in dance involved with folk. This year's meeting again had a well-chosen mix of speakers and the presentations and discussion were lively and entertaining. It was a "Historical Context" conference as this area has been largely neglected in the literature.

Julian Pilling – 'What is Morris?'

Julian juggled with slide and viewfoil projectors, notes and lights to illustrate the evidence that exists in early dance notations and illustrations and their relevance to the question of what was the morris. In the field of notations, by 1600 there were invented dances that can be reconstructed today, three of which could be 'Moresca', the extravaganza of the Spanish court e.g. the Torch Dance. This, with alterations, is in Dolmetsch's 'Dances of Spain and Italy'. Other sources such as Arbeau's 'Orchesography' or Playford were not folk or courtly material but aimed at the bourgeois or the Inns of Court respectively. Apparent morris dances were not, e.g. Mr Isaac's morris, which was a couple dance. He could only find formalised dances either for entertainment or ceremony.

The illustrations suggested that 'themes' ran through, such as a lady in the centre of a ring of male dancers. He coined 'passionate morris' to cover such bisexual forms. He concluded that there is no real evidence for the early morris dance form, whatever is hypothesised about its early history.

The reviewer considers that it will not stop others trying to squeeze something out of the mass of literary material, and it would be helpful if someone with the modern depth of knowledge could re-examine the implications of the relationship between traditional steps and figures, particularly in the Cotswold Morris and early social dancing.

Roy Judge – 'Tradition and the Plaited Maypole Dance'

The handed-down wisdom is that it started with Ruskin's students at Whiteladies College in 1888. The college May celebrations had a wide influence on school teachers from the time they had a May queen in 1881 till they stopped the Maypole in the 1930's when it was considered neither old nor patriotic. From the 'School Guardian' the first written description was in 1883 and in 1884 Booth published instructions. Roy has gathered evidence that by 1840/50 the Maypole ribbon-plaiting was an accepted part of the repertoire of dance display teachers. Crimond Garden in London had such in 1858. He also drew evidence from Buxton well-dressings in the same period.

Roy found evidence of early 19th century 'Theatrical Morris' as a stagey re-creation of 'Merrie England' and showed a print illustrating a mixed set.

This valuable work for a thesis is showing that an activity can have a longer history than is often thought. It raises again the question of how long does something have to be

[2] Roy had qualified this by saying she was an ex-carnival morris dancer but in the next issue Theresa Buckland corrected this statement – she was never one.

done to be traditional. Perhaps the scorn poured by the revival of folk dancing on this form of dance had inhibited its development and restricted the published material. [Pat] Shaw's book has been in print a long time so it meets a need somewhere.

Keith Chandler –'Morris Dancing in the South Midlands – the socio-cultural background'

Keith examines the historical and cultural aspects of the Cotswold morris by building up a picture using public records, census returns, registers, newspapers and oral material to obtain a better perspective of the material already collected. It shows what can be done to give the period for which the side existed, the occupations and kin relationships and the insight that can be gathered from specialist sources such as estate and personal account books, He offered a family tree for six generations at Bampton and mentioned similar work by others going on at Abingdon, Eynsham and Headington Quarry. The economic advantage of family ties was discussed, as was the frequency of appearance and the place visited. He asked how strong was the dancers' sense of tradition amongst all these influences.

The dependence on public records had meant that much of this work could not have been done earlier e.g. the 100 year delay in access to census forma. This gap, designed to protect people living, of course is crippling when it should be used to obtain oral sources.

Keith has maps of the existence of morris by decade and a growing body of 18th century references which should encourage more searching.

Barry Callaghan - 'This is Morris Dancing – the Derbyshire Tradition'

This sound cine-film was a valuable historical record incorporating older material and limited comparison with the processional dance at Castleton and Tideswell without being a full record of the latter dances. It was emphasized that Sharp's material and the memories of dancers from other periods differ because the dances evolved. The problem of multiple variants is solved today by doing two variants of the reel and the morris-dance. 20th century developments such as the introduction of Cotswold-like morris bells and the Flamborough Sword dance are covered.

Theresa Buckland – 'Hoolo! Here we are again! The Godley Hill Morris Dancers: A study in Longevity'

Tess has already shown the role of these dancers in Knutsford Mayday's history. Here she addressed the problem of explaining the continuity of a folk custom, a facet few social historians have considered. She offered suggestions which may help to account in part if not completely for the team's fairly systematic annual appearance over a period of 50 years, The story is complex and changes over the years, such as of costume, reflect the changing scene. Comments from the floor were lively, covering detail of how they became 'Royal' and the why and wherefore of the switch to breeches.

The dance conference fulfils a need for a forum and should continue for many years without becoming just an outlet for academics. It is not that it deserves support, you are missing something by not being there!

1982 (MM 5-1)

Future Historians

The latest issue of Morris Matters (5-1) is a challenge! In reply to Mary Johnson: What does anyone know about what will interest a future historian? Most things can be covered by keeping a log for the club, names of officials, characters, annual programmes and a scrapbook of cuttings, photographs, costume details and ensuring they do not get lost.

The special thing that could be done is a 15-20 minute film/video of representative dances/traditions. The other information that would be desirable is more personal to the club. This would include contacts and links with other sides, where the foreman got influences and what should be thought of as philosophy of the club; this would cover speeds of music, height of stepping, training beginners, dancing out, dancing spots, construction of shows, characters, changes to dances or convention and such like.

1982 (MM 5-2)

The Morris Ale in the Early Nineteenth Century

The evidence is that the Ales were adopted to raise money for parochial and charitable purposes. Being successful, they continued long after the reason had ceased, mainly for profit or sport, degenerating into more rollicking and boisterous amusements. They had stopped by the second half of the 19th century. The loss must have been a factor in the decline of the Morris.

Facilities

The ideal site was central to a village with a barn and a green for a Bower and a Maypole. The Maypole was set up the day before and was a bare pole ornamented with ribbons and flowers and having a garland of flowers to cap the top. The colours used were often those of the local nobleman or leading family of the area. For country dancing there was a bower of boughs or a tent or an empty barn with benches set around the sides and decorated with evergreens which would be called 'the Bowery'. Here they assembled to dance and each fellow would treat his girl to a ribbon or favour. A large barn would be named "My Lord's Mansion" or "..Hall" and fitted out with seats to accommodate the company. "My Lord's Buttery" would have several barrels of specially brewed Ale. 'My Lady's Bower' was dressed with branches and flowers, and used for the sale of confectionary and newly baked cakes. A neighbouring oven was engaged for a daily supply.

Economics

The Ales were planned by the sons of wealthy farmers who took the risk of the expense if it ran at a loss. It would be announced by the Morris on its rounds and at the markets in local towns. Dancers visited the neighbouring gentry for contributions. The Maypole and the boughs for the Bower were commonly given. The sale of ale, cakes and confectionery commonly saved the promoters from a loss.

The Lord and Lady

Two persons were chosen as "Lord" and "Lady". A smart, handsome villager was selected as Lord. It is doubtful whether he gained financially from the money raised. The organisers, or the Lord's friends picked the "Lady", ideally a lively, pretty woman, daughter of some respectable farmer. She was paid, being allowed daily new shoes and perhaps 20 yards of ribbon and a guinea or so at the end.

They were dressed in character and bedecked with ribbons. With their attendants, they offered flowers or cakes for a fee. Both carried as badge of office a "Mace", made of a short stick stuck into the base of a small square of board, from the four corners of which hoops crossed diagonally. The whole would be covered with plaited silk ribbons and filled with spices and perfumes or a small cake, like a Banbury cake, called the "Whit-Cake". These were offered to people to smell or taste in return for a small payment. At Kirtlington the maces were decorated in the Dashwood colours of pink and blue, with rosettes at intervals, and silk streamers hanging down from the corners. The Lord might also shoulder a tin money box called the "Treasury".

The Procession

The Ale started with a procession round the village to the Lord's Hall, led by the Lord and Lady, on foot or carried on the wooden horse. Their attendants might include a steward, a sword-bearer, a purse-bearer and a mace-bearer to look after the badges or emblems of office. "My Lord's Footman" or "Waiting Man" would also carry a basket of cakes for sale. "My Lady's Maid" helped to sell the ribbons, but also carried a 'mischief mace' - the flowers were enwoven with pins as well as briars to tickle the noses of her admirers.

Besides a Train-bearer or Page, there was a Fool or Jester, called the "Squire", dressed in motley. His ribaldry and gesticulations were thought very funny by some. He had a stick about three feet long with a calf or ox tail at one end and an inflated bladder or narrow round sandbag sewed in tan leather at the other. The fool cleared a path or a dancing spot, and those on whom the bladder or bag had repeatedly fallen without effect, seldom wanted a second from the tail. He was expected to have a wise or foolish remark for every occasion, for he was judged by the laughter his nonsense produced. He would try to take a man's hat off by a mere flick of the tail, or bonnet another by bringing his hat down over his eyes by a blow from the bladder. He had full immunity in the general privilege of the clown for such tricks, rough as they were.

The procession was completed by the Morris with a 'pipe and taborer'. At Kirtlington they went around the spectators each carrying a "Crown-Cake" on the top of their hat - about nine inches across with rich current and plum dough outer crust and a minced meat and batter centre. Money was expected just for looking. A whole cake could be bought for half a crown. As it was to bring good luck, a piece was often kept throughout the following year.

The Curiosities

In the morning the procession waited by the Maypole for visitors. The Morris Dancers came in sets from far and near, often with a goodly number of their village. The procession led them to the Bower and then to the mansion to be shown the "Curiosities". The regulations and forfeits of the establishment were explained and the party invited to buy refreshments. The Lord and Lady then returned to the Maypole. The Curiosities were hung about one of the buildings. A live or stuffed owl or a portrait of one was placed in a cage and called 'My Lady's Parrot or Canary Bird', Other songless birds such as a rook, jackdaw or raven were called "My Lady's Nightingales". A portrait of a lion was called "My Lady's Lapdog", and one or two threshing flails hung over a beam were called "My Lady's Nutcrackers" or "My Lord's Organ".

Anyone using a name for these and other such objects other than that prescribed became liable to a fine, perhaps up to a shilling. Much good humour and mirth arose arose from the non-payment of forfeits. Refusers were forced to ride on the wooden horse, or 'My Lord's Charger, Palfrey or Gelding'. The Cotswold Hobby Horse was not a tourney horse or stick animal as in the rest of Britain, but similar in appearance to the gymnastic vaulting horse. The wooden machine stood about four feet high on four legs. It could be carried shoulder high around the green by one or two stout horizontal poles that stuck out in front and behind. It might be painted and have a dummy horse's head with bridle. There was a chair for the Lady, usually mounted sideways such that

she held the reins. The man sat balancing as best he could.

The Penalties

Every man who paid the fine was allowed a ride with the Lady and unlimited kisses, and, whether bashful or forward, the process always provided merriment. A fine was often willingly incurred as men and boys wished to boast of their ride and of their kissing the lady. Many females would follow suit for more frolic. She took the Lady's place and the Lord did the kissing.

If a man would not pay he was mounted alone by force, and rough-ridden. This was akin to the use of the horse as a punishment in the army in the 17th century. If he still refused to pay, his hat was taken in lieu. Many University men would come to Ales to ride the wooden horse for the fun of the thing and frequent fights took place between them and the Morris Dancers when they would not pay.

There were other indignities - for example being forced to jump over a muddy pond or stream that was far too wide; or her Ladyship's maids of Honour would bring out 'Her Ladyship's Cook', a fat ugly wench with nose and cheeks reddened with brick dust and carrying a toasting fork and dish clout. There would be a mock marriage in the course of which he would receive three pricks with the fork on each buttock and have his nose wiped with the greasy clout.

Comment:

With such boisterous and unsophisticated humour it is easy to see how it offended Victorian sensibilities. It is suggestive that the morris may have obtained its stock of characters from the Ales and not vice versa. People can be assumed to be more likely to dress up and fool around for the equivalent of a carnival than to be just attached to a specialist activity like the morris.

1982 (MM 5-2)

1990 v3.0 much longer version not published

Morris Ales (a reply to Mike Heaney)

In reply to Mike Heaney I plead the problem of condensation of 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 col V, no 25 Feb 1881

'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, p169-173, 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 d200 which contains much of the above and Mike's references. However if anyone is making a serious study they must start with 'Whitsun in the 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.

1982 (MM 5-4)

General Monk, his March and his Maypole in the Strand

We will never really know why morris men commemorated 'Monk's March', but it could be, with the '29th of May', one of the relics of the impact of the Restoration of Charles II on English society.

George Monck was born on 6 December 1608, joined Viscount Wimbledon's expedition to Cadiz in October 1625, became an ensign in 1628, an acting colonel in the Earl of Newport's infantry in 1638 and a full colonel in Ireland in 1642/3.

He refused, at first, to take to an oath to fight for the king and not Parliament and was sent to prison in Bristol. He met the King in Oxford and was told that he could raise a regiment from troops just coming back from Ireland. He arrived at Nantwich the day before the battle on 25 January 1644, which was lost and he was taken prisoner and held at Hull for six months, and then in the Tower of London. While in the Tower, in 1647 he met Anne, a sempstress who used to 'carry his linen'. Her father John Clarges was of Flemish extraction and a farrier in the Savoy in the Strand, and his forge was on the north side of the Strand, the right hand corner shop of Drury Lane. At the age of 13, Anne had married Thomas Radford, also a farrier who lived at the *Three Spanish Gipsies* in the New Exchange in the Strand and sold wash balls, powder and gloves, whilst she taught plain work to girls.

Viscount Lisle was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1647, and he asked for the release of Monck, who then took the Oath of Covenant. He returned to England in 1649. That year Anne Radford and her first husband fell out and parted, but what happened to him is unknown. No certificate has ever been found to record his burial.

Monck took part in the Dunbar campaign under Oliver Cromwell and was left to subdue the Scots in Dundee and Aberdeen in 1650-52. He was made a General l-at-Sea in the First Dutch War of 1652. He married Anne, then aged 31, in the Church of St George, Southwark on 23 January 1653, even though it was said that her first husband was living at that time.

Restoration

He first took part in the successful 'Three Days' sea battle against Tromp, starting at Portland 18 to 20 February 1653. In 1654 he was back in Scotland as the effective military governor. By August 1659 he had made up his mind to restore the King. He camped at Coldstream on 8 December 1659, and left on 2 January with four cavalry and six infantry regiments. They marched through Wooler, Northumberland (3rd), Morpeth (5th), Newcastle (6th), and then stayed in York for five days. Then through Newark, Market Harborough, Mansfield to Nottingham (21st) meeting Dr Clarges, Barnet (2nd February) and entered London on 3rd, having taken a month, seized power and restored the Rump Parliament.

Charles II reached London on his thirtieth birthday, 29 May 1660.

On 7 July 1660 Monck was created Duke of Albemarle, Earl of Torrugh, Baron Monck of Potherbridge, Beauchamp and Teyes, Master of the Horse, Gentleman of the

Bedchamber, Lord Lieutenant of Devonshire and Middlesex, Privy Councillor, Captain General of the Army, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Chief Keeper of St James' Park. Prince James, the future James II and then Duke of York, became Lord High Admiral.

To celebrate, Anne's father is said to have paid for a maypole to be raised in the Strand, nearly opposite his forge. The Strand maypole of 1661 was erected in the opening of Little Drury Lane, opposite Somerset House, and the lane was renamed Maypole Alley, Although it was possible that Clarges' maypole was replaced within nine months by one that lasted over 50 years, the fuss over THE maypole suggests that it was the same one. How Appropriate that Anne's father should pay and the Duke of York's sailors raise it.

Monck was left in charge of London during the plague of 1665. He and Prince Rupert were made Generals-at- Sea again in November 1665 and took part in the 'Four Days' sea battle off Kent, 1 to 4 June 1666, in the 2nd Dutch war and off 'Orfordness' on 25/26 July 1666. He was recalled to organise the City's recovery after the Great Fire, in September 1666, but had to fight the Dutch again when de Ruyter came up the Thames to within 20 miles of London in June 1667.

He died on New Year's Day 1670 and his wife on 29 January. He was given a state funeral on 30 April and they were both buried in the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey.

Hero

General Monck became a popular hero as did John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough and Horatio Lord Nelson in later times. The tunes that go with the dances associated with their names are known under other titles. The originals of these local allusions could be examined further. Princess Royal was called (Bold) Nelson's Praise at Blackwell (English Folk Songs by Cecil Sharp vol 2 no 38) and Ilmington. This tune was used by Shield for 'the Arethusa' song in 1796 having been published by Walsh c 1730. Old Marlborough was used at Fieldtown and Ascot-under-Wychwood but at Fieldtown it was actually the White Joke tune. The Duke of Marlborough at Abingdon is a relatively recent dance but the tune was called the Marmalade Polka by Jack Hyde. The 29th May was a title at Brackley and a dance at Headington but there the tune was a version of Balance the Straw, published by Rutherford., c 1770, whereas the Playford tune (7th Edition 1686) is that for All Things Bright and Beautiful, Hymns Ancient & Modern 442, called Royal Oak. The tune called after Monck is only so used at Sherborne, Monks March and Bledington, General Monks March. Elsewhere it is called Belle Isle's March, at Brackley, Longborough and Lower Swell and just Heel and Toe at Bidford. Quite dissimilar tunes called Monks March have been seen in printed collections. The morris tune is called Lady Petersham's March in '24 Country Dances with proper tunes and directions to each dance as they are performed at Court, Bath and all public entertainments for 1764' Why Belle Isle? Is it named for Cornwallis's retreat from Belle Isle on 17 June 1795 in the Bay of Biscay or was Belle Isle a name for England like Albion? How did T Lynch come to use it for 'My faith it is an Oaken staff'?

1982 (MM 5-3) A much longer version was written ca 1990

– references quoted

General Monck: M Ashely Cope 1977
The Book of Days: R Chambers 1869
Lives: Aubrey 1680

Sussex Four Handed Broom Dance

Collected from Scan Tester by members of Chanctonbury Ring MM and as explained Autumn 1974.

Formation : four dancers in a square, facing centre.

Implements : used walking sticks or brooms.

Tune : Oyster Girl.

Step : heel and toe step, using heel of forward foot, similar to Sherborne Monk's March step.
: alternatively used step dance steps and took twice as long for each movement.
Figures:

1. Dance with own stick, bottom of walking stick or broom head on ground in centre, so that ends close together. Hold other end in right hand. Step on spot for phrase.

2. With broom end still on floor, pass other end under left leg and then under right, going from inside to outside each time. With walking stick, keep handle in hand and pass stick under leg, parallel to ground but pointing in direction of leg, not at right angles as in Hampton Fool's Jig. Pass under on the hop.

3. Corners cross — first corners change places with 4 walking steps, passing right shoulders and turning right to face back. Second corners change with 4 walking steps. All step on spot for 4 bars (end of phrase). Heel and Toe or a Step Dance step.

Repeat to place.

4. Pass right shoulders on the side rather than corner across the diagonal. Either neighbours change and back or go round the square, like a right and left through, hut always passing right shoulders. Presumably stepping on spot in bars 5—8 as in figure 3.

Repeat sequence a few times.

Mike Cherry suggests that first time use heel and toe step, second time a step based on the shuffle and third time something personal and showy.

1982 (MM 5-3)

The Morris at Withington

A village west of North Leach in Gloucestershire where the Clevely Brook becomes the river Coln. Its history includes a long barrow, a great Roman villa, in fact its parish boundaries may preserve the boundaries of the Romano-British estate of about 400 acres, a minster or monastery founded in the 7th century by a king of the Hwicce[3] which became an abbey and started the sheep runs in the area and a house of the Bishop of Worcester. The Big House was Compton Casey, for 200 years the home of the Howe family who had the peerage of Chedworth. The Bellingers, dancers in Brize Norton in the 1850's, came from the Chedworth area.

Cecil Sharp met Thomas Denley (Danby or Danley?) in Sevenhampton on 30 August 1909 aged 72. He told Sharp that Curtis used to play pipe and tabor at Withington and so had Denley's father. The sexton at Notgrove, near Bourton on the Water, told (Keith) Chandler that his father used to put Curtis in an awful passion by saying "Ah Curtis you can't raise to the 8th note." David Danley had made Thomas' pipe and tabor. He played 4 morris and 2 country dance tunes for Sharp on a tin whistle — Greensleeves, Princess Royal, Lumps of Plum Pudding, The Rose Tree, The Triumph and Hunting the Squirrel. (Tunes 2327—31).

Later that day Sharp spoke to George Humphreys, also aged 32, who had danced as a boy and was later the parish clerk. He described the costume:

Stovepipe hats, with ribbons tied round and streaming about 3 or 4" down the back, which hats they pulled off to dance. Clean white linen shirts with ribbons twice round the arm. White breeches and white stockings. No sticks but handkerchiefs. Set of bells on each leg, tied with ribbons". He called this, "That's the contents of the dancers!"

The Squire or Tom Fool was dressed as comical as you could dress him. He had a stick about 2 feet long with a bladder on one end and a cow's tail on the other. He drove the children back with the bladder and the adults with the cow's tail. The Ragman or Rag Carrier had the money box and was also the sword bearer but he emphasised that the sword was only for show. The ragman was dressed in ordinary clothes.

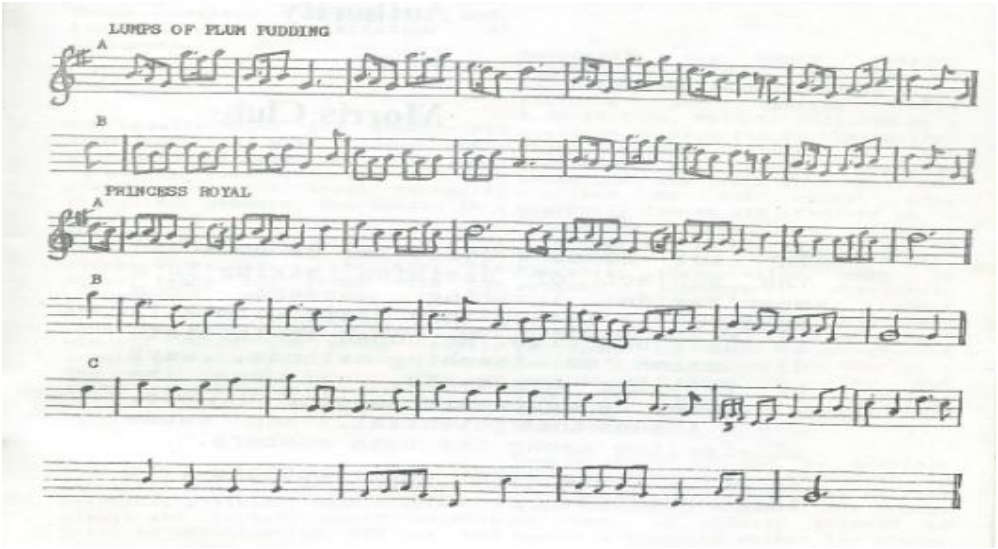
The Morris was danced at the Maypole in the village it was thought because of an "Old Charter in them times before mine." On May Day all the morris teams such as Chedworth and Shipton, it was thought that there was nearly one in every village, came and competed for prizes.

In recording Lumps of Plum Pudding Sharp noted that, all the C's in this morris jig were rather sharp and perhaps intended as C sharps. Danley was also playing some of the C's in Princess Royal as sharps. The Princess Royal tune looks a mixture of Princess Royal and Trunkles. Perhaps this is to be taken as meaning both dances were actually done at Withington. A more normal Princess Royal tune can be produced by using the bars 7—10 of the C music for bars 5—8 of the A and inserting the usual 2 bars between bars 6 and

[3] Tribal kingdom in Anglo-Saxon England

7 of the C music. Some years ago the Westminster Morris Men were using this Princess Royal tune for a morris jig but calling it from Sevenhampton. It suggests foot-ups to the A music and slow capers to the B music. What about that 10 bar C music? Use ordinary figures with an extra galley in bars 5—6?

1982 (MM 5-3)



The Morris at Noke

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 April 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 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.

It is not sure that Somerton and Shirley 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 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".

Old Tom Hall, the pipe and tabor player, lived in Noke for a while and then moved in the 1860's to Islip. Ball 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.

1982 (MM 5-4)

North West Morris workshop: Wigan

There is much emphasis in print on how dances were done rather than on dancing them now. Problems exist because the dance is not usually done in procession any more, nor with the full width of a road available, and numbers of dancers are often restricted to 8 rather than 16 or 24. Club style in hand implements, costume, footwear and stepping impose restrictions. Also written notations often need understanding, interpretation, shuffling and development of figures to be interesting or to contrast with other dances in a club's repertoire.

Source: A member of a boys' side in the last decade of the 19th century.

Step : Polka, free leg crossed over, danced 'on your toes', knees well up.

Hands : Short sticks held at bottom, shaken with twist of wrist on first 3 beats of bar.

Music : Jigs like Cock O' North.

Dance - On the move : All figures except Grand Chain (6) done on the move. Between figures walk forward with hands at sides.

- Stationary : Instead of Walk Forward one can use 'Outsides' to walk step, or drop it all together. The sequence to be described takes 5 - 7 minutes so a repeat of all the figures is not obligatory.

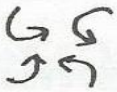
All figures have to be adjusted to some extent to be done on a fixed dancing spot. There are six figures. It is aesthetically satisfying to alternate simple and complex movements.

Simple moves adjusted to non-processional format:

Fig.1 Cross Over : Dance into line, right shoulder to right shoulder, taking 4 bars. Continue to opposite's place end turn right to face back, taking 4 more bars. Repeat to place, ending facing in. The movement should be timed to flow with no pauses.

Fig.3 : Turn Partner : Dance into line, right shoulder to right shoulder, taking 4 bars. Turn partner by right, crossing right sticks and having outside hand up as well, halfway round into line again to face out to own place, taking 4 bars. Dance out to place in 4 bars, turning to face up. Dance on spot facing up for 4 bars.

Fig.5 : Right Hand Star : Dancers take 4 bars to move into a star. They move in along the diagonal as if going to the opposite diagonal's place and do not make a ¼ turn to the left. The star makes a half turn in 4 bars so that the dancers now face out to original place, move out to place in 4 bars and dance on spot facing up for 4 bars.

In like this  Not like this 

There is no turn by the left in either fig.3 or fig.5.

Complex moves can be interpreted in various ways:

Fig.2 : Crossings : General rules — each move takes 4 bars, passing is done by the right shoulder, all turns are by the right as in 'Turn Partner'.

Original Pattern — top pair only cross over, face down file & turn next dancer half round to change places. Top pair only cross back all face up and polka on the spot. Top pair repeat with 3rd pair.

Top pair repeat with 4th pair while 2nd pair now start with 3rd.

This pattern continues while all return to original starting places, with new pairs coming in at top as soon as next pair is available.

The pattern looks

12 21 34 34 34 34 34 43 56 56
34 34 21 12 21 56 56 56 43 34
56 56 56 56 56 21 12 21 78 78
78 78 78 78 78 78 78 78 21 12 etc

Gorton Pattern — to shorten the figure the movement goes down the set and back but not the dancers. So the turns on the sides are complete turns taking 4 bars. The movement is also speeded up by using a skip step and doing the cross over in 2 bars and facing the next person to be turned for 2 bars.

The pattern is the top pair cross over, complete turn of second pair on side, then both let and 2nd pair cross over, 2nd pair turns 3rd pair and they both cross over, 3rd pair turns 4th pair and they cross over, etc.

Thus:

12 21 12 12 12 12 12 12
34 34 43 34 34 34 43 34
56 56 56 65 56 65 56 56
78 78 78 78 87 78 78 78

Combined Pattern — the original pattern is made more effective by adding in the idea from Gorton of <u>both</u> pairs crossing <u>after</u> the half turn so that at different times one, two

or four pairs are crossing.

The (combined) pattern now looks:

12 21 34 43 43 43 43 34 65 56 56 56 56 65
34 34 21 12 21 56 65 65 34 43 34 87 78 78
56 56 56 56 56 21 12 21 78 87 87 34 43 34
78 78 78 78 78 78 78 78 21 12 12 12 12 12

78 87 87 87 87 78 12 21 21 21 21 21 21 21
65 56 65 21 12 12 78 87 78 34 43 43 43 43
12 21 21 65 56 65 43 34 34 78 87 78 56 65
34 43 43 43 43 43 65 56 56 56 56 56 78 87

and partners are reversed.

Fig.4 : Reel : Start with bottom pair facing up and rest facing down. Bottoms work their way to the top up their own files doing a right hand turn with each dancer taking 4 bars for each. One way is for each 2 who are to turn, to face out or in with right sticks crossed at the start of each turn, make the turn in 3 bars and turn to face the other way in bar 4 ready for the turn with the next dancer. The original intent must have been for each pair to come in from the bottom as soon as the next pair is available, as in Fig.2.

Once the figure is under way, neutrals at the end can mark time facing in. Gorton introduce a different feel to this by making each turn skipped, going round 1½ times, only having 1 active pair at a time and making the turns alternately left and right.

Fig.6 : Grand Chain : The dancers move out to form a circle and then do a progressive grand chain starting at the top with numbers 1 and 2. Each turn takes 4 bars and is alternately right then left. It is possible to make it with only right hand turns as in Fig.4 making quick turns the other way in bar 4. In this case it helps to form a complete circle with all knuckles touching before each turn starts.
Alternately, Gorton make each passing a 1½ turns.

Clubs still have to fill in detail like which direction to face while waiting to come in or when filling up time at the end of a figure, and to find a satisfactory ending — perhaps all start the Grand Chain facing in to the centre and end it all facing out?

1983 (MM 6-1)

The Cotswold tradition (1)

Simplicity; Wheatley, Stanton Harcourt, Bidford

In the 19th century all the sides had a common repertoire of tunes and dance movements through sharing musicians, dancers and meeting at Ales and competitions, yet each achieved individuality. Today we choose to emphasis certain aspects of a tradition. What features should be brought out at workshops? What makes each tradition different?

Many dancers are initiated to the morris through 'simple' traditions which get them moving without much demand on them in terms of stepping. Such are seldom relearnt when the dancers become more experienced so they are often performed just as learnt. Of course they need as much skill to present as any other tradition especially as much must be made of what features the dances have. Comment will be made on 3 which ware either recent reconstructions or based on memories of revivals such that our knowledge of the tradition may be deficient. However they are satisfying to dance and traditional dances surviving into the 20th century were mainly simple.

Wheatley

Used the single step and a backstep. The hands went up and down, with the arm well bent at the elbow, from near the waist to above the head, with emphasis on the first strong beat of the bar. The lift that this gives the body is exaggerated in the half capers which are always off the same foot. Because the first move is 'lift' there is nothing in Once to yourself. The figures are only Foot-up, Whole rounds and Whole hey. Each is danced with 6 bars of hopstep and then the backstep and a jump, that is, no break half way. The hey can be repeated without pause and the Whole rounds continued by dancing anticlockwise back to place. The hey and rounds, especially in the repeats, can be danced with half capers instead of hopsteps. The order is not fixed other than starting with Foot up and ending with Whole rounds and All-in.

Some of the dances were described to Fryer in criticism of Wargrave doing Adderbury and Headington version. Room for the Cuckoo is the simplest dance and used for the boys and beginners. Shepherd's Hey is interesting because of the stepping inserted in the clapping chorus and the clapping instead of stepping at the ends of figures. The stick dances have simple bold movements, without half heys! The tunes are all a little different from the norm, the Processional is a nice Brighton Camp derivative and Trunkles may be a Hunt the Squirrel. For a team just over the hill from (Headington) Quarry who used to go around in the same gang the dances are surprisingly different.

Stanton Harcourt

The reconstruction is based on a verbose description of Nutting Girl and over-brief descriptions in another source of choruses only. Repetitions, similar moves by the opposite or mirror moves do not get mentioned. For example the handclapping in Princess Royal is given as

r + l r+ l r + l

r + r b

l + r l + r l + r

it probably means

r + l }

l + r } x3; r + r x3; l + l x3; b x3

Following Williams' mss there is no jump half way through Dance-facing, cross-over is done right shoulders but left coming back, the Forward-and-back is facing opposite not to side as in half gip. The middles go up towards the music every time in heys and the rounds at the end open out before the caper in. The backstep in all figures is done facing opposite including the half hey, so that the hands are out at side and almost touching in a line along the side of the set. No stick clashing on jumps in figures.

Greensleeves and Nutting Girl are 'goey' dances, the former is not a usual tune for a set dance. Attention should be given to standing upright in hitting one's opposite. The stepping in Nutting Girl is done facing up every time, it is very vigorous with larger arm movements than normal and the step is like Eynsham with possibly a pronounced slap down of the forward foot in the 'sidestep'. In the Nightingale there is a choice of to turn or not to turn when receiving The song tune 'Nightingale Sings' fits the dance, with the odds hitting the evens 3 times, the odds holding stick horizontal, the odds capering and hitting on the middle beat of the bar, then half hey and in the repeat the evens hitting the odds. A suitable tune for the Clock is 'Grandfather's Clock' but, as said before, the clapping intended is uncertain. Beanplanting tune is something like Badby. Brighton Camp is a pièce de résistance but it must be learnt from different positions. It is recommended that the dancers keep turning to their right between clashes. Invented dances are Jockey – 4 bar sidestep like Nutting Girl, a whole hey and 4 plain capers and Constant Billy with sticks – like bars 3 -4 of Brighton Camp done twice.

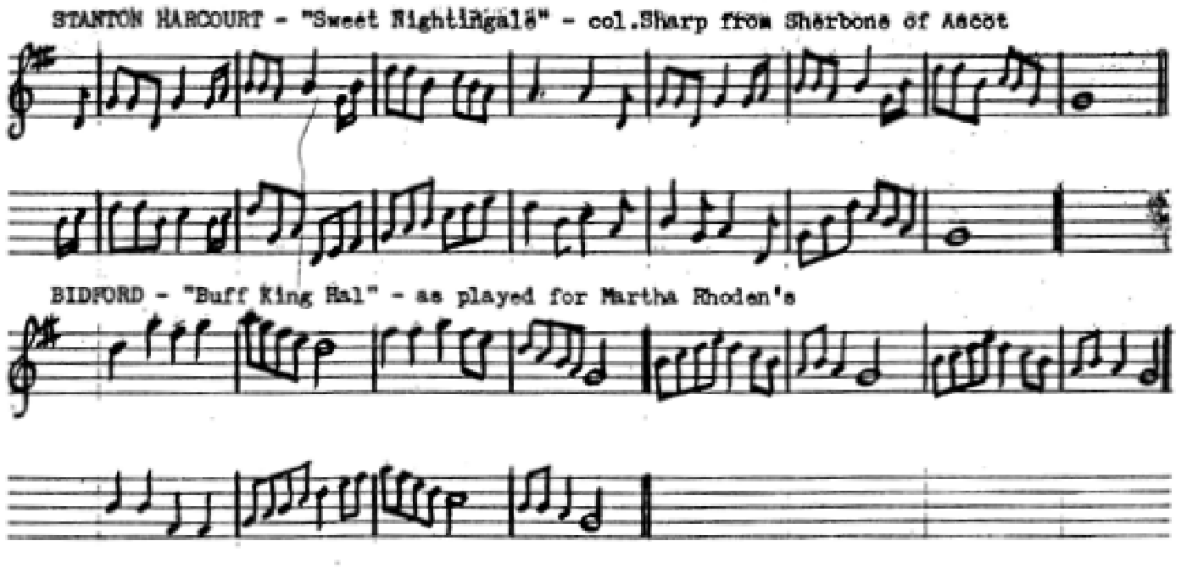
Bidford

Sources are Ferris mss, Graham book, Sharp mss, Stone's photos, local memories, boys' side of late 1930's. Apart from Graham describing everything from a spectator's point of view, no source is complete in itself. The locals have insisted on a vigorous single step. It starts with the classical kick forward but the foot is pulled back by lifting up to produce 'backpedalling' – perhaps an influence of the boots once used. There is no backstep, but the jumps are high and the sidestep has the feet in line with no body turn. Unlike other traditions, there was flexibility in the figure order, the choice of figures and the performance of the choruses. Informants said that the 'Handkerchief 'dance using the sidestep was done to many tunes and the 'Stick' dance movements could be chosen by the foreman at the time. The opening figure could be Foot-up, both long and short, Dance-facing or Rounds and the final figure 'Spiral', Foot-up, perhaps fast, Whole of Half-rounds. The intermediate figures could be done ad lib, even the same one over and over again. Besides the Spiral, which is a morris off that doesn't, the interesting figure is the In-and-out hey in which the middles move forward and back to avoid the ends doing a normal hey. Locals have insisted that the chorus movements (4 bars) follow the halves

of every figure and not just half heys as elsewhere.

Devil among the Tailors and Heel and Toe (Monks March) tunes have been obtained but not the dances. Some of the dances are unusual. Princess Royal is a jig adapted for a corner dance and includes the only 'slows'. We Won't Go Home Till Morning is a simple dance like How Do You Do (Headington) but it switched to the chorus of the Cuckoo's Nest at the end for handshaking instead of having a reconciliation corner movement. Bluff King Hal – a major version of the Staines Morris tune – is very unusual for a Cotswold dance, having a logical structure going from column to line of 6, to ring of 6, rings of 3, back to line of 6 and then column. It would not have been out of place at [Chipping] Campden but for the holding hands in the rings and bows. Fitting the dance to the tune and trying aesthetically to improve the nods etc have exercised many.

1983 (MM 5-1)



Wishford Garland Dance

Filmed at Folk Camp, 29th May '81.

Set : 8

Garland: Oak bough long enough to form arch.

Step : Cross over polka and skip change.

Once to yourself all face in in circle, curtsey and dip garland to centre, turn to right and repeat facing out, turn to right again to face in.

1 (8 bar) Form set (circle or column, face in or up) and polka on spot (sway garlands).

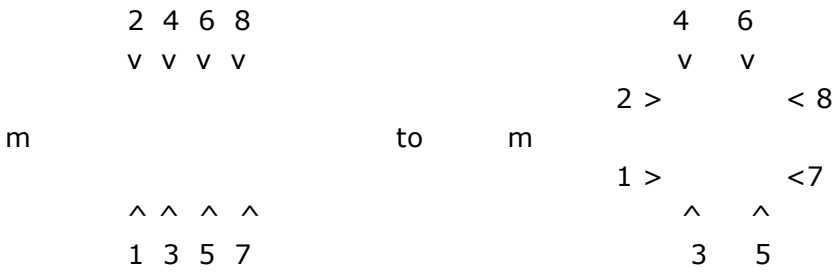
2 (16 bar) Progressive Grand Chain from the top. Top pair cross first, touching right hands, then bring in the other dancers progressively, passing alternate hands, 1 bar per pass. Others may sway garland while waiting to join in. End in column stepping on spot, facing in, till end of phrase. Last pair should be in place in bar 13.

3 (16 bar) Top and bottom 4s right and left hand star, knuckles touch in centre, 8 bars each way, going round 1½ —1¾ turns, turning in at half way.

4 (16 bar) Centre 4 right and left star while top and bottom pairs turn partners, knuckles touch in centre, 8 bars each way, going round nearly 2 times each way. End facing up.

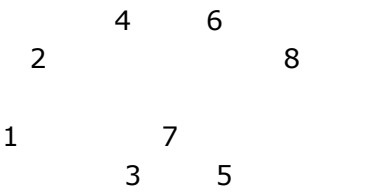
5 (16 bar)"Outsides" — a single cast from top, top pair form arch with garlands at bottom at start of bar 5 while the rest come through and form set in reverse order. As each pair reaches place they form arches as well. Go under garland to garland. The 4th pair come up under, but do not form arch, and flow straight into a repeat from the top to get the pairs back into original order.

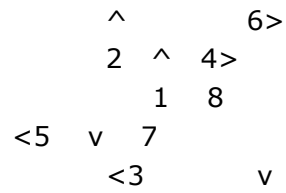
End with all forming arches and then turn and move into a circle. (see diagram).



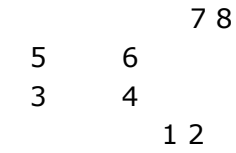
6 (16 bar) The left hand one of each new pair, nos 2, 6, 7 and 3, go forward to the centre (1 bar) swooping the garland down and up into the middle, turn a to the right and retire to the next place on the left, clockwise, holding the garland vertical (1 bar). Then the right hand ones, nos. 1, 5, 8 and 4, move similarly one place to right,

anticlockwise. Each set of 4 repeats this move 3 more times, 4 in all, to end approximately in starting place. However the right hand ones on their last move stop in the centre and turn round clockwise and the left hand ones also face clockwise as diagram below.





7 (16 bar) Double Star — clockwise with partner, touching knuckles, 8 bars, turn in as a pair, and come back to place. End facing in in a circle then turn to face down and move into a column.
8 (8 bar) The Rose — all face down and step on spot until it is time to move.
1st pair — bars 1-2 - dance down centre and kneel at bottom, shoulder to shoulder, with garland in front low near ground.
2nd pair - bars 3-4 - dance down and stop just behind and to side of top pair, stoop down a little and hold garland out horizontally to side at chest level.
3rd pair — bars 5-6 - move down and stand behind 2nd pair, holding garlands at head level at 60° to horizontal.
4th pair — bars 7-8 — move down and stand immediately behind everyone, shoulder to shoulder, and raise garlands up at arms length.



1983 (MM 6-1)

Characters and the Morris

The role and value of the characters associated with the Cotswold morris is often not understood. Part of the confusion lies in the lack of a clear separation of the various tasks that they fulfil. In the best traditions of entertainment these tasks can be combined, but any one character can only carry one role at a time, although they can switch from one to another during a performance. The first point to make is that such characters are an integral part of the show and not part of the dancing.

There are four roles that need to be filled in a show, besides those of leading the dance.

A. Communication with the Audience

The Master of Ceremonies, Ring Master, or Announcer is the Producer or Director and is seen to be in charge, even if only a front man. They tell everyone what it is and what is is happening. The activity is sited in the dancers' territory and is outward towards the audience.

The task can be done by someone who is specially dressed for the part and not otherwise part of the dancing. For example wearing evening dress or appearing as a town crier and thereby meeting another role mentioned later. Control of a show really requires observation of the crowd and its reactions during the dancing and not just in between dances, so that judgements can be made on when to stop the show, whether to speed it up or to change the programme. The character must be responsive, not scripted. In many ways it is an equivalent to a stand-up comic in speaking to the audience at large, and dealing with overall impressions rather than individuals in the crowd.

There are two subsidiary tasks.

B. Someone Accessible by the Audience

There is a task to answer questions, to chat on a one-on-one basis and to keep the inquisitive and troublesome out of the way of the show and team organisers. It is best performed by someone identifiably not a dancer. It continues all the time from first arrival at a dance spot until final departure. This activity is sited in the audience and is projected outward towards the audience.

It can be combined with distributing lucky morris cake or handouts and with the collecting of money unobtrusively. Traditionally this is a steady task that does not draw attention to itself. In passing out the cake, the bearer has a cake tin and a small knife and doles out very small pieces, and these are given not sold.

The tradition combined or eliminated tasks to minimise the number participating in the final share outs. This is no longer a consideration. It is difficult to combine this task with ragman.

C. Someone to Look at - a "beautiful" as the Basques put it.

The role is to be noticed and be admired. It is an inactive role with no major part in the

dancing unless specially choreographed. Traditional roles are King, Queen, Lord, Lady, Witch, Soldier, Tourney, Hobby Horse and other animals. They are usually too cumbersome, heavy, ornate, inexperienced or old, to be allowed in the dance area during the dances. The activity is walking or sitting between the dance area and the audience and is projected outward towards the audience.

The character is basically serious not clowning. They may be approachable and therefore able to meet role B but this would be uneasy for the character if the dress is grand. It is a role for the inexperienced and is often what the novice morris fool is reduced to.

D The Clown

This can be the key role, and traditionally and often the only one manned. The character represents the audience in dealing with the dancers. Its territory is everywhere, but from the audience inward towards the dancing. It is a continuous activity which includes recognising when not to be visible. When the clown is asked to be announcer, jig dancer or money collector, the role changes and so must the behaviour. Mixing in these other tasks dilutes the impact of the clown at their true activity.

The costume can be almost anything from the old fashioned country smock which could make him 'beautiful', or imply a country 'bumpkin', mock dress such as academic with student cap and gown, mock mediaeval, fantastic or idiotic or circus like. The circus has established many types of clown and clown behaviour which are now part of our cultural heritage and experience and which are now quite acceptable to any audience.

The fool is not part of the dance troupe and unease should exist in the dancers when he is around. Remember that the clown does not represent the dancers in dealing with the crowd. Although as part of the show they can have many subsidiary roles such as covering, i.e. stepping in for accidents, collecting money in difficult conditions, e.g. off buses etc, distracting if something goes awry.

The clown can not actually be foolish or thoughtless or reckless. If the clown is active, it is unfair for the dancers to call on the clown for activity between their set dances to give them a rest without prior arrangement.

The technique of a good clown is not to seek to amuse generally, ie as a stand-up comic but to be as a traditional circus clown and work on the audience one by one during a show so that all feel a personal contact.

There is an invisible role, that of the "ragman" who looks after the baggage and the inactives during a dance. Someone has to decide where to put things down, either near the music for safety or elsewhere. They should also control where the spare dancers stand, which should not be in the sight lines of the audience.

The stick hobby animal that gyrates or eats money etc is a variety of clown bound by the same rules.

1983 (MM 6-2)

The Cotswold Morris

It is impossible to trace the Cotswold dance tradition back to the 17th century although it is realistic to suppose an origin in the revival of Merrie England associated with the Restoration in 1660 in the districts covered by the Royal Palace at Woodstock and the major royalist estates north of Oxford. A growing number of references are being found for the 18th century over the area we already associate with the Cotswold morris although not in the places with which we have grown familiar.

In the 19th century the morris was maintained to some extent by the annual round of Ales, Games, Club Days, Village Feasts and parish customs which could have their origins back in the Middle Ages. At any one time the number of active sides was small – perhaps as few as 16 – certainly it was never the case of every village simultaneously as suggested by the Needham and Helm maps. Each team had a modest territory. They did not have long lifetimes if measured in terms of continuity of leadership and outside of the towns the centre of the team, that is the leader's residence; could move round and some of these family trees have been traced by Mike Heaney. It is to be noted that many of the teams were from what were at one time considered towns, Abingdon, Bampton, Brackley, Chipping Campden, with regular weekly or annual markets, The history of small ephemeral groups concerned with activities not essential to the main stream of living is too diverse to draw generalisations, However even the best established accounts are just a series of anecdotes and we are only just beginning to understand the morris in its social context, The implications of kinship, marriage or working relationships to gain membership of an essentially closed group for whom the economic aspects were as important as the artistic or recreational. Not that country men were allowed recreation. Such topics have been opened up by Keith Chandler now that relevant public records have become available.

Teams were usually drawn from the extended family group or from a corpus of good dancers within a wide area, rather as today, except then men would walk up to 10 miles for a practice. Practice season had to fit in with farm or trade work which tended to make it the short period between Easter and Whitson. Once the harvest started with hay making in June the opportunities to dance would be few till Harvest Home. Foremen could easily impose their own ideas on the dance. By the time we have much insight into who did the morris there were only a limited number of musicians who played for the morris. Hence the variation in detail but not in the music.

There are many reasons why the morris should start to die in the mid 1800's; loss of the social events that sustained the good times for the dancers; the growth of counter-attractions for young men that were often better approved of by their employers; and the general change in the attitudes and character of the countryside following the Agricultural riots of the 1840's, bad harvests and emigration in the 1870's. If there was a heyday it must have been 1780 – 1800, before the well documented period of course, but after the major upheavals of the village enclosures when the opportunity for 'good luck' visiting for largesse was at a maximum and social stratification not so important.

The development of the morris in the period 1860-1910 and since is an indication of the rate at which the tradition can diverge, suggesting a period in the not too distant past

when all the morris was much more similar. The urge for change is either forgetfulness which comes with revivals or new introductions or the nearness of rivals which reflects on the density of teams and perhaps it is true that left alone a team settles down and does not evolve.

The Cotswold style had its roots in the Renaissance making it the oldest dance around. At its best it allows a great deal of self expression as well as teamwork. Its effect on the audience depends on the jumps and capers and the subtleties imposed on the music and rhythms of body movement. The quality and interest inherent in the dance affords the tradition the ability to form a show with a minimum number of dancers and characters and a minimum of special costume, so that it can be almost the purest expression of dance of any English custom. It has the strength to support endless interpretation, to be enjoyed with good or bad dancing, and used in circumstances and situations far removed from the tradition in the Cotswolds, even adjusting to foreign culture the world over.

Though Sharp and his workers about a dozen 'traditions' became known giving nearly 100 dances. For many years the pattern set by the grade and certificates of the EFDSS ensured that a common standard and a common repertoire was had by all. So much has changed. Now there are over two dozen traditions available, all rather stylised, each with several interpretations and many with added dances to enhance the repertoire. Over 350 dances have been made available and probably something like that number composed or translated from one tradition to another.

Trends can be discerned in the performance of the morris over the years, the quest for excellence in the dance is not that common and basics are often poorly addressed. Little attention is paid to repertoire, show construction or the role of characters in performance.

The Cotswold morris allows a team to have a set of dances with common elements, rather than a series of different dances, as faces most other dance groups. This allows a theme to run through and encourages a club style. Diversification into several traditions always seems to degrade standards of lead to mechanical dancing. The form of dance adopted by a dance group should meet their characteristics and needs for expression and even if Cotswold morris is for you, care has to be taken as to which traditions within that tradition.

The Cotswold morris has four types of dance – either all moving at once or not, subdivided into using sticks or handkerchiefs, and into having special jumps or not. The tendency to use stick dances frequently is not the old tradition, where stick dances were not common. Much is lost if it is forgotten that the handkerchiefs have to dance.

1983 (MM 6-3)

Keynsham Christmas Dances

Keynsham Christmas Dance (1)

(4 reel around twice — 2 dance by themselves) 2 1 1 2

Two 'ones' walk past each other on the right (first tune) tapping swords from right to left and second man 's sword from left to right, passing behind twos , always turning towards stationary man. Position 1 2 2 1

Then twos go through the same figure, changing position back to 1 2 2 1

(Second tune) Then ones dance through same figure, clashing swords as before as they reel. Position 1 2 2 1 then twos repeat dance bringing position back to 2 1 1 2

Then twos face about and dance and so the dance ends with two couples facing each other.

Keynsham Christmas Dance (2)

(Collected from William Neal, Keynsham.)

Dance — reeling in fours.

Men lined up in groups of twos, one behind the other.

Two first men advance, clash swords, pass each other on the right, clash swords backhandedly with other men as they pass. At the back, turn left, line is reversed, and the two last men, becoming first, go forward as before. Do this step twice. Then inside men turn round and face men behind, other two standing waiting. The four advance and tap swords, (reeling), then pass on and tap back handedly with others as before. (Only 4 dancing).

The above was passed on to us by Roy Dommett. It appears in the Keynsham mummers play. See what you can make of it!

1984 (MM 7-1)

Morris Dancing at Ducklington - by Keith Chandler

This booklet of 44 pages is an impressive demonstration of what can be done with available records today if the researcher has something to start from, such as Carter's information gathered for Manning and Sharp's interviews. Much that seems vague in the sources can be pinned down, such as realistic estimates of dancing dates, although these seem to end with a feeling that the morris went on both before and after the periods for which there is real evidence. Careful reading of the main text and footnotes will show almost all the available source material has been quoted. It does not mention the fool of whom Sharp (Field Notes) noted "Fool spit on his hands and run up 'here we come again ma'am. Want a drop of your nice beer ma'am'. Carey noted that the fool carried a cow's tail and would sometimes put it on the ground and dance over it. The fool sometimes wore a women's dress. Sharp noted a number of comments whose content or form appealed to him, perhaps to be quoted in his later lectures.

"Girls have got the things for their use and Men have things for <u>their</u> use."
"Duckleton never afraid, they knew they's never be captured."

The costume appeared to be high hat with ribbons, calico shirt under linen shirt, all pleated by one particular woman and clean every morning, a diagonal scarf. White trousers as white as curd, called it jane (sic), fluffy as doeskin trousers navvies used but thinner, what officers wear, some breeches, 'white as that handk'. Druce 'used to buy bells at Stowe Fair'.

Sharp's mss states that they often used to whistle for dancing which suggests that they did not always have a musician. Druce said 'we used to learn our songs and dances up at the plough tent'. They practised 2 nights a week between Easter and Whitsun. "Often had a lot of people looking on, as many as though it were a play."

Sharp records that they danced Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of hit week, and Druce said "home all the week". As there were three parishes entitled to a deer it seems more likely that the Whit Hunt was for as long as it took to catch the three and the local celebrations in Hailey at least (Manning mss) were on the weekend following, the deer being taken to one of the public houses where It was skinned and cooked, The feast was on the Friday and Saturday and partakers were charged 1/— and the festivities included morris dancing. The Forest Fair in Cernbury Park was on the Wednesday and Thursday.

Sharp differs from Manning in saying that the horn blowing in the village started at 3 am not midnight and that the maypole was raised at 4 o'clock on the Whit Monday and noted 'they didn't come about Sunday'

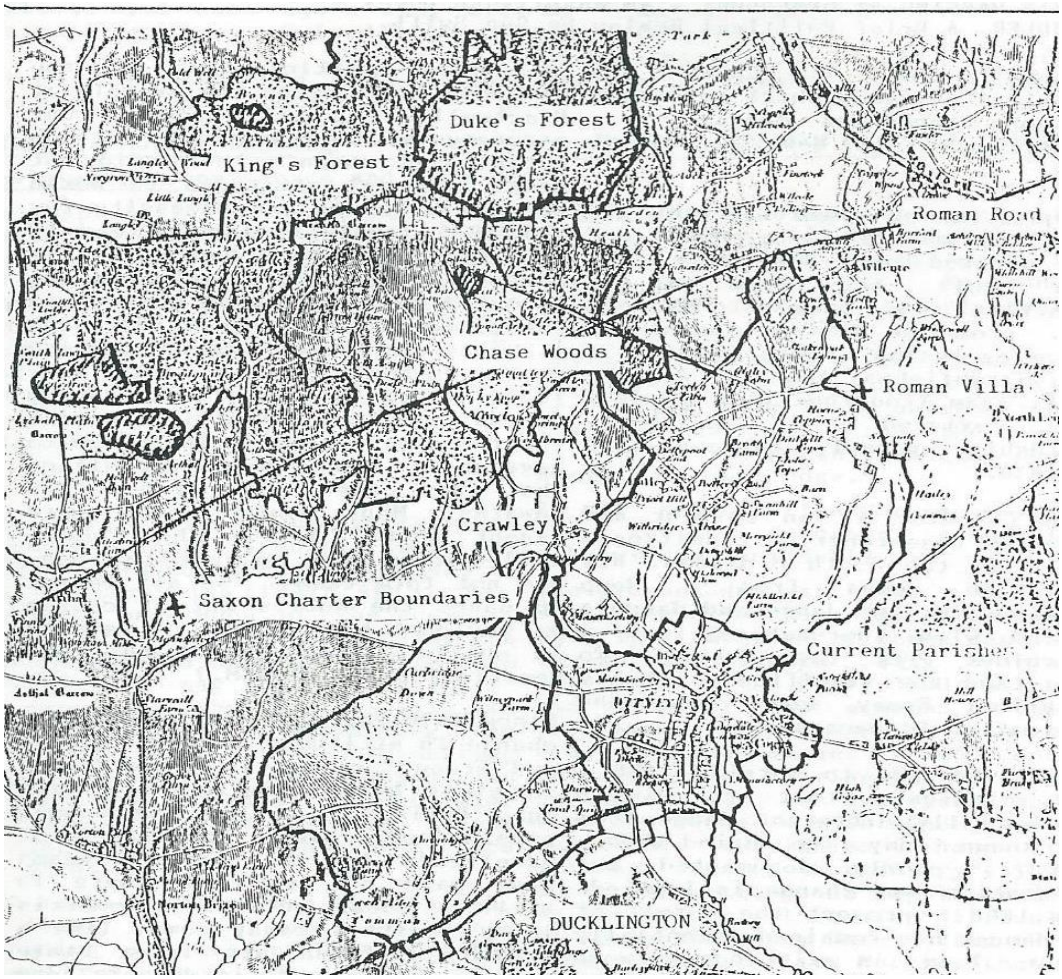
They did dance elsewhen, not 'now and then a fillaloo we danced as well as Whitsuntide'.

The amplification needed to the booklet is with regard to the Whit Hunt territory. Witney, Hailey, Crawley (and the decayed village of Curbridge) were subdivisions of a Saxon estate identified in charters of 9498 1044 (F Emery – the Oxfordshire landscape, 1974,

pages 60-63) which is thought to be co-located with a Romano—British estate or ranch. In Roman times Akeman Street ran through the area and it was fully settled and not a forest at all. The Saxons tried to arrange their holdings to have a proper mixture of meadow, arable, high land and woodland for a balanced economy and this territory included a bit of the Wychwood forest called the Chase woods. In common with the other woods this area was divided into smaller woods and cut in succession. In 1812 the King held 1650 acres of Wychwood, the Duke 1040 and the Chase woods were 487. The King cut on an 18 year cycle and the Duke on a 21. (Young, General view of Agriculture of Oxfordshire, 1813). The Ordnance survey map of 1833 representing the survey of 1811-18 revised names [of] the Chase woods and all 12 can be related to names in Manning's mss. The map indicated the extent of the holding. Ducklington was not part of the land that carried the right to join in the Hunt so participation can only be because of the fun involved. Similar village arrangements regulating the use and resources of woodland were very common and nothing to do with fertility or ritual.

Keith's paper should be read for its illustrations of the difficulties of such work including spelling of names and rounding off of time estimates. I am glad I am not the only one who failed to understand the local accent.

1983 (MM 7-1)



Morris Competitions - A Personal View

Morris competition might have been the lifeblood of 19th century Cotswold Morris but here is no real evidence of it being more than an occasional event. However the impressions left through eye witnesses or secondary informants suggests that as with current competitions, the impact is great. Many people today feel that competition is wrong and impossible between teams drawn from different traditions, but recent experience is that ritual dance competition is a great spectator sport. Usually the entrants gain little as they seldom see the other competitors perform and comment from the judges is often perfunctory.

Competition has been important in developing some aspects of the traditional dance. Most teams have the basic urge to upstage, outdance or otherwise out perform any side they meet, but this is not the same as the discipline needed to win a competition. Some teams will thrive in it, most will not. Competition will exist as long as teams are prepared to enter. The experience can be very traumatic so do not do it lightly.

I first met competition at Llangollen with the Ancient Men who assembled at Hope in Derbyshire the night before and had a practice on the drive to Wales. We did Swaggering Boney and Ring O'Bells, the requirement being two contrasting dances, and came seventh, by 2 points, out of about 30. We were criticised for not using the morris characters in the performance — the previous year the judges had objected to their interference. The Scots were disqualified because of their nontraditional costume and the Israelis because they could have no folk tradition. Bingham University did a Western Square and a Sioux hoop dance - it all seemed so arbitrary.

There is a general background of competition in Britain through the various Art Festivals with classes for folk dance. Nowadays these are well supported by the Brownies and Guides who have to obtain badges but not by adult groups. Often their existence seems to be a relic of the EFDSS certificate days. As an adjudicator one has to say something constructive both to the dancers and their Leaders. One needs to be knowledgeable about the dances and about dancing in general. The problems are interesting — judging 18 Baccapipe jigs done two at a time requires a planned approach. I found that making a stab at the first dancers mark, then ranking everyone else relative to that then adjusting the marks at the end to give justice to the best and worst seemed to work. Usually the winner is obvious and, if not, the audience will not blame you for your choice.

Adult groups welcome detailed comment, recognising that it can reflect only on some aspects of the performance, especially technique, and at the normal standard of Festival entrant, finding such comment is quite practical. General principles of the judging and of the standards expected should be announced. I found one side going outside and practising them. Given a responsive audience the morris always seems to rise to the occasion. Sometimes it is a surprise how well certain mens' sides can dance when sober.

One is forced today to be tolerant of the interpretation of a dance by a team because of the wide variety extant. Rigid adherence to a historical norm is counterproductive to good morris, I tried to encourage 'performance' including the responsiveness to the

audience and the sense of fun involved with characters and 'twists' to the dances. At this level competition can help acquisition of technique and self discipline as well as performing skills.

Competition and medal hunting seem a significant part of the life of Carnival Morris Troupes. Attempts are made by some of the Carnival Associations to keep teams to their own level to avoid the same problem that occurs in the Brass Band world of teams mopping up prizes by only competing against poorer opposition. Points are awarded for entrance and exit and appearance but not for dance content. At championship level minute detail like the polish of bells may be resorted to, to separate teams - rather like my experience of judging commercial vehicle classes in southern Carnival Procession classes. Such competitions are a test of endurance involving dancing up to 15 minutes at a time, and of course the young people have not danced long enough to build up the stamina or the ability for expression through movement and this has driven the form of dance that has evolved. Carnival Morris fits into the Arts Festival category of being good for the young performers - and their relatives and friends.

Attitudes to competition within the EFDSS have been ambivalent. Directors have been prepared to judge at the Northern traditional sword dance competitions. Some recent competitions of interest have involved the EFDSS. However can one judge activities that are more art than sport - the same problem as in recent Olympic classes for synchronised swimming or gymnastics to music, or ice skating.

There was a competition at Bath, as part of the folk element of the Bath Festival, with a substantial monetary prize, which however could not be given to a paid performing side employed by the Festival. There were seven entries; Old Spot, Alec Wixey's Bampton, Sherborne Village, Whitethorn clog and three Bath City teams, men, women and ex-members. There were four judges: myself, the Sidmouth Director, the Folk Director for the Bath Festival and a local worthy. It had been intended that half the competition would be based on the judges observing normal street performances in the centre of Bath and the other on a show on the court on the south side of the Abbey. The Saturday crowds stopped the first and after Sherborne had danced it rained very heavily so the rest was transferred to the inside of the Pump Room, with a small, tightly packed audience.

The performances fell into three groups: the poor, the inexperienced and the three effective displays.
1. Whitethorn - women's clog. Large set, noisy clogs, loud band.

2. Old Spot - Cotswold, own tradition. No real show, let dances speak for themself, technique very good but had a problem with the slippery floor.

3. Bampton - traditional Cotswold. Had a normal show structure but suffered from the floor. Dancing in socks was counterproductive.

The judging technique adopted was for each to make a separate assessment emphasising their own area of interest, to total the marks and review the ranking implied. From the discussion was to come the remarks to be made publically. The judges differed over the order and it took some time to agree Whitethorn, Bampton, Old Spot.

Someone phoned home to Bampton so that a crowd could meet them and ask who was first!

Judges' views can be irreconcilable so there must be a system of ranking or marking and a leading judge with a casting vote in the event of a draw. It is desirable that a consensus is reached on the winner and that it is fully agreed that they are the best so, if possible, the mechanical system should be used as a guide only. Teams accept that things go wrong in the particular performance being examined but they justly complain about the problem of producing a 'real' show in the artificial circumstances. Perhaps they need a warm up session?

The Cotswold morris demands more technique and takes longer to produce the equivalent apparent standard of dance skill than other English dance traditions. This suggests that judging should try and take into account, (a) what the team is trying to achieve, (b) the standard compared with other teams in the same tradition outside the competition (c) the difficulty of the tradition, that is Cotswold versus Clog etc. This cannot be all the story, otherwise it drives towards complexity and cleverness.

This year I tried to turn some of this experience to use in helping my local garland team, Minden Rose of Alton, prepare for the Portsmouth Arts Festival. The other entries turned out to be Victory and King John. The requirement was a 20 minute show. We choreographed the complete show from entrance to exit, the changing of implements, the contrast in dance rhythm, shape and length and the continuity in the music and announcements. We filled the available shape to impress. Despite a winter of practice of the "Portsmouth" figures, nervousness, lack of experience where it mattered and using a social dance, the Dummer Five Hand Reel, which the judges knew was not ritual, brought a joint second out of three.

Even in competition Victory are true morris - operating the 'disrespectful but not disreputable' adage. One year they tried to persuade the judge that a barrel of beer was an essential part of a traditional performance. Last year they offered their yellow blow-up pig mascot as a third judge to 'even up the bias against them'.

The Sidmouth competition has been the only one involving all top class entries. The first year was enlivened by a thunderstorm that flooded the arena marquee. The entries were;

1. Manley - traditional NW clog. Experienced competitors, with success at Llangollen and elsewhere before. They did their Sidmouth Festival arena show dances.

2. Monkseaton - Cotswold morris and rapper. The first moderate but the latter superb.

3. Ringheye - mixed NW clog. Young and enthusiastic.

4. Boughton Monchelsea Morris Men and Loose Women. New and wild experience.

5. Sweet Coppin - women not girls, light, graceful and feminine, and for the first time I knew how a garland dance should be done.

6. Great Western — own style Fieldtown

7. Seven Champions - Molly Dancers, helped by their dog

8. Ilfracombe children, just back from USA tour and dancing under lightning flashes, with thunder drowning the music and the water drowning the audience

The judges said little when announcing Monkseaton as the winner. Some of it would have taxed anyone for comment! I would have ranked it as (1) the thunderstorm, (2) the Monkseaton Molly, (3) the Great Western "dog" who collected the sticks and (4) the rapper.

There was an unreal atmosphere about it all due to the circumstances. It seemed a little like trying to award the prize for the most traditional item at the Letterkenny Festival to the organising committee.

Ringheye are a mixed side from Cheshire dancing in clogs like Bollin, Handsforth and some Open Morris Clog sides. The mixed arrangement works for this style, less earnest, more interactive and exuberant. One is less aware of the shortness of the women – height is impressive hence the elaborate hats for men's sides.

Sidmouth I showed the need for comment from the judges as both competitors and audience desire it. To do this requires a panel reflecting different interests.

Sidmouth II had 5 entries,
1. Ringheye - did 3 dances but even with one shortened they ran over time. Their Knutsford was, in my opinion, the best dance in the Competition.

2. Poynton Jemmers - did only Marston so were well short of the allotted time.

3. Old Spot - did 3 dances with a great sense of style now they use Mason's tunes rather than Taylor's and included one to a song.

4. High Spen - did their first sequence of rapper but not as together in the stepping as one would have liked.

5. Sweet Coppin - did 3 dances. One was a Welsh reel which could have been presented with more showman ship and another was a clog dance which had little impact compared with the earlier entries.

The judges were chosen to have different skills: a musician, an expert on morris, a local ballet dancer and instructress and David Slater who was concerned with its "attractiveness" to a dancer and who acted as leader and spokesman. The agreement was on Old Spot as winner on the grounds of best dancing, more demanding technique, more interaction of music with the dance, more show. Ringheye and High Spen were considered just behind and about equal. The judges had discussed principles at length beforehand along the lines already discussed but in the end aesthetic opinion dominated. The lessons were that judges need experience of judging, Festival adjudicators have a supportive organisation and are expected to work hard to learn the trade, and that subjective views do take a lot of getting over to competitors afterwards.

How does one sum it up? It has been interesting? It certainly generates a lot of

discussion, but does it help the morris? Probably not as it is against the spirit of most teams, Should it be stopped? You cannot prevent some sides from being competitive and if they do not have this outlet how will it bubble up?

1984 (MM 7-2)

Nine Mens Morris

A phrase evocative of Tudor England, Shakespeare and the Betley and Kingston windows, a morris team and its supporting characters. Of course many of the 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 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 to achieve a row of three or 'mill' which allows removal of an opponent's token. After all are laid they can be moved one at a time 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 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.

These games could not have got their name because the players blacked their faces so there may 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 6 or 8 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 9. It allows a symmetry that is denied a lesser odd number, but three columns are difficult when one has been brought up on two columns longwavs with the idea of partners.

There have been occasions when a Bampton side has done Bonny Green Garters with 9. The order of the dance is of course Foot up, Whole Hey and Half Caper off in single file, probably in a spiral. The central column mirrors the left hand as does the even side in a 6 handed set, and the right hand matches the left hand column in the hey. The central man is last of the file in dancing off.

In the late 1960's the Halsway Advanced Morris weekends used to have a session on the Sunday morning where groups were asked to invent a dance against some set board. 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 feast on 6 January 1973. Tallest dancer was in the centre.

All figures were done with a single step and ended on 4 plain capers. The DF was an Adderbury hey along the columns followed by a similar hey across the rows. Each matched — there was no mirroring.

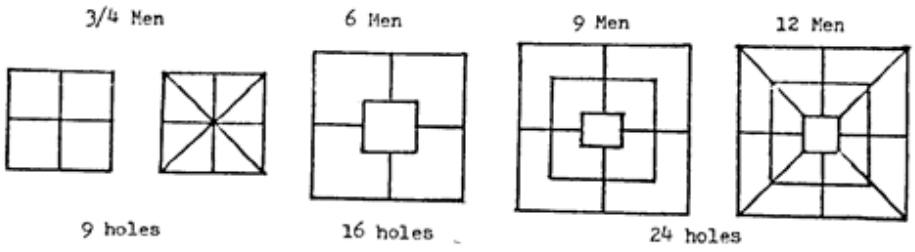


Figure 1 — Foot North, Foot East, Foot South and Foot West.

Figure 2 — 8 handed star around dancer in centre, ruffling hair!

Figure 3 — 8 handed ring, not ordinary rounds but "elephant rounds". All join hands in a circle, one at a time each swings right leg over right hand so that right hand is between legs and dancer facing to left, while other dancers single step. Set may be 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 with heads pointing to left of set, then Nos 7, 8 & 9 lay across them with their heads to the bottom of the set and finally 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 foolery.

Great Western have a Nine Men's Morris, Fieldtown style. The DF is all face up, crossed side step left in front, double step, crossed side step right in front, feet together and jump. The front 2 of each column then bend forward to be ready for the back row to leapfrog forward over them on 4 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 3 DF, so dancers end up where they started.

Figure 1 — Foot-up-&-down, all galleying left each half and ending facing up.

Figure 2 — Heys — half hey down the columns, half hey across the rows, half hey up the column and half hey back across the rows. The outer heys turn out to start and the central line follows the right hand one.

Figure 3 — Diagonals. While the centre dancer does fore-capers on the spot, the diagonals cross, first the corners, then the middles of the four sides and back again, turning towards the central dancer as they pass and hop backstepping out to the new place.

Figure 4 — Rounds. While the centre dancer does upright capers on the spot, the other 8 dance rounds, going into the centre at half way and hop backstepping out, and coming and lifting the centre dancer at the end.

Serious dances for 9 may be difficult, but with 12 now there is real scope!

1983 (MM 7-3)

Baccapipes

This is a solo dance or jig that exhibits personal skills, performed over two crossed churchwarden clay pipes. The dance is related to that done over crossed swords, versions of which are known from the highlands of Scotland, to Cumberland, the Forest of Dean and the Isle of Wight. Of course it could also be done over a pair of any suitable agricultural implement such as flails and once it was seen danced in a pub over a pair of prize winning parsnips!

The idea of clay pipes for smoking tobacco was introduced from America about 1360. The first pipes with long stems, called 'Alderman' or ''Straws', were made from 1750 and were 18 to 24 inches long. The very long ones, called Yards of Clay, about 36 inches long were not made till 1850. The name 'Churchwarden' was not used till late in the 19th century.

Being readily available the pipes quickly led to competition, in smoking and in other uses. Typically the ground or floor under the crossed pipes would be dusted with flour or sand and the dancers judged by how close they could mark into the vertices of the crossing without touching or disturbing the pipes. Of course, touching usually broke the pipe to the cost of the performer!

The usual tune was 'Greensleeves' - not the waltz rhythm version now associated with Henry VIII but in a livelier jig or hornpipe rhythm. As dancers could not always find a musician for practice or performance there grew a habit of singing simple rhymes.

Some say the devil's dead, the devil's dead, the devil's dead,

Some say the devil's dead and buried in Cold Harbour.

Some say he's up again, some say he's up again,

Some say he's up again, apprenticed to a barber.

or,

Greensleeves and yellow lace, get up you bitch and work a pace,

Your father lies in a hell of a place, all for the want of money.

The step was either a step-hop on alternate feet or a heel-and-toe cross rhythm step. The weight would change from foot to foot on the strong beats in a bar of music and the free foot would be tapped on the weak beat between.

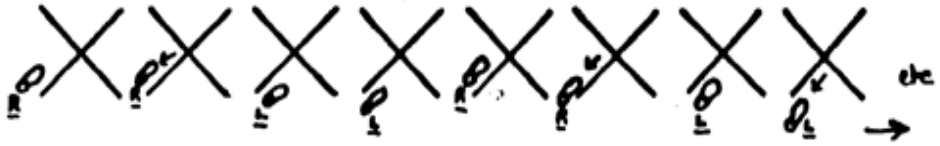
The dance is structured to have a passage of music dancing around the pipes and alternate passages dancing over the pipes. Usually each time the dancer goes into the pipes they would dance a different pattern of taps across the pipes both over the stems and into the vertices, sometimes from one position throughout the passage or progressing around the pipes.

1985 (MM 8-1)

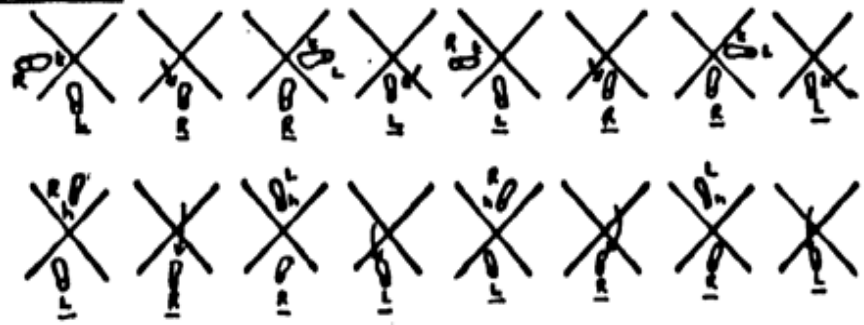
Start 

First Figure - 4 times

Second Figure - 4 times



Third Figure - 2 times



Fourth Figure - round twice

Fifth Figure - as first figure using heel instead of toe

Key L = left — L weight on left foot
R = right — R weight on right foot
t = toe
h = heel

Crisis points in Morris Clubs

Sides are often surprised that they have problem, which can wreck their club. Three of these centre on the leadership, levels of performance or the four year ayndrome and beginners.

Leadership

Any group has the social problems arising from the inevitable 'dynamics' or interactions within a small group and every group will be different. Leadership is a job that needs more than just enthusiasm and it is wise to seek some advice and to read a little about the potential problems which exist for any small group working together. What the leader can achieve depends on what the group will tolerate. The style of club and the type of leadership warranted depends on the mix available and can change with the turnover in members. Leadership is most effective when caring about everyone and remembering why the others are involved at all.

Stress can build up over a long period. Tension exists because things are not static, circumstances change, skills improve, experience grows and new faces appear. There are a number of ways of defusing such tensions. The AGM need not be self-congratulatory but encourage comment of all sorts from the floor. Anyone with the courage to speak out at all has something to say that must be listened to and reacted to, even if it is only to get at the real problem behind the expressed emotion towards which the speaker is groping.

A circulating grouse book can sometimes help members to express themselves and over a period of time understand how the others see it as well. Just a regular change in leadership helps, as does separation of the authoritarian roles of squire and foreman.

There are two sides to being a squire, the technical aspects of performance and presentation and the leadership of the group. The first requires innovative ideas and fresh approaches to occasions and shows so that they are stimulating and not repetitive. A leader should not expect to be able to keep up a high standard in this year after year. The important work as a group leader is to get every member involved. The greatest resources in the group are the different experiences, feelings and ideas of the group's members. Although a leader may start things off, the main objective is to enable every member to contribute. The greater the contributions, the richer the experience to which each member is exposed which justifies the individual's involvement.

Hints to Leaders

1. Be absolutely clear about the things you want the group to work on.

2. Be aware that a group works at two levels. While working explicitly on the objectives above, they will also be active at a feeling level, based on who they like or dislike, on who is perceived to be the most powerful, on who is angry etc. Both levels go on at the

same time and either may be dominant at any particular moment.

3. There are 5 easily recognised non constructive situations that will arise in a group:

a) Fight : Certain members get angry and attack, usually verbally, other members or the perceived leader.

Leader's Role: Acknowledge the anger/frustration/strong feeling without putting the person down or getting angry in return and respond to the valuable content of what is being said.

b) Flight : Certain members and sometimes the whole group go completely off the task and chat cosily about comfortable things ignoring the task.

Leader's Role; Being careful not to belittle people, get the group's attention back to the task here and now, perhaps by picking up from something done or said earlier.

c) Pairing : You will notice people making alliances with other group members as distinct from friendships as a step towards some positive action.

Leader's Role: Bring out what is linking them so that all share or relate them to the other members so that no one is left out.

d) Scapegoating : Often one member or pair will be out on a limb and consistently maintain a point of view at odds with the majority. The group may be reacting by pushing them out further.

Leader's Role: Recognise that an opposite point of view is valuable and, when held with strong feeling, it is usually expressing something unpopular that every member feels to a greater or lesser extent. The leader should try to enable members to admit to sharing some of the scapegoat's feelings or values. A scapegoat will have had all the group's bad feelings dumped on them and the leader should prevent such dumping.

e) Inactive or Overactive members: Both types detract from effective group work, a non-contributor can put a group off as much as one who will not stop contributing.

Leader's role: Dancing - Avoid drop outs or squeeze-outs. Watch for avoidance of particular dances, at the least you may be let down in a critical show. Do not allow hogging of particular places or parts of dances. Remind others that the strength of the chain is its weakest link, that experience should be spread around and so on.

Talking — encourage silent ones by verbalising what YOU judge by non-verbal signs they want to say and ask them to contribute. Be firm with the voluble, but be sure that their point of view is put adequately and then ask them to give others a chance.

A group works best when contributions are valued by being responded to with empathy. The squire should set the example and encourage the rest to follow the pattern. Sometimes a group focusses its needs in an alternate leader because of the strength of

their personality, skills or knowledge or the official leader's lack. This is only a challenge to the leader's position if the leader lets it be by ignoring the underlying problem.

The ideal leader has a reservoir of experience of the morris and people in general. Probably about 10 years is optimum when they should know something of all the facets that matter. Unfortunately this is council of perfection and in the real world, leaders of new sides are inevitably drawn from those with too little of the wider experiences. Hence the need for thought, care and advice.

Standards of Performance and the Four Year Crisis

Sides are supported by the initial enthusiasm of the leaders. There may come a time of crisis because of a failure to reach the leader's expectations. In a team's first year when all are learning, it is easy to be forgiving. It will, be found that regular practice of everything is essential otherwise dances and shows fall apart in public. In the second and third years, the team settles down and establishes its own character. The dances are known and the performers feel satisfied with the average performance out. They feel good and often the greatest. Then they start to wonder what more is there to it. New dances, new functions to attend, new contacts and friendships and local community status all eventually lose their novelty. Where comes this boredom and lack of challenge?

The mix of dance ability is changing with time. It is convenient to recognise three stages:

Beginners: the dance is in control of the dancers,

Advanced: the dancers are in control of the dance,

Experienced: the dancers are able to express themselves without worrying about the dance.

These definitions do not say anything about the quality of the dancing. Unfortunately what is learnt first is only learnt to the best of the ability at the time. Standards set then are accepted as THE standard by the better but less committed dancers.

The solution is to relearn with greater skills that have been developed both in control of movement and expression but also in effort quality. Professional dancers do this all their career. It must be a common experience that the newer dances or traditions are learnt and danced better than those first attempted. There is no argument for starting with simple throw away dances because in moments of crisis in a dance the dancers revert in standard and movement to what they first learnt.

It should also be common experience that dancing standards do not improve steadily but reach plateaus and that it needs a conscious effort to raise the level further. In their first few years dancers achieve about 80 percent of their potential whereas one would like something higher. It will seem irksome to many of the contented dancers, but the

advantage of reaching a step or two higher will be that it ensures the team's survival and with there being enough good dancing and understanding around in the club it becomes possible to train new dancers to the same standard without strain.

Policy

There are a number of policy matters that can lead to crises.

a) Links with the Community

It can seem a long slog with less apparent response than your effort appears to deserve to establish links with your local community. It is all too easy after a couple of tries to turn ones attention elsewhere. Absorption into the closed folk world is all too easy. Local links are essential and in the end the most satisfying. One must take a long view, it needs 4 to 6 years for a community to notice. As the community is full of people like yourself, how many of the other organisations can you remember? It needs a fair number of years before any place can say that the morris comes every year. One aim could be to have people able to come to some spot annually knowing the team will be there without having to stick up a poster.

b) Choice of tradition(s)

There is probably a form of morris and a set of dances within it to suit your team. It might not be that which you start with, there may be no way you can judge the team's eventual personality. The club may emerge as akin to street theatre or may be a practice centred dance club. Whatever, it is necessary to do enough of any one tradition to be able to have a long practice without becoming too boring. It may be desirable to run several traditions for a contrast in shows, but the more that is done the greater is the load on the bulk of the dancers. There are other ways of meeting a need for novelty, Ales, workshops, going out with someone else, just having a go without the intention of dancing it out etc. The risk is that new dances are seen as the easy answer to avoiding dancing better.

c) One tradition

The pros and cons of a one tradition side have been debated for many years and each club has to find its own answer. What is a common experience in trying to raise dance standards is that all the detail has to be re—examined. This is often not properly defined so it has to be decided within the club. Then all the dances within the particular tradition are not satisfying so some are dropped, then some are invented, then the team does not want to go through all that again with something new and so sticks to what it has. This makes a mature side, with something to offer to other teams.

Beginners

A club must have a policy on beginners. A steady flow of recruits for replacement is necessary at all levels without which the team will eventually collapse. New dancers seldom volunteer or respond to publicity: it has to be done by personal contact, perhaps by letting them share an outing with the team. The more experienced must remember what it was like at their start to see things from the beginners' point of view and to let the newcomers experience what they felt when they first did it.

Beginners must have roles in the club. The Farnborough Morris Men insisted that beginners were the only men with the right to dance - it lets the seniors off for a while. But the corollary was of course individual, concentrated teaching of steps and jigs to give confidence in movement before meeting a full team. Each team has to find a way of keeping the interest and support of the more experienced dancers while ensuring that the newcomers progress quickly. There is a natural desire to get beginners moving in a set — it is supposed to build confidence and help acquire style by mimicry as well as showing the joy to be found in dancing. It allows the seniors to carry on dancing while leaving the beginner to struggle and often build up his own bad habits.

Beginners need hours on the hoof before they become useful so it is crazy to restrict their opportunities to dance. Marlboro, Vermont, expects at least a two year commitment because of its high aims being tied to a few numbers of dancers. Therefore the attitude to the beginner is crucial in determining whether they will be regular and hard working. Apprenticeships etc. and rights of passage must be symbolic end not a real brake or hindrance to dancers' enjoyment or involvement.

Beginners need an intensity of practice to establish fitness, coordination, and proper habits. Senior dancers tend not to see the need for it themselves and set a standard for the club which slows progress. Beginners must not be taught to hold back in terms of effort or expression. Practice night is not a lazy night. The risk of injury from not warming up, from not stretching and from being tense as well as the risk of developing a limited dance style need to be explained.

Do not stint on the basics, it can cause endless problems later on.

Do not hesitate just because something is thought to be technically difficult — some such is expected as the beginner thinks it is all difficult. The longer the meeting of difficult movements is delayed the less well will they be taught, earned or danced.

Do remember that the practice space and floor will affect fundamentally how you dance out. We have all seen long narrow teams. Allow for the effect.

Do practise as you intend to perform in public. Any sloppiness or uncertainty inside will show outside.

Good groundwork both technically and socially will produce long term support, any short cuts can lead to long term problems for a club in one way or another.

1985 (MM 8-1)

Styles of clubs

The newcomer to the morris is hardly likely to question their club's get up or way of doing business and will seldom think about other ways until they are in at the start of a new aide. There a number of possibilities around which new teams might find worth thinking about.

The Traditional

In the 50's and 60' the traditional sides were still markedly different from the rest. There was usually a family involvement and the oldest members and even the female side had a say in achieving the consensus over arrangements for the major events. At the sane tine there was a recognised leader who combined the jobs of president, secretary and teacher and who was probably free to invite dancers to join 'his' team. The leader was not necessarily considered the final authority on the dances, there being long serving and ex-dancers around. Usually great tolerance was shown over most things yet great divisions could occur and quite often two groups would appear reflecting irreconcilable attitudes. The cohesive point was their 'day' of community involvement, quite different from a 'day of dance' during which a large group can insulate themselves from the world. It could be seen as a different emphasis to the priorities on the team's motivation.

The Cambridge MM

The Cambridge Morris Men (CMM) recognised very early on the separate tasks of foreman, squire and bagman and took the traditional terms for a team's number one, fool and baggageman and applied them to the teacher, leader and treasurer/secretary. Their leadership in the morris world between the wars, in the Morris Ring, the influence of their annual feast and the many derivative teams formed by ex-CMM ensured the general adoption of these terms in the revival and eventually in the tradition. It also brought with it the concepts of election and regular replacement. It is essentially a club format and although common because of its strengths it also has limitations outside of middle class leisure groups.

The Usual Forms

1. Single Point of Leadership.

This was very common in the early days when only one member had the knowledge and the drive to form and hold a team together. The Ring's requirement for admission emphasises that this is not a basis for a long term viable club because of the inherent weakness arising from the dependence. But then the Ring is intended only for long lasting democratic clubs and it is believed that jobs should be shared and responsibilities moved around. This is not to say that other forms are not appropriate in particular circumstances.

2. Sharing the Leadership.

This form brings a number of concepts;

a. Training for Tasks
The club has no reason to let someone ignorant practise on their club, but people do not learn the skills for nothing, so they must expect to be designated the next incumbent and serve an assistantship or apprenticeship.

b. Constitution
By forming a club whose workings are regulated it is possible to preserve the objective of the morris being a hobby and the principle of it involving a small group of friends.

c. Identification of the Tasks
The jobs that need to be done to support a team that performs in public can be identified and split amongst the members. These include monitoring the address List, collating the agreed dance notation, organising the beginners' practice, being the characters during performances, acting as conductor of the shows, producing the drinks or coffee during practices, supervising costume manufacture and upkeep, handling the correspondence for events, providing the implement, supplying handkerchiefs of the correct size, editing the newsletter, printing it or distributing it, doing the posters and sticking them up, public relations, being photographer, keeping the scrapbook, at least.

d. Elections
Jobs need people with experience. It is difficult to find enough in the early days of the club so some have to learn on the job. A procedure is needed to cycle the jobs. All the time it is necessary to be looking for the replacements and considering how they are to gain some experience without mucking things up for the club, yet still keeping in mind that it is a leisure activity. Sympathy exists for all official, when other, have tried the jobs. Apathy exists when no one has a chance to share in the tasks.

3. Other Structures for Clubs

a. No Leader — or King for the Day.
At the club's AGM it is possible to agree the dates for going out in the summer and to share out the organisation of each occasion amongst the members, especially if there is a recognised pattern for a weekend's morris, Thus each person does all the jobs once. It works best when the club's outings are limited in number but long in time, perhaps including Friday evening as well as all day Saturday. Fetes would then fall naturally into the pattern, providing both somewhere to go and a free tea, as well as having time to be able to wander around and enjoy it and so spending as much as has been asked for as a fee. It does need within the club several people who can conduct a day, but it is easy to train people as it can be done in pairs. It produces an element of competition to see who can produce the best or most interesting weekend.

b. Background Figure
Sometimes the expertise is with the musician, or perhaps a woman teaching or organising. This was much more common 30 years ago. Maybe the dance teacher does

not go out with the side, for example a man helping an all woman's team. The jobs have still to be done but it can be all emotionally easier as the background figure is there as referee.

It is worth noting that there is a role in any organisation for a reference on standards, who is prepared to be critical when necessary, and be an 'elder' without interfering with the others gaining their experience. Sometimes such people are called ex-foremen!

A job always needed, especially with younger dancers, but seldom recognised is that of 'mother', someone who is otherwise not very active but can be talked to about all the non-morris problems.

House Styles

The manner of doing is the style of a club. Decisions have to be made about such matters early in a club's existence and probably rethought every few years.

1. How Much Practice?

How much practice and to what purpose follows from the club's objectives. These may be in terms of social activity, type of dancing or type of event to be adopted. Is the club night to be a social event as well as a practice night for the participants? Does it include drinking as part of the socialising or should there be a separate social get together? How much time should be given to business and to dancing? Does the team need to meet before Christmas, should part of the practice season be completely devoted to the beginners? Is the team always learning new dances or is everyone trying to raise their personal standard of dancing? Can the club survive each year with a long period of inactivity? How can the club survive when the members have no leisure time for anything but morris?

2. One or More Traditions

After a few years with <u>one</u> tradition most dancers do not need regular winter practices but only a refresher in the spring before dancing out and this can be bound up with teaching the winter's beginners to dance in a set, they having spent the earlier winter learning the steps and jigs. Having just one tradition must lead to concentration on the other aspects of the morris as a performance or street theatre.

With more than one tradition the team becomes a dance troupe with the dancing aspect uppermost, having to be concerned with contrasts between traditions reflecting just those points that led to the particular choice of tradition, in the first place. It is usually found desirable to have a number of dances from each tradition to be worth working up the distinctive characteristics without boredom from constant repetition. The tradition and revival experience is that 12 to 14 dances in full practice is enough for any Cotswold side, plus any jigs or stunts. The simple rule seems to be to have enough material for three performances or shows without repetition.

A balanced repertoire seems to be either;

a. one tradition enhanced with adaptations from other traditions, plus inventions.

b. two or three traditions that are complementary
There is another option growing up of doing dances in their true season, a Cotswold tradition in the summer and a selection of Border dances in the winter.

3. Image.

The team's involvements determine its image. These can range from;

a. local involvement — looking toward their near communities and becoming part of the available entertainment scene and the public life around. The team will be readily recognised locally and often requested to be part of what is going on in the community.

b. a dance troupe that is inward-looking — probably thinking that aloofness and mystery are part of the ritual they are preserving, who have a wide territory, often with a name of no particular local association and going for money, festivals or personal jinks.

Usually no one outside of the team has heard of them in their area and when they do, no one thinks of inviting them to anything outside of the folk world.

4. The Season

Some clubs have a regular practice night all the winter and then in summer dance out on the same night, having given up practice for the summer, and at weekends as well, sometimes from April till October. This is the overdancing that should be objected to, not the too many teams appearing at the same spot week after week. Dealing with the first cures the second. Too many outings force reliance on a hard core of dancers if the club is to survive. In the USA and Australia they are forced by the climate to a shorter season or perhaps two short seasons, and they find it retains the magic and gives them something to look forward to in each practice season. A long season is the antithesis of the tradition as it was. The public presentation of tired or lack lustre morris can indicate a lack of caring both for the audience, and the impression of morris against which the rest of us have to perform.

5. Relations with Other Sides

Local sides actually have little contact with other morris sides in their area and even less with other types of dancing or entertainment. Morris sides are not really gregarious and when they meet they are naturally competitive whether it is at an Ale, a day of dance or a pub stop.

Summary

Thank goodness there will be as many forms of clubs and styles of behaviour as there

are clubs. It is the variety that makes it so interesting to the old hands or the audience. Problems are solved by caring about the participants and the audience as individual, not abstractions. And as a Polynesian said on TV '(the morris) is a living form which does not preserve the past but borrow from it'.

1985 (MM 8-2)

Lass of Richmond Hill

A good morris tune invites one to dance and is suggestive of possible steppings. During one of Hammersmith's creative periods a dance was produced to the tune Lass of Richmond Hill, a natural choice with a Richmond Hill just over the river. A new progressive 2 by 2 pattern was produced to fit the tune's distinctive 3 part format and it became one of the few new dances to be widely copied. Some clubs adapted it to other traditions and in doing so rethought the stepping. Here are some examples of choruses.

Hammersmith
The original with Longborough figures including rounds. As seen in 1972.

1st Chorus
Bars 1- 4: 1st pair only - closed sidestep [css] (rt), 4-step, galley left full turn moving out a yard.
5 - 8: 2nd pair only - ditto
9 -12: 3rd pair only - css (rt), 4-step, css (lt), ft.j to face up, in middle of the set at the bottom, side by side.
13 - 16: 1st & 2nd pairs - Long open sidestep down the set, moving down one place, galley out downwards. 3rd pair - 2 4-steps up middle and galley out into top place.

2nd Chorus
as 1st chorus but bottom pair come up middle on 2 furries.

3rd, 4th and 5th choruses are similar but bars 13 -14 are at slow time for slow capers.

3rd Chorus
bottom pair come up dancing 2 full capers while the other pairs face front and move sideways with 2 cross steps and ft.j (x. x. ft. j.)

4th Chorus
bottom pair come up with 2 upright capers etc.

5th chorus
all face up for bars 13 -16. Top two pairs bend a little and bottom pair leapfrog over to the top, 4 beats per leap, and all 4 plain capers up to end the dance.

Great Western
Adapted to Fieldtown, using FU, HG, BB only. As seen in 1976.

1st Chorus
Bars 1 -4: 1st pair only - css (lt), css (rt), both galley up, full turn, one side has to fudge, 2nd pair come in with a jump.
5 -8: 2nd pair only - ditto
9 -12: 3rd pair only - css (lt), 4-step, css (rt), ft.j to face up the set.
13 -16: 1st & 2nd pairs - long open sidestep down one place and galley down.

3rd pair - move to top with css (lt), css (rt), galley out.

2nd Chorus
as 1st chorus but bottom pair come up middle on 4 plain capers, LRLR.

3rd Chorus
as 1st for bars 1-12 then all face up, top two pairs bend a little, and bottom pair leapfrog to the top, 2 beats per leap, in bar 13 in slow time, then all backstep and ft.j, in bar 14 in slow time.
All galley out and end facing up in bars 15-16.

Broadwood
At a Broadwood MM weekend in 1979 one side danced it thus:

1st Chorus
Bars 1-4: 1st pair only - css down and then up and galley down.
5-8: 2nd pair - ditto
9-12: 3rd pair - face across and 4 4-steps, then face up and others face down.
13-16: Bottom to top and other 2 pairs down one place on 4 plain capers and all galley out.

2nd and 3rd choruses are similar, except that bars 13-14 are in slow time and all the dancers move using 2 slow capers, the bottom pair to the top up the middle and the other pairs down the side one place.

Broadwood MM danced it much the same but bars 1-4, 5-8 were css down, 4 -step and galley up!

Victory Morris
also dance it in a similar Fieldtown style except that in bars 9-12 the 3rd pair dance as Great Western but using open sidesteps. As seen in 1983.

Men of Wight
also have this version but the dancing in bars 1-12 is done facing up rather than across the set. The top 2 pairs turn out to move down one place. As seen in 1983.

Albemarle, Charlotteville, USA
Dance it in Bledington style. As seen in 1983.

All face up to start the choruses.

1st Chorus
Bars 1-4: 1st pair only - 2 css and hook out to face up.
5-8: 2nd pair only - ditto
9-10: 3rd pair only - 2 css up the middle to the top,
11-12: all hook out and move down a place, ending facing front.
13-16: all face front and sidestep and hook up, ending facing front.

2nd Chorus
as 1st but furries instead of sidesteps throughout.

3rd Chorus
Bars 1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 13-14 are played at slow time while the above pattern is repeated dancing rtbs instead of css/furries.

4th Chorus
Bars 1-8 as 3rd chorus but dancing uprights.
9-10: bottom pair leapfrog to top, 4 beats to each leap,
11-12: all hook out but end the two files close together.
13: the evens face to the right away from the set and the odds leapfrog over them and themselves then bend facing to the right
14: evens leapfrog over the odds
15-16: all hook out to place.

End the dance on a whole hey.

Windsor
Danced in Badby style, seen in 1980 and 1984, similar to Great Western's.

1st Chorus
Bars 1-4: 1st pair only - css (lt), css (rt), 4-step and leg-across.
5-8: 2nd pair only ditto
9-12: 3rd pair only ditto, ending facing in & in a little.
13-16: bottom pair long open-sidestep to top, rest long open sidestep moving down one place, all a 4-step & leg-across.

2nd Chorus
as 1st except that at end of bar 12 the bottom pair turn to face up shoulder to shoulder in middle at bottom of set. Then they dance to the top with 2 furries while the others open sidestep down.

3rd Chorus
as 2nd till end of bar 12. Then all face up, the bottom pair leapfrog up to the top, all one 4-step and leg-across to end.

1986 (MM 8-3)

Style, Self-expression and Basics

Often general comments on standards of dancing, performance or presentation confuse these separate issues of skills, group activity and showmanship. Should one comment at all, as it is often said that the tradition did not have to worry about them? It is not true, of course. The absence of what the tradition did in the collectors' manuscripts is the collectors' fault, not the tradition's. There is one major difference between today's clubs and yesterday's tradition in that they lived in a community of dancers. We could too up to a point, if we cultivated the links, but we can never know what it is like to spend our ordinary life with dancers. There is some reason to suppose that before the best people left the countryside a higher percentage of people with talent danced the morris, if only because there were far fewer competing activities. However, surviving comment and biographical studies suggest that they were always of a pretty mixed standard. Should this matter to us today? It might seem so if we are using the past to justify present actions. Does that not beg the question: what standard is needed today?

A strong motivation, in the absence of living local tradition, is to recreate something lost, either as a museum-like replication or to restore and develop a 'tradition'. Preservation of what is an ephemeral art form has to be done by someone as a reference and another jumping-off point for inspiration. Restoration needs an outside standard and an accumulated understanding of the why, as well as the what. Revivals usually lack all this, and are a new thing in their own right. Even if the question of why recreate can be answered, there is the problem of what to recreate — is it to be Cecil Sharp's EFDSS teaching, Pre-WWII Ring or Post-War Ring, a 're-look' or an appeal to manuscript interpretation? The latter choices are all right if the honest aim is to be different. The original is unknowable — even Sharp's teaching is now unreachable. The only authentic sources are the active dancers, and what we can know of the traditions from their dancing and appreciations. How many of today's dancers have this sense of responsibility?

There is a visible tradition with an element of continuity, although the existence of the rest of use has changed it considerably, leaving aside the question of whether it would have been there at all without the revival. To be of any use to the rest of us it needs to be seen and analysed, so we must feed on and I suppose erode what sustains us.

There are the village-based sides with continuity of place for inspiration. They tend to be less inhibited with their chosen tradition than we would be, allowing themselves evolution based on what was done but seldom influenced by why it was done. They are often examples of what can be done by expert dancers using secondary sources as witnessed by the revival of several new 'traditions' in the last 20 years.

The 'dance' bit of the tradition, which is essentially the basics underlying a reconstruction, does not come from manuscripts but is injected. In other fields this is just the element of interpretation and expression brought by the great dancer. It would be 'folk' not to credit the choreographer.

One is led to the question of whether some sides are more 'authentic' than others? It

depends on what is being looked for, but in general it must be a 'yes' if the method of transmission of the style and detail of the dance is considered important. Good dancing is not the same as a slavish following of tradition, so copying good morris is not necessarily getting close to the original tradition. The fine detail that makes a dance has seldom been recorded; it lies in the expressive part that Sharp found so difficult to pin down. It is possible that this, as done in the mid-19th century, has not been transmitted to us at all!

Any group is unique, and therefore its group expression in the dance will be unique. Think of the year-to-year and team-to-team variety at Bampton where everyone is as immersed in the tradition as it is possible to be today.

We should recognise that style consists of standard movements and quirks, commonly called self-expression. The Cotswold morris allows individual interpretation within certain limits of pattern and rhythm, even if the squire calls it bloody-mindedness or something similar!

Movement can be classed as positive, that is dancing, or negative, that is slacking. Dance lies in the spring in the step, the expressive movement of arms and body, in the flow of movement and the emphasis on lift, not downward actions. The degree of effort needed requires fitness and some element of physical training. Slackness comes with a weak step, slow acceleration off the mark, very little body or centre of gravity rise and limb waggling. Unfortunately, it is easy to practise slackness, and most of us are experts in self-justification for it.

It all comes down to good basics - if this is right, the rest looks good and no-one is going to argue over it. Height in stepping comes from ankle flexure, in jumps from bending the knees a little. Jumps should be done so as to drive into the next movement to give excitement to the dance. To paraphrase, a sloppy dance produces a sloppy audience, but then you may not be caring about those watching. Big arm movements come from a big handkerchief, not from flailing the arms. The contrast between different basic steps should be remembered and practised.

In summary, we have lost our absolute reference, if we ever really had one, so judgements today must as much on artistic grounds as on any other. Uniqueness in the individual and the team is inevitable; even copies will be different. But good basic training, often revisited, will ensure that all is forgiven and perhaps someone will want to copy you!

1986 (MM 8-3)

Who should Dance the Morris?

In the quiet moments the philosophers of the morris talk about things old and new, right and wrong, and what they are doing and the happenings elsewhere. Sometimes there is unease about the current differences from the perceived 19th century morris even though that itself was the end product of a substantial, unknowable evolution and despite the vast social changes since, because there is no real continuity with the past. The revival of interest in the performance of the morris passed for a period through a section of our society not normally associated with preserving these traditions. Alternative justification to what is done today has been sought in aesthetics, street theatre, democracy or imagined history. Nothing is as clear cut in history as we would like, and there is always the difference between what actually happened and the perception of it that influences our actions. It is worth considering some of these uncertainties.

Who Did Dance the Morris?

Work continues to identify traditional performers, their occupations and kin groups. Eventually we will have a clear idea of the status of the dancers in their community and whether there was a decline during the 19th century. Received wisdom suggests that there was a decline from the times when a farmer's son might join, till it was done by farm labourers, but with an impression given of it never sinking to the lower strata as the morris was always more respectable than the mummers, just as beer drinkers were above cider. One expects the leader to aim for respectability to increase the box. What is noticeable is that the same people today are active in charitable work in their communities and the leaders often become local councillors. Village society changed when so many died in the trenches and it is difficult now to grasp the impact. The evidence from other dance traditions will be far less detailed than the Cotswold morris. At the moment it suggests that work or trade was a common element, miners in the North East, mill and workshop workers in the North West, and craftsmen frozen out of work in the West Midlands. It is natural that a gang was formed to dance from people who were likely to know each other socially through work or drinking. Thus a team would be drawn from a small area because of limitations at the time on cost, time and distance of travel. Members of traditional groups this century have been drawn from increasingly wider territories as mobility increased. The tradition is only going to tell us that society has changed in one hundred years.

Who Did Not Dance the Morris?

a People from Closed Villages?

One expects that the morris would only happen in a community that tolerates it and when a village was dominated by one or two landlords their attitudes prevailed. There are cases where the big house accepted or encouraged the morris. The opposite is difficult to demonstrate. There has not been systematic study of the character of places with or without the morris. Cotswold dancers could be drawn from a wide area so active local discouragement would not stop keen dancers, although their employment opportunities might be restricted. This is the level of speculation at which the answers are unknowable because we have far too few biographies at the required level of detail for any such generalisations. Thus we are left with arguments based on common sense

which unfortunately miss out the attitudes of the time because they are no longer familiar.

b Children?

The strength to sustain a day's dancing was not supposed to develop until after childhood, and starting ages of 18 plus have been mentioned. However there are cases of dancers starting at as young as eight years old, and even now youngsters have been expected to do the long all day hike at Abbots Bromley. Each group might well have had its own rules. A young dancer is an attraction, if dancing well, and it is easier to train and control someone who is still living at home. Young men can be a risky investment because of moving jobs and the distraction of courting, one reason why Bacup looked for married men. Health and stamina must be important but generalisations cannot be drawn as it is very individual. How common essentially teenage teams might have been has still to be established. The revival at Bidford was one such gang. It would not be surprising if other teams were based on unmarried men. Was it common for most of a team to be drawn from one small group? There have been children's sides in the Cotswolds, from Keith Chandler's discovery at Sherborne, to the odd sides from the turn of the century trained by traditional dancers from Abingdon, Bampton and Sherborne.

The Cotswold morris was in decline and there were alternative attractions by the time that universal education was having an impact, and the gathering of children into Church Sunday Schools, orphanages, and ordinary schools became organised so that they could be an obvious source of dancers. Maypole dancing was promulgated through such channels since just before the turn of the century, as were the later processional dances such as at Lichfield and on the Cheshire Plain. As dances went with leaders rather than communities, it was possible for particular individuals to be responsible for teams of all ages or sexes as is emerging from North West researches. Drawing examples from all the dance traditions implies the assumption that social forces dominated and were universal. This could be debated.

c Women?

During the 19th Century and even into the 1920's, girls left home about the age of 12-14 and went into service, with perhaps no more than half a day off a week. They worked long hours, and had no tradition of independent activity so there was neither the time or opportunity or encouragement. In 1980 the United Nations reported that while women and girls constitue one half the population and one third of the labour force they actually perform two thirds of the work hours. Certain women were known to have been able to dance the Cotswold morris but it was not a common feature. As a woman's property was either their father's or husband's by law, there was little financial incentive, which is also one major reason why there were so few women's Friendly Societies. Women did dance when there was either a trade or occupation that gave the opportunity, e.g. milkmaids in cities and perhaps mill workers at wakes time, but there is no indication that this was widespread and it was confined to girls and unmarried women (remembering also that puberty could come late). 19th century culture still required women to have a chaperone to be respectable so that it could never be a purely women's affair. Normal 19th century adult women's clothing was not very suitable for prolonged energetic dancing either.

Both sexes' dance opportunities were restricted and we need to know more of how the ones that did dance were able to find the time.

One result is that there are few specifically women's dances from the 19th century. That makes it difficult when, as now, women do have the opportunity and the desire to dance using traditional material. Whether their position was always so needs further consideration for the 18th and 17th centuries, but it might extend back to the times when society considered women to be chattels. We are witnessing a similar debate about women priests in the Church of England, appealing to emotional and historical truths which range from a 'new' understanding of equality and the need for 'justice' and to do 'what is right', to saying that the arguments are only part of the whole picture, and the past should not be set aside because the male role contains a truth about human nature that is permanently true and cannot be put aside.

Public Schools and the Separation of the Sexes?

Once society escaped from cooperative farm work involving the whole family where everybody could do everything, there grew up different roles and expectations for the sexes, and 'men's things and women's things' were recognised. Public schools began separate education, boys first then girls, even Sunday Schools started this way. Pubs, Trade Unions and leisure activities reinforced this division by being male centred, so there then existed a separate male culture -the rugby club or sports team, public bar drinking with darts, skittles and other games - which built up its own language and behaviour camaraderie, small groups with common interests, ie. gangs, which became the natural model for traditional dance teams. It is not that this is wrong, it is a fact that it is so, and it could be as old as the forming of single sex peer groups. Equal opportunity and sexual discrimination legislation has to exist to mitigate the worst excesses of the 'old' ideas as well as 'new' and the relationship and separation of the sexes is ingrained. The insistence on 'mixed' morris in some parts of the world loses an aspect of our culture to gain something else felt to be important. The fact that a word has to be used for it shows that there is a difficulty. Are we not in the business of preservation as well as of innovation? What is wrong with keeping some of the traditional roles and arrangements, as long as they are recognised for what they? Morris or any street entertainment should not be the battleground for sexual or any other politics when the morris has to be socially acceptable to be tolerated at all by the people at large.

The Revival?

By this I mean the Cecil Sharp initiated spread of the knowledge of the Cotswold dance outside of its native Cotswolds. The more dramatic sword dance did not have the same impact, and even today they are at least two orders of magnitude less. Until well after WWII morris clubs were fewer and smaller. There was very little street performance of the morris and the world at large did not know what a morris dancer was, where he came from or why. The EFDSS spread a knowledge through school teachers but that did not lead to street performance by either children or women. Other dance traditions - clog, Border, Molly, Garland - only appeared in strength in the last 10 to 15.

Some happenings in the same timescale were not revivals but a new flourishing, for example, the North West Morris at the start of the 20th century and the girls on the Cheshire Plain between the wars. Changes in child employment patterns, as that age

group was not required for labour intensive activities, and the growth of youth organisations have made young people's teams practical. Whiteladies Teachers Training College promulgated the Maypole and the May Queen, and Mary Neal the idea of morris and country dancing for schools, and this grew up with Empire Day, May 24th, and similar opportunities for public display by troupes, with the 20th century emphasis on the cult of the child. Perhaps the oddest turnabout is that the older children's tradition in Cheshire is being collected and danced by adults.

Who is Doing it Now?

The EFDSS objectives recognised that the dance should go back to the ordinary people. It could not depend on educated organisations, vicars or school teachers, yet there was no way of breaking through the barrier. The EFDFS led classes in the Cotswolds taught morris, country dancing and sword and enthused a generation, but did not get them to dance in their communities or on their streets. The key step forward has been the 1944 Free Education Act which brought people from the right background to meet the preservers. The first break out in numbers dancing came in the mid 1950's. Then there was the opportunity of the discovery of new Cotswold traditions and the other English dances which spawned its own waves of teams and the process is still going on. Teams come while others go, it has always been the way of the world. The dancers now are still often professional people, financially middle class but socially still with their roots below. There is now a large number of people who can teach the morris of such diverse backgrounds, that someone suitable for any group can be found.

Are We There?

If the aim was to restore to a situation of local dances performed in local communities then it has not been achieved. Clubs exist that fit into today's society but drawn from wide areas. There are no family, work or community ties to hold them together, nor community expectations to cause them to get a team out each year. Only with the Combe Martin Horse has the community taken up and taken over a revival. Elsewhere, like the Whittlesea Straw Bear, the community is taking its own group to its heart, but the normal is of dance troupes doing their own thing as an occasional entertainment. If the morris arose from seasonal good luck visiting (ritual) why is it so obviously absent? Dancing at Fetes, shopping centres and outside distant pubs is not being a part of the community but going for ready made audiences and keeping them at a distance. What there is, is a response to our current social conditions, but it has much more in common with mediaeval travelling players than the likes of Helston or Padstow. Ah! you should say, was the morris ever a part of the community? I cannot produce hard evidence one way or the other, but I would not be surprised if conditions today are close to the way things always were, with much of the morris self centred. Community involvement is my ideal. It remains to be seen if the existence of women's morris has slowed or speeded the transition from dance troupes to community involvement. The truth is that if people want to dance they will, and if you do not like what they do, you have to, not hinder!

1987 (MM 9-1) V 1.2 1994 Roy Dommett, with amendments.

Writing that article

Magazines are always short of material for publication yet many people have the germ of an idea for one within them and only lack the discipline to put it onto paper. The biggest problem always seems to be how to assemble enough thoughts and to present them in a logical order.

The traditional method taught in schools works from the top down. The title suggests headings which can be broken down into paragraphs and then supporting ideas. The balance within the article and the credibility of the arguments can be seen continuously. The technique implies that you start with it sorted out in your mind. The more practical alternative is to find out what you have to say and then structure it.

Choose your topic - something that has been recently on your mind or perhaps has been building up over some time rather than something which requires correlation of book found information. Have a few initially blank A4 sized lined sheets as used by students - scraps of paper and backs of envelopes are only for emergencies. Thoughts will not come in a logical order so capture the ideas by writing them in the random order that they occur to you or arise in some discussion. Do it as it happens, do not imagine you can recollect everything at some later time. Odd sentences, phrases or even just key words will do - the only criterion is that you can read them later. This activity can be spread over several periods - it might even he worth carrying a jotting notebook with you during this time. You will want about 3 or 4 handwritten sides for a convenient sized article.

Look at what you have and breakdown the ideas into a number of headings that fit the material. Then allocate the rough notes to the headings and number them into some sort of order. Now write them out again, but in sentences and with some of the links put in, so that you can check the balance of ideas and headings and can see what you are actually trying to say. It is now not a bad time to talk it over with somebody else who may have different insights.

The real work is in the final stage. Insert anything else that needs to be said. Look hard to eliminate the bits that do not say much, the long phrases that can be shortened, the involved sentences that can be clarified. Prune, slim and hone till what you want to say is clear to the reader. Put it aside for a few days and come back to it with a fresh look. Do not strive too much for style but aim for flow and readability.

Two pages of A4 typed at double spacing fits a magazine quite nicely - about the equivalent of 4 handwritten sides. If it is up to twice that length then it would have to be a major feature in the magazine and so would have to be a major contribution, and the editor’s assessment of the topic’s worth in column inches may not be yours.

1988 (MM 9-2)

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, e.g. 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 ½" hems and the larger 1" so that they are sold as 11", 17" and 22" 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 average 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, Percale (brushed cotton/polyester nix), 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. 1G6 1QQ (phone 0268 745 106/206)

1991 (MM 10-1)

Humour in the Morris (parts 1, 2 and 3)

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, e.g. 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 men's 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".

Sources of ideas

Stunt ideas can come accidentally. Pilgrim were dancing a Ducklington "Arran Sweater", really a Fieldtown "Balance the Straw" to the Bucknell "Room for the Cuckoo" tune when the landlord shouted "Keep dancing while I get my camera!" So they kept on, adding more rounds and starting to invent new versions of this figure with different pantomimic actions until they had done 21 all different. Now it is used to bring members of the public into a dance and, because of its length, people can change in and out, while the foreman tries to be creative in suggesting fresh actions.

Having the audience join in is always a temptation and some sides have a simple dance for this purpose. The crowd usually enjoys having some of them actively joining in the fun. Minden Rose have a simple quadrille garland dance called "Jane Austen" which because it is worked in pairs can be danced with half of each pair of dancers drawn from the crowd, Farnborough would use a "Bromsberrow Heath" stick dance, but in a continuous circle formation. Rather than have problems with the turning round at the ends of a reel, it works well in a circle as the volunteers can keep weaving in the same direction.

Some ideas come on the spur of the moment. Hobbies Bobbies were asked to do something at a social dance after a tour on the day of the 1990 World Cup third place play-off, when they had not prepared anything beforehand. After a few moments thought outside in the passage they danced "Vandals" with the 13½% extra beer cans instead of sticks, as football supporters. After the chorus clashing, the first time they took a long swig from the can and the second time they simulated the action and noises of being sick. At the end of the dance they all collapsed onto the floor. Typically stunts need some preparation, special equipment and sometimes even a practice! Grand Union did rapper with those long thin balloons used by conjurers and clowns to make dogs etc.

People can be encouraged to produce ideas. At the Halsway Advanced Morris Weekends

in the 1960's, organised by Bob Bradbury, it was difficult to follow the Saturday evening party with something serious first thing on Sunday morning so the attendees were divided into teams and given a task based on manuscript, a tune or just an idea. Bath City created a blacksmith's dance as they just happened to have a croquet set and a log with them. Moulton did the Battle of Waterloo to the "1812" complete with paper cannon and final heap of dead. Jim Reynolds got a group to be very non-Puritan using wallpaper rolls in a number of surprising ways. Mind you, Jim could be persuaded to jump through a paper covered hoop. A nine mens morris was good enough to be danced by clubs afterwards. A twelve person dance produced at a similar session at a Broadwood Itchingfield weekend was very clever but who ever has twelve dancers?!

Naturally funny dances

The fun in a dance can be inherent in the movements used. There are a number of stick dances that exploit the Brimfield napping, with one side holding their stick still and slanting upwards from about waist level while their opposites belabour them (dances often called "Much Wenlock"). How the receiver responds is part of the act. Some dances when done without their music can be amusing. It is not unusual to find sides dancing one stick chorus during a dance unaccompanied. There was possibly a serious Midland tradition which was without musical instruments except that the dancers movements, steps and sticks provided a rhythmic complexity to compensate.

The Seven Champions once found themselves a dancer short, but instead of adjusting the dances, proceeded as if the person was there, pantomiming his presence, rather like Mr Pastry's solo presentation of the "Lancers Quadrille". It was so effective that Bert Ferris (founder of the Ferris Moderation movement - think about it!) is a regular performer.

The traditional pub dance of the various Four Hand Reels were frequently done in order to tread on toes in the stepping or to fling dancers off balance in the swings, both to embarrass and to force the loser to buy the next drinks. There was a similar objective in "Three Jolly Sheepskins" danced purely as a continuous sheepskin hey around three hats, glasses or similar objects till one of the performers made the inevitable mistake.

In Dorset there is the tradition that a group starts with an Eight Hand Reel and carries on till persons start to drop out and the dance progressively becomes a Seven, Six, Five, Four and Three Hand Reel. Changing in and out, especially pushing in inexperienced people, can be enjoyable to watch.

Dances are supposed to be interesting for their skill element, but with a little encouragement they can be fun as well. The jig "Ladies of Pleasure" includes a hockle-back step which can be more exaggerated in each repetition. Basically the same dance can be performed to "Widdicombe Fair" with the chorus mostly hockles allowing the dancer(s) to disappear into the audience before capering forward.

Morris clowning can interact with the dances. The Farnborough Morris fool will form a crocodile of spare dancers and audience members, each bent forward like old men and using a morris stick like a walking stick and then lead them through, back and forward

and around the set during a dance. A particular target dance is their Beansetting dance called the "Old Men's Dance" based on the Brackley version. The crossings are done like old men and they end facing out leaning on the top of their stick and then spring to life with all dancing two doubles and hooking to face front.

How ridiculous can you get?

The Cotswold Morris does not lend itself to parody in which something outrageous is foisted on the public as serious and accepted by them because it is good entertainment. The pseudo Molly had examples from the Seven Champions to Paddington Pandemonium Express and the Wally Molly. There are ridiculous Cotswold dances such as "Jockey to the Zoo" in which during each corner crossing the dancers imitate an animal nominated by the foreman, such as crocodile, gorilla, snake, stork etc. and has elephant rounds, in which the dancers link hands between their legs.

Other examples are the "Hartley Lying-down Dance", the Victory Morris "Four Old Men's" stick dance and versions of the Scandinavian two-man "Ox Dance". A mixture of silliness and a physical feat is the double deck, i.e. piggyback, "Bluebells of Scotland", with both having sticks and doing the tapping. There is a US dance with its choruses drawn from actions that appear in well-known American TV adverts.

The Morris occasionally appears on TV or in the cinema, although seldom in a serious role. I once helped a performance of Abbots Bromley in a children's play called "Shadows" and a realistic ribbon dance appeared in the Mikado. Better remembered are the real sides in "Dr Who" and "The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery". But from the time of early Tony Hancock TV with the "East Acton Stick Dance" inventive pseudo dances have been used for fun on the Russ Abbott, Bruce Forsyth and Two Ronnies shows, following in the path of a tradition of skit dances in the EFDSS Albert Hall shows.

The serious dancers' sense of fun comes out in dances with leapfrog movements, the throwing of sticks from dancer to dancer using funny or silly words and calls in the dances and even in dancing "Bonny Green" off into a telephone box. Even dancing with friable lathes, sticks of lettered confectionery rock or sticks of rhubarb can be amusing. Bath City used to morris off out of pubs to "Heigh ho", the Disney tune from Snow White, by putting on long coats and dancing on their knees. I have seen teams use kolas as a way of processing out of a pub.

A frequently used stunt is of a dancer who pretends to be hit and falls and an appeal is made for a woman to give a restoring kiss. When this happens all the rest of the team fall down. William Webb Ellis Morris Men have elevated this sort of behaviour into an art form. They also dance Brackley "Jockey to the Fair" with the men going off in the corner crossings to kiss women in the audience. At first the women are annoyed at being chosen but then they become annoyed at being missed. The audience attention to this aspect completely clouds the standard of performance of the rest of the dance.

The Coronation Morris (tune, Here's a Health unto his Majesty) is believed to come from Ravensbourne in 1953, although claimed by others since. The figures are anything called by the foreman, not necessarily consistently from one tradition and the choruses require

each dancer in turn to perform a short 4-bar solo sequence, then quickly drink a pint, the two bars of music being often drawn out, then all dance two double steps and a break on the spot.
Thanking someone who has bought a round can be done publically with a suitable dance. Using the tune, "For he's a jolly good fellow" allows the dancing of ordinary figures, with a chorus where all face up towards the Good Fellow and first one side and then the other sings "And so say all of us" while taking off and waving hats, and then all go into the next figure. Sometimes ideas are suggested by the availability of suitable props. What is the minimum number of legs needed to be able to do a dance without the dancers having to touch the ground? Many dancers have tried non-moving stick or clapping dances in confined spaces such as in cafes or railway carriages. Bath City created "Ring O'Bells" using eight chairs in two rows, in which everyone had to touch "bottom" in reaching or passing the position in which a chair is sited. Heading-up of course ends with everyone on someone's lap!

Setting up the humour

Some ideas have to be introduced to be effective or meaningful. One gag starts by explaining that one met an old dancer in a Bampton pub who was keen to dance a double jig, but when he stood up was discovered to have only one leg. He then went on to dance "Old Tom of Oxford" on one leg, and you proceed to show the audience how it was done. Sometimes people actually believe the story. Even the shortest jig seems long when you are dancing it off only one foot! You have to wrap the other one around the supporting leg, so it helps to have a baggy costume.
Bath City once had a Squire who turned out in judo kit and yellow face makeup so that he could perform stick dances with his bare hands. However it needed some explanation to the crowd to avoid it just appearing stupid. There are "Dances" which are no longer part of our islands' cultures, for example recreated or recovered Highland, Manx and Welsh dances, which are representational in the manner of dances from more primitive cultures elsewhere in the world, that need setting up if the audience is not to be puzzled or turned off.

Competitive dances can be easier to work in although they must still be justified if not to appear alien. The "Monkey" dance exists in several forms. The common feature is that the dancers squat and kick alternate legs forward, somewhat like Russian dancers, with their arms out at the sides balancing, with arms folded over the chest, or with arms bent so that the hands are under the armpits and the arms waggled like chicken wings The competitors squat in a line and continue till only one is left upright and dancing, or they work in pairs and have a knockout, or they hold one hand with the opposite and in addition attempt to pull, push or twist the other over while continuing to dance themselves.

Athletic feats more like gymnastics to music are a part of most cultures from the Caucasus to the American West. They are often included in the climax of Russian Folk Dance performances. One such feat was recorded at Adderbury. Although one would not ignore any talent in this direction, it is difficult to have only one person who can "tumble" and it should be supported by several dancers, each of whom has his own trick.

Singing can be an integral part of a dance. It was common as an introduction to dances at Adderbury, as well as having some things that are best described as songs that have a stick tapping chorus. The North Leigh side used to stop just before the end of a dance and sing a chorus (probably breathlessly!). Dances can be choreographed to sea shanties. "South Australia" is a common dance the other side of the world and it can be made to go with a swing if the dancers sing without a musical accompaniment. An extension of the idea is to make the figures representational as well, for example, illustrating movements typical of a steam driven engine.

1991 (in MM 10-1, 11-1 and 11-2)

Incomplete Set: Cotswold Dances for Three; Dances for Four and Five, Adding another Dimension

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 (e.g. Forest of Dean), Baton Twirling, Rhythmic gymnastics with apparatus (e.g. a stick and ribbon) and jigging by Hobby Horse (e.g. 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, unicycling 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, e.g. from the Isle of Man.

There are comic or fun dances from Europe, e.g. "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, e.g. "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, e.g.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 e.g. 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 Tester's "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, e.g. 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.

Stick Dances

Sticking has to be with someone! Half a Cotswold set gives either

(a) three dancers in a line

To maintain symmetry, the centre can tap with one end and then with the other end, then all three dance half a Reel of Three and repeat all to place. The choruses that fit this pattern are those where the tappings in bars 1 and 2 are duplicated in bars 3 and 4. An example is "Balance the Straw" (Fieldtown). Another is "The Bull" in the Fieldtown style from Great Western Morris.

Here the middle faces down and raises their stick in both hands overhead on the first beat of bar 1 and the top hits the middle's stick over the middle's head in the middle beat of bar 1, then the middle faces up and the bottom hits them similarly on the middle beat of bar 2. Then follows the inverse, the top faces up and raises their stick overhead in both hands and the middle hits it also facing up on the middle beat of bar 3, then the bottom faces down and raises their stick and the middle hits it, now facing down on the middle beat of bar 4.

(b) three dancers who form into a circle. The virtue of this configuration is that tapping can be "passed" on around the circle. It was attempted on Wheatley Day of Dance by half the Adderbury side when the other half inadvertently went down the M40. A typical arrangement could be: 1 hits 2 (bar 1), 2 hits 3 (bar 2), 3 hits 1 (bar 3) and 1 hits 2 (bar 4).

One can construct handclapping dances along the same lines.

Handkerchiefs

Movements requiring a recipient might be handled like the stick dances above. Some choruses, such as those in "sidestep and half-hey" dances can be done in a line without an opposite. The lack can even be exploited in that all the dancers could face alternately to the right and to the left, either for different choruses or within one chorus. They could even face up, across, down and out in successive repetitions.

Dances that have a "cross over and hey on the wrong side" in the chorus can be performed with no change, as the repeat back to place makes the symmetry.

Corner dances present difficulties. One solution is to dance the corner movement as a solo, like a jig, rather than competitively, and also to exploit a freedom of path not available with a full set of dancers.

Half Ducklington

The Ducklington tradition is unusual in having a suite of dances without the usual Cotswold figures, being set dance variants of jigs. Jockey to the Fair, Nutting Girl, Princess Royal and Shepherd's Hey have figures which were done 2-by-2 and which can be done 1-by-1 and the choruses done with all facing to one side. Some traditions such as Ducklington and Wheatley lack the common to-and-fro figures such as Half-Gyp, Back-to-back and Face-to-face. Consequently they are easy to adapt.

Corner dances can sometimes be changed to a Cross-over and hey on the other side form. "Lollipop Han" can become "Bobby Shaftoe" by all dancing simultaneously with one's opposite rather than the corner and crossing over on the spring capers and jump, then going into a half hey the easy way.

Those figures

When Janet Blunt and her friends were noting the Adderbury dances from William Walton they naturally had difficulty in distinguishing between Foot Up, Foot Down, Processional Up and Processional Down when shown them by a single person. The differences are actually small, as are the variations between the paths of the forward and back figures elsewhere. Without an opposite, the slanting paths and lateral movement in Half-Gyp, Back-to-back etc. can be ignored, leaving only two basic movements;

1) forward and retire backward twice eg. Foot Up twice, Half-Gyp, Back to Back.

2) forward and turn to come back to place forwards eg. Foot Up and Down, Whole Gyp, Hands Round and even Cross Over.

Thus dances can be constructed with either or both of these two figures performed in any of the tour basic directions of up, down, left or right. All could be called Foot * !

Dances for Four

This continues Roy's series of how to improvise when you lose part of the team and still have to put on a show or how to put on a longish performance with a small number of people!

Dances for four imply starting in a square, either facing the centre or side-by-side facing the other pair. The formation allows the exploitation of features not available when in a set of six. The solutions can be different to those suggested for three dancers. To be successful the changes to make a dance "work" should appear choreographed, that is

something definitely different and not fudged. The adaptation of dances has to face two issues.

(a) Alternatives to the Morris Half Hey

The following may be used to replace the half heys, either using the same substitution throughout a dance or to use them all.

1. Rounds

The simplest and least interesting possibility is to use half rounds instead of the half hey and to drop rounds out of the figure order. A variation could be to start with a cross over and then move into the remainder of half rounds.

2. Diagonal Cross and Back

First corners move cross and turn in the opposite diagonal's place and come back, passing right shoulders both times and taking 4 bars in all. The second corners do the same but not quite simultaneously, lagging sufficiently to cross behind the first corners. It is a simple movement but it has a lot of bustle.

3. Diagonal Reel

The first corners move into the centre, bearing to their left passing right shoulders, going into a Reel of Four on the diagonal and starting by passing their original opposite by the left shoulders. The dancers end the half reel in the diagonally opposite place. They have to get a move on. There is no time for a hesitation in starting the movement because of the distance to be travelled. Alternatively, or in a repeat, the other corner could lead into the reel.

4. The Figure

Instead of thinking of a set of four as the end pairs of a set of six, they could be the top two pairs. The middles following the tops is the basis of "The Figure" of the Stourton Caudle Stave Dances. Both pairs face up to start and each second follows their first. The top pair casts out and moves down until they are passing outside their seconds, they then turn in to face across and start a half Reel of Four cross the set, ending finally in the opposite place from which they started.

5 Round the Square

Opposites move forward and meet right shoulder to right shoulder and swing, by the hand, elbow or waist hold, once or twice round. Then move on to meet the person who was originally their neighbour, on the far side of the set and swing again, either the same hand or the reverse. They are now half way round. To complete the second half, continue for two more repeats to get back to their starting places.

b) Adjustments to the Figures

1. Square Morris

The intermediate figures have two halves. These can be split, doing the first half with one's opposite across the set and the second half with one's neighbour along the side of the set. This concept seems to go well with stick dances.

2. Line Morris

This concept is rather like turning the set inside out. The team's starting position is in one line rather than in two lines <l <2 <3 <4.

Figures:
Foot up etc: as one would expect.
Half Gip: done moving out to the side, two going one way and two the other and the second half being to the other side. Suggest that the set is thought of as normally l > <2 3> <4 so that dancers do the first half to their left and the second to their right. Note that this is out at right angles to the line, not shoulder to shoulder as in normal Cotswold Morris .
Back-to-Back: done along the line with the dancer one is facing.
Rounds: the dancers move out to their left so that they move easily into a circle going clockwise.
Hey: is a Reel of Four along the centre line.

Choruses:
Some choruses are easily adapted by -
(i) dancing the distinctive part in the pairs and then doing a half reel. Examples could be clapping dances.

(ii) move forward during the distinctive part, passing as in a reel and then doing a half reel back to place. In this arrangement there is no need to repeat the second half of a chorus to get back to place! Examples could be "Bobbing Around" and other active dances that do not require partner interaction. This concept seems to go well with handkerchief dances.

Dances for Five

The asymmetry of five dancers is difficult to handle. There are two obvious starting patterns:
(a) four in a square and the other in the centre, as for the pips on a playing card.
The fifth dancer would act as a wild card , in the centre for foot-up and rounds and able to dance a path at will in the intermediate figures , perhaps joining one group for half of whole gip or hands round etc. making it a threesome and changing to the other group for the second half.

The obvious chorus pattern is the Dorset Five Hand Reel with the four corners working together along the diagonals and the joker moving out of phase with them.

(b) three on one side and two on the other
Rather than make the foot-up unbalanced, all the dancers could face the centre and dance to and from the centre rather than up and/or down the set. The half gip works only to one side or shoulder, the three embracing the two, thus it should be to the same side twice (like Kirtlington). Back-to-Back would be best done as a crossover. Heys for five would take too long, but a reel of four with one of the ends, probably preferably the bottom, dancing a half or whole round as appropriate on their own outside would be acceptable.
If the set starts in a ring, there need be no natural top direction and choruses could rotate around the set each dancer in turn being the equivalent of the leader. Chorus stepping e.g. sidesteps and jump, could be danced facing the centre rather than to an opposite.

Adding another Dimension

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

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

One possible formation is an extended asymmetric five,

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   2    4    6

1     3     5     7
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Another is to have a three' embedded within a 'four",

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2        4        6

1     3    5     7
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which can be worked as if it were,

```
2                              6
                4
        3                5
1                              7
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The challenge is the choreography when going to three rows of dancers,

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        2                5

1               4                7

        3                6
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Barley Morris had a dance for six in a related formation,

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        2                5

                3                6
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1 4

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

2 5 7

3 6

1 4 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 6 9

2 5 8

1 4 7

and this suggests another formation for seven,

3 5 7

2

1 4 6

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

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

1990-1992 (MM 10-1, 11-1, 12-1 and 12-2)

The Early History of the Morris (parts 1 & 2)

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

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

When and perhaps how did the early dance concepts diffuse?

Fashion, armies, specialist industries, immigrants and tribal movements such as the gypsies are possibilities. There had long been a belief in the literature for a Spanish Connection and 80 years of the morris revival has failed to substantiate an alternative. Eleanor of Aquitaine, John of Gaunt and the Black Prince with the English King's Angevin empire which persisted in Gascony till 1453, Catherine of Aragon and their entourages might have provided the cultural links but there is no hard evidence and the dates seem difficult to reconcile as primary causes[1, 2, 3, 4]. The morris did appear at the court of Henry VII, and he was exiled in Brittany and Paris where the French companies of fools and lords of misrule were active, and this is a possibility, even though the earliest English references are from 1458 and 1466. Various European countries claim reference to what they interpret as morris or an associated activity before the English sources appear. However there is no examination in English of the early European references or of the etymology of the European words for the equivalent activities to consult.

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

triumphal entries etc. and of course the morris.

Why is there little pre-16th century?

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

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

What was 'it' Called?

The Annals classified the sources over the span 1501 to 1750 under four types : morris : all words that end in the sound /s/ : moreys, mores, morrice, morisse; moorish : all words that end in the sound /sh/: moorish, morish; Moresque : all words that end in the sound /sk/ without a following vowel sound : morisk, moruske; morisco : all words that end in the sound /sk/ with a distinct following vowel sound : moresco, moresca.

First the references are dominated by words like "morris" (728) and not by those that have often been seized upon for origin explanations (116 for the three other groups). It is significant to consider the type of source that uses the more exotic names. From about 1600 many of the uses were found in dictionaries which can be assumed to preserve the less usual words and also to quote from previous publications. An analysis of the actual phraseology of the dictionary entries might be interesting. Incidentally a 1811 "Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue" defines 'morris off' politely as 'get you gone' making it the equivalent of rather more vulgar modern expressions!

Occasional usages occur throughout the period considered and do not cluster early as would be expected if the exotic names derived from a recent origin. It suggests that we search for the origin of the morris within the 'morris' family of words, and see the other words at best as minor threads.

Where was it Performed?

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

Some venues have more importance than others. Royal and noble locations are paramount at the outset (1510-40), quickly overtaken by urban (1540-1600), which in turn are usurped by village (1600-1720), with private houses beginning to make inroads as the period ends. The trends for who gives financial support are very similar going from the state, to guilds mostly in the London area, the church, local towns and villages and finally individuals and households. The key role of the church in the transformation of the official attitude to the morris is plain. From being supportive in the 16th century, there is an expansion of church legislation against dancing coinciding with the shift of dancing from urban to village settings, except in a small area of the south Midlands, so that the later shift to 'private' support appeared largely in that area. There are intimations of a classic pattern of diffusion. From 1450-1630 there was a general expansion from the London region, then there was a marked thinning over the whole area (1630-90) consequent on a period of some secular (1570-1600) and then intense church prosecution (1600-30), followed eventually by a renewed support away from London, most notably in the south Midlands. They confirm the lack of a real link between Maid Marion, the Hobby Horse and Robin Hood.

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

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

The late concentration of the morris to the south Midlands is suggestive of the growth of the morris form there as a village enterprise. The zone free of persecution does not match any particular county or diocese. The south Midlands shires were set up by King Edward the Elder in 911-2 for the defence of the realm and although they have engendered much local loyalty more recently they were not well matched to natural or social regions. Until the dissolution of the monasteries (1536-40) the south Midlands was in the Lincoln (formerly Dorchester) diocese then Henry VIII divided it into the new bishoprics of Peterborough (including Northants) and Gloucester in 1541 and Oxford in 1542. The civil war saw the loss of church courts.

Those sources which are from entertainment show a peaking into common parlance from 1590-1640, matching the apparent maximum in events, with a marked turn off with the Commonwealth and the Restoration, matching the change from records of a formal role for the morris to a popular entertainment. One difficulty in making comment based on the Annals is that there is no comparable related material readily available in a similar form[12], for example on other dance forms or drama. Quite a few references cannot be considered contemporary to an event because of the nature of the source and this makes detailed interpretation of the decadal data suspect. Interestingly nearly a third of the sources after the "set" dance appeared mention that they were mixed!

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

What did it Look Like?

Over 200 references quote some aspect of the dancers' costumes, but there are very few near complete descriptions. About half mention bells and a third the coat or jacket and all the other elements are less than a tenth of the sources. Bells and coats occur mostly before 1630. Was this significant or just the effect of a greater familiarity existing?

Out of 218 occurrences we find 116 to bells, 70 to coats and jackets, 25 to hats, 19 to feathers, 18 to shoes, 14 to handkerchiefs and napkins, 11 to ribbons, 10 to shirts, 10 to sashes and scarves, 8 to swords and weapons, 3 to baldricks, 2 to belts and only one to sticks.

The gaps are interesting. Was the morris not a stick tradition? At the beginning of the 17th century only members of the landed ruling class were allowed to carry weapons and the meaner sort of people and servants were even normally excluded from serving in the militia. Incidentally do the 19th century crossed baldricks, as suggested by Douglas Kennedy, owe much to the uniforms of the army, militia and volunteer companies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries?

There is no mention at all of the blacking of dancers' faces! The study of masking in other cultures and its degenerate face painting forms suggests that masks would have had a larger role in England at some time than appears evident now in our folk cultures. This needs further investigation.

Technology development can give historical clues. Modern ribbon making started at the beginning of the 18th century and centred on Coventry. What were the few references to ribbons about before that time? When were small bells suitable for morris costumes first mass produced, surely they were not all hand made?

What was the Social Context of Morris?

There is tremendous amount of relevant background material accessible now that can put the development of the morris into its contemporary social context, as was intended by the publication of the Annals. It was probably important that from 1620-1650 there was great financial hardship, economically amongst the most terrible in English history, that from 1641-1660 there was no effective censorship, and there was a great overturning, questioning, revaluing of everything in England. It is unrealistic to produce a detailed bibliography, but there are entry points via agrarian, economic and industry histories and I enjoyed Calder's book[13].

Some very relevant background points have proved to be very difficult to research. Just how many people died in the Black Death cannot be calculated but it was probably between a quarter to a third of the population, and the impact on the structure of society is unclear, but half the clergy perished in Oxfordshire and two thirds of the villeins in the Witney manor.

The wealth released by the dissolution of the monasteries combined with a growing shortage of building grade timber led to the "Great Rebuilding" of the 16th century in stone and brick and the rise of the County Gentry. After the Commonwealth and the Restoration, there was much new building[14]. Where there were at the start a few big houses and manors, at the end there were a large number of prosperous houses and farms to encourage good-luck or box-seeking visiting. Some counties like Northamptonshire lost the 'parish gentry' of the 1640's due to the growth of large landed estates and this must have influenced the nature of the patronage available there for the morris. In 1705 music, morris dancing and about 100 buckets, bowls and pans filled with wine, punch and ale accompanied the laying of the foundation stone of Blenheim Palace.

Little explored as an influence is the long period of contact with the trend setting cultural leading north Europeans, the Burgundians, Dutch and Germans [15] as well as the north Italians. The peak of wool export was the mid-14th century and then it changed to the export of cloth through to the 16th century, mostly organised by the Dutch through Antwerp, who also organised the export of Spanish merino wool from the ex-moorish areas. Because of the restrictive practices of the town guilds, English cloth making had spread to the villages by 1400. Cotswold broadcloth was much in demand on the continent by the late 15th century while it was still of high quality and much was exported undyed and undressed. The Dutch came to the fairs and set up collection depots. The wealth it brought to the Cotswolds can be seen everywhere in its buildings. It would be interesting if the guilds that later sponsored the morris were found to be associated with the northern European trade. Much was imported from Holland in the 17th century, heavy four wheeled wagons and the first stage coaches came from there. The best 19th century morris bells that I have heard were expensive in their time and either appearing silvery or reputedly made of Dutch metal which was an alloy of copper and zinc made in thin sheets to imitate gold leaf.

Authors Comments

By analogy with elsewhere in the world, a young man's spring celebratory dance should have existed as long as there was the time and opportunity for its performance, as

showing off, boys-meets-girl and lack of money for ale are universals. We should look for the similarities within the peripheral behaviour of more modern morris men. The morris with its relationship with patronage needs large socially structured communities and without it dancing elsewhere in Europe has been inward looking and self indulgent and not geared to public show. So that people dressed up, danced and celebrated seems very reasonable, although any continuity with historical or even modern morris is problematical, the morris absorbing such elements into some new manifestation.

Cecil Sharp and his followers developed their ideas on the history of the morris in the wake of Frazer's 'Golden Bough'[16] with its massive collection of unrelated facts linked by some concept of a common human experience. The reality is much more complex and the generalisations do not stand modern examination, even though modern research suggests that all our societies might have had a common origin not too far into the remote past.

I have had to change my perceptions of the early morris, particularly with regard to the peak of interest from 1580-1630, and that Kemp actually was exploiting a popular activity and King James' exhorting was not just an appeal for a return to old ways. It does not provide a background for the other English Morris traditions, which must therefore be more recent, but these can be explained in terms of 19th and turn of 20th century activity, except for the black-face stick-based dances. The history of blacking up, from poaching to minstrel troupes, at the popular level needs more exploration to decide where the initial impulse arose[17].

1993-4 (MM 12-2 and 13-1) revised and expanded v1-3

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Notating Dances: ancient and modern

The first to write down actual traditional morris steps appears to have been Darcy Ferris for the Bidford revival, whose papers were in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in Cecil Sharp House. Sharp evolved a simple and - he had hoped - sufficient notation which he used in his field notes, manuscripts and publications. It. was copied by Mary Neal in her handbooks and by the later collectors. It was being used in a draft Headington Quarry booklet prepared by Kenworthy Schofield in the late 1930's and in recently published Morris Federation and Ring notations. Arthur Peck, one time Ring Recorder, had tried to develop the method further, and drafted a journal article explaining it and had prepared a pocket booklet on Bampton which had a limited circulation. Lionel Bacon's Black Book picked up on all the accessible material and has reflected it, although often in an abbreviated way.

The weakness of the Sharp method is that it describes the supporting foot rather than the action of the free foot; it does not have any stress, effort of quality of movement symbols, and is fitted to a simple music notation which does not accurately reflect the subtleties of the movements which are now considered significant, although such detail was part of the early EFDSS teaching. The notation is supplemented by detailed but standardised and separate descriptions of body carriage, steps and hand movements to cover the missing information. Although presented in 4 or 8 bar phrases as appropriate, lost altogether in the process is comment on the variations through a phrase. Despite disclaimers, because the notation has been the main source for most dancers since WWII, it has led to certain characteristics in performance which might have been avoided if passed on more traditionally.

Peck recognised the need to express movement continuity and emphasised sequences. Bacon avoided the problems by omitting such detail and leaving it to be taught by 'word-of-foot'. An emphasis on learning directly from experienced and competent dancers, which policy was first established by Mary Neal at the Esperance Club, had avoided challenging the Sharp publications, but risked deviation from these sources over a period of time, as happened very early at the Esperance Club and which later led to EFDSS versions that did not match the actual performances of traditional sides.

Most teams are self-taught, not in the traditional manner, because the leaders lacked - or failed to inherit - sufficient experience before the club was formed. Notations have a role as aide memoires whether published or in club manuscripts. The Morris Federation booklets were aimed at those who through circumstances had to be self sufficient. They established a clear policy to aim for a comprehensive coverage of known variants rather than to recommend an ephemeral 'best'. There is a value in the current quality of morris notation, when it allows a freedom of interpretation or when it produces novelties.

There have been many attempts in the past to provide effective dance notation methods and these have been the source of the modern reconstructions of historical social and display dances, even though it has been with much difficulty. These are now preserved by Societies of Historical Dance. Each method had unwittingly assumed a great deal of standard, then current, knowledge and each has had to be replaced as the need to record more information for the performers has been felt.

The limitations of these older approaches for recording the professional dance has led to the recent more comprehensive techniques, which still have limitations. Like music notations which are actually an 'exact' record, there can be so much detail as to be inefficient as a working tool. I favour Labanotation which has already been used to record some Cotswold but it has failed so far to distinguish the stylistic differences between the three Bampton sides. The Morris Federation was advised by Tess Buckland to work up a Laban notation for the morris from first principles. Its role is probably to record the dancing of short phrases by individual dancers. The recording by film or video captures a complete two dimensional record of one performance on one occasion taken from one viewpoint. It does not show what the side would consider a 'best' performance because these are not supplied to order, nor will one record show the tolerance on movements that are accepted within the club. Also a 'performance' should conceptually include both the periods in between dances and the behaviour of the morris characters.

What to film is whole phrases, whole figures and whole choruses with leads in and out. The reasons why one should film or video is to explore aspects such as how costume dances, the ephemeral aspects of a performance, to archive dance notation and to show team character.

1994 (MM 13-2)

Reflections on the 1992/3 Morris Season

On watching a lot of morris in the last two years I am struck by the persistence of seriously poor social behaviour and of faults. The prime failing is the belief that morris dancers are invisible, so that like photographers they can stand or walk around in front of spectators without being noticed. This appears to be getting worse as now you can see even good sides indulge in it. If you are trying to watch or you see old folk trying to, just complain.

The next problem is morris time, not the lateness of a start, but the complete absence of any indication for assembled spectators that a show will happen. It costs little to care for the people who have troubled to come.

It should be a golden rule to practice as you intend to dance out. Which means that the shambles between dances, the arguments, the post-mortems, the unwillingness to be ready which you have got used to all through the winter have no place in the shows and should not even be indulged in at practices. Does it not occur to people that the impression being given reflects onto all morris dancers? The real folk events are organised because everyone knows what to do and how to behave; why cannot the morris sides who have attended latch onto the idiom? If 'dancing out' is just a practice night outside, do not call yourselves morris, which after all is an occasion, not just a jumble of movement to music.

There are technical failings. Why do so few bother about body language? Posture, expression and so on give messages that any spectator can understand. We all know that poor dancing is compensated for by enjoyment etc. - this is what it all means. But eagerness, attentiveness, feeling for occasion can all be communicated. Why are drummers allowed to dominate, often to the exclusion of all pleasure? Good sides' performances are ruined by noise, usually offered with woeful technique and ignorance of what is required.

Finally why has screeching developed in the Border Morris? It was hardly part of the tradition, if that is relevant to what we do today, and was not the universal rule with those modern sides that made the idiom so effective and popular. It does not add to the spectators' enjoyment and at best should be an adjunct to the excitement that the dancing should be producing, not part of the technique of generating the excitement.

1994 (MM 13-2)

Missing Cotswold Tunes

An appeal from Roy Dommett;

Every so often I make an appeal for old tunes to go with morris titles that do not appear to have survived. Previous attempts have found some, for example, The Valentine, which is now a well-known dance tune and justifies the search.

Can anyone help on:

Broad Cupid	Badby and Brackley
Cockey Brown	Field Assarts
Forestry Keepers Daughter	Bampton
Jacks the Lad	Headington
Jolly Waggoners	Brailes
Lillee Dale	Headington
Mad Kaiser, Muller or Parson	Brackley
The Old Road	Field Assarts
The Tinkers Hoard	Bampton
In Wooden Shoon	Bidford

Most of these sound as if they were songs – an indication of that would be of interest even if there is no tune available.

If anyone out there can help contact Roy at 10 Attlee Gardens Church Crookham Fleet Hants GU13 0PH

1995 (MM 14-1)

Forty Something Morris

Intro

It is very hard to generalise about something so inherently diverse as morris sides, but the more elderly should seek out and consider the lessons that other comparable activity-based clubs have found. Our weakness is that the morris was fundamentally a peer group activity. But we are facing the issue of generating and maintaining a small group to have a very wide age range, with no common link other than the morris and for which tradition provides little guide. In the 19th century the dancers had other connections and sides seldom lasted very long. This century the apparent continuity in sides is often a revitalisation by waves of newcomers combined with the regular switching of the nominal leadership under a constant team name. Is this really different?

Image

The difficulties can be made worse when the majority of a team is rather self-satisfied with their own performance standards and probably do not work seriously on maintaining individual skills which will otherwise be declining with age. Their experience makes it easy for them to pick up new material and they probably have a large and diverse repertoire which is not intensively practised. The style of the social arrangements within the club and its outings is dictated by their average personal circumstances, mostly being married with children and other significant commitments. Also there are the subtle messages conveyed by body language - the stiff torso, timings and effort - which are those of older people and which can be offputting. These signs do not encourage younger people. An age gap exists that has to be bridged. Twenty-something aged performers need clear instruction on basics, a repertoire that can be grasped, freedom to be enthusiastically involved and with few inhibiting reminders of family or other hierarchical authority.

Integration

In my experience beginners of any age are too often seen as a nuisance to the average member, to be managed by someone else rather than integrated by everyone. If all the members do not feel a responsibility then what hope is there? Most teams have an open door policy for people to join, yet treat them as strangers. Other organisations have a welcoming policy and a positive get-to-know approach. So often the newcomer is going to be reticent about their difficulties, can be slow to pick up confidence and is told little of what it was all about; all issues with which everyone can help, unless they know no better as that was their early experience as well. There should be a regular opportunity for a feedback from newcomers. Too frequently it leads to an initial second-class membership, with exclusion from some of the repertoire, being asked to watch without being instructed about what, and the imposition of rites of passage. It may have been acceptable many years ago when there was a belief in a long term commitment and people expected to rise up through the club in skills and responsibility, but is hardly appropriate today. Potential members have to be attracted, invited, accepted and integrated into a peer group not based on age and which does not provide much support in their private life.

Ideas

Traditional groups always appear to have some older members. It gives them respectability and limits excesses as well as ensuring continuity and providing a fund of practical advice. They develop and exhibit the skills needed for the morris characters that take time to find and are the models for them on which their successors will base their interpretations. They should be secure in their position as a resource. Some authority must exist for essential tasks to be done. There are a number of models for organisations with a minimum of rules or none at all.

Policy

For a club to exist is easy, but surviving the founding generation does not happen automatically and it has to be planned and worked at. Sides have to be recruiting continuously from the first day and with a clear integration policy. Because it is often the club's social aspects that attract outsiders they need to be exposed to them and involved as an incentive to join. It should be the team's responsibility to give the newcomer the same excitement as they had when they first became involved. The growth of the number of clubs in the last twenty or so years means that many older dancers started with a young peer group rather than through joining a long established team, yet are offering something different without the necessary experience.

The growth in size of a club should not be a handicap. It is always possible to form groups within a club without splitting, if the club belongs to everybody. There are always the problems in any organisation of personality and policy clashes which are thought of as more important than the club.

The pursuit of excellence appeals primarily to dancers who already have some experience. The difficulty of recruiting based on the appeal of the quality of public performance is that it can appear to be so daunting to attempt. The standard has to appear to be achievable, so too demanding a morris can be self-defeating in this respect of long term existence. Once there is a decline there are other problems in appearing attractive; we are all aware of teams past their sell-by date.

Appeal

To be successful in recruiting, it is my belief that what is offered has to appeal to people in their twenties, therefore a team needs to encompass appropriate younger attitudes and a significant gearing to their circumstances. Unfortunately characteristically young behaviour probably does not appeal any longer to many older performers, but it has to be accepted. There will be adverse pressure from older spouses. It means more than democratic equality, as it has to be biased towards the people who are not yet members. It requires tolerance and some sacrifices by the older dancers. It also means that those older, less than fully committed members cannot expect equal or preferential treatment unless they have earned the respect implied.

1995 (MM 14-2)

Garland Dances

Garland dances are widespread in Europe but not very common outside of Austria. They exist in many forms but the oldest are assessed to be those which appear to have once been sword dances and in which, due to local laws, the garland replaced the swords. The "sword" was the stock-in-trade of blacksmiths which could be worked into most implements, tool edges and, when conditions warranted it, into swords. The ban led to the use of foliage covered hoops, cooper's barrel hoops and even ropes between dancers. To be impressive the numbers of dancers can be rather large and the dances rather interminable in length.

In most places the garlands are an inverted U shape and can be exploited as a frame for the head and top of the body. Some German and Basque garlands are the size of garden archways with spikes on the bottom ends which can be struck into the ground to allow the dancers greater freedom for stepping. In Austria many are rigid and small, of "A" frame or "Δ" triangular shape, as well as complete circles. The latter is appearing in the West Country. The earliest English reference available to me was in a ballet. Earlier references to garlands are to a different type of object that is not a dance implement but something that is carried to accompany a party of dancers or singers, who are perhaps 'bringing in the May'. These are close in concept to the heavily flowered garlands in a stave pole, such as are used in Tutti Day at Hungerford and also as was used by some Friendly Societies instead of stave heads. Garlands can also mean slack streamers or decorated ribbons, like skipping ropes or even interior decorators swags.

By the mid-19th century garland dances were appearing as part of the stock in trade of the dace display choreographer along with plaited ribbon maypole dances and theatrical morris and might be seen on the stage, in at least one classical ballet, at the pleasure gardens and at revels. The Britannia Bacup and the original Whitworth dances probably date from the middle of Queen Victoria's reign, but most surviving English dances seem to be late Victorian or Edwardian period compositions. A particularly well known one is the "Victory" dance from Knutsford which was danced with a slack garland, like a flower decorated skipping rope, now preserved in performance by Poynton Jemmers.

Garland dances are still part of the repertoire of children's dancing schools and a waltz garland was performed at Knutsford May Day in 1982. This dance was done with small rigid framed garlands which allowed quick and easy change from linked to stand-alone formations. Apparently a U-garland dance was circulated amongst Girl Guide troupes after WWI and parties went out collecting along with a maypole. Simple dances suitable for such activities were being published[1] in the first decade of this century, as part of a general urge to exploit pseudo-historical material contemporaneous with the Esperance Club and Sharp, and these sources need more exploration. This was in a period of "sharing" dances and games from many cultures and the actual source is unknown. There is a photograph of schoolgirls with U-garlands and a team with a plaited ribbon type of maypole at Alton at the end of the nineteenth century[2].

The only English garland dance to include linked movements that has surfaced so far is the 'Rose' recorded from a college team from the Sunderland area at an inter-college folk event in the early 1960's, apparently created and taught to the leaders when at

school a few years before by an ex-longsword dancer from the Cleveland area north of Whitby who did not believe in women doing the traditional men's dances. Originally intended to be danced by twelve or more, it now is often done with eight with loss of scale - and even by six. English Miscellany of Open Morris used a character, carrying a separate object such as a bouquet, who passed through the figures at appropriate moments to fill out the tune. Although it was done at the fast longsword walk, the dance has been developed in both rapper-like running and slow polka-stepping versions to suit different club requirements. There are similar linked dances in Spain, Flanders and Provence.

English dances seem to include bows, made from the waist but keeping the head up, as at Bacup, Blennerhasset and in the Mayers "Maze" dance at Lancaster. Garland dances have not attracted fancy stepping sequences, although one like a Three Hand Reel was composed for Minden Rose. Within a club's repertoire, there is always a need for a variety of rhythms and speeds from waltzes to polkas and it is not unusual for a team to change the collected or acquired material for the sake of the balance in their shows.

A good garland dance uses the garland as part of the dance, rather than having the garland just to look pretty. They can be waved from side to side, laid on top of each other. or even used to catch other dancers. However, garlands have been added to existing dances such as the reconstruction of Mrs Hepple's dance. There are now in circulation a number of composed dances, ranging from the four-handed Sweet Garland dance, seen danced by Wessex Woods, the five-handed dance by Plymouth Maids, the Six-handed Tina's dance by England's Glory, up to the Wain for fourteen. This is one of very few dances with one garland shared by each pair of dancers. It is now a much longer dance than when first seen at Sidmouth danced by a visiting Flemish team as English clubs have added several good figures. Several garland dances have been composed for use in Australia, New Zealand and in the USA. I have seen there good garland adaptations of Playford dances such as Newcastle and a comic version of *Hey Boys Up We Go.*

Garlands can be made of a variety of materials - plastic domestic water pipe is just about the right diameter and flexibility and was first suggested by Tony Barrand of Boston University, USA. Some teams have used Hula Hoops, but cane is desirable if the garlands are to be clashed, or even wood steamed to a permanent shape. A set of garlands in basket wickerwork has been seen. Decoration is very much a matter of the team's personal taste. Weight seems to be an important criterion, specially if someone has to carry eight or twelve of them around.

1995 (MM 14-2)

1. G T Kimmons: The Guild of Play - Book of Festival and Dance Part 1, J Curwen, London, 3rd edition, 1907
2. Local School brochure, seen by courtesy of T Munday

New Directions

Being old, I regret the wilder extravagances masquerading as morris today.

Developments in the morris world this century have been based on several false impressions of the past whose impact is only now being appreciated. Collectors concentrated on the oldest, playing down the creative elements in the traditions, recognising the urge to improve as part of the traditional process, but not seeing the variations found as showing the equally important desire to be different, even though this was evident in the Cotswold villages where the morris had stops and starts. 'Modern' dances and tunes, such as The Rose Tree at Bampton, were ignored as untraditional, as in effect were all young dancers and their performances. To older dancers long familiarity brings an apparent stability for which there is little hard evidence.

The received traditions include many dances which have been well honed for performance and this root material can only be distorted or ignored at our peril. However they are not intended only to be for museum reproduction. We do not know how accurate is our knowledge, we do not know how complete are the surviving repertoires, and we do not know how satisfied the older dancers were with each of their individual remembered dances. The really great material for the performing arts is that which allows of continual regeneration and new insights within an accepted framework.

It is the nature of 'new' things to be explored in many ways, e.g. the Border Morris since its recreation in 1975, not necessarily all successfully. When a dance tradition was 'living', e.g. as in the North West, the variety was found to develop over a relatively short time. Once the 'novelty' stage is passed, dance idioms settle down, as did country formations and as has Carnival Morris and Formation Dancing, often within self imposed limitations, and an emphasis on quality not freakishness.

Living dance is not static but adjusts to today's needs, which cannot closely match those of the past. Modern performances are built around shows which hardly existed in the 19th century. Unfortunately, the number of recorded dances are insufficient to produce satisfying repertoires for the many attention competing clubs that now exist.

Where might the leading edge be pointing?

Cotswold

Introducing a new chorus only changes about one third of a dance and it still remains within the local idiom. Good dance ideas are invariably simple but difficult to create. It is all too easy to be complex, making it hard to learn, difficult to practice and seldom "borrowed" by other teams. Part of the future has to be the 'new traditions', probably with fresh, easy patterns rather than steps. The problem for them achieving any impact remains in providing documentation and workshops, otherwise they die with their club.

Border

This is still evolving and remains largely raw and frequently inward looking and self indulgent. There will be more ordinary public resistance to the excesses of behaviour, especially the yelling and more ridiculous dress. In general, the dances need to be

shorter, with more structure and greater attention to dance and presentation skills. The successful sides seem to be those built around 'themes', which brings them into line with minstrelsy and street entertainers rather than the morris.

North West

The tradition was of a single processional/stage dance. The problem today is of having a contrasting repertoire. The dances often appear to come 'by the yard', appropriate to unstructured procession performances, but not to more static audiences. Unfortunately, most older dances use common movements and appear repetitive in performance, but introducing a few 'Gee Whiz' figures is not enough compensation, although that was the traditional style. Because of the technical limitations of the idiom, novelty will always be important to keep the interest in dance orientated groups.

Long Sword

This appears a limited idiom whilst the dancers remain linked, although not all the possibilities have been explored, especially with regard to timings within movements. This is one area where insights from European analogues could be most illuminating. While there are some fresh dances being created, new lock forms or methods of their assembly have been little explored. It is possible to form one with only four rigid swords and there are many proper possibilities for greater numbers which are not so symmetrical as those with which we are familiar or which are patterns within patterns. Dances which depend more on the manners of forming and the patterns of the swords displayed may well have been within the tradition.

Rapper

This is a dance idiom which, like step dancing, cries out for some systematic work on possibilities, as most collected dances are sets of contrasting figures, and this does not highlight what can or cannot be done within the limits of linked topology.

Molly, Stave, Garland and the Rest

These are weak English traditions with material akin either to the other traditions or which have been largely dependent on country dances. They depend for their survivability on contrast and having a unique style. There is much printed dance material out there from which choreographies can be quarried, and that was the traditional approach!

Music

Band skills are still minimal. There is a need to think about how the tradition was used in the video Riverdance. Also the inspiration that can be gained from early music up to the end of the 17th century.

We need an honesty about the past, but also a respect, and a recognition that inexperience usually leads to mistakes.

1996 (MM 15-2)

Who Owns the Dance?

Almost by definition a "folk dance" performance is in the public domain. The legislative mistake in the past was letting collectors in effect have an exploitable copyright for the material within the culture to which the dances belonged.

Morris dancing troupes imply or profess a folk origin for their material, even though we know that it is usually only the bare bones which is preserved, and that frequently most of that done is new. Unless a team does something positive, that legal fiction, 'a reasonable person', would assume that what is shown has no associated intellectual rights and therefore not protected. The copyright resides in the records and not the performance. Having recorded your own dances on some media, it is still not enough to control its performance by others. Preventing them gaining financially is another matter.

The sources which I met were pleased to pass on dances, as long as they were to be promulgated without personal gain. None of them claimed that the dances were ever anyone's personal property. Survivors or heirs of old teams would have great difficulty in establishing rights allowing any control over performance.

Collectors reconstructing a dance from fragmentary evidence may have some intellectual property claim, if clearly stated and understood at public performance, just as there would be for the choreography of a new dance. The rights could reside with the team, if they were assigned. But the publication, teaching at workshops or public performance without mention of such caveats, is prime evidence of an intent that it should be in the public domain and that rough imitations in performance or developments of the dance would not be challenged.

The courtesy of leaving alone a long established side's special dances, as for example those of 'traditional' clubs, is a mark of respect, which most such groups have earned. However imitation is only harmful if the original sees it as threatening their own tradition.

In an age when 'tradition' is hard to grasp and to hold on to, the lack of experience of survivals and of modern expressions would be harmful to our collective future. Our only concern should be those clubs who seek dance fodder which is then poorly rehearsed and badly presented, but such standards are bad for our image anyhow.

1997 (MM 16-1)

Putting Morris in the Shade

Dancers may have noticed that the time to 'burn' in sunlight, typically about 20 minutes, seems to match the length of a typical outside show; yet little is done to counteract the effects.

Natural Protection Time depends on skin type, time of year, time of day and latitude. It can be as short as only 5 to 10 minutes for a very fair skin which hardly ever tans, but no more than 45 minutes for one that tans very easily.

No-one stays young forever. Many of the obvious signs of ageing on faces and hands, the exposed parts of the body, are due to sun damage from over-exposure to the sun through many years. Experts now say that a tan, for so long thought to be healthy and attractive, is a sign of skin damage.

Dancers must expect some exposure in the summer if they dance near midday or in the afternoon. If this is to be a regular part of the summer programme, dancers should consciously allow the time for the exposed skin to build up its own defences. They should cover up and stay in shade in between dances and shows. Hats are important even if not worn during dances. Careful attention to costume, for example, long sleeves, choice of materials and looseness of fit and the use of sunscreens are obvious self-helps.

1998 (MM 17-2)

The End of Morris

On Boxing Day 1999 we will remember an incident 100 years ago when the past met the future. Although the truth is more complex, without that one occasion it is unlikely that any morris, other than perhaps the Carnival Troupes, would have survived or have been recreated. The limited links to the 'historical traditions' are treasured, but for whatever is owed in inspiration, the current forms are modern in all their aspects. The last traditional cycle was finally interrupted by the mass killings of WWI. The current one is a post WWII creation, combined with discovery of many dances and dead traditions, their reconstructions in a new environment and the flowering again of creativity within the idioms, even where there were no traditional practitioners to guide on style and character of performance.

Once the morris had novelty value as a relic, though the variety was severely limited, it was easily identified. Now we have clubs with large repertoires of contrasting, multi-sourced dances. Today the morris appears so common and so diverse that it is an accepted part of culture that no longer needs to be 'understood'. It can be an object of fun, a typical English response to things truly cared about. What is more, there are groups that intend to be more than an entertainment, seeking originality rather than being 'traditional'. Present sides do not have an historical perspective; why should they, it has little relevance even when they claim continuity. They may perpetuate historical myths to questioners, although why they should says more about the image projected by the 20th century 'revival'.

There are two linked issues; what does morris do for the performers and what for the watchers. People join a morris for a variety of personal needs and satisfactions; the club has to balance all these, thus each team will be different. Do foremen or sides ever talk about this, or think about the inherent quality of the morris and what they can expect to get from it? For some it is the pursuit of excellence, for others the generous rhythmic movement provides its own magic; they may not feel the need of an audience. But the morris exists for performance, to be a happening, an event or an occasion and should not be reduced to just an evening out from home. The watchers add another dimension. By the choice of dance, costume and behaviour, most teams project an image which implicitly recognises having spectators.

The morris is a living folk art, done today for primarily the inner feeling it develops in the performers and not for any community objective. This feeling has to be enough to carry them through a long practice season. The dances have been 'given back' in the sense that they are now widely danced outside their original home territories by ordinary people, but in a modern environment. They have not returned to the communities, but recent research suggests that such involvements were always the exceptions and that the concept was an Edwardian illusion. Supposedly, for it to be 'traditional', people had to grow up and grow old knowing that it was there, and could be expected on its proper day, now an impractical criterion. The morris was always an addition, not a centrepiece, but the involvement was always rewarding.

The morris is not subservient to organisation, at its best it is mischievous, irreverent and interactive, hence the common dislike of the distancing principle of paid engagements.

Even the traditional mummers recognised two production standards, one for the street and the other in the private house. Yet still the teams remain isolated and basically inward looking, as the unavoidable common dynamic of the social relationships within a small group working as a team. People commonly 'grow' through involvement with the morris, but forget to upgrade the club dynamics, in the same manner as teams seldom revisit and improve their first learning dances.

The standard of dancing has hardly improved over the years, but that state is often justified by appeal to some ill-defined process, not by learning from better examples. However there never was a golden age. The teams Cecil Sharp saw were thought to be nothing special, but the morris concept appeared to have promise, which it still does, in terms of skill, self expression and enjoyment within the reach of ordinary people. There will be little further progress because the morris' role and its rewards, not being articulated, are difficult to explain, let alone amplify. Do standards matter? Is it enough to enjoy it and amuse the crowd? An unstructured approach is all too common, there is a woeful ignorance of the underlying basics.

Sides do not grow up in an environment inheriting good practices and attitudes and there is no proper mechanism existing for learning or obtaining help and advice. Every side appears to learn them from scratch, rather than starting from some established common position, as do all other activities which involve training. But to change it could put the morris on a par with the continental folk troupes with their over-emphasis on roots and preservation. The morris is a heritage to be used, not frozen and institutionalised. But what on earth is special about the association with the supposed age of morris?

It does not help that the intrinsic appeal of the morris is such that older dancers can truly care and become concerned over any reflection on it from poor behaviour or performance. Too often published comment is one-sided and rooted in the authors' past. The innovators seldom have time to write, yet they have the long term greater influence. All modern changes started somewhere and if they had been choked off there would be no morris. There must be room for the less usual groups, as long as they are not slavishly imitated. The broader the base the more the niches that will exist. The poor ideas will die away naturally within a few years and their negative impact can only be a local setback. A danger, so often met in the folk press, is the premature praise of new trends which after a few years are all but forgotten, although the lack of judgement by the announcer and followers may not be. Leave the cutting edge alone, it will be naturally survival of the fittest!

Is all well? Some things had to change, the 'show', the revival's 'demonstration' had no traditional guidelines, because that was not the way the dances were used. What are the signs of unease, that is, the attempts to improve? The new dances: invention and 'borrowing' was always a part of the tradition, but the complexities introduced now are often apt to appeal to the dancers, not to the audience. The advent of the massed musicians is another change, but volume does not equal better. Little thought is given to the quality of the music and its fitness for the idiom, yet there cannot be good dance without sympathetic music. There is excessive and often pointless noise from the dancers, yells should be enhancers of an atmosphere already being generated, not an

initiator, because it puts off the spectators. It is even rehearsed! Is the morris reacting, as are many sports struggling for new images, to regain lost supporters by altering the game? If so, there is something widespread happening in our society. However we have to take seriously the instinctive responses to it of our ordinary dancers.

It is difficult to suggest such a universal issue without considering the common faults sides exhibit which could be part of the coming downfall. There exist poor PR, bad timekeeping, being organised by the older leaders to suit the middle aged dancers, forgetting to give newcomers the same exciting environment as they had at their start, and not stepping back from control when there are younger dancers. This must be tempered with recognising that some people are born leaders but that the longer someone rules, the more likely it is that they cannot be followed. Unfortunately the regular change of club officers ensures a conservative, not necessarily healthy, environment.

Many sides share outings with guests, presumably to generate an interest and have an audience, although frequently they do not watch each other between their own dances. Since when did any side have a post-mortem on what the guests did, in order to learn something from them? Is there anything better seen that teams should do? Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, clubs continue out just as they do at private practice. I thought that everyone knew that the habits and behaviour at practice sessions got carried over into public display. Do the inactive dancers ever watch their own team at practice, or do they just socialise? Just look at what happens between dances. Why do they think they are invisible and inaudible? Do they consider the impact of their own "body language" on the spectators? Attention is seldom given to other flaws that undermine audience interest, the lack of showmanship, distracting casual chatting, standing in front of the audience and the lowest common denominator – noise of massed instruments.

But there is a major disturbing trend. It is my experience that a new problem is appearing with the regular evening out. Some pubs are packed with young drinkers, but most are either restaurants or near empty. Good spots are now hard to find and teams travel miles for them. Pubs are not as social as formerly. The issue is not the intrinsic merit of the morris but the absence of watchers. That it is an ancient art is not enough reason today for expecting outsiders to be automatically interested. The future of the morris is probably that it is to be ignored, so that the impulse to dance gradually fades. I give it fifty years at most in England, as so many folk activities appear to go in century-long cycles. The second half of the next century could still have a "morris" but not as we know it. Society changes and a stable morris will find it is not relevant. It happens all the time. We must consider what the morris' role is and how to present the morris as natural.

It should be, "It's England in summer and it's cricket and morris"

2000 (MM 19-1)

John Forrest's long awaited book "The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750"

The Morris has no discernable pagan origins

The Book

This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to say, or think, anything factual about the 250 years of morris ahead of that 250 year period covered by Keith Chandler and the modern revival. That's the 400 years before a mention of ritual and fertility! The book has been a long time a-corning, I saw an early, and for me a very influential, draft in Charlottesville at Jim Morrison's in 1978. It was then based on material collected whilst John was still living in England. Such a specialist topic had difficulty finding a publisher and many dancers contributed to its publishing fund. In the meantime there has been the Early Morris Annals written with Mike Heaney, with all its tabulations ripe for further analyses, and also the book on the Matachin stick dances. Incidentally, thought- provoking films of its' Spanish-American Indian derivatives can be seen in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington[1].

A précis cannot do the book justice. When, where, what and how they looked - all different from the more familiar later period. The source material used is that which specifically referred to morris. It is an appreciation of it all, but full transcriptions are lacking, as they would have made the book far too bulky. The book is not a history, just the evidence that survives. The study could not address every aspect of the morris, the approach adopted cannot find everything that is relevant, and there is much yet to be done to put it into context. A broader net is needed. But it is comprehensive enough; the wider implications will not be changed by any material still to be found. The morris in England went from being sponsored at the highest level as fashionable and expensive, to being supported by private patronage, continually adjusting to the changing social circumstances, as one would expect of something opportunist and not embedded in a ritual year. Costs were very important when life was much more marginal[2]. The story unfolded is probably close to the truth. Forrest has made good use of graphical representations, using modern statisticians' techniques to expose relationships.

I hope that those long-conditioned to another version of the past will give this one a chance, unlike those people who could not accept the four equally professional and relevant undermining studies[3] by Prof Ron Hutton of Bristol University. Modem research often shows that the true origins of things can be quite different from the popular imagining; the Uffington White Horse appearing pre-historic yet the Cerne Abbas Giant probably being from Cromwell's time[4]. Too many of the views in the past have depended on no positive evidence being seen as no proof of absence. Like Keith Chandler, I rather thought that the apparent truth would win out. More attention has to be given to what was said at the time, and not to the imposition of a modern model of what was desired.

The UK Beginnings and Overseas Influences

The earliest references are to artifacts, not to performances in England. They could be imports or copies of objects from Flanders, Holland or Germany where the morris (and cricket?) was already extant. Surprisingly I found in 1993 that copies of the early

German grotesque morris figures were still on sale in small towns around Munich such as Otterbrun. There is a chronic need for publishing, in English, comparable studies of European traditions[5, 6].

Missing are the linkages with European cultures[7]. British history from the mid-17th century obscures that it was a backwater before, and dominated by the Low Countries and Burgundy court and mercantile cultures. Many technologies, new crops and agricultural techniques, financial and marketing methods were gained from the then-world leaders, and a wool trading network was set up. Cultural celebrations were imported by the English merchants[8].

The perceived importance and commonality of the morris at the time must be found by relating to the frequency of mentions of what we would consider similar activities. The volumes of Early English Drama Records, produced by the University of Toronto, include many dance instances which deserve a statistical analysis. A set exists in the Vaughan Williams Library. But the morris does not appear in many detailed accounts of Queen Elizabeth's travels[9]. However the chief value of the morris material is the cross check that it gives on other historians' viewpoints. But that also depends on escaping from the fog of "explanations" of past community celebrations[10] whose real role was in maintaining a sense of local belonging[11]. Typical has been the interpretation of pamphleteers' over-the-top rantings as reflecting actuality. Maypoles were a symbol of licence, attracting crowds when there was no mechanism for any community control, and not to do with the Victorian indirect fascination with sexual images. Maypoles and football matches were commonly banned to avoid crowds assembling when there was a risk of sedition or riots spreading.

The Religious Dimension

That the world was being turned upside down had an important bearing on the early history of the morris. In 1350 1% of the population lived in monasteries. There were Societies, Fraternities and other peer groups, with Chantries and other religious celebrations including processions, especially at Corpus Christi and the many local holy days. England was probably the most Catholic Christian state in Europe. Then the plagues, the Renaissance, Henry VIII, Protestantism, books, etc. changed peoples' personal attitudes to the relationship of the individual to the community and conspicuous display with self promotion became the thing[12]. Henry VIII created new but poor dioceses and appointed pro-protestant bishops to solve his problems, the impact of which occurred in the reign of Edward VI[13]. Lists of bishops exist[14], their views and allegiances can be recovered and hence the likelihood established of them coming down on the 'popish' morris.

Playford

Unfortunately Forrest accepts the long-held view of a folk origin for Playford's dance material. Keith Whitlock in Folk Music Journal 1999[15] shows that it mostly derives from the masques through Playford's professional contacts. What little notation exists outside is for much simpler dances. His first volume was published during period of unrest of the Civil Wars. What is never mentioned in the literature is that, it is estimated, 1 in 4 to 1 in 3 able-odied men bore arms, 85,000 died in battles and 125,000 more from non-combat

causes out of a population of about 5 million, a percentage as bad as modern world wars with all their tremendous impact on our culture and society. A good analysis of contemporary local attitudes is found in Stoyle's book, albeit mostly for Devon[16].

One lesson is that we cannot read back from the relatively well known mid- to late-19th century, because then the morris was in terminal decline in competition with all the alternatives[17].

2000 (MM 19-2)

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Roy Leonard Dommett- the authorised autobiography

The story so far! (to 1985)

I was born in 1933, married in 1955 and have 7 sons, and a daughter.

The morris discovered me at Bristol University in the early 1950s where I met Alan Browning, musician, rapper enthusiast and friend of Peter Kennedy. Through sharing a room with Alan at the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE)'s hostel in 1954, I became a founder member of the Farnborough Morris, originally centred on the RAE, and over the years did most jobs: leader, announcer, fool and playing. I also danced for several years with another non-Ring side in the area, the Border Morris, based at first at Woodlarks, near Farnham, and then at Holybourne, Alton, under the leadership of Miss Mary Ireson, a fine pre-war dancer.

The collecting started in 1958, as did the calling for barn dances. A slack period at work enabled the copying of dance material from the Sharp microfilms in 1960. There followed a short, but very intense, period of gathering manuscript material together and visiting many of the earlier collectors, including most of the survivors of the early Travelling Morrice tours of the Cotswolds. There were many collecting trips to the Cotswolds in those days, by public transport, with Frank Purslow mainly. In this period, there were interviews with old dancers at Abingdon, Bampton, Bidford, Eynsham and Ilmington and the meeting with men who knew something of the morris at Ascott, Ducklington and Leafield. This was complemented by uncovering manuscripts on Ascott, Border Morris (as the West Midland dances are now called), Oddington, Stanton Harcourt and Wheatley.

I was asked to dance with the Abingdon men through Frank Purslow's connection with them at the Reigate Ring Meeting in 1960. For several years, the numbers were very low, and my older children helped to make up the numbers at practices and on tours. The team survived the loss of Tom and James Hemmings and Major Fryer over a very short period. There was an invitation to teach the Abingdon dances to the Rover Scouts at Longworth in 1967 with Jack Hyde, the Abingdon bagman. From this grew the recovery in numbers. My sons and I last went out with Abingdon in 1970.

An association with Thames Valley morris started at their feast in 1956 and in 1961 we formed a club, to revive dances from manuscripts, that met at Jim Brooks and Chris Penton's houses. Lionel Bacon asked us to teach Oddington and Wheatley at the instructional meetings in 1962 and 1963. For many years, we enjoyed the October morris weekends, run by the club, at Sandy Balls, Fordingbridge. We did an Oddington instructional again in 1978. After so many years of performance, the Thames Valley Oddington is not a revival!

The filming started in 1962, when the future of all the traditional sides seemed in doubt. Since then, I have tried to cover interesting interpretations and revivals, which would otherwise be ignored, although over the years, the emphasis has swung from the Cotswold morris to Clog and Border. It is now quite impossible to keep up with the number of exciting things being done.

The local village mummers, who trace themselves back to 1880-ish in Crookham Village, asked me to play for them, in procession, from place to place in 1963. This I still do, having also tried being the Doctor, King George and Father Christmas, and having, as of 1985, 4 sons in the play.

I met Tubby Reynolds first during National Folk Week in 1967. The close friendship led both to an identification with Bath City Morris, for about 10 years, but also working together on instructionals across the country; teaching whoever asked whatever they wanted to learn. This stopped about 1980, after a very successful teaching tour of the eastern USA. Bath City learnt a number of little known traditions so that they could be filmed as well as worked out in a club atmosphere. These included Ducklington, Stanton Harcourt and Ascott-under-Wychwood and the girls trying the first of the stave dances. We did a tour of the Cotswold villages to do their dances in 1978.

My first Ring meeting was in 1956 at Lichfield and since then there have been many. I was a guest speaker at Taunton, Ipswich, Cardiff, Isle of Wight and Reading and conducted the orchestra in the cathedral at Gloucester. For a few years I was an area representative on the Ring Advisory Council. I twice stood for squire when work looked slack and there was some anniversary coming along which I felt I could contribute to but each time I failed at the last vote. I did not spend enough time canvassing but concentrated on doing the instructionals, often with new, uninfluential sides.

The series of Advanced Morris Instructionals at Halsway in the period 1964-70 were the most influential; indirectly affecting the growth of morris in the West of England and challenging many on style, standards and traditions. The attempts to interest dancers in clog morris and border failed at that time; although the border instructional at Ledbury in 1972 did succeed in interesting the local sides. Sidmouth has always seemed the best of the Festivals but it always seemed impossible to give top quality instructionals year after year so the visits have been limited to 1971/2, 1976/7, 1979 and 1982, giving a course of classes and lectures. The morris competitions and the celebration in 1979 have been good filming opportunities.

Some clubs have built up a close friendship over the years, even though the faces may be changing. The Oxford University Morris Men (OUMM) first because there were collectors there when I was trying to meet the collectors and the tradition. May morning, Cotswold tours, Ancient Men tours, including the never-to-be-forgotten Hampshire tours and the appearance at Llangollen have helped build, after 25 years, some life-long contacts. I helped Oxford City out for a while when they were very short of numbers, as they and OUMM did for Abingdon. [Oxford] City, in those days, was a model of how a morris team should perform in a pub.

Another annual event, now dead and gone, was the Cardiff Morris weekends at Boys Town, St. Athan, near Barry. Where else has anybody had to get another lorry load of beer delivered, on a Sunday, sale or return? Some clubs have had repeat instructionals: Cardiff, Great Western, Chelmsford, Men of Wight and Chanctonbury Ring, such that they are all old friends. Over a number of years, Sherborne instructionals with Kennet Morris raised them to the heights of an invite to Sidmouth and of course, in my opinion, the best Sherborne ever done!

Sidmouth 1971 invented the term, "Women's Ritual Dance" – I taught North West (NW) dances. Only a handful of NW dances were known in 1965 outside the Manchester Morris Men notebooks but by 1970, it was nearly 50, as people were encouraged to teach or pass on notations. A number of women went home and decided to form morris sides in the next few years, one of the first being at Bath University. As a defence against bad teaching of bad Cotswold by men, I did some instructionals and got the Women's Morris Federation (WMF) archive started, and later I supported the WMF notation group in producing a glossary and some descriptions suitable for inexperienced leaders. The arguments on who should or who should not dance left me cold, as it was not up to outsiders to tell anyone what they might do or not do.

I have run instructionals for the Ring (for example, Ascott); Sherborne at Chippenham; foremen's weekend for the Morris Federation and Border and Fieldtown for Open Morris. New people with new ideas to graft onto the old tradition. I have seen a lot of the problems of newish clubs and have advised that recruitment etc. will be a problem if attention is not given to it from the start. I helped the Morris Federation indirectly through close friendship with Betty Reynolds, the first president, but then Marguerite (my wife) and I have helped anyone genuinely interested in furthering the morris.

I went to the USA for morris first in 1978 at the invitation of Tony Barrand and did an instructional tour. The following year I went to California, Berea and Knoxville as well as doing a tour with Tubby. Then in 1980 I did the Cotswold morris at Pinewoods Camp of the Country Dance Society for 3 weeks. Our great trip was to Adelaide for the Australian Morris Meeting in 1983. Abroad, one has to accept mixed morris and goings-on that would not do in England, but it does teach what is morris and what is just our culture.

I have tried to get at dancers in print through short articles in magazines rather than learned work in journals. It offends the few genuine research workers but it helps keep certain publications in circulation.

Like all old morris dancers, one slowly relapses into parochial activity. For a couple of winters I instructed Fleur de Lys at Godalming. Since late 1982 I have taught Minden Rose at Alton, a garland and short stick team, mostly interpretations or inventions. It has taken a lot of years to be confident enough to compose dances. I like to think that I brought the idea of garland, ribbon and stave dances to the attention of the world. The stave is the most interesting, based on fragmentary sources, but now done by a number of southern clubs; my wife ran a club that did nothing else for a few seasons.

2001 (in MM 20-2) originally written in 1985

Folk Dance to Festivals - what are we talking about?

One has to start with, what is Folk Dance? Curt Sachs suggested a spectrum of definitions of dances from Primitive, seen as communal and sex segregated, through Folk, restricted to couples of opposite sex, to Civilised, meaning both court and modern. This does not fit our common experience. Popular folk dance is non-ritual, non-professional, unselfconscious, anonymously choreographed and normally sexual. Even then, professional dance companies in other countries adapt or paraphrase folk dances and provide a continuation of folk style on the stage and ordinary people accept such performance as folk. But here is also the form of dance which does not fit these categories and, because of this difficulty, is often in the UK called 'ritual', even though the ritual content is, to all intents and purposes, non existent and the general public does not distinguish between them, seeing the common element of dressing up and performing something in public.

Each form of dance could have two existences, the first as an integral part of the community and the second when it is no longer such but is the property of a few interested people. Within any first existence, folk dance depends on a one-to-one relationship of transmitter and receiver, and basically upon oral transmission, even when the detail is obtained by emulation and trial and error. In this second existence it is more fixed and less dynamic; it is extracted from the dramatic context that gave it its original justification and is not part of the larger complex that remains in oral transmission. Often it is a recreative process with specialist teachers, manuals, aids and a notation system. Even if there has been continuity, it will be equivalent to a revival at this stage. We assume that there was a proper first existence for ritual dance - but this could be challenged.

A definition of folk dance has to recognise such comment. It can be expressed as a vernacular dance form performed as part of a little tradition within the great tradition of a given society. Such dance is an affective mode of expression which requires both space and time. It employs motor behaviour in redundant patterns which are closely linked to the structural features of the music. Note – this definition does not include the concept of authenticity or the passing through generations and it can be the product of change and innovation. Maud Karpeles said in her preface to Sharp's Sword Dance Books that it is well known that traditional art forms never remain static.

Today we are wedded to print and people are trained to work from the written word. This can dominate the aspects of a subject that we think about. It causes one to miss that folk dance has still some dependence on oral transmission. Seldom does formalised motor behaviour occur without it being part of some context, the understanding of which is passed orally. That is, folk talk about dance and its setting, which they do not do about everyday gestures that are learned by unconscious mimicry. To appreciate these other aspects fully, we need rigorous studies of the dance event and its social background instead of just observing and recording 'steps' and 'stylistics'. Examining the total requires looking at what happens between dances and in the audience.

A festival will include ceremonial acts, but not all behaviour is ceremonial. It might include prescribed behaviour. Traditional festivals can persist maintaining essentially the

same format long after their original meaning has been forgotten. The enduring significance of the festival is not in its apparent purpose but in the fact of the celebration itself. Midsummer bonfires were once a signal for the community in a hundred to assemble. The social side persisted after the Normans had reorganised the legal structure of the country into manors. As the original purpose of the bonfire was forgotten, the people involved thought up other justifications which have served to confuse anthropologists. There may be other utilitarian justifications, for example, bonfires are also an opportunity to burn accumulated rubbish, or even the unusable bits from the annual animal slaughter.

Secular celebrations in recent centuries have been organised institutionally so that the occasion is a respite from work or holiday and an opportunity for witnessing a spectacle such as a procession, games, dancing, speeches, band concert or fireworks. There has been strong tendency for community festivals to be transformed. The UK has national public, formerly called Bank, holidays. The USA does not have national holidays as each state sets its own but, as in England, not all are of equal popularity. It is noticeable that the fiddling with the traditional dates has changed the character of the days even in my own lifetime. A festival is a large group celebration where one has a right to participate by virtue of being a member of the community and often it is this participation that confirms that one is a member of that community. Such festivals are to be contrasted to limited participation celebrations involving small sub-groups such as are found at rites of passage as a person moves from one stage of life to another.

A festival provides an occasion for people to rejoice together, to interact in an ambience of acceptance and conviviality. Sometimes the general participation feast is the only time in a year when members of a community come together. It creates a bond between participants, they identify with each other so it is a feature which is a prime device for promoting social cohesion, for integration of an individual into society or a group and maintaining them as members through shared, recurrent, positively reinforcing performances. Hence the emphasis by communities today on carnivals, fetes and other participatory entertainments. As festivals diminish, the individual lessens identification with society and replaces it with identification with a sub-group.

A traditional festival is not a place to learn something new. It is rewarding to the performer, generating positive emotional responses or expressing a positive emotional condition. The festival is a shared sequence of experiences based on symbolic interaction. Participation, for example, by wearing of a traditional costume, implies an allegiance and some subservience and devotion to the community.

The modern Folk Festival is a complex interpretation of its participants' perceived needs, including involving the community in which it is run by publicity beforehand building anticipation, public displays in an arena, on the street and in the pubs. But it is a reaching out by those involved, not a natural growth from the local community. Folk Festivals usually provide workshops to pass on technique and dances which are otherwise difficult to transmit. The existence and format of the Folk Festival tells much about what has been lost from community life.

2004 (MM 23-1) originally written in 1985

Traditional Repertoire

Much is rightly made of the differences between the characteristics of the known Cotswold village sides. However the assembly of a collection of material on the morris has enabled a re-examination of the older idea of 'one morris' of which these teams' dancing was a reflection. Lists of dances performed exist in varying degrees of completeness for 34 villages. These give over 600 separate usages of tunes and more than 300 separate usages of a dance idea. Statistically the average list contains about 17 dances of which about 7 were jigs.

The information for some teams is severely limited and it would be expected that in reality the old teams had much larger repertoires. Where it has been possible to obtain information which reflects the change in repertoire over a period of years, it seems that each side had a little over 20 dances old and new in regular practice. When the side was a living tradition nearly as many again seem to have been remembered to some extent and unused for a variety of reasons - both old ones superseded and newer ones that did not catch on. The tune lists show that 7 tunes were almost universal - given below in **bold -** and that 10 others were probably used by more than half the teams. However about 10% of the tunes seem to be titles that were unique to the particular side and not normally associated with the morris.

The dance notations have been considered for the content of their distinctive figure. A total of 22 dances, which includes 14 set dances, is best to obtain a proper balance between the ideas. The 14 set dances should include Trunkles, 2 clapping dances, 3 stick dances, 3 slow caper dances, 3 corner dances, 1 tune that has two distinct dances to it, most likely a stick and a clapping one, 1 tune that is used for both a set dance and a jig, a processional and 2 elementary dances. Obviously some dances can satisfy more than one of these requirements e.g. Trunkles is a corner and a slow caper dance and Shepherd's Hey is often a stick dance, a clapping dance or a jig.

It is possible to offer a list of dances and tunes which produce the traditional repertoire.

Processional	Hey Diddle Dis
Dance in position	Brighton Camp
Simple handkerchief dance with "different" idea	Maid of the Mill
Sidestep and half hey	Black Joke, Highland Mary, **Old Woman Tossed Up**
Corners with slow capers	Cuckoo's Nest
Corners without slow capers	Local unique tunes
Corners twice and slow capers	**Trunkles**
Sticks - hitting ground	Young Collins
Sticks - hitting in air	Balance the Straw

Sticks ditto + handclapping dance **Constant Billy**

Handclapping + as a jig **Shepherd's Hey**

Miscellaneous -

Slow caper dance, heel and toe or leapfrog Local unique tune

Jigs **Jockey to the Fair**

Lumps of Plum Pudding

Nutting Girl

Old Mother Oxford

Princess Royal

Sherborne Jig

Baccapipes and Broomstick **Greensleeves**

The marriage of dance and tune should immediately recall traditional dances.

Much of interest can be deduced from the degree of fit of various teams to the above list, as well as from the geographical distribution of particular dances and tunes. An interesting result is that the fit to the tunes is much closer than that to the dances. It could reflect that some pipers played for many morrises. It also suggests that the average piper had a severely limited selection. With the dances, there is usually some compensation that maintains the balance of ideas. For example at Bampton there are no stick dances but there is an increase in the sidestep and half hey dances.

The repertoires of side that survived to or into the 20th century have diverged, so an explanation is needed of the older similarity. Either close contact e.g. competition, kept them in line or perhaps, heretically, the Cotswold morris is not as old as we have been thinking. Another area of interest is the older revivals in the traditional environment. Where there is no antiquarian drive to revive everything good or bad, from 7 to 10 different dance ideas are sufficient but fewer have been tolerated - like 5 at Chipping Campden and at Abingdon for many years, and even as few as two and a mummers play, as at Eynsham. This could be the difference between an emphasis on the recipient and an emphasis on the performer.

Lessons that can be drawn for those interested in the traditional way are:

- the set of dances for massed dancing at Ring Meetings is not an unreasonable selection, apart from the insistence on particular traditions.
- there was a greater emphasis on jigs so that the experienced and skilled dancers expressed themselves in these rather than in rare or additional set dances imposed on the others.
- by contrast there were fewer corner dances featuring capers so that the deficiencies of the poorer dancers are not exposed.

- the number of set dances to keep in practice is not high, perhaps 14, without lowering standards in public performance.

2004 (MM 23-1) originally written 1979; reworked again in 2010 (MM 29-2)

Off Planet Morris

In the distant future someone will face doing the morris somewhere else than on Earth in a different gravity environment. Let us assume that it will be in an earth density atmosphere of breathable air and not while wearing a space suit! To think about it will show whether we actually understand movement and the morris. There are three scenarios to consider:

Low gravity on a moon or planet smaller than the Earth…. It's unlikely that anyone will want to dance under a gravity which is much greater than the Earth's, as it would be like dancing with someone on your back - and only University sides try that!

Under artificial gravity as produced by rotation….as has been proposed for large wheel shaped stations as in the film "2001".

In free fall, as in orbit around a planet….where the relative gravity effects are negligible and there is no preferred 'up' direction. They can produce near-zero gravity in an aircraft for about 20 seconds, hardly enough time for a short jig.

Low gravity:

It changes the balance in a step between the time in contact with the ground and the time in the air. With an earth gravity level of effort, the dancer will float around and the music will have to be very slow. Body and arm movements in the air will have time to move the body around, rather like high diving, so they must be minimised as well. If the effort is cut back to regain the speed, the lift effort will be negligible, the effort will be very slight and then there will be a problem in moving around - because although the gravity is reduced, inertia is not and the effort needed to move laterally will not have changed.

Lateral movement is generated by rotating the body in that direction and moving the feet to stop falling over, but falling is slower, so again it is a slow down. It is not done by the friction on the foot soles! In any case friction is proportional to weight and both are reduced. Could there be an advantage in carrying additional weights, like a deep sea diver? Height might be controlled but the additional inertia will drastically slow travelling. So, low gravity simulant morris will be slower and more restrained than the earth standard. Are some sides practising it already? The opportunity would be for more gymnastic routines, with incredibly complex capers.

Stick tapping should work out, as it is mostly a matter of inertias, but the lower ground friction may make it difficult to keep on one's feet. Handkerchief behaviour will look odd; there will be less asymmetry because any 'drop' will be much slower.

That the flow and shape of the hankie is determined by gravity is seen when films or videos are played backwards.

Rotating gravity

A rotating frame of reference introduces the pseudo Coriolis forces because the dancer's body is actually rotating in one plane but there are no visual clues for the muscles to

allow for it. Running and jumping in the place of the rotation will seem normal because the body will rotate about its centre of gravity at the same rate as the 'outside'. The problem is with rotations, i.e. turns in the air, hooks or galleys when balanced on one foot, in the 'horizontal' where the preserved angular momentum of the initial body tumble will throw dancers over. Like high jumpers, vaulters and divers, it is possible to learn the control of body component angular rates, once analysed.

Zero Gravity

Being able to move around at all could be difficult. So one solution is a flat surface with magnetic soles! Another is to dance within a box, launching oneself from one wall to another. The way to get something that looks like a conventional patterned dance is to use small personal jets, but this eliminates footwork! Perhaps there is a solution which has the effect of swimming around? However, the one novel feature is the chance to have a set of 27 - three layers of nine with each nine in a square. There could be heys in every conceivable three-dimensional direction! Without an obvious 'up', this direction could vary throughout the dance – just think what the 'sphere' equivalent of rounds could be like!

Someone could propose a research topic to NASA on the morris in zero gravity!

2004 (MM 23-1)

Ministry of Silly Walks

Department of Country Pursuits
Section of Jumps and Capers
37627 Birdcage Walk
London, ECI HOHO

Tel : Ansaphone available to record insults

Our Reference: KP%(h

Fax: Messages can be sent to The Tower

Your reference: ……

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (73/2004/b) dated 1st April 2004

In pursuance of the latest obligatory EC directive, Her Majesty's Government is seeking a representative entry for the equal opportunity traditional dance section during the next World Games. The Cabinet Office, in conjunction with the Treasury, had agreed that this should be coordinated by the Ministry of Silly Walks, herein to be known as the MinSW, with one group to be selected from several finalists, following heats to be held at suitable regional centres, which are to be established, with the usual delays, throughout the United Kingdom.

ANNEXE Rules set by the MinSW

1 There should be a minimum of ten distinct and preferably identifiable figures[1].

2 Each dancer is allowed to exhibit their own individual sequences of steps[2].

3 The competition is to be judged on the basis of originality rather than quality.

4 The entries must conform to local and national practices and prejudices.

5 Attempts at bribery will be penalised if not successful.

6 The group will smile at the official adjudicators at appropriate moments.

SCHEDULE 1 Applicable EC Regulations

1 The performance[3] to be at least 2.33 minutes and no more than 3.68 minutes long.

Any excedence of these limits will be associated with the dancers being shortened or lengthened in compensation.

2 The performance will be constrained to a rectangular floor[4] area of no more than 3.5×10^3 hectares.

3 The performance will be limited to a group of between 5 to 10 persons plus at least one accompanist[5] with a portative musical instrument.

4 The persistent incorrect playing of wrong notes will be penalised.

5 The combined waistage[6] will be less than 8 meters.

6 There is to be no discrimination[7] on the grounds of disability, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual preference or marital status, in that order.

7 The following hand signals will be observed: ABCDEFGHI, as defined in the official encyclopaedia of intercultural gestures.

SCHEDULE 2 Bye laws from the Local Rural District Councils

1 The internationally recognised rules and regulations for all sports that are customary on the local playing fields will be observed, with the following exceptions:

a) keep off the grass,

b) no bodily contact below the waist,

c) all droppings to be retrieved immediately and placed in an approved receptacle,

d) avoidance of nakedness[8], except in the heat of the moment,

e) straight lines[9] are only to be formed parallel to the pre marked boundaries.

2 All required services are to be paid for in advance.

3 Participants may use their customary tools or be hand operated.

DEFINITIONS

1. A figure is defined as a sequence of movements that fit to one or more musical[10] phrases.

2. A step is the transfer of weight from one foot to another, or the same, with or without the other foot remaining in contact with the floor. For greater understanding consult the Morris Federation "Glossary of Terms"[11].

3. A performance is defined as an attempt to be entertaining, mischievous or unlikely.

4. A floor is defined as a flat surface constructed at right angles to the local direction of Gravity, which may be used at the dancer's discretion for support between leaps and capers.

5. An accompanist is defined as one who goes along with what is going to happen.

6. A waistage is measured exceptionally in non metric 'hands' up until 2004.

7. An absence of discrimination is to be demonstrated through the content of what is offered.

8. Nakedness is the state at which sexual differences[12] may be observed.

9. Straight Lines are those things which foremen are forever seeking at practices.

10. Euphemism.

11. Copies may be obtained at some small expense.

12. Classes can be arranged for those who are unsure through your Technical Officer.

2004 (MM 23-2)

Advice when Starting a Clog Morris

Clogs

The whole point of clogs is to hear the clear sound so one must practise in clogs to get the stepping together. Normally one needs two pairs, with rubbers for indoors and irons for outside. Note: the team must be equipped for running repairs when out. Clogs are commonly used in Cheshire dances nowadays, even though it was done by girls in plimsolls and so was quite different in character.

The clog affects posture; it reduces the flexibility of the foot compared to other dance forms. It allows variation of the level of noise. It encourages stamps not jumps, so that there is no spread in time for the body rise and therefore no need to 'stretch' the tune as for Cotswold Morris.

Step

In the hop step it is usual to raise the knee high, perhaps till the thigh is horizontal, shin vertical. The leg is not pumped up and down but the knee is held up a while especially travelling. The polka step has a characteristic change of balance from standing on one foot it is "hop, hop, change, pause," the change being a switch of weight-bearing foot. The differences in the step arise from the use of the free foot, tapping the ball of that foot on the first "hop" either beside the carrying foot, in front of it or with the foot crossed over it, or perhaps using the toe, and maybe with a wide swing of the foot, either backwards or to the side before the change of weight. Minor variations arise from the height reached by the knee of the free leg and, when tapping across the foot, where the crossing of the legs is done between ankle or knee. Each team and even each dance has its own way often without realising that there are so many possibilities.

Music

From the start, the music must be right. The two rhythms used are "jigs" and "polkas". The 6/8 jigs are played like "100 Pipers", what the Irish would call "single jigs", because of the basic skippiness, and are frequently used for dances with hop or skip steps. The polkas, properly in 2/4, are frequently more exaggerated in rhythm than Cotswold Morris but not quite as the 19th century ballroom dance like "Can't you dance the Polka" where the hop in the step was much more exaggerated. The polka rhythm is "t'1 2 3", and it is very important that it is played exactly as the team like to dance it. The underlying beat for the stepping is not to be sacrificed for the sake of the melody. The tune is played to have a clear phrase ending for each dance movement. The tune repeats are chosen to fit the figures, not to suit the musician. The melody may be changed at each figure if one must. Marches are also used, e.g. "Men of Harlech" or "British Grenadiers", not in strict tempo but to the stepping.

Beware of country dance players whose playing is inevitably too fast and too decorative, with no concept of phrasing to the dance, or of having to fit to body movements. They must understand that, as fiddle and banjo styles can be regional, so playing for morris can be different from anything else. A side drum is helpful, as the music can be overwhelmed by the noise of the clogs, but in turn it must not dominate. Heavy on beat

is deadly - it drives the dancers into the ground. Off beat is emphasized to give the dancers a lift - as can be heard on good records with a snare drum.

The music is slower than one might expect because of elevation in the step and covering ground with the usual polka step. To travel it may be better to use skips than polkas - or slow down so that in certain figures the dancers have time to move. The dance should be in control, not the musician. Putting the tallest dancers in the positions which have to travel furthest may solve some problems.

Good dancing needs good music. In practice sessions, play exactly the required rhythm and only the necessary notes. One should practise to music clear enough to be heard against the clogs but not the full band it is better to have separate band practices. Older North West sides would practise to one instrument, often a concertina, and keep the rest including drums for major performances.

The standard NW tunes are well chosen. Tunes must fit the club style for the dance so it is often difficult to find the "right" tune. Do not ignore a good tune just because it is well known.

Style

The size of a set is larger than Cotswold desirably stick tip to stick tip spacing, rather than fingertip, both along and across the set. Movements can take twice as long compared to a Cotswold dance. Because of the greater size and the polka step, greater numbers are involved, traditionally 12 or 16 or even 24. The numbers are important for the effect created – and determine the room needed for practice. Many dances are adapted for 8 but at great loss of impact and it is to be deplored even if unavoidable.

The arm movements are more definite than in Cotswold morris and to obtain the required appearance it has to be standardised for everyone in each dance. The slope of the arms, the plane of the arms, the orientation of the implement needs to be fixed for every figure with perhaps general rules for turns, stars etc. for both arms, not just the one in the middle. This detail is often the major observable difference between dances from the same area. It is also this fine detail which is difficult to collect and so is not always available.

No notation gives enough definitive detail and the leader may well have to make arbitrary decisions on where to hold sticks, when and why to shake bells. Another example is a reel, on which precise beat to pass, how far apart, what happens at the ends, how wide are the loops. All these become the individual team's interpretation.

Repertoire

A traditional team would have its one or two dances. A modern dance troupe will need at least 4 or 5 and perhaps up to 12 depending on what can be kept in reasonable practice. For variety the dances should include ones based on walk, skip and polka stepping. The patterns or figures should be recognisably different and the implements should vary. If garlands are carried, the dances should use the garland rather than having it as a decorative feature. Avoid the trap of teams from the Basque country or Provence: they appear to have one family of steps and figures but a wide range of implements so that

their ‘different’ dances have no variety.

Implements

These range from very flexible to rigid and there is usually one for each hand. Slings were common in the Manchester area with a length chosen not to hit the chest. They can be knotted handkerchiefs, bound cotton waste or covered corks on a string. They can be rotated vertically in front of the body or in planes parallel to the forearms, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, or horizontally above the head in ‘twists’. As sticks are not hit they can be painted and made of dowelling or broom handles. They are held at the end or the middle and have bells and ribbons or streamers on the ends. The ribbons may be to dampen the bells. They are waved, shaken or rotated from the wrist to make the bells ring and the ribbons flutter. The sticks can be developed into carnival wavers and, if two-ended, become ‘fluffies’ or ‘pompoms’, formerly made of crepe paper but now often of thin coloured plastic sheet. Intermediate are short sticks held by loops of leather or ribbon on the end. There are no traditional rules for garlands with regard to size, rigidity or material.

Routines

There are a basic set of ‘glossary’ figures outside, inside, reels (chains), forward and back, cross over, hands across (star), partners turn, arches etc. Most dances draw on these with only subtle differences. To be effective a dance must have at least one original figure even though the rest are basics.

Dances are better with a structure. First with some repetitive element such as a walk up (up street) and perhaps a ‘step & turn’ figure, once thought to be characteristic of the older dances in the Manchester area. The other figures should have some natural order of increasing complexity, becoming more exciting by more travel or by developing variations on a theme. Random sets of movements are entertaining only up to a point. Dances ‘by the yard’ are difficult to enjoy unless very well done or the movements are technically complex so that the audience appreciates the achievement. One can incorporate complex movements not found in other English traditions, especially those requiring 8 or more dancers to be done at all. Remember written notations are not a good starting point as they are often ambiguous, incomplete or need interpretation. If you want it right, try and see it danced or get it taught by someone who knows it. Of course, you may be wanting your own interpretation in which case the written notation is just a tool.

The Practice Session

Start each session with (a) stretching - it avoids ‘tightness’ and restrained dancing and its baleful influence on style and (b) stepping practice, both stationary, and very important, travelling. One may have more than one travelling step, e.g. a hornpipe. Getting everyone to do the same is a problem. Use mirrors, reflections in windows, standing close or holding hands and repeating sequences many times. For people who have a coordination problem, break each movement down to one thing at a time and do

not put it all together too quickly while they grasp it. Letting them loose in a set too soon will just throw everyone. Use walking through as an effective way of learning the patterns, 2 walks per polka step and no hand movements. The Carnival girls have a simple practice step which is a step, then a tap of the other foot in front, changing weight on the next step etc.

A team needs an agreed signal word for stopping immediately, like Whoa! When stopped do not drift about but wait for the instructor to sort it out. The leader has to decide if it was a one-off mistake, a genuine confusion, bad or wrong teaching. They need to recognise that some movements are difficult to recover from and one may have to go back to some earlier point in the dance. Some errors, like mistakes in steps or arm movements, do not impact on the set and can be left till an appropriate moment for comment. Have a policy that mistakes will be reviewed, that there is nothing personal about it, just to sort out why and for everyone to benefit.

The team needs to agree what to do if there is a mistake in an interacting figure like a reel or grand chain, either to stand out or trying to recover. The danger is one dancer falls out of the correct pattern and throws the rest.

The leader may have a problem with other people helpfully teaching, arguing with each other or post-morteming when the leader needs to teach. There is no real harm in this but everyone must recognise a signal when it has to stop.

Notations

Write a full notation of all the detail you have agreed. A leader has to decide how much effort is put into dealing with a technical difficulty before it is changed or deleted. Persist with difficult dances for a reasonable length of time - really difficult ones can take a couple of practice seasons. Try difficult dances to different tunes, for better lift, or even different rhythms and stepping. Discard what is unpopular, proven to be beyond you or difficult to get a set up to do, at some proper time like the AGM, when it can be a consensus just letting it drop out could be offending some of the side. Have an AGM, ask everyone to comment in an environment free of risk to the club. Prompt all the team to make constructive comment about the dances and difficulties. One can run a club just using common sense but some thinking about it and remembering that it is all about people will help.

Points at Practice

A leader for each dance has to be trained, agreeing what signals and when, use of voice or whistle, and where from if it is a long set. Should a separate conductor be used and should they face up or down and use arm signals for control?

Practice as you intend to dance out. Entrances and exits during a show and changing implements need organising and practice to avoid time wasting. Any slackness or laziness inside will carry over outside, Do not let the team get casual over forming up. It is easier to integrate newcomers into a clog side than to a Cotswold side, as there are fewer technical difficulties. It is not for exhibitionists as there is little room for self

expression. One usually finds a newish side does a dance well the second time through. To get everyone to remember the dance, run through it beforehand slowly if you dash into it and get it wrong that confusion has to be removed, as well as the uncertainties that pre-existed. Initially designate places in the set to people and practise it hard from there before trying somewhere else. Have a chart of who should dance each dance - and from where - when going out so that there is no hesitation in public performance. It is worth having a register of who was there and learnt a dance and who has done what position. For the same sort of reason leaders should watch who is late arriving, early to leave, has a long break in the bar and misses key sessions, because you may find yourself depending on them when they cannot do it.

Experience suggests that new material is best introduced at the start when everyone is fresh rather than after a hard session, for example, working up a show, To get in all that is desired one should have a rough plan for the evening. Do not imagine that the best way of learning a dance is to keep at it till it bores. Most people find that last week's problems can disappear when properly learnt a second time round, so work on it a bit and then make more progress the next practice. Take time to be sure that the patterns are understood by everybody and remember those watching do not pick it up as well so bring them in for repeats. Eventually everyone should learn the dance from every position in the set. Clog morris is quite different from Cotswold. The pattern comes first and the style is worked up later.

Summary

Some advice has been offered based on experience. These suggestions and solutions are not necessarily for all teams but the issues have to be met somehow and the chosen alternative must have its own justification.

2004 (MM 23-2) originally written in 1985

Belle Isle March

There is a well known morris tune commonly called Monk's March presumably named after General Monck, later Duke of Albermarle, who restored Charles II to the throne in 1660. But this is not the proper name of the tune which was commonly called the Belle Island March.

The French used Belle in place names. Some of Belle Isle occurred in England from those fleeing the French Revolution. The most notorious was part of the Somer Town Rookery, or large scale slum, near the site of Cecil Sharp House in Camden Town, which was largely displaced by the building of the railway to St Pancras. It was also the name given to sea battles, one by an island in the mouth of the St Lawrence river in Canada, and the other a masterly retreat by Admiral Cornwallis from the Bay of Biscay on 17 June 1795 during the French Revolutionary War.

However the one of interest arose when the Marquis de Belle Isle was the French War Minister during the Seven Years War, 1756-63, and held the large island of Belle Isle, off Brittany's Atlantic Coast and heavily fortified. Pitt the Elder thought small raids were what Britain could mount and believed the taking of Belle Isle would rile the French. It was achieved on 7 June 1761 after an initial reverse. There had been so many delays and reconnaissances the defence had plenty of warning. Eight of fourteen current British regiments have it as a battle honour because of the difficulty of the assault, although the honour was not awarded until 1951[1]!

The celebrations at the end of the war included a march past by the British Army in front of the new King George III, like an early King's Official Birthday ‘Trooping the Colour’. As a gesture of conciliation, the French Ambassador in London was invited to join the salute. As each regiment passed, it changed to the quick march "The Belle Isle", as a Swiss hymn tune that had been picked up had become known! The tune continued to be used at least on ceremonial occasions and at the Trooping the Colour into the 1970's.

The morris version of the tune is called after Monck at Sherborne and Bledington, but elsewhere, including places quite close to these two, it was called "Belle Isle's March", as at Longborough, Lower Swell and Brackley. It was published soon after the march past as "Lady Petersham's March" in "Twenty Four Country Dances with proper tunes and directions to each dance as they were performed at Court, Bath and all publick entertainments for 1764". It was probably named after Lady Caroline Petersham. The hymn writer Thomas Lynch used it for 'My Faith it is an Oaken Staff'. Quite dissimilar tunes called “Monk's March" or "The Mad Monks of Bangor" have been found in printed collections.

A French ship "Formidable" captured by Lord Bridport off Belle Isle on 23 June 1795 was renamed "Belle Isle" and fought at Trafalgar on 15 October 1805 where it was third in line in the lee division under Collingwood.

2004 (MM 23-2) see also General Monck in MM 5-3

1 This was not exceptional. Tangier 1662-1680 and Namur 1695 were awarded in 1920, Gibraltar 17704-5 in 1909 and Blenheim 1704 in 1882.

Holiday Reading

"British Society 1680-1880":Dynamism, Containment & Change; by Richard Price; CUP, Cambridge, 1999. ISBN 0 0521 65701 5

As a young engineer in the 1950's discovering morris, it was easy to accept the Edwardian view of its history. When I took an interest in the realities of the 19th century, it began to fall apart. Many dance notations came from village revivals, under influences, Darcy Ferris, pageant master, Percy Manning, antiquarian, Queen Victoria's Jubilees, etc. and our 'revival' history was partly bound up with the Suffragette movement. So what had it really been like?

Recorded remarks indicate a decline in the 19th century probably in quality, certainly in status. Some said it got like begging. Further back were tales of ales, Club entertainment, week long tours, competitions, and up to London ahead of the harvest. On the other hand we know of the hardships of the Napoleonic Wars and the aftermath, Chartism, Captain Swing and Luddites. Early 19th century popular journals were concerned even then at the increasing rate of change, e.g. the impossibility of farmers keeping up with the suggested advances in practice.

Our mental images of various historical periods are strikingly different, Roman, Saxon, Tudor. There had been an industrial revolution in the Middle Ages and other developments in ordinary life, untouched on in the old books. Obviously there was always change and there never has been a static period rich in slowly changing customs. Sound work has been done on the period from the Glorious Revolution in the last fifty years. Price's book is a synthesis of this, in particular of the developments in the 18th century. There was a marked change in attitudes after 1688. A surprise was how different the current attitudes still were, even though many elements of modern life can be traced back to then. Administration was still at a local level, the vestry with its committees provided what we would now call the social services. But the improvement in agricultural productivity raised the standard of living for most and left time for leisure activities which had formerly been restricted to special annual days.

"Start of Play": Cricket & Culture in 18th Century England, by David Underdown; Penguin Books, London, 2001. ISBN 0 14 028354 4

The history of morris problem is putting it in context. There are anecdotes, enough to show continuity from 1750, with an inkling of how the Cotswold Morris fitted into its social landscape. One can speculate on how conditions impacted on the morris; but it is helpful to consider another pastime. Morris and cricket had much in common. Early references do not indicate detail, but both were regional pastimes. Cricket occurred in the Weald and the edges of the Downs, and the morris in Oxfordshire, spilling into the nearby counties. Both might have been influenced by similar activities found in Flanders and the low countries.

The history of the Hambledon Cricket Club 1750-1825 is unusually well documented. For a while it was the county's leading team, able to challenge and beat sides drawn from the best elsewhere. It was a club, a voluntary association which brought people with a common interest together, so characteristic of the English over this period. What made

Hambledon unique was it had an outstanding team early on, whose success attracted the best for miles around, and captured the interest of neighbouring gentlemen and aristocracy, ensuring its continuity.

Players' regular weekly practices paid a better rate than for farm work. Each match played for a sum, the share depending on whether they won or lost. Fame brought them matches at long distances, as in London. The 18th century populace bet on almost anything, so cricket became a popular part of any occasion, including the social side of the assize gatherings and the races, along with balls, cudgel fights (single stick) and cruel animal sports. Most men were familiar with single stick but the best came from Wiltshire and Somerset.

A common feature was the large meals and excessive drinking following matches. Of interest is that many teams were known as singing sides. In such ways exist similarities with the morris. Of course the betting side led to arranging matches to be more even, so that the results would be less predictable. Often players were "given" to the other team, or the good players split between the two sides. As stakes rose, the best players, as distinct from the gentlemen, became semi professional and attracted to London clubs, and control of the rules moved to the MCC, with the eclipse of Hambledon, and their loss of local aristocracy support.

The early folk dance revivalists approached the morris from song and other one on-one interactions, with little interest in where this group public activity should fit. It is hard to believe that the first collectors, brought up in the second half of the 19th century, were not aware of the immediate social history and the consequent range of tensions. They could not have seen this background as relevant to an appreciation and exploitation of the dances in the Edwardian and post WWI periods.

There are many threads in the books

- The idea of "improving" activity as essentially more desirable than old ways.
- The enormous growth in household women servants locking so many out of the public scene.
- The shifting effect of the Victorian philosophy of two separate worlds for men and women - a very serious concern for activities which depended on community acceptance and largesse from those further up the social ladder.
- The overloading of the local administration with many new tasks in the 19th century leading eventually to a county and then to a state run civil service.
- But worst of all, the apparent underlying desire to establish a docile, hard working underpaid working force, with a convenient surplus of unemployed. Much has been gained since then.

But also something preserved, without the excesses. I recommend two stimulating and complementary texts!

2004 (MM 23-2)

"Leap" at Sidmouth

The enthusiasm for the special morris arena show FLAME at Sidmouth in 2003 was a response to a novel production built on morris groups with a running link from a pair of presenters, one ancient, one modern. This year's LEAP had a similar audience response, but a comparison of both performances as captured on the JKL produced videos, which eliminates the infectious impact of the surrounding audience, shows that LEAP was superior in content and structure. The stroke of genius was the bringing in of the icon Sid Kipper as presenter, whose explanations of the morris had just the right amount of truly English humour. Unfortunately for viewers his two typical songs are deleted from the video on copyright grounds.

1) The show opened with the Stackstead Silver Band who play for the Bacup Coconutters.

Sid : *How d'you do? Welcome to LEAP the morris show with punctuation. Full stop! We're here to celebrate a very special number, 49. It's exactly 49 years since the first Sidmouth Festival. For all those years there has been morris dancing, and no one knows why. Well actually as a matter of fact I've made a bit of a discovery, but I'll come to that in a little bit. Now our first side is starting it because they are well known for starting things, fights, arguments, you name it. They've been coming here for years, guess what, they're back again, the inimitable Great Western Morris*.

2) Great Western, the local side to Sidmouth, were in force, with 6 musicians. They used "Swaggering Boney" for their entry dance, followed by "Leapfrog" with inspired clowning and ending with a cumulative leapfrog, the last man leaping over all five in a huddle! They finished with a "Nine Men's Morris" with up and down and across and back heys. As always the pace was very steady, the spring in the stepping magnificent, and the arm movements and handkerchief dancing a lesson for all.

Sid : *Now this evening I'm going to put the dancers on and try not to put them off, but first I've been asked to tell you a story. The story of Morris Dancing at Sidmouth Festival. Because this Festival goes back a long way, and just think what it could have been if it had only gone forwards. But this is the story. Once upon a time there was a brand new Festival at the mouth of the river Sid in Devon, and it wasn't going very well, because that first year, they had marvellous weather.*

So they had all these concerts arranged in top venues like the ARP wardens hut and the novelty rock emporium, but nobody wanted to be indoors. And the organisers wondered what to do, and what they did was to get hold of a passing morris side, and they sent them dancing all around the streets of Sidmouth. Well that drew people into the concerts all right, and it was so successful they decided to do it every year.

Now of course you might not be lucky enough to find a passing morris side just when you want one, more often it's quite the opposite, so they started inviting teams to come and be on stand-by. So that meant they always had those Morris dancers hanging around getting into trouble, and the organisers wondered what to do. And what they did

was to start dance displays like this one, to keep 'em busy. That's how it went for some years until the 1960's. The time when people wore bells, beards, strange clothes and flowers in their hair. Morris dancers fitted right into that didn't they, and they could dance for ever, due to drugs, particularly the drug that helps you morris the night away, EF'D'Cy.

And that's how it went on for more years, until in the 1970's there was a strange disease, some dancers were made ill by Cotswold Morris, they got ringing in their ears and an analogy to flowers, it was Shepherd's Hay fever, and the organisers wondered what to do. And what they did was to start up different sorts of dancing, like Norfolk/Suffolk border morris, more fighting than dancing really, and Nor by North West Morris, all you have to be able to do is form a straight line in the right direction.

And of course that meant they had workshops for people to learn all the new skills like how to shred clothes to tatters, and the use of a compass. And that led to even more and more morris dancing, and that went on for even more years into the 1980's. By then everybody at Sidmouth Festival was morris dancing. They ran out of space in town. Some people had to dance in the sea or the ford, that was all they could get.

There were competitions for poor and wealthy alike, for the wealthy, there was the Rich'all dance, and for the poor there was the So'Low jig, a mixture of morris and limbo dancing. It was a Golden Age and the organisers wondered what to do, and what they did was to bring in the modern era. Which is where we are today.

But I have missed a bit of the story out. Because I have skipped over women and they don't like that, especially if you are wearing clogs. You see at start of the story women were only allowed on stage for country dancing, the sort where you always have to keep one foot on the floor. Morris dancing was men only. It was also the name of the magazine a lot of them subscribed to. So in those days the men danced and the women were grateful, and washed and ironed their kit.

But then some of the women said they might like to try morris dancing and the men were sore afraid. See they were afraid that if the women danced the men would have to do the washing and ironing. We know the truth about that now, but that was then. And some of the men were afraid that if some of the women danced there would be no excuse to dress up in women's clothes anymore.

The organisers wondered what to do. The EFDCC came down firmly on the fence. There was a lot said, quite a bit shouted, you know what they say, most said, slowest mended. Some women even started illegal morris dancing in the ladies toilets and still the organisers wondered what to do. Until, there came a statement from on high, from Norris Ring, he said that he would never ever come again to Sidmouth Festival if they had women morris dancing. Well that instantly settled it, they had women the very next year. Of course all those who said it would only lead to doom and disaster, well they've been proved right haven't they, instead of Morris Dancing quietly dying out as the dancers got older, they interbred.

Now we've got loads of young dancers, who think they know everything. It's worse than that, when you talk to them you find out they do. And that's the story of how we got

here. Which only leaves one question unanswered. Is that the end of the story? We don't know, we'll see. We're going to start it over again with some proper country dancing with ladies, the indispensible, and I've tried to dispense with them, Stroud Ladies.

3) Stroud Ladies and Stroud Men. They started with a very sedate 4 couple longways to "Rose Tree", then the men started to dance "The Rose" in Stroud style when broken up by youngsters going into "Willow Tree" in four sets forming a cross. Both country dances were effective but went on a turn too long. The spot continued with two men singing "Over The Hills and Far Away" whilst the women danced, and ended with another of their handkerchief dances which reminded of Ilmington's "Lively Jig". It was a joy to watch, it made one think that that was probably what we had expected women's morris to develop to be when they started in the 1970's, although most women find leaping and stick banging more to their satisfaction.

Sid *: I'll tell you something actually about this festival, if you do well, they ask you back, otherwise you have to be like me and hope they forget, but the next lot we have coming on have never been here before - so we can't be sure about them, the jury's still rigged. They're young, they're gifted and unmistakably female. They are the insurmountable, and I should know, Black Adder.*

4) Black Adder. This was a classic comedy item with a morris twist to it. A rotund ballerina in full "Swan Lake" kit was followed by a chain of cloggies in white shifts, all with fiddles, of which at least two were amplified and actually played the ballet music. The swan died, and was restored by electric shock treatment, the five awkward squad cygnets danced, and there was a screen/window with the mirroring movement gag. The audience was in continual uproar and the parting applause was immense.

Sid : *Lot of people say to me, Sid, Why is morris dancing? Where does it come from? and I'd say I'm buggered if I know. Well, I used to. But there is a lot of theories about, some say it comes from the word Moreish. Well you've seen it, haven't you. You wouldn't say that it's moreish, would you? Then they say they don't mean moreish but moorish. It's why they have black faces sometimes. I know why they have black faces when they come to Sidmouth, because they have to, with all the people that have upset over the years.*

Morris dancing has got nothing to do with moors, Ilkley or Bobby. I've done a bit of research. I've discovered that the word morris comes from two Old English words, "Ma" and "Ist", meaning to spoil it, Ma Ist is also where the word marriage comes from. It all makes sense once you know that. It's more than you can say about it otherwise. Morris dancing is actually marriage dancing. Where do you get dancing: at weddings. Where do you get bells : at weddings. Where do you get people dressing up in daft clothes : at weddings. Where do you get handkerchiefs for people to cry into : at weddings. I'll tell you what gave it all away to me when I found this old song and dance, which may well be the original song and dance that started the English Folk Dance and Song Society. There is something I can't put a finger on. Make up your own mind about it.

It's about a young woman getting married next day, called "On Wedlock Edge" [song deleted from the video].

Well time flies while you are enjoying yourself, feel like I've been here for hours already. Because a pleasure shared is a pleasure halved and there's plenty more pleasures to halve yet.

Get to the interval with another pleasure. Some are fast, and some of them are nefarious. Their musicians are electrocuted. So brace yourself for the inexplicable, the Albion Morris

5) The Albion Morris opened with a rapid paced solo clog dance to a 6 piece band. The team then came on to "British Grenadiers" and danced a Knutsford NW morris for 8 in clogs, filling the stage, but with a Cotswold spring in the step! The Albion band and morris have done much for folk in the wider world and their appearance was very much appreciated.

6) The second half of the show started with some of The Seven Champions towing Sid onto stage in a wheelbarrow whilst the "Entry of Gladiators" was played. The eight of the Champions performed another very disciplined and stylised show of some of their own modern idiom Molly dances. Starting with a reel that grew from 3 to 6 dancers, then the dance to solo voice, "Wraggle Taggle Gypsies" and ending with the dance for 5 to rather plaintive music. The Champions are a very distinctive part of the Festival circuit whose influence has spread wide, although no others are as smart.

Sid : *As you've seen by now, morris dancing is pretty easy, I know some of them make it look hard but it takes years of practice. The truth is that you can have all your workshops and rehearsals, but all you need is basic training. We can demonstrate that right now. Ignore what your mother said and answer back, you can join in if you want, and you respond.*

The "Barrack Square-Dance" - song by Sid with responses from audience and marching by the Seven Champions.

They were conceived at this very Festival in 1977. I'd like to have seen that!

Now the team that grew up they say with the Festival, can't have grown up very much at one week a year, the irrepressible Morris Offspring.

7) Morris Offspring, more good theatrical morris with well organised and rehearsed mass movements. The highlights were sequences based on the tunes "Princess Royal" and "Gooseberry Tree" played by two musicians. The jig showed the house style of dance very well. Aesthetically I did not like the snatch sideways, the near vertical, or the dip sidestep arm movements, although they work en masse. It looks so much better when, as Douglas Kennedy used to say, the movements involved all the body, particularly the shoulders and torso. He would always point out that workmen spread the effort around their muscles. The large numbers involved led to a sameness through all the varieties of stepping. It suggests that the Morris Offspring still have further heights to achieve.

Sid : *Brings out the sweat, don't it. We don't do morris dancing in my little village of St Justice Trunch in Norfolk. We used to do it on Boxing Day, that and Fox Hunting, that was the other thing. But well you see nowadays Fox Hunting is a little bit ... Morris*

dancing has always been a little bit... So what we've done now is to combine the two, so we have Hunting the Morris Dancer, keeps everybody happy but one, he doesn't usually hang about to complain

But the reason I mention it, is some people are made of sterner stuff and some people have kept their dance tradition come what may. Which is all the better for us. So it's why we still have the chance to admire our next guests, from Lancashire, we present the incorruptible Britannia Coconut Dancers, accompanied by members of the Stackstead Silver Band.

8) Britannia Coconutters from Bacup - with a nine piece silver band. They are heirs of a tradition traced back to the mid 19th century. A very good JKL video of all their dances is available from their previous visit to Sidmouth when they were interviewed in a Meet the Team event. This very special side did a garland dance and then danced the nutts. How do you praise such superb uniqueness? Long may they continue.

Sid *: As I was saying, you sometimes get dancing after Christmas, but in Winterton, they dance on New Year's Eve. They do "Whatsupping". They go round and tell all the incomers how dreadful they are. They knock on their door at midnight and when they all come to their door and say "Whats Up", they do the Rimington "Whatsup" dance, a sort of stick dance with banging, you know the sort of thing. And I thought we'd have it tonight. So for a performance for you, here and now, at least one of them, please welcome the individual, me! Thank you. This is the only known solo stick dance in the country. You'll see why when I give the song and the dance, and a hat [*song deleted*]*

I'm going off now for a rub down with a copy of Morris Monthly, and then we're going to go into the big finish. I know that at the interval I got a bit confused. I did mention it, but you probably didn't notice. So I'm going to go off and come on with the final lead. To build up to that climax, I feel I short-changed them slightly in the first half. So will you give extra large welcome to Albion Morris.

9) Albion Morris: They started with "Shooting" from Adderbury along with a hobby horse and a seven piece band, followed by "The Rose" from Fieldtown with handkerchiefs and ended with the "Upton-on-Severn" stick dance. Although obviously elderly and having to dance to the loud band, they performed very well with excellent hand movements and good lift and gave full value in the sticking, they even broke a stick!

10) Finale : To the old "Morisco" tune, the entire company led by Sid Kipper danced on team, by team and zig-zagged across the stage to fill the stage and dance wildly. The show ended with a bow from all the musicians.

The impression was given that "stage" or "theatrical" morris is coming of age with impressive big set displays drawing on the mechanics of the normal street morris. But the big bands lose the musician/dancer relationship and unfortunately degrade the Cotswold form to the level of the rest.

2004 (MM 24-1)

Mining the Source - Morris Dance references of the Renaissance - talk by John Forrest

A lecture by John Forrest given at Sidmouth 2004 attended by Roy Dommett

The Origins

John is an anthropologist now working in the USA, who was a Morris Dancer in England, joint writer with Mike Heaney of the "Annals of Early Morris", 1991, published by Sheffield University in association with The Morris Ring, and author of a book analysing the material, "The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750", published by James Clarke, Cambridge, 1999, after some delay. It was very difficult to get any dance movements out of the surviving material. He was concerned with the context of the dance and how this affected the interpretation of the records of the dance. He had some profound insights. There is still a need to fully establish and understand the contexts of the existing references. It started with the Royal Morris which was very elaborate and whose cost was enormous. Henry VII paid for four performances. In 1514, at Epiphany, Twelfth Night, there was a single performance in an interlude, but the costumes were reusable. Organisers recycled morris costumes, hired them out, etc.

In those days immense wealth had to be shown, involving enormously rich displays of costume, especially in front of foreign dignitaries, and also at weddings, the context being power. Royal weddings were the greatest opportunity to show off. So, elaborate performance equalled power. The dances were themed around fighting, courting, and other contemporary contexts. The wider tradition, the renaissance context, was romantic at all stages, with knights and women in towers being rescued. The Moresque was a dance form from the same tournament context, and this became the context for the morris. Pages were selected for being the best dancers. The problem of the time was how to get the previous masculine tournament-like aggressive things out of the court.

Peasants were all too busy in the fields. We should look at analogous forms in Europe. The earliest reference is 1408. We have to recognise that Europe exists and there are and were links. In those days there were many more. Moorish there usually meant bells. It indicated savagery, attached to arms and bodies, a form of bravoism. The dances were seen in Burgundy and other states. Italian Dancing masters were widely imported, therefore it became the next fashion in Europe, a common ancestor for all the different European traditions. The different forms of the morris, but most commonly the processionals, occur in all the different contexts. They were divergent in their form, more so in Europe, there never was only one form of the morris. There was then an interplay of European ideas, they were going back and forward all the same.

There was a ship with morris to the USA in 16th century. But no record of the morris afterwards. There were only a few leaders available and they couldn't pass it on.

The Tradition

Keith Chandler was the first to consider who were these people who did the morris. Was their activity the consequence of the effects of economics and seasonal jobs? The agricultural labourer had no independent income. Morris was not a leisure activity. In the

19th century it was customary to split the bag, so there were no spare dancers. Musicians were not part of the 19th century team and were paid separately before the bag was divided up. This was a very old concept in the morris. Each musician earned as much as the whole team in Tudor times in London. Socially the musician was a different order of person to the dancers, who were not professionals. Dancing masters put teams together, so dancers could be seasonal. Musicians could only have been professional, they were at all sorts of events. Early church records showed the cost was £4 per coat (up to £1,000 today); they were very costly and elaborate. Church Wardens got rid of the costumes or they were gradually lost, therefore dancers dressed up ordinary clothes to minimise overheads.

The 19th century idea was that the morris had trickled down from the pagan world. Typically an early statement of the idea was by Stubbes, a Puritan in the 16th century. Sunday performances and those in the churchyards were therefore called pagan by Protestants (meaning unreformed Catholic) and equated in their minds to old paganism, along with the lighting of candles and the ringing of bells. Morris was seen to support the old Catholic Church. There were protests against the morris as supported, although it had been used for raising funds for repairs, by having ales, selling beer. So the code word "pagan" equalled Catholic. The argument is persistent; we get it now from our own pagans!

The folk tradition as developed from the dancing masters became a great art.

Cecil Sharp was condescending, he assumed that peasants were basically stagnant and liked doing the same thing year after year. He thought that he was monitoring a form of Englishness, as did Rolf Gardiner, a fervent nationalist. But every such historical analysis comes with an agenda.

The morris dance had formed in its present style by 1750. From 1750 onwards stick dances appeared in the south Midlands. A good morris stand needs a variety of dances. Morris in the late 18th century to started to emulate their betters. Morris became more popular as depicted at the elite level, and a parody at the lower level. The 'Ale' is a parody of formal functions, a form of protest. The Church Ale developed Robin Hood as a functionary, a hero in the stories to all except the Sheriff, but in folklore he was in practice a great anti-hero appealing to peasants, and antagonistic to the aristocracy, a confusion of personal perceptions. Then there was the loss of the Church Ales, which became illegal. The Puritans technically banned morris. As the old context dried up, it still survived, but then it died almost completely. As a rule, if there were no references, it did not exist. Mostly it went because of economic decisions, but the story was complicated by the changes in the farming techniques of the time. We have to become our own context. The value of the processional was it allowed lots of noise, making it noticed from as far away as it could, as people were in the fields. The need was to attract people as disposable income is minimal, therefore the appeal of a variety of dances.

Today

The elite art world ignores the morris. There are no dialectics any more.

For 300 years morris evolved with creative force, and helped keep the cork of disturbances in the bottle. Dance and music is a powerful form of social comment. Often one can get away with it in dance in the right context. Unfortunately parodying power recognises the existence of power, thus it is self defeating. Morris is not a minor part of society.

What is the social mood today? We have exploited morris in a broader context in the last 30 years. There is a need to refer to this evolution. What social comment is today's morris making? We may be dominant socially in public but the morris itself is now introspective and only talking to itself. Can we take it out of that context? How many dancers really care? Tell them something that they should care about, just get out of the closed circle about yourselves. The dance potentially has a real contribution to make to our communities.

What is the future? Today's situation cannot last. Things do not take a long time to die, morris doesn't just potter on. We have different attitudes and have a different mindset from the 'tradition'. All things do change, there is no such thing as going on for time immemorial. All the time it is in the context of something else, it is only one of the dance forms available. Collecting has been part of the past of the morris. We don't need the money. What should we say about passing the hat? If we don't need it, then don't think about it.

2004 (MM 24-1)

Advice for entering Sidmouth Jig Competition

In 2004 timescale pressure on the day prevented detailed debate between the judges or the offering of informed comment to the audience. Hence these notes.

1. Attention to detail: During the competition the audience is excited and supportive, and the atmosphere helps the dancers to do their best. But the judges have to take all the performance details seriously and suggest marks which are collated in some manner. In 2004 the standards were high and most of the dancers were considered to be very close, but no one approached a near perfect score because of insufficient attention to detail.

2. Posture - A matter of body language. Good posture is healthy posture, and some acquaintance with the Alexander technique is desirable. The messages given by body language are complex and unavoidable, so a little study of some of the books available will bring ample reward, particularly in the presence of women judges, who are naturally much more sensitive to such things.

3. Some male dancers have the advantage of height plus strength, but height alone seems to inhibit lift off the ground, and power often comes out as jerkiness, not control. Women can bring lightness and grace and sometimes even a feeling of flying.

4. Lightness is a matter of technique, avoiding a banging of the floor, requiring a proper use of the ankles and instep, otherwise the dancers are heading for cartilage troubles. It should be important to hear the bells.

5. Feet - little thought seems to go into their relative positions. The judges look at the total picture, which is not the dancer's perception of themselves. Some turn out of the feet looks good, other angles often attract rude comment.

6. Travel - this is distracting when continually used, especially in double jigs. It is often an excuse for a poor dance technique with less lift, coming out more like running.

7. Handkerchiefs - too often too small and too light, thus becoming mere appendages. Pocket handkerchiefs have become smaller and of finer material through the 20th century, to avoid appearing bulky in pockets, so that dancers hardly make the handkerchiefs "dance" at all. With no handkerchiefs, as in Bampton style, often the hands are more expressive. Dancers must practise with suitable handkerchiefs, 18" square rather than 12".

8. Jerky arm movements and "dip" hands - movements that emphasise "down-ness" are not really part of the tradition, and in practice limit the lift that is achievable in the stepping because the downward acceleration lowers the reaction onto the ground.

9. Transitions - Too often a competition dance is learnt or created as a series of sequences rather than by mimicking a good role model, without the necessary attention given to smooth transitions from one type of stepping to another, suggesting that there is not enough practice nor a proper thinking through of the dance.

10. Traditionally, the music told the dancer which steps to use. Each step has subtle shades that can be reflected in the strength and length of each note. It is not just an opportunity for the musician to shine - they must work with the dancer. The music must follow the stresses and efforts of the dancer; an evenness of playing flattens the dance. You cannot speed up gravity, so the higher the step or caper the longer it must take. It also takes longer to accelerate into or decelerate from travelling.

11. Bells - no one seems to 'dance' them, do they need to be of better quality? Do men ever listen to them? Do they even wear them during practice? Really good bells have always been expensive but they do not jangle and have a clear ring. Old dancers used to select them so that the pads were tuned.

12. Skirts can hide the legs, and remembering that costume influences the movements, a woman may need to do something to compensate for what may be lost, such as emphasising the movement of the skirt. Practising the dance in front of a mirror, or being videoed to get the total image, are suggested.

2004 (MM 24-1)

Roy Dommett on Teaching, Teams and Repertoire

Beth Neill sat down with Roy and Marguerite Dommett in August 2007 to follow up on part one of his autobiography (MM Volume 20, Number 2)- which left off in 1985 – to find out a bit more about life after that, especially working with various women's teams.

"Let me explain my situation at the moment – I was diagnosed in 1980 with diabetes. In those days before we went abroad on business, we had to go to the RAF for a medical, so it was picked up fairly early. It's led to kidney failure; I started on dialysis at the beginning of 2006. I get dialysis now three days a week. At the moment it's 4½ hours on the machine each day, so the fundamental problem is that you get up at 6am - on dialysis - get home sometime after midday feeling somewhat washed out. We don't have many days free and get behind with everything - only essential things get done. Also I haven't driven for 2 years so it absorbs Marguerite's time as well as she has to drive me. The other problem that hit us very badly; my father died in 1996 aged 89. We'd been looking after his affairs since 1982 for 25 years and then my mother died last year - aged 97½ - so we've had 30 years of dealing with her finances and health. My daughter Judith died in 2002 and other close relatives died also in 2004 - we've had our fair share of family losses. I struggle to write things for people; one thing you can do on dialysis is write things down in notebooks. But it doesn't stop me sitting and thinking about things and there are a lot of aspects of morris that I've been illuminated on recently – don't know if it will be of interest to people. It enables to me to read a lot – I have a lot of books lying around the house – anything that impinges on the morris, such as life in the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

I was dancing morris out in 1955; I passed 50 years of first being involved in morris in 2002. I didn't celebrate in any way, it just made me feel old. It's not that I have stopped being interested – there's nothing quite like spring coming along and the morris teams getting out and going out to see them; it's so different from going along to a practice. I began to understand some of the old men I knew, like old Len Bardwell from Abingdon; it kept him going till he was about 84 or 85. He looked forward to doing his jig on May morning in Oxford every winter. You know, it keeps you going.

I retired from work in 2000. I was actually working over the Millennium – I was there for the Millennium bug (which didn't happen). I thought I was going to retire at 60 but they kept me on full time till I was 63, then I had 2 years officially at half time and then 2 more years of what they called "on demand". I was finishing a job and doing far more hours than I was being paid for. I finally escaped working at Farnborough when I was 67 in the year 2000 - but by then I was a member of the nuclear research advisory council. I was on that for ten years although you were only supposed to serve on it for three – and I only came off that in 2006. The last day I was in there working at Farnborough they got in everyone who had worked with me over the years – all of one person – everybody else had gone! The laugh was that the one chap who was left was by that time my boss, who I had in fact recruited in 1972! I have done a little bit of teaching occasionally since then, but I really retired from morris in September 2000 – rather sad.

I've worked with women's morris teams since the late '70's. I worked with Fleur de Lys for the first two or three years, then Minden Rose. Minden Rose are what I think of as

the ideal women's side – they're effectively almost all married – they were middle-aged when they started. It got to the stage this year one or two couldn't make some functions because there weren't enough of them. I worked with them for quite a few years – they had a good band, a good teacher and a long-term goal. Then I got involved with Fleet Morris who practise just up the road from me. I remember celebrating Fleur de Lys' 25th anniversary and I know Minden Rose celebrated 21 a few years ago - maybe the same thing is true of Fleet. All three sides have changed from being young unmarried executive types [the sort of side that you phone at 10 o'clock on the Friday evening to turn up at 10 o'clock on a Saturday morning] to a side where you have to decide in February what you're going to do in July or August because of families and things".

Morris Federation and the Morris Ring

BN - Did being involved with (W)MF stop you being elected as Ring Squire?
"No - I stood twice in my days with Abingdon – each time proposed by Thames Valley and seconded by other people. In both cases I was eliminated in the last round. From my point of view, if I had been elected as squire (which would have pleased me immensely), it would have affected my career tremendously. I had 132 visits to the States on my job – I have spent several years of my life abroad – towards the end it got to be every three weeks. I would not have done as well as I did in my career. I would have liked it because one was a particular anniversary (1969 - 60 years since Sharp); there were two anniversaries where my knowledge would have been invaluable to the celebrations. Never had an interest in it since. It would have given me the opportunity to get around and film a lot of morris.

The Morris Federation - although I talked at great length to Betty (Reynolds), the first President, I debated but never tried to persuade her to my point of view. I suggested options but I never recommended anything - the Federation was its own boss. It's been my attitude with the three women's teams I have worked with. You can't have morris without people doing it – the people doing it therefore have got to get something out of it – that is what I have loved about the three women's teams– they're not just nice people and friends - they all get something out of it as well as increasing their self confidence. This brings me to a good point – the difference between men's & women's teams. I think mixed teams are doomed because one sex or other will dominate.

With women's sides, I notice that they spend all day playing roles. For example we went to a weekend of dance at Port Talbot – they dressed for breakfast, for morris, for relaxing. When asked why, we realised everybody did role-playing in a somewhat subservient way. Get them to a morris practice – all that is thrown to the board – they come along to practice, all uniform in behaviour & appearance; no airs & graces. Although there was one side who did have one elderly lady who gave herself airs – they offloaded her onto another side - they could only improve when they got rid of her! It's hard when someone doesn't fit in – it always surprises me when you get to know the background of the members of a team, the diversity of the people in the team. Men during the day are happy to work to stretch themselves, so they like to be something in the evening; in the evening they dress up, drink, they don't settle down to work hard - unlike the women's sides who are determined to work and work at something. Men's sides say, "I can't do it so I shall never try again" – unfortunately even the good sides I've worked with over the years.

In Fleur de Lys, Marguerite came to most practices and would sit in the corner sewing; the team all came along to chat so they had a "mum" to talk to (as Betty Reynolds had done for Bath City) – you need that in a young team. You don't find that in a men's team – they just don't behave that way. That's why when women's sides work together with men, one or other tends to dominate to the disadvantage of the other – they only recover from that situation when they break away - when they have their own squire and own officers. They may socialise together but have different repertoire; different and independent teams. I've noticed that in sides in this part of the world, the male attitudes against women have largely disappeared – apart from, for example, Bob Bradbury in Somerset who could never get used to the women doing it. All you want is for them to do it well –not do it badly. I'm always happy to support WMF – also I was interested to see what it would be like".

BN: has it gone the way you expected?

"No!"

Fleur de Lys

"With Fleur de Lys, as I remember it, I only once went out and played on a tour for them - the strawberry cream tea seemed too good to miss! Although I played at practice I never played out, since they had a very good concertina player. When they started they had only a second rate morris man as a foreman. The foreman ran away with the squire – they were stuck – they had no-one to teach them, so I went over to get them on their feet – they'd only been going one year – a lot of shouting 'jump now' – to get them together - one of the problems of women who weren't used to doing things together.

Fleur de Lys discovered Martha Rhodens, who did Mad Moll of the Cheshire Hunt and Bonnets so Blue, which nobody else was copying. Then they wanted something local – found some ribbon dances but they are a bit unforgiving; if you make a mistake, you stand there all tangled up. Then they found stave, which suits them down to the ground. George Frampton tried altering the dances a fair bit. It's up to them what they do with the dances. They now have some new, some old – always of interest. They feel what they do belongs to them.

My real feeling is that sides ought to find what suits them – you ought to be able to find what suits you. The problem comes with remote sides like Belles and Broomsticks (*Guernsey*) – also the Wellington side in New Zealand they want to do it all – but you are on your own. You have to fit into your community as well. In NZ they have a get together somewhere. In Australia there are good sides but they are 500 miles apart. Of all the places in the world I'd love to live in New Zealand. You go to dance and people turn out because nothing else is happening!"

Minden Rose

"I got involved with Minden Rose because a number of wives and other people wanted to do something other than what the Alton men did. So they called a meeting in the community centre of Alton, tried learning two or three dances; they liked them and found a hall in Nursery Street with plenty of room and were there for many years. The problem was that I was very influenced by Dave Robinson (aka "Buttercup") when he was in Bath City Morris university side and knew his father-in-law who was in

Manchester Morris Men. He had access to his father-in-law's book of notations, so I was strongly influenced by what he said about the reality of northern dances - given a repertoire that didn't repeat itself – you've got one Cheshire dance, you don't need another one like it – you've got a Preston dance, you don't need another.

One of the problems with Minden Rose was to give them a balanced repertoire. I have a great debt to Julian Pilling, although I don't think he thinks kindly of me any more. He said a lot of good things and gave a lot of good advice to people. One of the things he pointed out was that North West repertoire was divided into major and minor dances. Many teams up north had what we would call a North West dance, but they were very often associated with a dancing class or groups and many of them were associated with a lot of other things. Kids of course would have Scottish dances, sailor's hornpipe, maypole; adults would have country dances and things of that sort as well. They all would have a dance repertoire of things you would consider ritual, things you would consider traditional, things you would consider modern. That is the way the folk world always was.

So we rapidly exhausted English repertoire; added Dutch garland dances, we've got a dance from Provence [I converted the hobby horse dance from Provence into a stick dance, which we then called Ansty Mill. They said it looked so complicated it looked like a mill, so we've called it after the mill down the road] and we're quite used to persuading a northern side to do it, believing it is a northern dance. So we've decided not to disinform them! Also have the Dummer 5-hand reel, which I collected from my grandmother, so that it's a pretty mixed bag – both large and small. Of recent years I have created a dance for Minden Rose called Nutting Girl, which was based on an idea on the first day they wore their new kit. There was a photo showing some with garlands and some with sticks and they said, wouldn't it be nice to have a dance with sticks and garlands. They still do it and it's satisfyingly simple.

You discover some things are too difficult – it's discovering what you can learn satisfactorily in a winter's practice – so that you can do it when you're out the following spring - if it is too hard in a winter it's not worth doing. That's the problem really. With Minden Rose there was always an influx – a few new people each year – when you've got 16 or 20 dancers, two or three new dancers is easy to absorb – but by the time you've taught them the repertoire, there's not time to learn much new. Peggy of Minden Rose is a very good foreman, very good at controlling, organised, they have a good bagman, good music and so on – there wasn't a role (for me)."

Fleet

"So when Fleet came to me – they had a problem - Graham Upham and his wife were leaving – I can't remember the side being more than one or two years old – I toured with them. I think I filmed them to see what they were like – and because they were doing Adderbury, Ducklington, Stanton Harcourt, I thought there couldn't be a problem with a side because they were doing things I'm very familiar with. It didn't turn out like that; they were just looking for another musician as it happened. I couldn't recommend anyone, so I was happy to play along with them for a while. I discovered that although they were doing Cotswold dances as a Cotswold side, the rhythms of the things they did were absolutely off the rhythm of the sides I danced with. They didn't have anything in

common with Fleur de Lys or much in common with any of the men's sides I've worked with.

An interesting experience but it forced me to think very hard about playing – and rationalise all the lessons I learnt from it. Getting people to listen to the music was hard. The one point I was able to make - if you play to the dance well, they respond to it – they can dance very well without you having to explain a lot. If you're stuck with unresponsive music, you probably can't dance very well anyhow, you're constrained by the music. Foremen spend a lot of time trying to improve the dance – they're not improving the bit that matters - and I firmly believe it's the quality of the music, the rhythm, the phrasing that matters.

Fleet of course eliminated a few dances – we did Badby for some years especially the versions of the dances I introduced - they found it was too much like hard work. However, Moulton say they do Badby – I say 'no you don't, you do a Moulton version of Badby and Windsor do a Windsor version'. That is a problem - how many dances can you add to the repertoire and it stays the same tradition? The answer is, not very many before it becomes your own anyway. I introduced Fleet to Lichfield – we had a night when they did the same dance from different traditions to decide if we liked it – they couldn't cope with Kirtlington - thought they could cope with Lichfield. Then we found some basque stick dances. Marguerite and I went up to a show at Milton Keynes where we filmed 2 shows and we liked the choruses. One is called the windmill and the other is chicken in a basket (something to do with eating in a pub). What we've done with Ducklington in Fleet is to introduce some of the Fieldtown dances – maybe something like Old Woman Tossed Up - instead of doing the chorus in 3 corners, we had 2 lots of 3 people doing them together - the dance is too long otherwise. We do Cuckoo's Nest going into line one at a time, which I first saw Windsor do. I have tried many dances over the years that don't work. I see other people do them and think 'that's a great dance' - then it doesn't work. I do have a little booklet of all the dance ideas I've tried on Fleet – of my invention. Fleet wanted something to remind them of the Fleet Air show, something to remind them of the Red Arrows: we have a dance called Red Arrows – quite unusual; that took about a year to think up."

Workshops

"I've run workshops with the various teams - when I was with Fleur de Lys, we had some workshops in Guildford where we had a mixture of Cotswold and clog. With Minden Rose we had a garland workshop – teaching garland dances for four, five and six that I picked up in the States. That was very successful. With Fleet we started some workshops – after the second time we decided, let's do border morris –something that none of us do. We invited the local side and asked them how they did border. I did a selection of dances that I knew, then after a couple of years Alton Morris decided they would run a workshop. We did some more in Farnham at the Memorial Barn, Shinfield Shambles ran two or three, then the last one was by OBJ at Bracknell. But I'm pleased to say I don't think I repeated myself - that was also my principle when teaching North West and garland dances - I tried very hard not to repeat myself. When a new team formed at Hungerford. I cobbled together figures from different dances so they had a unique set of dances. The border workshops ran for ten years or more between the various people. It came at the right time and the right clubs – each club had enough

confidence to run a workshop – know how to enjoy yourself - not be overwhelmed by visitors – other people came in wanting to have ideas – I think that is why teams like Alton, Hook Eagle and Datchet have gone away with ideas and wanting to put things together.

What none of them learnt is – you have a limited repertoire - they have a good idea and pad it out to make a dance. What teams do then is have too many dances – what they should do is say, 'let's amalgamate the good parts so you have fewer dances that are better'. I did this with Treacle Eater down at Taunton - they had a good selection of garland dances for various numbers of people – they suffered from that problem – we spent a day touring with them and made a dance from a selection of the best bits - now they have one very good dance called the Treacle Eater. Another side – Magog at Horsham wanted to learn some garland dances – they rather liked the Bacup garland dances – they learnt the five garland dances and strung them all together so now have one dance that has the best bits of all of them! I admire that."

Rapper

"I gave up teaching this; I was running a workshop on doing back somersaults until someone went over backwards and landed on his head! If you're running a mixed weekend or folk club, it's different – I do have in my papers all the published notation for rapper dances – I have filmed a number of sides doing rapper but it didn't enthuse me to create anything. What I've wanted is for someone to sort it all out in the same way that Mike Cherry does with clog steps – they're not all different steps - what you should do is look at rapper in the same way for the fundamental movements. Each team does it differently but it's all the same movements if you see what I mean. In North west they are all the same figures – back to back, half gyp etc. – just put together differently. It was never very popular in the south of the country."

Longsword

"I've taught it to children – at a junior school south of Fleet – they were going on a school trip and wanted to show off –the senior teacher was very keen for them to have a dance. We taught them the usual longsword dance – five figures (single over, double over): there were two teams, one from the top stream and one from the bottom stream; it was the bottom stream that lapped it up – they were the ones who borrowed the swords and practised over lunchtime. Another time the kids found a certain amount of difficulty with one of the figures so they altered it grossly (even more amusing); they didn't know what to do, so instead of going under they reversed back – it worked with that age group. We found a shop which sold stair rods, which you can't make a lock with, but kids can belt each other with them and that proved invaluable in workshops in large numbers. Underexploited that kind of thing is!"

Maypole

"I got involved with Berkshire council, teaching maypole on the outskirts of Reading. Bear in mind I'd never actually seen one but that didn't matter; they had a commercial maypole and I did it for seven years until they realised I wasn't a teacher. I ran a schools' dance festival at Basingstoke for three years until someone realised I wasn't a

teacher and I shouldn't be doing a teacher's job. As a dance teacher you look at it differently – figures and movements and what can be done. Talking to old people and looking at old pictures, I realised there are more than five standard figures – there are 17 figures - that doesn't include that you can simplify them as well."

Working with children

"We were asked to teach at a school where most of our children had gone – the headmistress wanted us to do a maypole dance so we could do it at the church fete. I'd never taught little kids but I thought I'd try it. We went down there and I tried but there is no way I can teach 5 or 6 year olds - I just can't cope with it. I tried but I can't dumb down enough! I'm too used to working with older people, so all I could say to Marguerite was 'you may not know what you're teaching them but this is it' – and she taught them like a mum. I had written notation for the dance and after a while Marguerite actually learnt the figures properly – it was hilarious because I knew what I was playing for, as I could play for them and make the length of the tune fill the time for what they did, as distinct from having music left over or not enough music.

That's where you've got to get them – junior schools. The objectives when teaching children morris or maypole or country dance is so that they've met it so when they grow up they don't say ugh! We want them to recognise it. [Farnborough Morris had to learn Beansetting because everybody that we met in those days knew it!] Young children at the moment are a lost opportunity – you can't fit dance into the curriculum but you could do it after school. When I was running a youth centre here (a country dance team) they wanted me to have a dance qualification – the only one I could get was old time dancing – there is no recognised folk qualification. Why can't we have a (Saturday) folk dance course? One day teach a course on a simple border dance, a maypole, other country dances – a committee could produce a brochure – a few pages on each topic – enough to make the key points to teach. There are enough people around with teaching in that field to do it.

A close friend of ours ran classes in Aldershot for children at risk – they provided them with all sorts of activities. We went over to provide basically the singing games. We were defeated at almost at the first step; 'stand up and join hands in a ring' 'go round together to the left'. They had no concept of co-operation, they had never been in social situations. You don't learn it in school – those social interactive skills are lost or are not being gained on the current curriculum or they lose it as adults if they ever gained it in the first place – they haven't learnt how to engage."

Wantage (Advanced Cotswold Workshops)

BN - how did they start?
"I have an idea that it started from the WMF notation group including Barbara Butler - we met regularly to do dance notation. Phil (*Butler*) was there – but who organised that weekend I've no idea. The first one was up in Norfolk (How Hill) a strange building with very odd shaped rooms. The next one was Burgess Hill in a Catholic hall (and we couldn't dance on the Sunday morning because of the church services). In Brighton we stayed in a youth centre and walked down the road. Then it went to Wantage.

This business of 'every 18 months' started because I had said that for Sidmouth, Cardiff,

Halsway Manor, annual events were too soon really. Tubby (*Reynolds)* and I found you needed to refresh yourself between the weekends – and that meant you needed more than one season. Two years would have been too long, so that led to 18 months. It suited us down to the ground – enough time to prepare, to try out new ideas and for regulars to feel refreshed as well and ready for one. That's one of the problems with instructionals and events; they're either one-offs or annuals. 18 months for Wantage was so ideal in many ways, being able to exploit Friday teatime through to Sunday teatime – we had a full two days. Other events I've been to, like Ring meetings, in their instructional sessions I've noticed you spent as much time doing nothing as you did in the instructional - I'm not sure what the thought on that is.

The great thing at Wantage you could do things that you couldn't do at any other workshop – first of all they were genuine advanced dancers so there were things that I never imagined we'd be able to do. I remember doing an Irish mummers dance; I saw them doing it originally and I wrote down the parts. We had to find out how to do it ourselves - once we got it going we didn't dare stop in case we didn't get it going again. The idea again was to stimulate ideas, to approach things, in the same way as we had a fallout from Halsway weekends. People like Tim Radford were inspired by the range of things we did and the attitude that developed. [Within the Federation did anybody keep a chart of how the number of sides grew? It would be interesting to see if these things had real influence – three or four years after people attend, there ought to be sides doing things on their own.]

The Morris Ring wanted their sides to be run by people with 10 years or more experience who knew what they were doing, knew the ropes. The reality was that MF formed sides from people with only 1 or 2 years' experience. I had the idea of writing a booklet of giving advice of the various things that foremen ought to know about, that new sides had to learn by themselves. When you go to school, somebody teaches you how to read and write – they don't actually sit you in front of a pile of books and say find out how to read!

I was never very good when I was younger at creating dances. You get a tune and think, "how can I fit a dance to that?" – I hardly get anything that gives me satisfaction. On the whole good dances have to be simple and most of the good ideas have been thought of already. Take Cotswold dances – about 360 have been collected. I encourage people to make dances up. Very few people have taken the dances away from my teaching at places like Halsway Manor or Wantage – having said that though, I did invent a tradition. I called it Juniper Hill (I was heavily into Flora Thompson at the time: Lark Rise to Candleford and all that stuff); something that was a bit Brackley-like. There was a new side at Norwich that took it up, which came as a surprise in East Anglia – the molly sides up there had never learnt the *original* molly dances – one day the side did the Juniper Hill dances and I filmed it. I was very pleased – I really appreciated it. You can give things to people and they can do what they like with it. Similarly with North West dances – I acquired a lot of dances by writing to different people and sharing it around – so if they meet they should all have different dances.

'The Rose' I got from a university get together; this group of girls from Sunderland Polytechnic said it had been taught at school by a man who didn't like women doing longsword dancing, so they did a garland version and changed it to suit themselves. I

taught it to teams like Knots of May; having taught it to sides like that who weren't very happy with it, they changed it. So it came back to me as an improved form of the improved version of the improved version! As far as I'm concerned it is the definitive form – I got it as a dance for 12 but sides have adapted it for eight and I've got a collection from English Miscellany who did it for six and I'm surprised how well it worked. I have no proprietary right over these things – you give someone the concept."

Teaching techniques

"We found sides abroad that wanted someone to come up to them and say 'you're doing quite well, you're going the right way' - they have no way of seeing themselves. There comes a stage with sides when they do like Windsor did: said 'something's wrong or could be improved; come and say how we can improve' - very few teams did that I must say. I said all the steps and jumps looked the same – wonderful, but all the same! It takes an incident like that to find a good sound principle – finding out things the hard way - again all this should be written down, They should be concentrating on the performance, not how to get the steps right.

That is why tapes of the music played the right way would be invaluable to people – the Ring did a series of tapes for each tune for all the dances in the Black Book – for people who could learn by ear. You need to talk about where the emphasis came. Douglas Kennedy used to start by teaching people about movement. He had classical training – he talked about the offbeat and delays. I've got an article by him – if translated into morris it was sound advice. Tony Barrand said the same thing – you have to explain to people – do you start the movement on the upbeat, or do you get there on the beat? Where is the beat? If you can understand that you can tell the drummer what to do. A drummer usually beats on the beat, driving into the ground, which kills the life of the dance. The best thing you can do is pick up the drum yourself!

When you've got small groups, you find the drum isn't necessarily the rhythm instrument - the guitar or banjo may be the rhythm. With pipe & tabor you may think the drum is the beat for the rhythm of the dance, but for traditional players the whistle was for the beat – the drum was for the excitement – you played rolls etc. I don't think it is necessary to reproduce the tradition as it was, there are lessons to learn from it. You can't have sides dancing to the old pipe & tabor. The G pipe is too highly pitched to have the volume to cope with modern noise. That's why Tubby Reynolds played a C pipe. Outside you need a lower pitch – while inside a hall you're struggling with the echo and you need a high pitch. If you have a G/D instrument – you play G outside & D inside if you can. That's why fiddles in A were quite useful indoors.

The technique I have for teaching (I used to do it at Sidmouth; also at Wantage and at Pinewoods) is to teach a tradition in an hour and a half. You'd do a dozen traditions this way - not to teach the tradition to people - but enough to work on it but not so much that it's fixed in their mind. The mistake I made in this approach was that people forget what you taught to start with and they start to make it up by the end of the workshop and then they go away saying 'that's what Roy taught us'. And I know it's not, because I keep notes! Not that it matters in the end because what I want is that each team should have its own repertoire that make it different and better – as far as they are concerned - than anyone else.

One day we went out with a side and I didn't recognise anything they did – which is great. Whether that is the best thing for the morris I don't know! But it has got to be better than the other way with 50 Cotswold dances which you learnt progressively, starting with Headington and working your way up the traditions.

The thing about teaching the morris is to teach dances or tunes; with enough advice to lift their self confidence up. One thing I've learnt over the years - don't give gratuitous advice whether to musicians or dancers – only what they ask for. Otherwise you lose friends – no matter how well intended or needed the advice is! People who aren't performing well don't know they're not performing well; how do you educate them to know that? People don't know they're doing it wrong – all you can do is point them in a direction or drop some hints - and they may pick up on it. As I've said to Tony Barrand, morris is only as complicated or as difficult as it has to be… when there is no competitive morris around it can actually be very simple - when there are lots of morris sides around you've got to be distinctive - or better!"

2008 (MM 27-1)

Roy Dommett on Influences and memorable moments

Who have been your main influences?

First of all there was **Alan Browning** with whom I shared a room in the RAE and who got me involved in the morris. He started to run a weekly barn dance and I did the door. Then I joined in the dancing. Later on Alan appealed for someone to form a morris side; the team started practising in 1954. I was number one; we practised Bledington – from Russell Wortley's notes – and was dancing out by 1956. He also had other ideas – Farnborough Morris never had a squire or bagman – we would appoint a foreman and bagman for each event that year – the year was shared amongst pairs of the team - we had the AGM at one of the weekends out over lunch somewhere, so everybody who turned up got a vote - we believed in having weekends that lasted Friday evening and included all of Saturday. In the early days we would organise dances between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. to fit in with the bus timetable! Farnborough Morris Men had one car and six bicycles – for our long weekend we would borrow the RAE bus and drive round advertising the dance. He was a profound influence on me anyway. That was really about organisation.

The next influence was **Mary Ireson** who had run a side based in Farnham – then at Woodnarks (home for disadvantaged girls) then eventually practised at Holybourne near Alton - she was a well known country dance teacher in the area who had learnt her dancing before the war and had passed all her morris exams and that stuff before the war – her father was still alive. She saw the whole thing as a social thing – people working together in groups – going out to fêtes – fitting into the community.

The next one was **Frank Purslow** – he introduced me to the traditions - I was introduced to him by Reg Hall who played for Farnborough in the early years – he said come along to see how Abingdon dance and that is how I got involved with Abingdon and with Bampton and he introduced us to Chipping Camden and so on. Through him I learnt about tradition and started visiting with him the old dancers and eventually did a bit of researching with them myself. EFDSS policy was not to film living traditions – they didn't want to interfere – whereas I wanted to film Abingdon and Bampton in the '60s in case the teams folded. As it is, they survived.

I went to a weekend run by **Nibs Matthews** at Halsway Manor and asked about dances other than the ones he had taught. I was invited back by Bob Bradbury and the following year I ended up teaching at Halsway (around 1963).

And the final real influence was **Tony Barrand** – and he was about the aesthetics – the artistic bit - and also the fact of the interaction between the morris and the audience. As an assistant professor at Boston he did have a different approach to things. He did have a row with his sides as they tended to think he saw them as a psychological experiment; I think he just had a grasp of those things. His doctorate was about aesthetics of dance. Typical American I might say. He's done some good things – researched and found step dances – he found that not all step dances had to be traditional – they could be commercial as well. He uncovered the equivalent of the West Gallery singing – the shape note and Northern Harmony. Marlboro Ale has been a great success over the years - a great influence - and getting Marlboro to concentrate on one tradition was a

good thing as well. I had a good session with his ex-wife about Ilmington; the repertoire of the women's side at the time.

He asked me for material – I gave him a copy of loads of stuff typed up to about 1980. When I went to Pinewoods, in 1980 I suppose it was, I took a set of notation of North West dances for distribution – bear in mind this was a time when everything in America was new – chronic shortage of material or information of any sort and no opportunity to access raw material (as distinct from publications). So it seemed to me a very sensible idea for material to be accessible. The Country Dance & Song Society in America, of whose journal Country Dance & Song (CDS) he was editor for a while (which I didn't know), decided there was a limited market for it and published it – and surprisingly, it got sold in this country! Although not many people knew about it. So when people (like Julian Pilling) made a fuss, no-one knew what they were talking about.

We had agreed for notation not to be published. Also I asked 'had they asked the teams if they were worried about their notation being published?'. I knew, like in Abingdon (as a member of the club) the older men actually wanted someone to do their dances and they had looked forward to the days when a massed Abingdon dance would be the massed dance at a ring meeting. It was the newcomers coming in that made a fuss. It's their opinion, they run the team and it's up to them to decide. Because of the fuss, there were British people who actually started threatening Tony through the post, threatening to take it up with the dean and the university. I don't know why they would say it but they would have been laughed out of court, as Tony only ever did things with the full approval of his faculty: as a faculty member he can only do things in accord with the faculty.

American copyright laws are different from here: over there if you want a copy of a book you go into the shop, just ask for it and a quarter of an hour later you get a quick single copy. That's how I got a copy of the notation of a Romanian morris dance; it cost me $7. Rules there are different – none of this 10% of a document rule. CDS have decided not to publish the material any more – as far as I'm concerned the impact it had made, it had done its job. The morris world does not need a book like that any more – people can gather information via the internet or elsewhere. People have a different approach to things these days

Tubby (Reynolds) was a profound influence as a friend. He is the worst sort of influence; he will suggest something and think about it later. Last time we sat together we agreed we're not ashamed about anything we've done but we're not very keen for it to be written up!

I was going with Mike Cherry to Bacup via Tubby's in Bath – staying overnight; the car broke down near Bath – Tubby came and towed us home but on the way towing us back to his house he overtook a bus!

Highlights and Lowlights

What was your worst morris moment?

It was being welcomed to Bath City University morris, making me an honorary member by being thrown in the lake - in my best suit which I'd only had for three days – and I

went down with a kidney stone. Marguerite has not forgiven them – a suit cost a lot of money when you've got a large family.

I don't recall being embarrassed – there are one or two things I regret – I know when I went with Tubby and Bath to a Thames-side Ring Meeting, there was a day with Benfleet Hoymen. It wasn't Bath City but lots of ex-Bath City coming in for a reunion; they were basically out of control. Tubby & I didn't really notice what they were up to because we were talking with old friends. It got out of hand, it was all embarrassing. At the AGM the then-squire of Bath City had to crawl to the Ring to apologise for their behaviour. There were people saying 'why are you associated with a university team?' I couldn't answer that - because as far as I was concerned they were as gifted as anybody and they had a spark that made it lively – not associated with most of the Ring sides at that time.

I was embarrassed by a Bath City woman – they were doing Stave dances and they did them beautifully - I said something which I thought was complimentary – the squire burst into tears as she took it the wrong way. She was obviously very nervous about it and expecting criticism. The women needed to find something they felt confident about and could do well. The boys were happy to work on traditions like Ducklington. Bristol was the centre of the brass industry – where the stave heads came from – so it made sense – the side were young and inexperienced; it gave them something to go round with like that and gave themselves confidence.

And your best moment ?

Michael, Simon, Stephen, Peter, Judith, Roy, David, Thomas (in hat) and Marguerite Dommett – about 1970. Boys in Abingdon kit

2008 (MM 27-2)

Entertaining Adderbury with sing and stick

Background

The Adderbury Morris sang both old songs and other popular town songs of the day, often executing some of their stick movements whilst they sang the choruses. They did this to keep the crowd quiet while they were resting themselves. Only sometimes they danced as they sang, but mostly it was stationary - hence the use of longer sticks than was customary for show. In the South Midlands sticks were to show precision, not strength, which then would have been unquestioned. Like those of many modern teams, performances were extended by any individual skills available, as they were performance conscious. There had been three sides at one time.

Janet Blunt (1859-1950) lived in Adderbury from 1892. She, with the occasional help of friends Mrs Elliot Hobbs, Miss Kennedy and Miss D C Daking, collected songs and country dances from 1907-1919, the morris only over the 1916-18 period. Several copies of her manuscript were made at different times to pass to other people (such as to Cecil Sharp who appears to have ignored it) which differ in details, so all have to be consulted. The Blunt collection was used by Michael Pickering for a thesis and a book "***Village Song and Culture***: *A study based on the Blunt Collection of Song from Adderbury, North Oxfordshire*" published in 1982 by Croom Helm, London. This puts the material fairly into its context of period and locality. Keith Chandler considers the people involved in his books[4].

The major informant on the morris was William "Binx" Walton (1837-1919), at least a third generation morris dancer and last survivor, and a well-known local singer with his brother. The village orchestra was disbanded in his boyhood, but he sang treble in the church choir. He had a difficult teenage period as his father was convicted of two counts of theft in 1844 and died in 1848 soon afterwards, so William was in the workhouse until apprenticed to a bricklayer and builder. However he became a lifelong bellringer from the age of 15. He married a girl from Coventry in his early 20's, when he was probably already a morris dancer, and he claimed that he was its leader from about 1860 to its end just before 1880. He had four brothers who were also morris dancers. In the 1881 census he was a builder and shopkeeper, in the later 1880's and 1890's he kept The Wheatsheaf public house with an attached shop in East Adderbury until 1899.

When Blunt first met him he was a vigorous and upright man full of dance, as can be seen in the Blunt photographs in the Vaughan Williams Library. He met Sharp and Karpeles in Hampstead, London on the mornings of 25th and 19th March 1919 through Janet Blunt arranging for him to visit a married daughter living in London. He died in that September aged 83. Sharp said he was "hale and hearty, rather blind although he can hear well, walk with a firm step and sing with a strong baritone voice". At first it was difficult for Cecil Sharp to get Walton's memory back and it was only by degrees that he was able to recall the different evolutions with their many technical details, despite Blunt's success over the previous three years. Blunt failed to distinguish between

[4] See for example "Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles" The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900 (Hisarlik Press, 1993)

Foot-up, Foot-down and the Processionals.

In the 1950's and 60's the Sharp and Blunt manuscript material was rationalised for circulation to be consistent with the existing Sharp publications. From the 1970's the various slightly different copies of the Blunt manuscript were treated as independent descriptions, widening the interpretation possibilities. Unfortunately 1919 was in the period that Sharp appears to have pressurised informants (as at Abingdon, Brackley and Wheatley) and his interpretations cannot be completely relied upon if there is alternative evidence.

Style

Modern sides do not match the manuscript descriptions.

The handkerchiefs, half a yard a side, had two opposite corners tied and held between thumb and forefinger. The hand movements were not very stereotyped but varied considerably, although always within certain limits. The arms were held in front of the body, the elbows curved and held well away from the sides. The movements were "counter-twists" in rather large vertical circles or ellipses. On the first beat of a bar the movement was outwards going down and then up. Sharp elucidated that they could be a slight upward pull using mainly the wrists when the hands met dropping in front on the third beat. Modern sides say "apple and stalk" and less polite descriptions.

The sticks were held vertically in the middle with the hand at shoulder level and a little in front of the body. The tapping in choruses is normally "doubles".

o = odds strike evens, e = evens strike odds, x = clash tips.

Hands Round : clasp hands at waist level.

Whole Hey : the top two pairs pass right shoulders, turning the easy way into it.

Shooting : The dancers stood upright, as if firing a shotgun, which they would know all about, and never crouching, which would be dangerous to the person.

Dances

The following is based on transcriptions of the Sharp and Blunt manuscripts and not on previous publications such as Lionel Bacon's book. The choice and order of figures was somewhat variable.

BLUE BELL OF SCOTLAND - doubles stick hold

o o e e / o o e e / o e o e / x - x - // repeated.

Pattern : (1) and (4) partners; (2) and (5) middles up; (3) and (6) middles down.

If they are to be done twice, it needs at least 6 figures.

BRIGHTON CAMP - doubles stick hold

o e o e / o e o e / o e o e / o - x - // repeated.

(COME LANDLORD FILL THE) FLOWING BOWL - doubles stick hold

Normally they sang the figures without dancing.

o e o e / o e x - / o e o e / o e x - / o e o e / o e x - / o / e o e o / x - x -//

Pattern : can use the different striking patterns inspired e.g. by *Blue Bell of Scotland.*

HAPPY MAN - Four Part Song - doubles stick hold

Normally sang and tapped sticks without dancing. Would clash across "to close" at end of lines.

(Blunt) o e o e o e x

(Bath) o o e e / o e e / o e o / e x - / e o o / e o o / e o e / x - - // repeated, as less boring.

Step : 1 1 2 hop,

2 run with heavy step on first beats,

3 like *Jenny Jones.*

End dance with a repeat chorus performed faster.

LADS A BUNCHUM

In the "High" hold the sticks in both hands, stand pointing left shoulders to each other, evens facing up, odds facing down, and raise sticks well above heads horizontally and parallel to the files. When striking, the dancer makes an overhead movement pivoting right hand over left, so as to strike down with his tip on to his partner's butt.

POSTMAN'S KNOCK - Two Part Song - doubles stick hold

Adderbury tapped only; the Wootton Morris danced foot-up and half-gyp, foot-up with singing, stand facing and tapped without singing, ad lib.

e o e o / e o x - // four times through. Note start with an "e".

Because of the tune stretching in the last bar of the sticking to make the B music nine bars long, it is often stretched further by adding two more strong beats for a tenth bar and doing two extra taps.

End dance with a repeat chorus performed faster.

ROAST BEEF OF OLD ENGLAND - doubles stick hold

They only sang and tapped before the club dinner; when outside they might dance. This was a typical formal song before army mess dinners.

o e o e / x - x - / o e o e / x - x - // repeated.

Collected with tapping through the A music as well.

(SWEET) JENNY JONES - alternately doubles and singles stick hold

Figure order as *Washing Day*.

Sang on the last foot-up in the last chorus.

Collected both in 3/4 and apparently in 6/8 time.

in 3/4 o e o / e o e / o e o / e x - // twice

in 6/8 o e o e / o e o e / o e o e / o e x - //

Step : in 3/4 time pause on 4th step etc. with weight on both feet.

WASHING DAY - alternately doubles and singles stick hold

Danced for as many as available. Figure order: foot-up; half-gyp; sticks across diagonals in fours; foot-down.

o / e o e o / e o e o / e o e o / e - x // repeated.

2010 (MM 29-1)

Fiddling Fieldtown

The Place

The core of Leafield is a small and fairly open area on a hill in the centre of what was the post-Roman Wychwood Forest. It was originally named *La Felde* by the Normans, not being recorded as Leafield until the 18th century. The settlement in it became known as Fieldtown (the tun or homestead in the field). Wychwood Forest was a managed park woodland of copses and wide rides. Before its enclosure in the mid nineteenth century the forest was the primary source of wood and timber for more than twenty parishes from many miles around. It is on Oxford Clay over Forest Marble, with a cap of glacial drift on the hill at Leafield which was relatively barren.

The Roman potteries around Oxford had disappeared in the 5th century and also the mediaeval potteries in Wychwood in the 16th century. They were started again in the 18th century by a family Goffe, who were also farmers, using the surrounding forest for fuel. Because the local Oxford Clay contained iron, the pottery was red or orange when fired; when glazed the colour ranged from orange to brown, unlike at Shotover nearer Oxford where the Wealden Clay produced whiteware. The local trade in country potter's coarse earthenware contracted after 1850 as longer distance transportation improved. Wychwood was not ancient woodland. It was settled at least in Roman times to provide ranches (colonia) for retired army officers. The outlines still existed in Saxon charter and parish boundaries. By reputation in the nineteenth century the people were reckoned gypsy folk because of their closeness and independence, but this is unlikely as the hamlet is much older than their arrival in England.

There were two morris families involved at Leafield, the Williams, who were purely potters, and the Franklins, who were brickmakers as well, but even they ceased making pottery by 1900. Some examples of ware produced by the Franklins are displayed in the Oxfordshire Museum at Woodstock. There is no surviving evidence of intermarriage, but several were dancers or musicians. The potteries were actually owned by the Vokins and then the Grove families. In later years, once the local production had stopped, they sold pottery brought in from other sites, such as from Colliers of Tilehurst. The site of the pottery moved from Witney Lane, owned by Vokins and worked by the Williams, to Chimney End by The Fox Inn off the green, and then to The Crown Pottery up the Shipton Road. Percy Manning wrote a manuscript description now in the Bodleian Library of the Crown Pottery and the work processes following a visit in May 1906.

The local rights included expression in the Whit Hunt for deer in the eighteen Chase Woods in the segment of the forest near Witney, which has been covered in an earlier issue of Morris Matters. The village church was built in the late nineteenth century and before that they had to use those in the neighbouring towns. There is a story of a funeral party going to Charlbury who put down a coffin to chase a squirrel and could not find it again for a while in the snow. Hunting squirrel vermin who terminally damaged hardwood trees was often associated in England with 30th November, but the occasion was frequently used as a cover for general poaching. Presumably this started before the spread of the American grey 'tree rat'. *Hunt the Squirrel* is a common folk tune.

There was shortage of local surnames leading to many being known by their family nicknames. Reg Pratley of the Jubilee Inn, Bampton, who had grown up in Leafield was a

'Samson' Pratley through a relative who as a strongman had been able to pick up a horse.

The locality name of the local morris side varied over the years with the changes of leader and his domicile. Locally it was reckoned by dancers from the early EFDS class and the school that the later Ascot-Under-Wychwood sides were the local heirs to the tradition, which view might be supported by the similar long dance lists from both places.

The Source

Our major source on the dances was Henry Franklin who left the village about 1858, although some little snippets have come from other dancers. These include George Steptoe, once a noted prizefighter, and Henry's much younger brother Alec, who survived until the late 1930's. Cecil Sharp found that Henry was not completely sure of all the details and this led to some differences in what was collected on different visits, as in *The Rose*.

Henry and Alec once walked over to Kelmscot to show Sharp's team 'how to dance' at a major show. Because they were not allowed to dance Henry wrote complaining about it to the Oxford Times. Henry badgered the local EFDS branch so they arranged for him to show his jigs at a display at Christchurch college.

The boys in the village who danced before and after WWI learnt Headington as their basic tradition. The local older dancers considered this to be not the real morris. In the early 1960's it was still possible to have a whole set of dancers up with a pianist in The Fox to perform their school-learnt morris. When Alec had retired as a potter, so said Reg Pratley, he would sit outside The Fox in a shepherd's smock with a crook and empty glass waiting for passing motorists to stop and buy him a drink.

The Fiddle

The fiddle was a natural successor to the pipe with a similar sharp-edged note but more colour and therefore more expressive and lyrical, but with less rhythmic possibilities. Fieldtown danced to a fiddle played by Charles Busby at the end. Although no local player for the morris was ever met, some of the recalled tunes were very distinctive and confirmed by more than one informant. There were two quite distinct versions of *Shepherd's Hey* and *Molly Oxford* in use. Other tunes such as *Dearest Dicky* and *Old Woman Tossed Up* were not the usual versions but variants of tunes known as *Lads a Bunchum* and *William and Nancy* elsewhere. Dancers from south of Wychwood claimed that it was difficult to transfer dancing from the pipe and tabor to the fiddle, which suggests that there were significant differences in style and idiom. The few recordings that were made of old morris fiddlers show very simple styles, almost childlike, with none of what is now called the 'English Country Music' style of modern times.

Sharp met several fiddlers from the Stow area but little about their style was ever recorded. However what may be assumed is that the fiddlers knew the dance idiom and were far less influenced by other dance and musical styles than anyone is today. It seemed unusual for a musician to play for the morris and for other forms of dance as did Richard "Dick" Butler of Bampton or his father Edward, who had a mobile dance booth.

The notes from a fiddle, like all the good morris instruments, have a sharp leading edge which is used to indicate the pulse; this is why most accordionists are poor unless they use the bellows like a melodeon. There can be much debate about where in the note the foot touches the ground, the major effort to slow down or to rise occurs etc.

Tricks of the Trade

The morris handkerchief was normally half a yard[5] square before hemming. The Sharp photograph of William Kimber in the Morris Book shows that the opposite diagonal to that held would touch the ground. Men's pocket handkerchiefs were normally a third of a yard and ladies one quarter, but they were never intended to be waved except for a goodbye. It is important to make the handkerchiefs do the work, not the hands. The two are often confused when copying someone else's movements.

To gain height off the ground, which was an avowed Fieldtown purpose, the force on the ground has to be maximised, and this is helped by accelerating the arms upwards while in contact with the ground, and lowering them while off the ground to bring the body up compared to the centre of gravity.

A similar appeal to mechanics shows that during a galley the arms and legs are hung out to maximise the roll inertia and gradually brought inwards as the body turns to decrease it and so keep up the rate of turning.

Steps and Hand Movements

Some details of the dance style have been preserved. The tradition allows of considerable expression in its movements. The morris step is not forced, there is "bounce". It is particularly noticeable that there is a preparatory bounce at the end of bars into the next stepping.

The arm movements are not violent, nor is there a high swing or even a snatch. The handkerchiefs do the work. Effort in the arm swing is on the "up" to help in gaining height for the head and body. There is very little emphasis in the Cotswold Morris on "downward" movements, which tend to look and feel poor, whatever the foreman thinks. It is also clear that it was intended that the hands during a backstep sequence trace a small figure of eight rather than be held stationary, going out and down and then in and down. When holding a morris stick while doing this, it should wave slightly either side of the vertical. In the half-gyp and other crossing figures this movement avoids hitting one's partner while passing.

The backstep was carefully described by Cecil Sharp. The key is that the sole of the forward foot is not lifted off the ground but scuffed, and the foot is twisted with the heel across on the offbeat. Of course the emphasis in the morris step is "up" whereas in the backstep it is "down".

The sidestep was collected by Cecil Sharp as a closed crossed-over movement and by Kenworthy Schofield as an open one. The Bampton dancers who met old Fieldtown men before WWII said that they all danced a "heavy" step, ie like Eynsham, and put the

[5] Eighteen inches or 48 cm in metric

forward foot in line with the back foot! However in each case the hand movement was an "up", either straightish or as a show, but never with a snatch down, only a "float".

Figures

Foot-Up: face in at half way and at the end.

Back-to-Back or Whole Gyp: the latter less frequently. Compare with the differences between sides at Bampton.

Rounds: danced to opposite diagonal place using back-steps around the ring as at Bampton. Going into the centre, which belonged to *The Rose* only, has come into common usage since 1951. It does not fit well into stick dances for which it should be avoided.

The Hey: the backing up/down the line involving an extra body twist compared with other traditions was taught to the Travelling Morrice in the 1920's. The first two bars are normally danced with sidesteps.

Dances

Sidestep dances

1 *Gary Owen*, the march past of the US Seventh Cavalry, and known at Leafield from the once popular song words as *The Walk of the Twopenny Postman*.

2 *Blue Eyed Stranger*, collected by Schofield from Alec Franklin.

3 *Month of May* and *Molly Oxford*, usually used for jigs.

The important point is that the rhythm affects the dancing. The 6/8 tunes best fit a bouncing style whereas the 4/4's constrain movement.

Shepherd's Hey

The chorus is a whole hey usually danced with three sidesteps and a jump or just a rise and fall followed by a pause of half a bar (one bounce worth). The characteristic is the opening up and out of the arms to end out sideways for the pause. This movement has led to being called in the past "Signposts" or the "Ritual Cursing" dance.

Trunkles

The tune comes from Minster Lovell. On the B music pairs in turn crossed over and galleyed to face back, and then danced on the spot and galleyed the other direction. This is long-winded, so it is more usual to either delete the dance on the spot or to have all the set do both parts simultaneously. Following a modern interpretation it is satisfying to have all the corner crossings to the C and D music together with the start of each corner delayed a little, so that Nos 1 and 6 move off in bar 1, Nos 2 and 5 dance on the spot in bar 1 and move off in bar 2, and Nos 3 and 4 dance on the spot in bars 1 and 2 and move off in bar 3.

Old Woman Tossed Up

The collected version has each corner in turn crossing over, then each corner in turn dancing slow capers and finally each corner in turn crossing back to place before the next figure. This is so long that often modern sides only do half the dance. An alternative commonly seen is for the capering to be done simultaneously by all the set, and even to delete the immediate corner crossing back to place. The suggestion here is for all the set to dance the corner movement simultaneously to cross the diagonal, all passing right shoulders in the centre, all cross the set changing with their partner on the slow capers, and then all dance the corner movement back to end opposite their starting place simultaneously.

Long versions of dances were used because in those days a performance in front of a small but distinguished local crowd was often expected to be only one dance and that dance needed to match the size of the monetary box expected.

Dearest Dicky or *Dear Is My Dicky*

The collected version is also long with the corner movements being danced in turn leading off on one foot and then repeated to place off the other foot before another figure is danced. It has become customary to delete the immediate repeat. A more effective dance is produced by having three dancers at a time move, Nos 1, 4 and 5, then Nos 2, 6 and 3, each going round two places. Another impressive idea is to dance with eight and have the corners done by four at a time, first Nos 1 and 6 and Nos 3 and 8 change, then Nos 2 and 5 and Nos 4 and 7 change, and finally the dancers in positions 3 and 4 and 5 and 6 change.

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2010 (MM 29-2)

Where was the Cotswold Morris?

The first point is that the known 'Cotswold' morris territory is the part of the South Midlands that lies between Cirencester in Gloucestershire and Towcester in Northamptonshire, and is mostly on the limestone belt that runs from the sea in Devon up to Yorkshire which is followed by the Fosseway. It provides good building stone but which varies significantly in colour along it that is well used for the vernacular architecture. As a geographic region 'The Cotswolds' is normally taken as from Bath to Stow on the Wold. As a social region it is the country of nucleated villages with houses clustered around its church and pub.

The morris area is bordered by the clay basins of the Vale of the White Horse, the Buckinghamshire plain, the Bedfordshire brickfields, the Nene Valley of Northamptonshire, the Vale of Evesham and the Vale of Gloucester, although there is some spill over onto the edge of the clay. The clay has been the home of larger estates and often closed villages dominated by major landowners. Another reason for the withdrawal of the morris from its possible former territories could have been the growth of local industries whose independence negated the need - for extra economic inputs, the boot and shoe trade in Northamptonshire, bricks in Bedfordshire, and clothing in East Gloucestershire.

Looking at the morris from internal evidence suggested that the local styles can be divided into two groups, those around the forest and those on the stone. The former in the 19th century appear more elaborate in steps and choruses, the later rather simpler and including greater use of sticks. It seemed reasonable to deduce that the morris which revived after the Restoration could have started from around Wychwood Forest and Stow and spread north simplifying as it went and overlapping with the Bedlam Morris and its sticks drifting south from the Midlands. A possible indication of such a diffusion was that the distribution of the surviving teams has mostly been around the edges of the heartland.

However that was not so, David Underdown, in "Start of Play - Cricket and Culture in 18th Century England", Penguin Books, 2000, on page 77 says, 'The New Wells also saw commercial possìbilities in more traditional entertainments, promoting the 'famous Bath morris-dancers' after they had come to the capital to perform at Bartholomew Fair. The date appears to be 1744. D'Arcy Ferris wrote to Cecil Sharp before WWI remembering the morrís in Bath, so it may have existed there for a century. Underdown also mentions the morris at Bletchley (Stony Stratford) about the same time, and Russell Wortley met its aged last foremen of a side, so it also could have lasted over 100 years. Alex Helm reported morris-like dancing from North Somerset. Perhaps no one has looked thoroughly for mentions in the 18th century which might show that at one time it stretched further.

It is part of the folklore that the morris existed in the villages, however this identification owes much to the modem redefinition of places which were once considered to be small towns with markets. Even where they were not, they were close to one and it must be assumed that the morris was part of that place's social life.

2011 (MM 30-1)

The Collectors - meeting some of the morris

This account formed part of a conference paper which is not very accessible to dancers. It covers some of the early contacts with traditional dancers and helps illuminate the times.

The Non-Event

In the Autumn of 1885 D'Arcy Ferris, then living at Cheltenham, began the well-known revival of the Bidford morris. In the 1880's Ferris was involved in organising 'revels' up and down the country: in 1886 he was Master of the Pageant for the Ripon Millenary Pageant which brought the Kirkby Malzeard long sword team to fame, and also, Julian Pilling claimed, included a Lancashire Morris although no reference has been found documented. His first attempt in raising a morris was a troupe of boys for revels at Lord Wantage's in August 1884. From subsequent events it can be deduced that it was hardly a proper morris, probably with no attention given at all to tradition. It is likely that this episode was well received, yet criticised for not being 'morris', as he almost immediately set to the task of obtaining genuine dances. With the aid of Dr Fosbrooke-Powers he found in the autumn of 1885 William Trotman, then aged forty-five who came from Idbury near Bledington and who had danced the morris in his youth.

Ferris was the first person to write down morris dance detail and tunes with all the attendant difficulties of being a pioneer. Much of his manuscript is now in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML). To help improve the dancing standard of the troupe of youths, Ferris contacted many morris men in Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. The evidence from letters covers Bledington, Brackley, Bucknell, ldbury, Ilmington, Longborough, and Wheatley and his address list included Blackwell, Brailes, Honington, Newbold Pacey and Preston-on-Stour. It is impressive that in 1885 he could find a dozen places which had or recently had a morris. Harry Taylor had been,

"... asked to dance for 'em at Jubilee time for a week but squire wouldn't let him, he said it was all nonsense."

By 22 January 1886 the youths from Bidford were ready to perform at the Bidford School Room with Ferris lecturing and dressed in his costume as "Lord of Misrule" from the Billesley Old English Fete of 1885, see *The Pictorial World* for 4 February 1886. They danced to an old tabor bought from Tim Howard, a Brackley dancer and to Robbins on a fiddle. The episode was repeated at Alcester, Stratford-upon-Avon, Evesham and other near villages and later at Cheltenham, Bath, Clifton and London, The 'circus' paid for itself and allowed a small wage for the dancers. Harry Taylor did not think much of the Bidford dancers: they were too clumsy and too heavy on the ground

The Bidford men danced occasionally after 1886 - for certain in 1887 and 1896 - but in 1904 they were approached by the secretary of the Shakespearean Celebrations for that

year, then a Mr Evans, a vet working in Stratford-upon-Avon. Evans also collected local songs and oral history using an early Edison phonograph. This Bidford side was still comprised of some of the men who had started dancing in 1886-7 and was seen by Sharp and MacIlwaine when dancing at Redditch in 1906. That was the first time they tried to collect dances from active traditional dancers. Before then, the Headington dances had been taught directly to the young women of the Esperance Club and then notated from the dancing of the chief instructress Miss Florrie Warren.

Ferris has received a bad press from the early days of the Revival, yet without him realising the possibilities inherent in the growing antiquarian interest in folklore there might not have been a Revival. He seems to have coincided with the start of the modern habit of reviving old customs and traditions for national celebrations, thereby making them respectable, as at Queen Victoria's Jubilees. The interest aroused was decisive in maintaining the Ilmington tradition. It is uncertain if it played any part in Percy Manning's involvement and the Headington Quarry morris renewal in 1897 and hence its discovery by Cecil Sharp on Boxing Day 1899.

Cecil Sharp

Sharp began his independent collecting of morris music and dance with John Mason at Stow on 29 March 1907, (see *English Dance and Song* for Spring 1967 p23). From Mason, Sharp obtained a Constant Billy and Marriage Vow, an alternative name for Saturday Night and the Maid of the Mill, which he later published in his collection of Folk Dance Airs in 1909 as from Lower Swell. From the same source Sharp learnt of William Hathaway, a lame shoemaker, then living at 8 Burton St., Cheltenham and a former Lower Swell fiddler.

Sharp saw him on 30 and 31 March and 4 April and again on 9 August 1909. From the ages given to Sharp, William must have been born between 5 April and 9 August 1840, Charles Hughes of Naunton had sold Hathaway his first fiddle in exchange for a pair of boots worth 3s 6d (17½p). William Spragg was a great friend of William Hathaway and had copied out for him at some time his tunes from Sharp's notebooks. Sharp often allowed this practice. Many years later Spragg gave his tunebook to Helen Kennedy. It included tunes e.g. Jockey to the Fair, presumably written out by Spragg, but with very poor barring.

Hathaway and Mason had both played for Taylor amongst others. Mason knew 'Bill' Hathaway well enough to be able to give Sharp a version of the tune Black Joke as played by Hathaway. When asked about his Princess Royal, Mason said. "I began persuading it about", but Hathaway claimed for his, "this is absolutely correct". From Hathaway Sharp learnt of Alf Tuffley and Harry Taylor at Longborough and Albert Taylor of Lower Swell, but he did not follow them up until 1910. Clive Carey noted Albert Taylor as a Bledington dancer. A brother to Charles Taylor, he was born in Oddington and married a Bledington woman, living there briefly in the 1860's. Sharp met another fiddler, on 1 August, James Hathaway, who also played for the morris near Stow.

Cecil Sharp was not immune to criticism. Frank Kidson attacked him in *The Musical Times* of 1 January 1908 over his remarks on Country Gardens and Constant Billy. Lucy

Broadwood took him to task in the *The West Sussex Gazette* of 2 January 1908, over misquotes on singer's repertoires. Sharp subscribed to a newspaper cuttings service that extracted relevant articles from national and local papers, and this collection survives at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

Sharp entered his prolific phase of collecting morris dances in 1910. He spent Christmas 1909 with Miss Ella Leather in Herefordshire where he saw traditional country dancing and the Brimfield Morris team at Orleton (see *English Dance and Song* for Autumn 1969, p98). He returned to London visiting Billy Wells of Bampton, the Howards and Stutsbury at Brackley, Cadd at Yardley Gobion, and seeing the older scratch side at Eynsham on the way. In March *The Morris Book vol.2* (first edition) and the first volume of *The Country Dance Book* were published. For most of March 1910 he stayed near Oxford with Mrs May Hobbs, better known as Miss May Elliot, a noted concert pianist, at Kelmscott, the former William Morris place. He was visiting George Simpson at Upton near Didcot, cycling over from Didcot railway station, to learn the Sherborne Morris, e.g. on 5th, 24th and 31st at least. George had a young team of boys and one of girls aged 10-11 years old and a local young woman as fiddler, but Sharp ignored these, although they were filmed for a two reel rustic epic in 1908 (Wortley), or perhaps 1913 (Rollo Woods), unfortunately now lost! A photograph of Simpson in his Sherborne costume with the children appears in Keith Chandler's book. On 23 April Sharp wrote to Mrs M L Stanton of Ladle Farm, Armscote, near Stratford, about two miles from Ilmington,

"I had a great find in an old morris man whom I traced from Sherborne in Gloucestershire. This man is the sole survivor of the last side ... He is full of knowledge and full of dancing and I have been steadily emptying him ... I have learned more from him than anyone else so far. His dances are quite lovely and the tunes are very jolly. I have seen him four times already."

There is another photograph of George Simpson in *The Dancing Times* of April 1925. Born in 1850 he dìed of cancer in 1915. Fred Hamer was told that the Simpson brothers had been in the police for a while. James was a Police Constable at Stonehouse, near Stroud, in 1881 when aged twenty four.

Sharp saw the Abingdon side in Ock St., Abingdon on 1 April with Mary Neal. He lectured in London on the 20th and at Retford, Nottingham on the 25th, and was staying with Mrs Stanton on the 27th. From here he wrote his first letter to the press to start the public dispute with Mary Neal, attacking in particular Sam Bennett's Ilmington side and the Abingdon dances in *The Daily News* of 29 April.

"... in the process of revival, many of the most beautiful and essential parts of the dances were lost, as anyone, conversant with the attributes of the traditional morris, would see at a glance."

The cause, course and justice of Cecil Sharp's dispute has been treated elsewhere. Mrs

Stanton was a frequent companion of Sharp's at this time. She took the local traditional country dancers, the "Armscote" dancers, who in fact came from Honington, to the Stratford-upon-Avon Festìvals. (See *English Dance and Song* for Autumn 1966, p100.)

Meeting Harry Taylor

Cecil Sharp and a friend set out on a tour on 27 April 1910 through Blackwell (one mile), Ilmington (two more miles), Brailes (six more miles), and then on to see the boys team at Chipping Campden (seven more miles). (William) Denis Hathaway had trained a set of boys because the men's side, who had performed in Chipping Campden in 1896, perhaps for the first time since the 185Os, would not dance for Sharp. The boys included Don Ellis who in later years became the side's leader and, like many a leader elsewhere, a local councillor for a while. Denis told Sharp that his dances were practically Longborough dances, but a certain amount came from his grandfather-in-law, Thomas Vaile, an old Campden dancer. The connection looks tenuous when watching the traditions being danced, but there are certain stylistic features in common. The dance to the tune Young Collins, used for a stick dance at Campden, was then called Longborough Morris.

The cyclists went on to look for Harry Taylor at Longborough. They found him over the hill from Longborough at Condicote, Denis Hathaway's home village. Harry had gone over for a haystack thatching job according to Fred Taylor his son In 1964. In *Merrie England and the Morris Dancers* published in *The World's Work* in August 1912, Mrs Hobbs wrote:

"Another dancer, whom Cecil Sharp discovered pulling mangels, was asked for particulars of a certain dance. The veteran took Cecil Sharp behind a haystack and the pair capered together, the old man singing the tune at the pitch of his voice, until the data necessary for the perpetuation of the dancing were in the collector's notebook. In the middle of the dancing the farmer came on the scene at hedge-gap and sat down thunderstruck. At length he approached the dancers, spoke appreciatively of the entertainment he had been given unseen and reproached his servant not for leaving his work, for he was on piece work, but for having been with him for so many years and never let on he could dance".

In Sharp's lecture on 31 May as reported in *The Morning Post* on 16 June, mentioned previously, he described his visit to Taylor on 2 May. He told how one pouring wet day he bicycled six miles from a station to interview a former morris man, seventy years of age, who worked as a farmhand in one of the highest parts of the Cotswolds. There under the shelter of a haystack, using wisps of hay in lieu of the orthodox handkerchiefs, Mr Sharp and "Old Harry", as the man was called, danced a 'Pas de Deux', the ancient one whistling the tunes, of which, along with the steps, notes were taken and afterwards pieced together. The first dance gone through was Constant Billy, because of its possible relationship to the Campden dance, then Country Gardens, Taylor's favourite tune for the sidestep dance, and onto Hey Diddle Dis, the processional.

"Hey Diddle Dis, my backside you may kiss,
And away goes the Longborough Morris"

Fred Taylor had the same story of his dad having a dance with Sharp by a stack. The demonstration side at that lecture danced some then very recently collected dances: Shooting from Brackley (note not from Hinton-in-the-Hedges), Constant Billy with two sticks from Sherborne, and Brighton Camp from Eynsham.

Sharp was fifty years old and on the brink of public recognition for his work.

Sharp returned to London at the beginning of May and fired some more public letters to the press about Mary Neal on the 9th and 10th. On the latter day in *The Morning Post*, Sharp refers to the recent Queen's Hall show with a Northants Beansetting and an Ilmington Maid of the Mill...

"Survivors of the old Ilmington side would have told Neal that the dances 'had not been handed on in a correct form' and that the steps were as untraditíonal as they were uncouth; that the figures were incorrect and the tunes untrustworthy.

On 25 May, the paper had another letter.

"Cecil Sharp has all Sam Bennett's dances in his collection. but he would not dream of publishing them."

In fact he recorded them under "Stretton-on-Fosse" from the place of the flower show at which he saw them, rather than give them the dignity of being called Ilmington.

On 13 August 1912 Sharp's letter said,

"The traditional morris of the Warwickshire village of Ilmington was difficult to get, since it had not been danced for a long time, and there were only to be found two old villagers and a railway worker at Birmingham who had taken part in it. The information extracted from them on repeated visits was ingeniously pieced together and the result is a beautiful dance of some historic importance."

His reconstruction was a perception of the Ilmington of about 1867, the last "proper" outing being a visit to the Tysoe Club, but which was itself a revival, and he largely ignored the subsequent dancing. Following Sharp's criticisms, Sam Bennett went back and established from the older men to his satisfaction an authentic form, which he was teaching at least in the 1940's, and which was inherited by Oxford City through R Kenworthy Schofield, after he had moved to Oxford from St Albans.

Cecil Sharp was back with Taylor on 13 May 1910. Fred Taylor was eighteen at the time of Sharp's visits and recalled his dad teaching Sharp the steps. Sharp first wrote down the tune of a dance and then, while whistling or singing it, learnt the steps and figures by dancing opposite as No.2 and mimicking Taylor. This was Sharp's technique both at Sherborne and Fieldtown as well and as all three traditions were published very soon after being collected, it is not surprising that some of the "points" of the dances as published in his Morris Books do not appear in Sharp's papers. As he taught the dances immediately to the "demonstration" side, "points" of style have come down through the EFDSS teaching that also do not appear in the Morris Books.

The only other collector that Sharp appears to have trusted was George Butterworth. He

and Tiddy visited Gibbs and Wright at Bledington and gathered the steps and dances that Sharp used in his revision in his Morris Book. The music is in the Butterworth collection in the VWML. Miss Sinclair, Ralph Honeybone and others confirmed that these two were the source of the material for the EFDS. At Bucknell the collecting difficulties defeated Butterworth and he had to call on Sharp.

Joynes the Fiddler

For some of the time at Longborough Sharp had the assistance of the local young fiddler George Joynes, then aged twenty three, who had had no connection with the morris but who could read music. Until then Joynes had had no idea that there had been a local morris, so well had it died since the early 1890's. Sharp visited Taylor on 13 April 1911, and noted to his great delight his version of London Pride. Douglas Kennedy met Taylor for the first time on Sharp's men's team's Cotswold tour in 1912. Clive Carey visited Taylor on 22 March 1913 during a follow up visit to the Cotswold survivors on behalf of Mary Neal.

Mr Joynes was fired with enthusiasm after Sharp's visits and wrote out some tunes played by Harry's eldest son Henry, also a fiddler. He intended to give them to Sharp when he next saw him but they never met again. Joynes lived at Longborough with his sister. A gardener most of his life and a clock and watch repairer in his spare time, he had also worked on farms, as a shepherd and in the Donnington Brewery just two miles away. He had assembled a collection of morris tunes from libraries and other places but they were stolen just before WWII by a woman visitor who had been stopping locally in a caravan.

Rolf Gardiner

In 1923 Rolf Gardiner went on a walking tour across the Berkshire Downs and up through the Cotswolds with Christopher Scaife, then at Oxford and later to be a professor at the University of the Lebanon. They met several singers but only two morris dancers, Harry Taylor of Longborough and Charles Taylor at Church Icomb. Rolf remembered Charles doing a few steps for him. He could not be stopped, despite his daughter's efforts; he being partially blind and it being a rough stone floor and he knocking into furniture. The meeting with Harry was overlaid with memories of subsequent visits with the Travelling Morrice. What he learnt then was also re-gathered by the Travelling Morrice later.

There was a lot of dissatisfaction amongst the Cambridge undergraduate morris men just before this visit, which found expression in Rolf. He wrote in *Youth* Vol.2, 1923, p.52,

"If you plant them in artificial conditions where vulgarity is rife, all the more so if you spray them with the germ-killer of a spurious traditionalism ... the dance subjected to the anatomical treatment of text-book legislation too is a corpse ..."

He continued by proposing a ten point programme for changing the character of the EFDS, from Classes to Festivals.

1 No public demonstrations.
2 Discourage women's monis,
3 Divide the work clearly between, a. proselytising. b. artistic,

4 Proselytising - five area groups with freedom of action, to tour villages, like the Travelling Morrice in character, perhaps with the morris restricted to public shows and boys and mens organisations,
5 Artistic - dramatic work instead of displays (Old King Cole)
6 Encourage experiment but be relentless in criticism
7 Meet continental dancers in England
8 Send English teams abroad
9 Masques, processions, pageants in public, everywhere,
10 Rename as the English Festival Society.

For this view, which was fifty years too early, he was asked to drop out of the Festival team for the King's Theatre Hammersmith, 2nd-7th July 1923. He then expressed his views on the EFDS and morris in *The Challenge* issues for 6th July 1923 and 17th July 1923.

"Cecil Sharp got dances chiefly from old men, greybeards of sixty and eighty, men with stiffness in their bones and rheumatism in their joints. He saw the dance as it was performed by the men who had danced in the hotness of their youth and now remembered it like a half-forgotten dream. Out of his notes and conjectures Cecil Sharp gave us back the English Dance ... One wonders at the [judgement] 'decadent' ... [applied] to Rose Tree from Bampton?

... the technique of the morris as performed by the members of the EFDS was derived from an application of theories conjectured by Cecil Sharp ... I did not think it necessary to explain further that when Cecil Sharp set out to collect the dances he knew next to nothing about dancing technique and that he has never been a proficient morris dancer himself, that certain movements, such as the galley, I have seen him demonstrate in a way diametrically opposite to that described in his books.

Only a few weeks ago as a guest at the house of Mr. Taylor, once captain of the Longborough side, I learnt something of the method by which Cecil Sharp collected the dances of that particular village and was able not only to correct some minor mistakes but to collect some new dances from Mr Taylor and another octogenarian of the same name who danced for the Oddington side, This experience proved to me the supreme difficulty of gauging movements accurately when demonstrated by limbs withered and lacking flexibility and when one man had to represent a dance intended for six."

Few of the Travelling Morrice went all the way with Rolf's views. Many were very orthodox and these continued with the Travelling Morrice for many years and exercised a decisive influence on the morris in the early years of the Morris Ring.

Rolf became friendly with Mary Neal. As reported in *The Globe* for 22 April 1919, she had disbanded the Esperance Club during the war years, the male members joining the army, the girls going to war work and the children having to be kept at home because of the perceived risk from the air raids. She became a Secretary, a senior civil service grade, in the Ministry of Pensions. She said that some of the teachers were still active though and she was hopeful of starting again. However she resolved never again to fight publicly with the EFDS and encouraged her workers to associate with the EFDS branches

springing up everywhere in default of the Esperance organisation. She gave Rolf some background newspaper cuttings, that she had thought valuable and kept in order to help him in his debates with Sharp and his followers. In an interview at the Farmers' Club on 27 October 1961 Gardiner expressed the belief that the Karpeles sisters were jealous of Mary Neal, and took Cecil Sharp away and fostered the bad feelings.

She and Rolf joined 'Kibbokift', an apolitical movement concerned with open air camping, woodcraft and the love of all lores of nature. Miss Neal was 'Keeper of the Open Hearth' at "The Cottage" Amberley Sussex and Rolf was "The Ranger". Kibbokift was founded by John Hargreave on 18 August 1920 at a time when he was HQ commissioner for Woodcraft and Camping to the Boy Scouts. He later became political and turned a portion of the movement into 'The Greenshirts' or New Social Credit Party. Gardiner wrote in 1928 a brief account of the Travelling Morrice which was published in his own magazine *North Sea and Baltic* for High Summer 1938.

"In the spring of 1924, two of the morris men [Gardiner and Heifer] conspired to give the side [Cambridge] a taste of the real thing. They poisoned the imagination of their fellows with the charmed names of Longborough, Bledington and Sherborne. It was like talking to the home stranded Crusader about Jerusalem and the Holy Land. In this mood the Travelling Morrice was born."

Arthur Heifer was probably the key motivator. They had first met at the Chelsea Polytechnic when Rolfe was sixteen. Heifer had just finished at Oxford and was going to Cambridge to run the family book business. He had been educated at Perse School, a cadet at Sandhurst and commissioned in 1918 into the Royal West Surrey Regiment. He was severely wounded and invalided home. He then gained a second class degree in Modern languages as an army student at Queen College, Oxford. Arthur died of pneumonia on 1 November 1931, aged 32.

2011 (MM 30-1)

Innovative Ilmington

The Ilmington tradition is valuable for the modern morris world because of the insights derivable from its many stops and starts and the changes to the dances that have been documented. For most of the 19th century the local morris was danced to a pipe and tabor, played by three generations of the same family, from the founder George Arthur (1769-1836) from Snowshill, Warwickshire, through his son Tom (1802-1890), a mason, and grandson James (1828-1906), a carpenter. Most of the 'historical' facts published by Sharp in his Morris Book were wrong and the correct details should be sought in Keith Chandler's two books[6].

The dancing traces back to the beginning of the 19th century, perhaps as early as 1805, when George Arthur came to the village and set up a workshop. The morris probably stopped first about the time of the end of Dover's Games in 1852, and then again a little later, 1858-1861. Evans, the Stratford–upon-Avon vet who restarted Bidford, recorded an interview on an Edison phonograph which told how its last tour towards Brill met the local dancers and when the fighting broke out, the Ilmington leader Johnson ran all the way back to his village. The ridicule caused him to live in Birmingham for a few years. It was revived from 1886 to 1888/9 stimulated by the local interest in the Bidford team, then in 1897 for Queen Victoria's second Jubilee and again in 1906 because of the growing wider interest in morris. Sam Bennett revived the morris in a fashion with women after WWI and again after WWII using children[7]. There is an indication that Ilmington was danced with galleys in its early days and this thought has been inspirational to several modern sides in England and the United States. Galleys do not work in all the figures. It is particularly attractive in the hey where each pair galleys at different times.

Cecil Sharp collected dances from those who had been in the 1886 and 1897 revivals. He even recorded the dances of the early 20th century side when it was dancing at a Stretton-on-Fosse Flower Show, and these notations and an interpretation have been published by the Morris Ring under that village's name. Ewart Russell and I visited the last survivor of Sam's team. He remembered the incident but not very favourably. Sharp thought that he could recover 'older' forms of the dances from the senior dancers in the village and his reconstruction was published in his revised edition of the Morris Book. Because of Sharp's public condemnation in the national daily papers of the then-active Ilmington side, for which Bennett was playing (although he was not responsible for the dances), Sam recollected the dances himself and produced a version which was seen and recorded by Kenworthy Schofield. This form was taught to Oxford City MM when Schofield moved to the city. He had never taught Ilmington to his previous side at St Albans.

Ilmington was one place where beginners were taught to morris step by supporting their

[6] "Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles" the Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900 and Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900, A chronological Gazetteer both by Keith Chandler, (Hisarlik Press), 1993

[7] See later in this issue for more about Sam Bennett

weight on the backs of two chairs, on the bars of a sheep dip, or hanging from a beam. They also each supplied their own sticks, 23" long and double-tapered like many chair legs, and the dancers were fined if they forgot theirs. The current village side started in the 1970's with the intention of avoiding both the Sharp and Bennett influences. They had the joy of some local inputs on the dances, once they were established and locally accepted.

Pipe and Tabor (Whittle and Dub)

This was once the only instrument used for the morris and it should be more widely adopted again. It is easy to learn and only requires one hand to play[8]. The three-hole pipe (two holes on the front and one behind), is played in the first overblow octave as the fundamental notes are weak. This ensures that it is high pitched and shrill, more of a rhythm instrument than a melody one. They are made for particular keys. They can still be obtained made in metal. The accuracy of hole positioning is critical, which ensures that hand manufacture is difficult, and probably explains why the art died amongst players in the 19th century. An instrument maker who is a supplier in Brasstown, North Carolina, USA, has them made in the keys of C and D by the company who manufactures his CDs. G pipes are much larger. Major Fryer of Wargrave used to make large pipes from bamboo, which he could tune using matchsticks and plastic wood. The modern problem is the volume of background noise from traffic and other things.

There are actually two forms of three-hole pipe available, called here the Basque and the English, which differ in playing by a tone, which ensures that transferring from one to the other is very hard. Joseph Powell at Bucknell had a commercially available Basque pipe. When Helen Kennedy gave him a copy by Dolmetsch of the John Potter of Stanton Harcourt damaged pipe owned by Jinky Wells, he could not get on with it at all. Musicians played their own versions of the tunes, suited to the instrument. It is thought that it should be possible to tell from the tune collected with which instrument the informant was familiar.

The tabor can vary from a very deep side drum to a small tambourine-sized one suspended vertically from the little finger of the hand playing the pipe. Usually the drum is played with a single headed stick, but some players had a short double headed stick which could be "rolled" for excitement. Although the pipe could not provide much sound colour the pair were rhythmically independent and hence very flexible in expression.

Style

The dances considered are those used in the late revivals as they are described in Lionel Bacon's Handbook, but which are usually ignored by morris clubs.

Stepping: Single stepping, Cotswold, not any other form.

Hand Movements: The arms are swung down and up, not a large swing, not up very high, and up on any jump. One source describes a "sailor's roll with alternate arm swings" but this does not look well unless it is done in the Chipping Campden style.

Jumps: jumps were not used consistently during the dances, and should be kept for the finishes of movements.

Slow Capers: During the period of interest these were only performed in jigs. Sam Bennett told Schofield that each involved three movements rather than the more normal

[8] One friend practised while driving!

four, as had become common at Bampton, for one of whose sides Sam was playing, and he showed a cross-apart step and a clapping set.

Because of the D'Arcy Ferris contacts about 1886 with various dancers to help his Bidford team dance, it has long been thought that their dances were influenced by Ilmington ones. However the Ilmington dances of that period seem to reflect the reverse!

Figures

Once to Yourself: A jump. Start on to left foot unless there is another consideration.

Foot Up: This could be danced on the spot, facing up and then down, turning first outwards to face down and then inwards to face across. It could also be danced moving up and back, then turning in to face across and dancing on the spot still facing across.

Cross Over: *not* a whole or half gyp. Two bars across, passing right shoulder, turning right to face back, two bars back on the same track passing left shoulders, turning left to face front.

Cross and Turn: Normally done as a whole gyp movement, except in *Maid of the Mill*, and elsewhere when it suited to have such a movement.

Half Heys: These were 'country dance' like with the top pair going between the middles and the bottom waiting, not turning out to start, with no extra loops.

Whole Rounds: This was the normal, not half rounds, and probably not with a pause facing across at half way, ending all capering up, but facing across at half way and turning out to carry on looks much better.

Dances

The choruses tended to stay the same or be simpler than Sharp reconstructed but the figure order was rather variable from dance to dance.

Shepherd's Hey - hand clapping

Chorus :

b rk r+r - / b lk l+l - / b unr b unl/ b beh r+l, l+r - / plus a half hey.

b = *dancer claps both hands together at chin level,*

rk, lk = *slap top of right or left knee, which is not raised, with right or left hand,*

r+r, l+l = *opposites clap right or left hands together,*

unr, unl = *dancers clap both their hands together under right or left thigh,*

beh = *clap both hands behind back,*

r+l, l+r = *opposites clap both hands with each other.*

Figure Order: Foot-up, chorus, [back-to-back, chorus, whole-gyp or half-gyp, chorus] ad lib, whole rounds to end. Or, as *Molly Oxford* version 2.

Clap hands above head at each jump.

Cuckoo's Nest - stick tapping

The stickings appear to include a number of small variations on a single concept.

Odds hold their stick by the butt and hit their opposites stick, held horizontally at chin

level by both ends, in the middle 3 times, while the odds tap their right toes on the ground and the evens their left in front 3 times. Next the evens do the same to the odds and tap opposite toes to before. All hold sticks by the middle vertically and clash the ends, tips right to left and butts left to right, 7 times in all, while dancing single step and jump on the final clash.

Half hey and repeat all to place. *Figure Order* as above.

Black Joke (1) - with a stick held by the butt.

On the tune extension all the dancers do 4 plain capers on the spot. There is no specific sticking in this dance but at the usual place for clashes the evens hold their stick out to the side and the odds hit down on the tips with their tips.

Figure Order: [Foot-up and down, chorus] ad lib, whole rounds to end.

Foot-up (2 x 6 bars) could be alternately up or down to start.

Chorus: half back-to-back (4 bars), half of a half-gyp ending with 4 plain capers (6 bars), both passing right shoulders and then repeat dancing the other halves, passing left shoulders.

Black Joke (2) - with handkerchiefs

Figure Order: Dance facing opposite ending with 4 plain capers (6 bars), cross over and back ending with 4 plain capers (6 bars). Chorus. Foot-down (6 bars) etc

Cross-Over: end turning left to face front for 4 plain capers.

Chorus: dance first half of a half-gyp, dance in position and end with 4 plain capers. Dance first half of back-to-back, dance in position and end with 4 plain capers. In repeats dance the other halves.

Molly Oxford (1)

Figure Order: [Foot-up, chorus, whole gyp, chorus] ad lib, whole rounds to end.

Chorus: All sidestep to left, so that lines uncover, and side step back to right, without a jump, and half hey. Repeat all this to place.

Molly Oxford (2)

Figure Order: Foot-up and retire and dance facing, forward and back to meet opposite (not a half gyp) and then first half of a figure. Sidestep to left and right and half hey, sidestep to left and right and dance the second half of the figure. Repeat all but start sequence dancing foot-down and use another figure in two parts such as half-gyp, whole-gyp, back-to-back, cross-over, cross and turn and half rounds.

At Bidford I was told by the two sons of the old foreman that they had two dances known as the handkerchief and the stick dance. The former was the common sidestep and half hey dance which could be done to a variety of tunes, but for the latter the stick tapping was at the foreman's discretion and might not be known by the rest of the team until they saw what the foreman did!

2011 (MM 30-2) written in 2009

On Sam Bennett

Sam Bennett was effectively the Ilmington village squire. He owned the biggest farm; he had the best house at the top of the hill. He owned the orchard which employed lots of people in the village. Later on he owned a number of small fitted coaches to provide transport. In other words he dominated village life. This means other families in the village were a bit anti-Sam and his heritage. Sharp's morris books' dates are all wrong – he said people were dead when they weren't. Sam had played for the 1886/7 revival (about the time of the Queen's first jubilee). He learnt to play tunes from the pipe and tabor man. He then made attempts 10 years later and was playing for them alone in 1907ish about the time the Esperance club became nationally famous. He wrote to the local paper saying the Ilmington side existed but no one was very interested in Ilmington, only in the wonderful dances the Esperance club were doing. So he went and taught himself Headington – and anything else that was popular.

Having heard that the morris was going on at Abingdon, he then went over there to try and learn the morris there. Hilda Weblin (who I talked to about 1960) knew the dancers and remembered Sam (and all the other collectors) coming over when she was a small girl. She was Tom Hemmings' sister - James' daughter. She remembered Sam coming over several times; he had problems playing the tunes properly. In the end he became such a nuisance they threatened to shoot him to stop him coming!

He was invited over to Bampton the year that Jinky had a row with the rest of them (1926, the year of the big strike). He played for the old side that had kicked out Jinky Wells - who then formed his own young side. I was told by one of the people who danced with Sam at the time that he would play on the fast side. They got a bit fed up of it so they would say, 'Hey Sam, play a bit faster' in a sarcastic way – but he did! So they regretted it!

He obviously liked Bampton as the hobby horse that he had made for morris over at Ilmington was left to Bampton. Sonner Townsend was meant to collect it but there was a delay in getting a truck to go and collect it. By the time they went, it had been taken by Ilmington School. In August 1962, Ewart Russell[9] & I went to Ilmington and found the hobby horse in an empty school so we were able to turn it over & take pictures of it.

He tried to get the side revived in the '20s but they had lost too many men through the war, so he had a women's side. It was the dances they did and the way they did it which was the basis of my first teaching Ilmington dances to the Federation. Not the way Sharp reconstructed it from the way Michael Johnson danced, nor the way the local side danced. I did produce a few sheets as taught by the old dancers to Sharp – again where the variability of the dance structure came in. I did those notes because I was asked at Sidmouth one year to teach dances that were danced to different instruments (pipe &

[9] Bag of Morris Ring at the time (1960 to early 1970's) and with Colchester MM – his father was a gamekeeper on an estate on Colchester and claimed never to have left the estate in all his life. His mother (and possibly his father) could neither read nor write. His father was charming – very experienced and gave Roy some of his driving experience!

tabor, concertina, fiddle) - to show if you danced to original instruments how it affected the dance. For Ilmington, Mary Jo Searle from New Esperance played (pipe & tabor) for me at a workshop and it had quite an effect.

That women's side generated a lot of photographs. When Ewart Russell and I talked to Sam's son and his wife; the son didn't have a good word to say about his father as he would be gone for days on end with no word of where he had gone. Years after Sam died he was still resentful. Sam junior's wife didn't echo that; she seemed very proud of Sam senior – and he had encouraged her children to learn to play the fiddle. While we were there they got out Sam's best fiddle – it had a 17th century date in it – by not the most famous violin-maker of the time but a well-known one anyhow. He got his fiddle from someone over in the Forest of Dean – one of the old musicians who played for the morris. Sam also for morris tended to play an old fiddle and although he was noted as a teetotaller he used to give his fiddle a drink!

As a result of seeing Sam's son we went over to see his sister (Sam's daughter), who had a cottage of her own. She had the photograph album - I don't know what's happened to it. It was a big thick album with photographs of the women's side between the war and the children's side afterwards. She was pleased to have anybody come & talk to her, spoke as though she thoroughly enjoyed being in the morris and talked about places they danced at; going to Stratford-upon-Avon for a festival. The morris seemed to have had a busy life.

Sam Bennett senior, by talking to people in the village, had got together a history of Ilmington in fine detail from the beginning with George Arthur at the beginning of 19th century. Not only the history, but who they were and what they did including notations. This book was left, after the war, to relatives in Canada but it never came back! We never found out if they were called Bennett or not. What's interesting is that there were comments that when Michael Johnson started in Ilmington in 1840 the tradition had galleys in it. Several sides have tried putting galleys in and it does look good. I spent a day with Andy (Barrand, née Horton, of Marlboro women in Vermont) going over their tradition as they did it.

After the war Sam formed the children's side that used to dance at EFDSS festivals at Stratford-upon-Avon. Kenworthy Schofield wrote down the dances that the children did. That version of Ilmington was taught to Oxford City. At the time he was dancing with St Albans but the people at St Albans told me that Ilmington was one of the few traditions they didn't do. So I presume Kenworthy thought it so different from the way Sharp had published it he wouldn't teach it like that.

Sam was invited to the United States by Henry Ford (who had established a settlement to preserve folk life) and after that visit Sam's character changed – he became big headed, but he obviously enjoyed it. He was interviewed by the BBC on a number of occasions. On one occasion he was invited to a studio in the Midlands – they interviewed him and invited him to play. What they didn't realise was they couldn't stop him playing – in the end they had to carry him out of the studio still sitting on his chair – to get him away from the microphone.

I would say on the whole only his son was bitter about him. A few people were irritated

because he went to places like Eynsham when the side revived – he was interested I suppose. When he disappeared he went to Abingdon and Eynsham again and again. If he didn't get anything the first time he would keep going back. He had a big catchment area! He was so used to being his own boss.

When I went in the 1960's to see the revived Bidford side and talk to the old dancers, they all told me that Sam used to come across and play at the wake – he played for Almscott. I'm not sure if he went and played because he was the only musician or he was invited, but he was well known.

When I went to a Stratford-upon-Avon Ring Meeting in the late '60s, for the tour round the villages (with the Ilmington village side) I went with Julian Pilling from Nelson. He was good at talking to people in the crowd – he had a gift of chatting people up from cold. We found one who claimed he was a shepherd who remembered some country dances so we went across on the Sunday to chat to him and collected them – they got published in "English Dance and Song". So often in a crowd it's easy for people clam up or they think it's trivial – other times people get the knack of getting them to talk.

2011 (MM 30-2) talking to Beth Neill in June 2009

Eric (aka Tubby) Reynolds

13 January 1925 - 14 July 2011

A true friend, a man who made dances and instructionals memorable, and half of a team of repute. He will be remembered through many anecdotes, although we once agreed that although we were pleased with the things that we had done, we were not necessarily proud of them and would not like any account published!

We first met during National Folk Week in the 1960's. He was a travelling salesman learning to play the three-hole pipe whilst driving, who made his own snare drums. Then we worked together on Bob Bradbury's Advanced Morris Instructionals at Halsway Manor with their amazing Saturday night dances, for which Bob brought in a coach load of women, and established a style of weekend that still continues. When the folk world closed down for the annual Albert Hall Festival, Eric ran *Albert's Out of Town* at Bath University, a weekend of dance and workshops. Raising Bath City Morris with both men's and women's teams, he and Betty provided the older stability that a young university based side needed. The teams helped me reconstruct some classical Cotswold traditions that led to a university side providing a Morris Ring instructional interpreting Ducklington and to interesting southern teams in the local tradition of Friendly Societies dancing with slaves. One lesson from Bath was never to repeal stunts, and to be looking for fresh possibilities, as repeats tended to become cruder and wilder. Who can forget the men after a show, kneeling down, putting on their coats, moving off on the knees still singing "Heigh Ho".

Personal memories of happenings include,

- Going via Bath to Bacup with two others. Our car broke down. so Eric came and towed us to Timsbury, overtaking a bus whilst doing so.

- Picking up ten Dommetts in his car from Bath Station and passing a rather surprised policeman.

- Calling a dance at Smiths Industries at Swindon on the centenary of Custer's Last Stand, which became the theme for the evening. With each dance we tried to top each other - including taking prisoners, forward and back, forward and carry off your partner over your shoulder. Four of us dressing up: Eric in pantomime dame's dress, and going to fool for an unsuspecting Gloucester Morris outside Bath Abbey.

Eric invited the then Camberley Silver Band to play for dances at the University - forty musicians and a sound you could wallow in. One night it snowed, the porter came in and said it was drifting up to the height of the parked cars. The band had a competition the next day and had to leave up a snow covered M4. Those who stayed were snowed in for 2 or 3 days. During a workshop at Farnborough near Timsbury, one of the dancers was persuaded to restring Eric's fiddle in reverse order. He was clearly puzzled when asked to play Nutting Girl. The culprit spent the rest of the day trying to play with the new arrangement.

We went together to the USA in 1979 where he fulfilled an ambition to drive a huge

Chevrolet out to Harpers Ferry near Washington. He was always kind enough to offer to do the washing-up everywhere, not realising they had dishwashers; nobody dared to dissuade him. We were taken to a dance at a Fire Station in the back of North Virginia which took all day travelling to reach. You had to have brought your own partner, and all the dances, big sets or couples, went only clockwise, leaving us frequently giddy. He also went to New Zealand, there could never have been a better ambassador for English Morris.

An early achievement was the Apley Morris, a single tradition side dancing the best Fieldtown at that time. Later he was instrumental in helping the Sherborne Village side to revive its tradition. But perhaps his greatest was as an adviser to the Letterkenny International Folk Festival in Ireland. There are many stories. I remember the year that the Carnival procession assembled along the bypass around the town, and when the front went round it met the rear before that had started off. Eric presented a slate-based trophy for the most traditional performance. It should have been awarded to the Carnival Committee.

2011 (MM 30-2

Blacking up and "Border" morris

From 1840 there was minstrel/coon dressing up, dancing weirdly in the States and within two to three years it was in the UK - from about 1845 to 1950, which saw the end of the Black and White Minstrel Show on television. It was a prominent form – in fact over 1860 to 1910 in England it was the prime form of entertainment. There were permanent troupes in theatres in London. In America it became a form of denigrating negroes – it became a way of taking the mickey out of them. In England it wasn't the same; the problem was anything that thought of itself as entertainment ended up blacking its face.

Despite many years of searching, I can't find blacking up as being part of any of the English customs before 1840. One reason is that in the time of Walpole we had the Waltham Blacks. These were people (middle class because they had horses) who caused problems in the Royal Forest. From Great Windsor forest all the way down towards Portsmouth is the area in which the Waltham Blacks operated. Laws[10] were thus passed that if you were found at night with a black face you were thought to be a poacher without any other evidence. Those penalties were relaxed in 1823, by which time the morris was disappearing. It is my opinion that the growth of molly, border and mummers in the nineteenth century and blacking up your face was *not* to avoid being recognised (if you think about it, modern troops like commandoes cover their faces to be not seen rather than not to be recognised) but to ***not be seen***. Poaching rules in the early nineteenth century were to be not seen when you were out.

What's more, blacking your face is terrifying. I cannot believe that with people for whom it was a way of getting money (as for the mummers round here in Farnborough between the wars), the one thing you didn't want to do if you visited the big houses was to frighten the kids or anyone else or you would get no money if you did that. There are many things about border morris today which have no connection whatsoever with the tradition. I'd like to mention that of 12 collected dances there are 11 that aren't done by anybody. Any border side you see is *not* doing collected border dances. They are all doing their own created dances. I'm not complaining - I think that's great. I only complain if they claim it to be ancient.

The strange thing about border morris is that sticks were 6 to 9 inches long – you have a bit just sticking out of the fist – clash the bit – don't need a long stick if you're just making a noise. It's been pointed out recently that for 19th century morris at no stage was there a need to be powerful. Everyone had a walking stick; most people had learnt to fight with sticks. You were not trying to impress people by bashing sticks together. That was all part of common life anyway. At Brands Hill police college there is a collected

[10] Waltham Black Act, 1722. Originated in response to an outbreak of organized poaching in Windsor Forest and near Waltham (Hampshire), and declared that to go abroad in woodland areas in disguise or with blackened face was a felony without benefit of clergy and punishable by death.

displays of truncheons – what we would call sticks. Most are painted badges of office, some as long as 18 inches. Staves were used as well. In the end it is not a power weapon but precision – what the morris, particularly the border morris, were trying to impress upon people was their precision; the cleverness and togetherness of the bangs – none of these big swipes. It shows how culture has changed in the meantime. What people do today is actually appropriate: I'm quite convinced if you just used a stick to do the same thing as clapping it wouldn't be impressive at all.

I mentioned about border sticks being short; the only people who had long sticks were Adderbury - and they were the only people whose dances don't involve stepping. In other words, they were just standing, therefore could manipulate a long stick. The average morris stick these days is 3 feet long – half stick is about 18 inches. Traditionally in the South Midlands they were 2 feet long. A stick was commonly the leg of a chair - with turning – so you had a place to hold it by. They were commonly painted; people were called upon to provide their own and fined if they didn't. It is a change in culture – now people don't have spare chair legs – you don't have someone with a wood lathe who can turn it out for you. Some sides would have truncheons and at Bidford they had a ring at one end to allow a grip.

The other thing is that when Alex Helm and his lot were collecting references to morris dancing in this country, he got his daughter to do a series of drawings of costumes that either illustrated or described people. I think David Jones (of Border Morris) has got a set of drawings as well. Rag jackets **don't** feature - lots of ribbons on the jackets, loopy ribbons (like Forest of Dean) yes; rag jackets no! My mother's father used to make rag rugs and he was known to have made a jacket. He also made little shovels. That sort of thing was common; you did it because you were so poor. I've got view foils based on pictures I saw up in Cecil Sharp House. At Brimfield they actually wore costumes – one was a clown, one a policeman, one a man-woman. Again, nothing like the modern border side.

The modern border side owes everything to John Kirkpatrick. The year Shropshire Bedlams turned up at Sidmouth for the first time (1977). Several of us were wandering round to watch every show: quite an incredible experience. We had no idea that morris could look like that.

In the same way for molly dancing; I went to workshops run by Russell Wortley - he did the so-called feast dances and described how it was done – and we got the Seven Champions out of those. What I love is; we went to a town in Norfolk and local school kids (about a dozen schools around the town) had learnt the dances – we had a concert with a little bit of Molly in front of adoring parents – it was all in the style of Seven Champions. This year they ran a TV programme about the festival at Ramsey – towards Huntingdon – they all had the same stuff. It looks very good, but as far as one can tell absolutely nothing to do in style with the way it was. You can say the same about "northwest" morris – what was essentially a processional street dance is now nothing like a processional street dance. What used to be called a stage dance, where they would do the dance once through stationary, is now a set performance with several dances, like Preston Royal.

Thanks to Sharp the idea exists that things were in a fixed format – 4 or 5 figures,

chorus between each either the same or with progressively more difficult stepping. We have to emphasise that things move on; people when they write their brochures talk as though it's not been changed for centuries. There are many things I think got missed.

2012 (MM 31-1) talking with Beth Neill June 2009

The Art of Clowning

You cannot simply put on make-up and a costume and dash around and expect people to see you as a clown. Nor is the clown a way of using up surplus or poor dancers. Clowning is a serious art form and should be approached in a disciplined and systematic manner. Untrained clowns can at best be embarrassing and at worst a menace. When with the morris a clown is a link between the audience and the dancers and sometimes vice versa, as for example in making the environment right to bring members of the audience, especially children, as volunteers into the show. The interaction with the audience is key. Unlike in any other performing art, the clown can acknowledge and work with the audience directly. If a morris clown is not prepared to interact, then they are dressed as the wrong character in support of the morris.

A good clown needs "presence" but at the same time is to appear "open" to the audience. This means letting the audience know what they are thinking and feeling, reacting and interacting with the crowd and responding to individuals in the audience. The clown's response must appear genuine and consistent with them being a larger-than-life performer. Thus the clown's behaviour is not just restricted to rehearsed acts. If you are expressive, open and communicative then you can reach and touch something deep in the individuals that make up the crowd, so this is the ultimate objective in developing the clown skills. The involvement with the audience puts the clown on the crowd's side with regard to the show and this has to be understood and tolerated by the rest of the performers.

The first main step in learning to clown is to discover the clown character that works best for you, the one that you are comfortable with and which is both funny and believable. The second step is to use and integrate any skills you have to represent and serve your clown character. Just being very large or small can be exploited. You do not play for laughs as does a comic, you let them arise naturally from the character. You should want laughs at the character not at you. You are no more the persona of your clown than is an actor the character in a play. Without presenting a clear character it is all too easy to confuse or even intimidate an audience. As not everything can be spontaneous, much of what is done needs to be worked up. To do this one evolves a style of one's own. To be successful the clown character needs this consistency and it should not just be a ragbag of other people.

One must separate the ideas of "image" which consists of costume, make-up and overall appearance and "character" which is the personality being expressed. Your image projects your character and helps express the kinds of things your character does. This could be summarised in a descriptive combination like,

Young, shy and silly,

Overlarge, goofy and very exaggerated,

Grumpy, fed up, but with a bubbly foolish child buried inside.

The **first exercise** is to try some simple everyday activities in the style of a possible

character to find which has possibilities for you.

Appearance
The costume has to fit the character. There are four common modes of dress seen on morris fools:

1. Smock and Hat, probably worn over a normal morris kit. It has the advantage of being able to disappear by just slipping it off. Such a help when walking around on your own
2. Mediaeval Jester or Circus Clown, with decorated face so it cannot disappear
3. Man-Woman, dressed in clothes of the opposite sex, sometimes the kit of a rival team
4. Top hat and tailed coat, appearing well dressed but having seen better times

The possibilities are endless but it is wise to avoid some of the grotesque get-ups seen at carnivals if any rapport with the crowd is to be achieved. Grotesque must be classed with animals not clowns. The usual requirement on a costume is looseness. It is often made more effective by being very colourful. Coats are often seen covered with buttons and badges which themselves help provide talking points. There is an important point about face make-up. The circus clown emphasises mouth and eyes to look friendly, but it is quite possible by heavy make-up about the eyes to look frightening.

Roles
What you do has to fit in with the opportunities that a performance of the morris allows. The morris fool is expected to fill a number of roles in support of the morris show. Some that require clowning are:

1. Give entertainment
2. Fill the gaps between dances
3. Cover up mistakes and accidents
4. Demonstrate skills

and the following which may not involve clowning but for which the character may be better able or better placed to do compared with anyone else e.g. to save time:

5. Announcing
6. Collecting money
7. Giving out and collecting the implements
8. Dancing in the set as a straight man
9. Controlling traffic and crowds

The interaction with members of the crowd comes from directing the clowning at someone, so it becomes 'at the expense of' meaning it interferes with in some way.

Causing amusement can be:
1. at the expense of the dancers e.g. by following close behind and mimicking
2. at the expense of the leader e.g. makìng faces or contradicting commands
3. by trying to get involved with the dance and probably failing e.g. trying to copy steps

4. at the expense of the musicians e.g. winding them up with an imaginary key
5. at the expense of an individual in the crowd e.g. hit someone who is looking the other way with a bladder to make them jump
6. by using a rehearsed routine which may or may not need props e.g. borrow a bicycle or pram
7. by a target of opportunity that catches one's eye e.g. use of a road sign

To do this the clown must be following all that is going on, all the time that the role is needed. The clown has also to learn when to do nothing and when not to be within the audience's attention.

General Policy

Any clown uses movement, cartoon like imagery, costume, control of pace, sometimes words, sounds and skills, and, most important of all, a specific character to make people laugh. They can make stupid mistakes, trip and fall down, not see obvious solutions to simple problems, fight for silly reasons and generally make fools of themselves. People laugh not only because of the content and style of clowning but also because we all experience embarrassing and awkward situations in which we feel foolish and everyone makes mistakes from time to time.

The clown exaggerates human behaviour so it is not unreasonable that they can go to crazy, absurd or outrageous lengths to achieve what they want. However a clown is still supposed to be a person, not an animal or creature, and should avoid any distorted or weird characteristics which would not fit the spirit of the clown.

The clown projects attitudes by means of expression with the entire body. You are funnier if you can work with physical movements and much more interesting to watch. Exaggerate emotions, intentions, reactions and activities and the audience will understand more readily what is going on. The audience should not be able to say, "What's that, and what are they doing?"

The **second exercise** is to stand in front of a mirror and try and work up some exaggerated facial and body expressions that indicate particular emotions or intentions. It is surprising how difficult this is at first.

Technique

It requires practice to become a good clown. The working up cannot be approached with any feeling of embarrassment especially during any practice session. One has to work on exaggerating movements and on using the whole body. Other performers have to be carefully observed and analysed rather than just noticed.

Good sources to watch are the old silent comic movies on TV. Lessons have to be picked up from acting, especially with regard to the size of gestures. Beginner clowns tend to move around too much with fast, fussy movements. When you express an idea, emotion or intention, do it as efficiently as possible, cut out the unnecessary movement and make sure that the ones included are clear and carefully timed.

"Centering" is a procedure for promoting, before a performance, self awareness, mixed with naturalness, preparedness, mental relaxation and openness to the audience. Before

you start, follow a discipline to energise by warming-up exercises, relaxing and clearing the mind. A strong centre frees you to extend yourself physically and to be a little outrageous. Rehearsal and performance build up confidence. Concentration helps one to relax and be less self conscious. Acting techniques require concentration and focusing and this plus your imagination working on the possibilities around you will reduce awkward feelings. Clowning is to be played to its fullest and enjoyed.

A clown walk helps express the absurdity of the clown. The walk can be identifiable, stylised and can be used frequently. The clown's props will be mostly things borrowed or picked up, like morris sticks or umbrellas. A woman's felt hat can be a good prop as it can be used in expressing many emotions or to symbolise a range of objects. It can be a friend, enemy, toy, obstacle, handkerchief, steering wheel, weapon, gift, symbol of wealth or poverty, pillow etc. The clown needs a grin, especially for naughty behaviour or the occasional obscene gesture.

A key concept is that the clown plays to the audience one person at a time. A second or so to each will produce more rapport than a long session of stand-up comic routine. The individual in the crowd is important. Playing to the crowd is distancing oneself, like being on TV. Remember that they also have an expectation of what a clown should do, which will be a mixture of all the comic and clowning things they have experienced in their lives.

An "attitude" is a frozen pose, or snapshot, held in the middle of an action. As it is expressing something that you are wanting or waiting for the audience to catch, it is not a relaxation but a holding. Particular examples are the "take" when reacting with a frozen attitude or facial expression, usually to something surprising or unusual. Then there is the "slow burn" when slowly expressing something like being about to burst open or burn up with rage.

The clown must motivate the actions to make the character believable. Otherwise it is aimless and pointless to the crowd and a destructive interference with the show. After a lot of experience it may become instinctive but initially it is important to think about and plan what is done.

Routines

A sort of organised series of actions with a beginning and an end is a "routine". Each routine has an objective which is the motivation. "Actions" and "activities" translate the routine into movement. Activities are sub-actions or things done to support an action. A routine can be divided into "beats" like paragraphs in writing, each containing an idea. The character must be maintained through a routine. When not the centre of attention, the clown may also have to invent business just to provide an excuse to be in view. The end result of a routine has to be funny and if it is a fall or other action that could appear to cause a hurt, then the clown must appear unhurt at the end.

The beginning and end of a routine are key points. One needs a good first impression if the audience is to be attentive and responsive. A clown should have a personal symbolic "hello". Entrances and exits should be strong, emphatic and simple. An exit after a surprise ending is called a "blow off". One must ensure that there is a reason for the entrance and exit. Possible excuses for coming on are, to escape from someone else, to

look for something like a dog, to swat a fly, or to wander in innocently not realising what is going on. To exit you have to leave the audience's attention area or otherwise indicate that you have dropped out of the action. The ring around a morris team is difficult to work in as the audience is on all sides.

Good ideas are easily forgotten so should be noted down. Each routine is flexible and the performer needs to experiment with all its possibilities. Do not do anything which you are unhappy about, there will always be plenty of other possibilities. Also try not to repeat good ideas too often and make them stale. When working in front of an audience try and work out why they laughed, or why they did not, if you can. Perhaps you will need another person to help you make these post mortems. Take the work seriously, but do not intellectualise too much, have fun and be spontaneous and remember that the next time will always be a little different. The more you rehearse and the more you know what you are doing, the easier it is to play with the act and experiment. What makes each performance different is the changing crowd, as anyone who has played in a stage show or pantomime will know, each with its own rapport and different leads.

Exercises

Only elementary stunts can be sorted out live with a crowd so there is a need to develop oneself using exercises. Simple things to try are, freezing, switching from one attitude to another, the walk, entrances, how to appear and disappear from attention, stylised movements, openness and vulnerability, what character you are, mimes, concentrating and the creation of a routine. "As if" is a significant phrase, you do things AS IF certain conditions, usually imaginary ones, are affecting you. Try behaving as if you want to be loved, to be accepted, to be allowed to join in, to inflict embarrassment. It is very difficult to do at first but persist. You will find that you need a special approach geared to certain types in the audiences, like babies, children or pretty girls. In workshops or other places where you practise with others avoid being a "prat", that is, letting your embarrassment or nervousness get in the way of what you should be doing, so that you are stupid, not constructive. Stunts or tricks or routines which work with one team may not for another so it is not sufficient just to slavishly copy someone else's routines; there must be an understanding and an appreciation of the why and wherefore.

One tries to stay in the character, but this cannot be maintained when chatting seriously. Be prepared to explain your costume and role. Try and drop into the background for such moments. The clown is not restricted to clowning.

Experience suggests that fooling must not be too choreographed with the dancing — this is the role of the animal - and it does cut across the link role with the audience. An exception is the Tommy and Betty of the Rapper who even have integral parts in the dance. Clowns should not be foolish and stupid. They should be sensitive to whoever is being the "straight man" whether the team leader or a member of the crowd. The clown jokes to relieve tension and is not the character who can be dangerous or frightening that creates tension. It might be just possib1e to have a character like the villain of Victorian melodrama whose overacting makes him comic and not frightening, but that would seem out of style with the Cotswold Morris.

Traditional gags are not very good guides on what is acceptable to do as they come from

a time when humour was more inclined to horseplay. The fool near Stow who wore a padlock and chain instead of a watch would, when asked the time by someone who thought they were going to take a rise out of the clown, hit the questioner over the head with the padlock saying "just struck one".

No matter how many of the audience are to be the recipients of a stunt or routine, the action has to be "staged" so that the audience can "focus" on it. The speed and rhythm of the action and hence its effectiveness depend on "timing", all of which helps you to sell the routine.

Some routines include "falls" which must be practised. It is wise to start on a cushioned surface. Before you try a fall do a warm-up to minimise the risk of hurting yourself. You use your hands to slap the floor both to create the sound of falling and to break the fall. The arms must be bent a little at the elbow on touching so that there is give - it is rigidity that leads to broken bones. The rest of the fall is achieved by landing on something soft (buttocks) and rolling. But remember at the end to look unhurt, even if you are hurt, by grinning, moving immediately or jumping up.

Slapstick or fights require simulated blows which do not actually connect for which the receiver claps their hands to provide the noise of the slap or punch and jerks the supposedly hit part away.

With care one can have a stooge in the audience who becomes the innocent victim of a routine but it must become clear that the recipient is part of the act before it is over or the crowd will be alienated.

In general the morris clown has as a potential partner anyone around, and the other dancers, the leader or the other character can be involved in preplanned activity. These you slap, trick, fight, outdo, outsmart, and develop a comic relationship with — but if you are on your own you have to make props, real or imaginary, do this for you. Props may be wayward, defective or break, you may use them improperly or they have a mind of their own. You create a personality for props by treating them like people, love them, get angry with them or throw them around.

You can use the audience, ask them how to solve something, or get someone to help you, and get them to applaud or boo when you want it.

Bladder work can be useful but it is not important. Dancers do not appreciate it and it can encourage children to become a nuisance.

Creation of Routines

It may be useful to have a check list for one's first attempts.

Structure

Beginning - stylised opening, usually an entrance

Meeting - meet another clown, dancer or object, usually involving "discovery"

Conflict - the persons and things interact and there is a conflict

Resolution - brìng to a point when it can no longer be dealt with on the arena so it is rested, usually in a unique or funny way

Exit - usually a chase and also stylised.

Content

Mimicry –just that

Discovery - moments of discovery are important and one takes one's time over them

Trickery - outsmarting or use of a gimmick

Stupidity - making mistakes, not seeing the obvious, bumping into things, trip, forget and. cause accidents

Slap/Blow - may be more to the clown's ego than physical

Fall - ultimate in blows, especially for an authority figure, may follow a series of blows or slaps.

Surprise - major one should be with the ending

Process
Notebook - ideas and observations

Explorations - improvise variations on the idea

Outline - write it out, make some decisions about good routines – the nearest there is to a script

Rehearse - practise and explore

Polish - clean it up, work on timing

Test it - then rework!

Examples

It is an interesting experience at a workshop to ask someone to suggest something that should be "funny" and then get them to do it with a dancing set. Most times it is not funny.

The same thing happens in a club when the characters are asked to work up some business the team is often well off without it. The fun must grow out of the activity, its absurdity, outrageousness or unexpectedness.

What works for me? My character is aggressive, determined to be one up and large! Being large the others are cautious in how they retaliate. Here are some of the things I would do.

- Tag onto the end of the set during the dance, follow it for a while and then cheerfully sail off the wrong way at some time.

- Watch the steps with amazement, slide off to the edge for a quiet practice and come back and do it wrong.

- Run in with a stick, especially if it is a handkerchief dance, while it is forming up but eventually find that there is no place available.

- Pass through the set in a stick dance but escape just before the stick clashing.

- Stand where the set has to pass, e.g. in Black Joke, Adderbury and just move in time, or then again do not.

- Use two sticks and try to do both sides of the stick tapping and get into a mess.

- Use a stick to make the team jump over it during rounds.

- Dance up the middle of the set at the end of the dance to take all the glory.

- Get involved in one of the fights in Swaggering Boney, either by helping one corner, getting caught between the two corners, pushing a reluctant corner forward, jump in too far so that there is a collision from which one of you bounces off.

- Take a rest in the middle of the set, say in rounds.

- Chase after the leapers in Leapfrog, either never getting to leapfrog, or threatening to go over in the wrong direction, or just bladdering bottoms.

- Comment loudly on the leader's announcements or just be personal, and polish their shoes with a handkerchief (theirs if you can) when you have been naughty.

- Terrify the music, threaten to tighten the accordion straps, pass a handkerchief under the fingers, blindfold them or wind them up with a pretend key, tie their bells together, all because they cannot do anything back to you while playing.

There is some general advice. Do not continuously interrupt as the clown is only part of the morris. Beware of what is done with the animal otherwise children will copy it and make life a misery.

There is very little helpful literature for clowns. I found, "Clown for Circus and Stage"[11] by Mark Stolzenberg, Sterling Publishing Co. New York 1983, distributed in the UK by Blandford Press, very inspiring.

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[11] This book is still available – I found several copies were offered on a well known shopping website – Ed.

Stave Dancing - an overview

A Stave is particularly a symbol of the various Friendly Societies who had an annual Club walk and Feast day with banners and band. An interesting account is given in "West Country Friendly Societies" by Margaret Fuller published by the Oakwood Press for the Museum of Rural Life, University of Reading. The annual feast day was the climax of the friendly society's year, the only public event in the life of the societies and the procession of members demonstrated their unity and pride of association to their families, friends and spectators who could come from miles around. Everyone shared the festive atmosphere of the day, enjoying the colour, noise and excitement. The directions for procedure and instructions for behaviour were the subject of numerous rules, surprising for an annual event with little connection with the conduct of the society's business.

The day usually began with roll call at the club house about 10 am. An orderly procession was formed behind a band, banners unfurled and all walked to church for a sermon, then to the clubhouse for the feast, often taking an indirect route to include a tour of the district. The feast could be at the public house that normally served as headquarters if it was big enough. Most clubs perambulated the district after the feast, calling on friends and benefactors who each extended hospitality. Later all joined with the public in the enjoyment of music, dancing, sports or a visiting fair.

The common days were Whit Monday and Oak Apple Day, 29 May, but Easter or days in May or August were sometimes used or local traditional festivals like 'Coker Feast Monday', 'Tuesday in Donyatt Play week', or 'Monday in Odcombe Feast week' were fixed upon. Members were obliged by their rules to attend the feast day celebrations or be fined a shilling or half a crown. They were exempt only if sick or living more than a specified distance away. They might be fined even if late. The procession would be ordered as they stood on the roll, with the longest serving members at the front. Some places allowed women and children in the procession, sometimes to represent absent members, sometimes as a relic of the times when they were included in the membership of such societies.

Most of the village societies died with the rise of the national societies and improved social benefits. Many photographs can be found all over the country of processions. Some men's societies still exist such as at Priddy, the Victoria Inn with its feast still on Whit Monday, and South Harting with a procession like a carnival and at Bampton, Oxon. Many more clubs survived in the 1930's such as Crewkerne and Timberscombe and at some places such as Warminster several clubs combined for the day. There were a number of Women's Societies and at least one survives at the Rose and Crown Inn at Nether Stowey and whose feast is on the last Friday before Midsummer's Day. However such societies were never numerous because before the twentieth century all a woman's goods belonged to her husband or father and there was little point in a benefit club that might not benefit the saver.

There has been no national review of the village societies, their operation or survival. Interesting accounts exist in Harvey "Club Day, being a description of a Kilmersdon 'Old Club' Annual Parade" published in 1927 and in William Barnes "Whitsuntide an' Club Walken" published in "Poems of Rural Life in Dorset Dialect" 1886. The following comes

from the main reference:

Having assembled in regulation splendour of Sunday clothes, cockades, ribbons, staves and banners,

"Zoo off they started, two an' two,

Wi' painted poles an' kots o ' blue"

to church behind the band,

"Whiles fifes did squeak and drums did rumble,

An' deep beazzoons did grunt and grumble."

In smaller churches the staves had to be stacked in the porch,

"An' then at church there wer sich lots

O' hats a-hangen up wi' knots,

An' poles a-stood so thich as iver,

The rushes stood bezide a river."

The preacher denounced the very things that the society fined,

An' Mr Goodman gi'ed em warnen

To spend their evenen lik' their mornen;

An' not to pray wi' mornen tongues,

An' then to zwear wi' evenen lungs;

Nor vu'st shake hands, to let the wrist

Lift up at last a bruisen vist:

Vor clubs 'were all a-rnean'd vor friends,

He twold em, an' vor better ends

Then twiten vo'k an picken quarrels,

An' tipplen cups an'empten barrels ,

Vor meaken woone man do another

In need the kindness ov a brother."

At the Feast,

"An' there they meade sich stunnen clatters

Wi' knives an' forks, an' pleates an' platters;

An’ waiters ran, an’ beer did pass

Vrom tap to jug, vrom jug to glass:

An’ when they took away the dishes

They drink’d good healthes, an’ wish’s good wishes,

To all the gre’t vo’k o’ the land,

An’ all good things vo’k took in hand;

An’ woone cried hip, hip, hip, an’ hollow’d,

An’ tothers all struck in an’ vollow’d;

An’ grabb’d their drink wi’ eager clutches,

An’ swigg’d it wi’ sich hearty glutches,

As vo’k, stark mad wi’ pweìsson stuff,

That thought theirzelves not nad enough.“

After the unfamiliar experience of so much food and drink,

”An’ after that they all went out

In rank agean, an’ walk‘d about,

An’ gi’ed some parish vo’k a call;

An’ then went down to Narley Hall

An’ had some beer, an’ danc’s between

The elem trees upon the green.

An’ down along the road they done

All sorts o‘ mad-cap things vor fun;

An’ danc’d, a-poken out their poles,

An’ pushen bwoys down into holes....”.

In addition to presenting a respectable personal appearance, the members of many societies were required by their rules to wear ribbons in their hats. The usual colour was blue. Combe Hay had a cockade of purple and pink ribbons on the hat. Top hats were common and the ribbon would be wound round the top of the crown, with the rosette pinned to the side, with its tails flowing down beyond the brim of the hat. Sashes appear often in photographs but were seldom mentioned in rules. Those preserved in museums are elaborate and in expensive materials. The photos show that they were worn over the right shoulder, often 3 inches wide, crossed by the waist and pinned with a rosette.

The Staves only appeared on Feast Day. The "Club Stick" as it was usually called or wand, pole or tipstaff, varied from 4 to 8 feet long and was stained or painted either in a single colour or striped. At Kilmersdon the 4 feet long stave was painted blue with red and white spiral striped, decorated with red, white and blue tassels and ribbons hanging from below the pole head. At Wookey, where they met at the Ring O'Bells Inn, the wooden knob was painted red and mounted on a blue pole, 6 feet 4 inches long. At Donyatt by Ilminster their 4 feet 4 inches stave had a gilt head with a blue tassel and a ribbon a yard long. The blue ribbon fixed to the blue staves of Hatch Beauchamp had to be no less than one yard and a half.

The length of the pole varies from about the length of an old rifle to the length of a rake handle. Old ones at the Rural Life Museum at Reading are about 6 feet long and tapered, either because they were made from coppiced wood or planed to be so. They were naturally a little flexible and light in weight so that with a substantial pole head the centre of gravity was quite high. They were easy to dance with. Too often the balance can be poor and the stave bounces on the shoulder and bruises. As an implement for dancing the hanging decoration is important and the more the merrier with materials of different weights allowing the haberdashery to flow out behind the dancer.

The use of brass pole heads which make such a fine show was confined to Somerset, South Gloucestershire, South West Wiltshire, North West Dorset and North East Devon. During the eighteenth century Bristol had a large brass industry and, it is believed, Bristol was the main source for the brass pole heads. Although the variety of design was enormous, the Reading collection illustrated in the reference book comprises 333 examples, there were two clearly defined types. One consisted of a flat sheet metal shape slotted into a tubular socket or ferrule to fit on the top of the stave, and the other consisted of a three dimensional shape formed in the round with an integral socket. The pole heads would be from 5 to 8 inches high. The shapes included fleur-de-lis, variations on spearheads, halberds, crowns and representational designs deriving their subjects from the names of the meeting places. The majority of the round emblems were urn, tall or acorn shaped. Other examples can be seen in many museums, at Blaise Castle, Salisbury, Bridgewater, Taunton and others. Wooden stave heads were very common, they just did not survive to be collected.

Cutting pole heads from sheet brass is not too difficult although brass sheet is not cheap. Sometimes a machine shop will produce a punch for a small rim of the same shape. However today it is effective to make them of cast aluminium as any secondary school metal working department can do, or in mild steel and plate them. Making up an example in wood and card will help in any discussion with workshops.

The Societies usually had banners or flags. The banners betrayed kinship both in design and use with the military standard and were either almost square or of the common rectangular flag shape. They were made of silk with painted or appliqué decoration and often edged with a fringe. The designs were of two types — those which were heraldic in character and consisting of individual symbols on a plain background and those showing allegorical or historical figures. Early on these were very often locally made and fine examples of folk art but later they became plain ensigns with the Union Jack in the first quarter and the name of the society across the lower half. The appearance and carriage of the banners were much like those used still by Trade Unions.

Many Societies ended the day with a dance and some included dancing in the activities during the Club Walk. Raymond in "English Country Life" 1934, mentions the dancing of Hunt the Squirrel and the Four Hand Reels. Maud Karpeles collected a finishing dance in Wiltshire which was a version of Up the Sides and Down the Middle. At Paulton step dancing is specifically mentioned in a local history. Where formal dancing was done it was derived directly from contemporary social dance. Dancing seems to have featured west of Gillingham, Dorset. A newspaper account described dancing at a wedding at Buckhorn Weston, men carrying their staves to do a version of the six-hand reel. The minute book of Fifehead Magdalen states that Haste to the Wedding, Pop Goes the Weasel, the Dorsetshire March and Spithead Fleet would be practised and danced at the stations on the walk. At Stourton Caundle, pronounced Stert'n Candle, a note exists of the agreed first and second parts.

Raymond wrote "when the hour for dancing came there was a certain want of unanimity about the brass but this was amply compensated for by the precision of the big drum. The youth of Sutton (Veny, in Wiltshire) with peonies in their buttonholes, without invitation, seized the willing maids all dressed in white and frisked and bobbed them round as merry as lambkins. You cannot waltz upon the grass, and they danced the old country dances of long ago which were so much like romps."

The final dance of the evening for the Churstanton Unity Friendly Society was 'the cock and the hen dance' which is said to have started with a row of men facing a row of women with a space of about 10 or 12 feet between. Each side then advanced working heads and arms and pretending to peck each other. They then paired off and carried out further movements. The dance is said to have been very pretty when properly carried out, but, after some years, it was practised with some vulgarity and banned from then on.

As can be seen the tradition of stave dancing is very thin, although dancing is strongly associated with the Club Days. The material from Stourton Caundle can be assembled as separate dances with the first parts as the common figures and the second parts as the choruses. The list of dances from the neighbouring village can be interpreted using published notations of dances with those titles of that period. There was a limited tradition. The stave with its size, weight and decoration imposes a style on the dance and the dancing that is different from any other English tradition. Teams in the south of England appreciate having dances with a local flavour however remote. The stave requires care in the dancing and the restraint contrasts well with other dance traditions within a dance troupe type of club. The dances work.

Sides

Known sides in 1980's were Bath City, Bourne Bumpers, Fleur de Lys and Somerset Maids of the women's clubs, Marlboro' and Charlottesville in the USA, and Stalbridge (Dorset Knobs and Knockers) and Abercorn as mixed sides. Abercorn were the only wholly stave dancing team. A Californian team appeared doing one of the stave dances, using bamboo poles as background to a Wicker's World TV broadcast!

Poles

Bath City used small brass curtain rail finials. Somerset Maids bought a set of original

Friendly Society brass pole heads. Stalbridge used handmade flat wooden emblems; Fleur de Lys have used a gilt, plastic 'pineapple' curtain rail finial but have plaited the ribbons for about a foot down the pole before letting them fly free - very attractive. Charlottesville use a flat circular piece of decorated metal which turns out to be a control valve for an indoor stove chimney. Abercorn were going to have used horse brasses mounted in a slot in wooden knob finial.

Tunes

Different dances even within the Stourton Caundle set have different musical requirements and the best rhythm for the club has to be found by trial and error. Slow hornpipes, although traditional are not the best for dancing. The tunes used by Abercorn are,

Stourton Caundle: No.1 - Over the Hills and Far Away; No.2 - Ninety Five; No.3 - The Bacup Processional; No.4 - Mad Moll of the Cheshire Hunt;

Fifehead Magdalen: Three Around Three and Wedding Reel - Spanish Lady.

Step

The hornpipe one-two-three hop — not a morris step but the country dance travelling step with the foot brought up behind the other on the second beat. The style is that of Dorset country dancing with little lift of the body or the free foot on the hop. The backstep where used is the back setting step -like a hockle.

Shoulders: the stave is carried on the right shoulder. With the long staves the end should just clear the tussocks of grass when dancing. The rest position is with the stave on the ground and leaning on it with both hands. Holding staves like rifles with the butt in the hand is a good way of ensuring ribbons tangling in the dance - and it is embarrassing when the dance gums up. It is best to pass left shoulders when there is a choice to avoid staves and their decorations entwining.

Style: the dancing should be lively not sedate. Phrase the movements to make it flow.

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Background to Brackley Area Morris

Keith Chandler's article (English Dance & Song 43/1) shows how evidence from one place can illuminate many aspects of the history of the morris while avoiding generalisations. Brackley was a town, so were many places where the morris survived late; also towns form a focus in the history of many village sides.

Bampton, or Bentone, was an important King's manor in Domesday and its market yielded 50 shillings. It remained significant until the decline of the horse fair and its associated industries. The interpretation of the history of the morris must take account of conditions at the time. Bampton-in-the-Bush, as it is called on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps, gives the impression today of isolation, but actually the "Bush" was the centrepiece of the town where the fire station now stands.

Another possible false impression exists in connecting some early references to the morris to local performers. In "Drama in Gloucestershìre" by T Hannah-Clark (1928) it is mentioned that Elizabeth I visited Gloucester in 1553 and later years and was entertained by morris dancers amongst other things: Master Arnold's Servants were one company of players that were paid 20 shillings for "Bringing ìn the May" but only 5 shillings for being the May Day morris dancers. Lord Berkeley had a similar company of players from 1556 till 1610 which toured going to London and in the present context most significantly to Abingdon. These players turned their hands to everything; perhaps all these early references are to professional performances?

D'Arcy Ferrers was told that Brackley would turn out at 2 days notice by Thos H Curtis who dealt with Timothy Howard in 1885/6. Later Sharp did not consider this troupe to contaìn regular traditional dancers. He took the same attitude elsewhere. It is difficult to read into his introduction to Abingdon that a complete side had danced for Sharp in 1910, "of the original dancers only two survive". Presumably he was interested in the dance as it once was, not as it was developing. Similar issues arise at Bledington, Eynsham and Ilmington.

In an old exercise book in the Ferrers manuscript is a dance list that does not quite match that given in the Banbury Guardian two years before. The list starts with Round Morris or Broad Capers. As this is not a stick or a handkerchief dance it could be the opening or closing dance like Bonny Green at Bucknell. Is it the Broad Cupid of the other list? The stick dances are given as Country Gardens, Rosy London City, Rodney, Mad Kaiser or Mad Muller, Robin and Joan, Balance the Straw, Rax Marlow, Greensleeves, Constant Bill and Shepherds Aie. The handkerchief dances are Jockey to the Fair, Queens Delight, Lads a' Bunchum, Cuckoos Nest, Room for Cuckoo, 29th May, Bell Isles March, Bonny Green Garters, Trunkhose, Maid of the Mill and Black Joke. Ferrers was told that some dances were called single and other double. There were 20 or more different tunes but the same dance goes to three or four different tunes. Maid of the Mill, Lumps of Plum Pudding, Queens Delight and Lads a' Bunchum were all footing up, stepping and half capers. 'Lumps' is not on the main list and was given in the other list as a jig. Both lists contain 22 titles. Ferrers does not have Saturday Night or Old Woman or the four jigs. In 1910 Howard told Sharp that Shooting was called Beaux of ("Rosy") London City.

Sharp learnt of Brackley from material sent to him by D.S. MacColl, which is now recorded in Folk Dance Notes, Volume 1, in several handwritings about September l909. Sharp went off with 'T. Howard, Manor Road, Brackley' on the flyleaf of his field notebook. Perhaps it is not realised now how many of Sharp's informants were found for him. Howard and Stutsbury's versions of Shooting are recorded together as if at the same occasion. Stutsbury's versions were 40 years earlier so would appeal more to Sharp. Sharp never seems to have doubted that Stutsbury was a Brackley dancer, although in August 1912 Shooting was described in a programme as from Hinton in the Hedges. In his tour of the Northants-Bucks border in September 1922, Sharp visited Hinton and Mrs Smith, then aged 70, told him there had never been morris in Hinton.

Shooting appeared in another furore. The Harrogate Times of 7 November 1908 reported that dancers from Northants and Warwickshire had been up to London to teach their dances and that on 1 November the Esperance Club did a Northants Beansetting. After the Queen's Hall Show in May 1910 Sharp wrote to the Morning Post (10 May 1910) to complain about its lack of authenticity, classing it along with Sam Bennett's Ilmington as faked, revived and decadent. John Graham defended the Esperance Club (Morning Post 17 May 1910) -"the essential point of striking the ground is retained, but it varies in having the sticks clapped overhead instead of while stooping down". Sharp replied (25 May 1910) that he had traced the dance to its source, which was Shooting, and except for the "dibbing" it bore no resemblance whatever to the dance under discussion. The dance in question was from Thomas Gadd of Yardley Gobion. Maud Karpeles published Sharp's comments on this man and surviving dancers in the village were offended and would not speak about the dances in the late 1960's. Mary Neal's notes seen via Clive Carey are very brief but showed the influences of his time in the North West with his use of the cross-over polka step characteristic of that region.

The little that was collected from Stutsbury is mostly available but not the words for Getting Upstairs - "3 blind horses, 2 blind mares, 2 blind donkeys a getting upstairs, such a getting upstairs I never did see". This was a minstrel song which the early collectors ignored.

Sharp went back to Brackley in 1922 with Maud Karpeles. They started enquiries at the Brackley Union. They were told of Shady Law, John Paxton, Jimmy Watts (tin whistle and drum), Tuckey (fool with cow's tail and bladder), Timothy Faulkner and Tom Makepiece, all dead. Of the living there was Will Giles living in the old town behind the church, Henry and Timothy Howard and Harry Howard at the Union, William Gardcain, known as Curly, was rag-man. Harry Hayward near the Fire Engine House was a dancer and mention was made of Jas Smith at Sulgrave opposite the Manor. Other possible informants were Sarah Giles, living in Ard's Lane near the Town Hall, close to the chemists, also Margery Salmons her daughter who could sing the tunes, Jane Makepiece and Bessie Whitehouse living opposite Nichols' Coach Builders whose husband used to dance.

Sharp wrote (Folk Dance Notes Vol IV p92-3, 11 September 1922), "Timothy Howard (71) tried to show us dances at his home in Manor Road, at the back of the Hotel, but was not very successful, partly because rather stupid, but mainly because so unmusical

he could not give me the tunes. I got one or more from Mrs Sarah Giles, widow of Will Giles who died 40 years ago".

In an interview about 1960 Dr Karpeles told how impressed she had been by Howard's dancing and the extraordinary height achieved in the stepping. He performed every dance at great length, padding the usual dance sequence with additional foot-ups or -downs and or whole heys as well as splitting the side-by-sides and back-to-backs. A typical full sequence was published by Sharp in The Morris Book III (2nd Edition, p92). Howard never repeated a sequence even for the same dance and nearly always ended with Hey-down, Hey-up and Ring & All-in.

Sharp started his 1922 investigations at Buckingham on 8 August. At the Union he was told of morris at Dadford and Steeple Claydon. He cycled to the latter and on return through Winslow was told by Mr. Clear that he thought he remembered the morris at Maids Moreton or Tingewick. John Stokes at Dadford said his uncle and father used to join in with the Brackley dancers who passed through Dadford on the way to Stowe House and Maids Moreton, "somewhere about 20 years since they came here". Brackley men used to have for music a tin whistle and small drum slung over the wrist; the same man played both. Mr Bagford at Maids Moreton said only Brackley dancers came through his village, last time "20 or more years ago".

At Tingewick Sharp was told that Brackley dancers came through. Some came from Fritton and Middleton Cheney. At Westbury, Sharp met Mrs Johnson, née Makepiece. Her father used to play pipe and tabor for Westbury Morris and Brackley Morris. It's doubtful if Westbury ever had an independent side of its own. Her father died 40 years ago and then Brackley men got another old man to play the "drum and fife".

The Banbury Guardian (12 January 1950) published two photographs taken on August Bank Holiday 1914 of the Brackley and Whitfield teams. Tim Howard "told the Whitfield men, walked every night to learn 'em". The Rev. H Broughton, vicar of Brackley at that time, was a great enthusiast and conducted regular rehearsals, and exhibitions in the town were given about every third week. The names on the Brackley photo from left to right were, T Franklin, T H Rawlins, A Giles, W Mallet (fool), A B Rawlins, T Howard, F Wooton and W Giles. The Whitfield men dressed in smocks and wore top hats with a single coloured ribbon. The photo was published in 'English Dance & Song'. The names were: back row, J Ayre, W Billingham, A Coles, C Wynne, H Somerton; front row, E A Kendall, A Blencowe, W Blackwell and W Freestone.

In 1950 one old Brackley lady remembered them back to 1876. The annual procedure was a tour on foot of Brackley, Buckingham, Banbury, Towcester and intervening villages on August Bank Holiday week. They had at that time a piper and a side-drummer, the latter a recent addition. When the Great War ended, repeated effort by T Howard and one or two others of the old troupe were unsuccessful and it faded out.

On 4 September 1937 Dr and Mrs Kenworthy Schofield, Arthur Peck and Rev Jack Putterill visited Brackley and saw W Giles and C Blackwell. They obtained tunes from both and figures from Giles. They did not see any other of the dancers then alive. Schofield's manuscripts are mostly in the VWML, Peck's manuscripts were with his papers in Cambridge, Putterill's manuscripts were lost while being exhibited at a Thaxted

Ring Meeting and never recovered. Later Jack Saunders got some tunes from Kendall. Their whereabouts are not now known.

The dancers mentioned in 1937 were: team - W Giles (Vine Cottage, Brackley), Tim Howard (deceased), Joe Castle, Bert Rawlings (called "Berb", worked on railway), Albert Giles (deceased), Joseph Franklin (deceased), Tom Rawlings (deceased). Fool - W A Mullet (Goose Green); Musicians - C Blackwell and A E Kendall (Church Lane). At Whitfield there were A E Blencowe (Post Office), Harry Newbury and W Tyler (concertina). Tyler gave tunes to Sharp on 12 September 1922.

Kenworthy collected Shooting "substantially as Bean Setters" and Bean Setters with the corner movement of Shooting. All the dances given to Kenworthy and Hamer later only had 2 or 3 figures in the dance unlike the performance of Howard for Sharp. Fred Hamer made enquiries about 1951. He met "E A Kendall, Church Road, born 71 years ago, father died when he was 13". He learnt tunes from the pipe and tabor man from Deddìngton.

Berb Rawlins lived in Manor Road. He appeared in the 1914 photo with his father, only because he stood in for his brother Harold. They had one or two extra practices specially for him. He believed that the movements of Beansetting all meant something. Harold Rawlins also lived in Manor Road. The tours went from village to village stopping in the locals at night. The last time before 1924 that the Brackley Morris turned out was to provide subs for a blind man. Mrs T Howard lived at 36 Manor Road and remembered Stutsbury. Hamer was told of Billingham who also lived in Manor Road (42?) and G S Stevens who came from Middleton Cheney. This is near Banbury and is a surprising distance away. "Tweezer" Franklin was the Fool.

The origin of the town of Brackley is a cluster of farms 2½ miles NW, the centre of the Saxon Parish of Halse. The "Old Town" is a daughter settlement, Bracca's Leah (or clearing) on good soil close to a ford on the Ouse on the Buckingham Road, now only a footpath, with a church to St Peter mentioned in *(the)* Domesday *(Book).* The "New Town" derived from the short lived castle (Henry III). The market for wool was so successful in the thirteenth century that the burgesses rebuilt St Peter, even though the huddle of houses and tangle of streets of the Old Town were never considered part of the borough, and founded St James chapel, at the foot of the castle, demolished in 1836.

A hospital dedicated to SS James and John was built half way up the High Street. New Town has only one back lane, Manor Road, parallel to the High Street and serving the long narrow burgess crofts on the west side. The hospital was used to endow Magdalen College, Oxford (1458) and the Fellows established a free school in 1548. The hospital was used by the Fellows when the plague came to Oxford and now serves as a chapel for the school.

Brackley was one of the rotten boroughs, in the keep of the Dukes of Buckingham, and the influence of Stowe House must have extended wide, as did Blenheim over Wychwood. The town still shows its early mediaeval form and its development has been arrested despite some prosperity in the eighteenth century and the arrival of the railway in 1846-7. However, there seems to have been enough opportunity for patronage to keep an activity like the morris alive. The early morris here was prosperous enough to

present silver plate to the local church in the seventeenth century. This helps support the growing idea that early performers were drawn from the elite, such as yeomen - considered one step below gentlemen - rather than from artisans or peasants.

It is appropriate that a revival started at the College under Roger Nichols about 20 years ago (1960) under the influence of Fred Hamer's interpretation. They had the privilege of contact with the surviving dancers even if the information gained is only very little. It is a pìty that most morrìs dancers' experience of the tradition is only Jockey to the Fair. Bedford Morris Men keep the tradition to the fore and have been the source of instruction for many years. One also always thinks of Thaxted and Maid of the Mill. Now amongst the women's sides there is Windsor Morris developing their own interpretation.

2013 (MM 32-1) written in 1981 and updated in 2012

My involvement with Abingdon Morris

I danced regularly with Abingdon from September 1960 until 1970/1, at every event until the very late 1960s, the last time I believe being by invitation to an early twin town ceremony, supporting the team through a very difficult period during which they could otherwise have collapsed completely. I was invited and was not looking to join. I first saw the team dance through Frank Purslow, to whom I had been introduced by Reg Hall. I felt close to the old men, I found that my father, Jack Hyde and Arnold Woodley had worked together briefly at Pressed Steel by Oxford recovering scrap near the end of World War II. My family grew up with a background of the Abingdon Morris. Three of my sons, Simon, Michael and Stephen danced with them at various times to help make up a team.

Naturally, I dropped out as soon as the club was viable due to an influx of younger men, as the tradition properly belongs to the truly local people. I still have a letter from Colin Corner thanking me for my part in teaching the dances. The involvement with Abingdon actually started my hobby of filming and recording live morris because of the all too obvious risk at the time that the side would not survive and that no one else was bothering. The cost involved was met at some personal and family sacrifice. There is no lack of recording today as the equipment is readily available. We then bought a car in order to attend practices once the Radley to Abingdon branch line closed down. I was not involved at all with teaching the Abingdon dances to the local schools, Dr Barnardo's or the Townswomen's Guild, because of the transport difficulties, but I did help Jack with the Rover Scouts at Longworth, 5 of whom later joined the club.

Each year I helped out at canvassing, and sometimes vote counting at Mayor's Day. I was present when it was finally agreed what was to be the form of *Maid of the Mill*, what was to be the "recovered" version of *Constant Billy*, and when Jack worked out at a practice what was to become the *Duke of Marlborough* dance.

The Recording

A team has to be aware of its own history. Those Abingdon dances then in practice were described by Major Fryer and published within the then small Morris Ring in the late 1930's. The Major wrote regular letters to the Morris Ring officials about the happenings and politics at Abingdon and I assume that this story is accessible out there somewhere. He always kept copies of correspondence. In the early 1960s when interviewing outsiders I saw several sets of notations still existing. At that time with the help of the older Abingdon men I produced a stencilled description for the Morris Ring Advisory Council as one of the documents considered in preparation of a case for publishing the known morris dance material, as an example of something with which they were unfamiliar. Copies of these sheets were later used by Jack Hyde to help newcomers to the Abingdon team. I had separate discussions with Douglas Kennedy, then Director of EFDSS, and its policy of not formally publishing traditional material whilst a team was still active, even in an archival journal, was clearly stated and accepted by all concerned. Peter Kennedy had made an audio tape of the Abingdon Morris in the 1950s which I presume is still available commercially from Folktapes, as one of 300 advertised.

All the material that I and Reggie Annets, his manservant, were able to rescue from Major Fryer's papers - which his brother Charles Fryer set out to burn - was passed or copied to Jack Hyde and I assume exist in the Abingdon team archives and hopefully nowhere else. Jack said, for example, that they answered a number of questions he had had about what happened between Percy Hemmings, a former bagman, and Major Fryer. Unfortunately we were unable to preserve Percy's material as he had kept it all in a garden shed for many years and it was so weather-spoiled as to be unreadable. We had a meeting with him, involving the then current older dancers, to explore the history of the team through the late 30s and early 40s.

There had been an arrangement with the older men in the early 1960s for them to teach the Abingdon dances at a Ring Instructional at Cecil Sharp House which only fell through on the day. It had often been expressed by Jack Hyde and his friends that they would have liked to have seen an Abingdon dance like the *Squire's Dance* done as a massed display. These men had hosted two Ring Meetings and always attended such meetings that could be reached in those days when several of them did not finish work on Saturdays until noon. These men gave their dances *Princess Royal* and *Maid of the Mill* to one of the Oxford teams to dance for some reason - presumably Oxford University Morris Men as I never remember Oxford City doing them out when not dancing with Abingdon.

I also remember seeing about that time another side dancing Abingdon's *Jockey to the Fair*. Maurice Sutherland, who had also danced with Abingdon before my time, spoke of other teams doing *Princess Royal;* the Wargrave Morris Men, like Reggie Annets, knew all the repertoire, and were one source of information about how the dances had been recovered earlier. The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House has some cine film of Abingdon dances in its archive.

When I assisted in the writing and publishing of Dr Bacon's Handbook, he wrote formally to the Abingdon side about potential publication and accepted without any argument the expressed desire not to have the Abingdon dances published or described any further, and the statements in the Handbook reflect this understanding. I never attempted to take my writing about the dances any further than they had been in the mid-1960s and the bulk of what I have remains unorganised, and probably quite a bit of relevant information is now forgotten. So what others can have accessed from archives is a poor description that is fragmented. During the 1970s I was too occupied with my job to be involved in folk dance and morris. I have not passed much of the Abingdon material to more recent investigators, such as Keith Chandler, but only that specifically relevant to their research topics. However some of what has been said by the Abingdon men about the dances and their origins is wrong, although I have never thought that it really mattered enough to comment.

One of the purposes of Dr Bacon's Handbook was to make 385 dances available, even where it involved much reconstruction of limited surviving evidence, instead of the only 80 published before, so that pressure could be taken off the traditions. At various times I have heard both Bampton and Headington Quarry men express their disquiet at the use of their dances by others and wished that their own traditions could be left and not emulated so slavishly nor quarried so quickly by outsiders. This is of course the price of

becoming meccas for the morris world, but without the interest the traditions would have probably not survived. None appears to have refused TV appearances or festival invitations and all have enjoyed the lauding.

I used what influence I may have had in the 1960s and early 70s to persuade outsiders that the Abingdon tradition was authentic and worthwhile, at a time when many Cotswold dancers thought it all rather simple and not worth taking it at all seriously. I still believe that I had something to do with its gradual acceptance as a genuine traditional side with all the respect due to it. I continue to speak well of Abingdon and its traditions. I reflected in good faith what I have been told or experienced, although I know I could have been misinformed or have misunderstood.

I respected the wishes of the Abingdon team not to be filmed in the 1970s and 80s and gave up going to Mayor's Day to my great regret, thinking that the club's cohesion was more important than mere personal interests or the justice of the situation. I still have a pair of 400-foot spools of 8 mm cine film from the period during which I danced, so the prohibition was not that embarrassing.

The club's problem with the Hemmings family was unfortunate for me as most of my surviving friends in the team went to dance with Mr Hemmings Morris[12], a most proper expression of the tradition. I was drawn into discussions with the media by them. Although I attempted to calm people down on one side, there was little that I could do except report to the outside morris world officials what appeared to be happening.

I have with Mr Hemmings Morris permission filmed them a few times for archival purposes. It was always assumed that their team would have a finite life, but it now looks as if a new generation will be recruited.

Attitudes

We presumably differ in that I believed that genuine morris dancers should have some knowledge of the width of the morris for the sake of the health of morris in general, but not necessarily by public reproduction, and that little was gained by secrecy, or imagining that the public, on which even the tradition depends, attempts to distinguish between the "tradition" and the rest. If this is not true then there is nothing to worry about. Whether we like it or not, the acceptance of the morris in any part of the country is determined by the behaviour and attitudes of all the teams. It is probably too much to hope that outsiders would grasp all the significance of tradition, but they can be expected to respect the past, present and future of the morris. My 40-plus years experience shows me that teams with "wrong" attitudes do not last and that their long term impact is minimal.

It is sad that no one from Abingdon or elsewhere felt it necessary to approach me to discuss any aspect of the past or present as it affects the Abingdon Morris over the last 25 years. A reasonable record of attempts at direct communication would make the case more plausible. Just a copy of a circular is an insult. I find that discovering views third or fourth hand with all the possible misunderstandings and deliberate distortions involved is

[12] Now known as Mr Hemmings Traditional Abingdon Morris Dancers

hardly the basis for determining my own actions or what I should say to others. I love the Abingdon tradition and care greatly for those that passed it onto us. If I had ever raised my own men's team amongst friends, I would have been very tempted to base it on the Abingdon dances. Frank Purslow had at one time set out down, with agreement, such a route with the proposed plan for a Primrose Hill Morris in Camden Town, London, before he moved to live and work in Bampton.

Some of the comments reported from Abingdon men since I left both belittle and denigrate other morris dancers, implying that they do not or cannot care or have sympathy with tradition. As Keith Chandler regularly points out, today's morris world, including the tradition, has little in common with the past. Yet there are very many around who do care about the morris today, and are proud that teams such as Abingdon continue to exist.

For many years I held a clear attitude about the traditional morris, and I quote from my occasional lectures. "It is commonly, properly and ethically accepted that certain dances are the 'property' of the performers. Some dances, such as the Great Wishford Faggot dance, Abbots Bromley Horn dance and the Coconut dance at Bacup are so distinctive that even when avoiding the actual movements in the original, any exploitation of the form is recognised as a copy, rather as are any attempts at the late Wilson, Keppel and Betty's *Egyptian Sand Dance*. Yet the archives mention other "nutters" in the past.

The existence of most of the older living traditions is precarious, and the use of their material can be life threatening. Often dances have been collected on the understanding that either they are passed on or are kept within a particular group. Such wishes have to be respected. Some dances are recovered or reconstructed only with great difficulty and the collectors have some 'rights' in obstructing their further uncontrolled propagation. However also to be avoided is overprotection.

There is a danger that to guard, for example, the simple Bacup garland dances will inhibit the exploitation of the quadrille formation for other dances. Contact with the tradition is a two-way process, it is inspirational to those without their own inherited dances, and it helps to provide the interest that has kept the tradition alive. A caring and sensitive approach is required, although it has to be said that some urban sides do not understand it."

The ephemeral performing arts are in a different category to the fine arts. Rights are attenuated by public performance, by claims of ancientness, and by teaching or otherwise sharing by anyone at any time in the past.

In any case the unilateral statement by the Abingdon Club on the status of the dances was incomplete and needs some extension. I suggested that something like the following be added: "In the past, Abingdon's dances have been taught by members of the side to local groups for specific occasions, as is their privilege. This was never intended to signal a general licence, but a recognition of the belonging of the tradition to the town. Archival records are not resisted, but the dances are not for general or specific performance except by previous agreement with ***all*** the members of the club, and should be so clearly labelled. Existing known records of the dances are incomplete and not an accurate reflection of current or recent performance. In the event of the demise of the morris

tradition at Abingdon, it is the desire that the dances remain dead until such time that they can be revived locally."

I must point out that an alternative line was taken by the traditional longsword teams, in a little different situation, over their dances when it was proposed that Ivor Allsop published the known material. He was asked to ignore the more recent changes to the dances made within the tradition. The equivalent here would be to publish the Sharp, Neal, Fryer and Kennedy tunes and notations, which are easily accessible by anyone.

I believe that I have acted in good faith, within the acceptable limits given by my direct contacts, particularly with the old dancers, and have caused far less problems for the local tradition than some of the antics of those active in the club or who act as friends. The worst aspect to me is that the manner of the fuss makes the current holders of the tradition appear foolish and it depreciates the gift and heritage that is uniquely theirs. That a concern is expressed must imply that the local tradition is at a low ebb. Externalisation of a threat is a common response to internal difficulties. I wish The Abingdon Ock St Morris well and hope for recovery and moving on to fresh achievements.

2014 (MM 33-2)

Ed: This letter was written by Roy in 1997 and published to a limited audience on Andy Anderson's Morris website, so I felt it was worth reprinting as a reflection of the morris environment at the time. I passed it to Les Badcock (Mr Hemmings' Fool) and Keith Chandler, both of whom can recall the situation and Keith commented: *"Roy's letter was a response to one Chris Clarke had circulated to a number of the old sides, stirring it up about outsiders filming and documenting what he thought ought to be kept within the community. Just shows how little Chris knew about outsiders keeping these things going, especially at Abingdon. I had pointed out that it was a reality that people had access to cheap filming equipment nowadays (digital cameras were becoming more and more widespread) and that one could no more stop someone filming a performance of the morris than one could stop them photographing the outside of your house. That ripple caused by Chris Clarke died as quickly as it had begun. He wrote to me asking what I thought of his ideas, and I told him in no uncertain terms what an idiot I thought he was being. Roy obviously felt in 1997 that it was the right moment to give his own, rational, views on the situation at Abingdon over the past four decades"*

Morris Myths

Please stop passing on myths about the early morris; it encourages the wrong public image - as many formers of opinion know well - and it gives an unfortunate impression which is proving hard to live down.

There are no roots in fertility, or any other surviving folk customs. One thousand years of Christianity had seen to the end of any of that as a community activity. Like many a late Victorian idea, it seemed reasonable at the time when they were discovering oral survivals of mediaeval songs and the like.

The mid-15th century mention occurred at a time when the morris was known as an entertainment in sophisticated circles in Europe, but was not common at a local level anywhere, although many other activities are recorded. It was also the start of a period in which bands of travelling players toured the continent as well as England; a period when England was still a backwater.

The many 16th century mentions, mostly just of payments, often coincide with the tours or visits of out-of-season travelling groups who, like the Earl of Berkeley's players, advertised the performance of plays, jigges, triumphal entries and the morris. When all the volumes of the Early Drama Records are finally available it will be possible to fully cross-check. The English Martial Arts Association also claim some of these events as more fencing to music than morris; perhaps the records are confusing them with the Matachin, also of growing interest at the same time. The morris was then a strictly kerchief tradition.

There are surviving illustrations which are being interpreted wrongly. The convention was that if something consisted of number of different movements or sequences, the figures illustrated the number and conclusion of each, *not* the actual number of dancers. [These postures were exploited a few years ago by a touring company of mediaeval players who performed in Middle English.] Some performances were by local people, but their status could be high; yeomen have been mentioned and these were only one level below gentlemen, defined as the people who did no manual work.

The 17th century Playford dances represent the Country Dance [Country as in 'Town and Country', not folk] to dance at home in troubled times, and drawn only from Masque and theatre performance, *not* collected as once believed. The resemblance of the early set dances - soon to be replaced by the longways-for-as-many-as-will dance of the Assembly Rooms - to the South Midlands morris is not close and the connection remains speculative.

It is suspected that the heyday of the South Midlands morris was from the mid-18th to the early 19th century. Society then started to turn against a culture of heavy drinking and rough behaviour, so the morris ales stopped, the competitions failed and teams no longer came up to London ahead of the early harvests in the suburban horticultural areas.

At one time it appeared that the Cotswold tradition must have centred on Wychwood and Stow because of the complexity of the local dances and diffused north-eastward,

gradually weakening in content. It was missing from the clay areas, the Buckinghamshire Plain, the Vale of the White Horse, the Vale of Evesham and central Northamptonshire. It is now obvious that at one time, perhaps at the end of the 18th century, recorded morris stretched from Bath to Stony Stratford and from Wootton Bassett to Stratford on Avon.

Two things have led to its diminishing territory. The first was the development in the clay basins of the big estates and the change from open to closed settlements. A study of the distribution over time of non-conformity would be interesting. Because the Cotswolds were slow to respond to the improvements of the Agricultural Revolution, the guide books dismissed them as uninteresting, and they were not considered beautiful until the romantic period was underway. The second was the development of local industries; cloth in Gloucestershire, footwear in Northamptonshire and brickmaking in Bedfordshire, which removed any local economic motivation and provided continuous 12 months employment without the traditional seasonal breaks. The morris at Wychwood and Stow, in contrast, was maintained by local celebrations such as the Wychwood Forest Fair and Dover's Games.

It is now clear that morris of a sort extended more widely, it just has to be looked for. Traces have been found in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, as well as Somerset, North Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex. There were advertised separate competitions between the different Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire morris. The only latter one collected was from Steeple Claydon which would be classified today as a Border dance! Yet the format of something-and-a-hey was not just restricted to the West Midlands. Not realised by many is the amount of restarts in the traditions. Breakaways and restarts usually lead to changes in the repertoires and the dance details.

From the middle of the 19th century, when the possibility of teams meeting was reduced they went their own ways, gradually limiting repertoires, dance elements and details of costume, doing just enough to be still tolerated in the changing social conditions. One issue never addressed nowadays is what tolerance was allowed to individual dancers within the 'house style' of a side. The evidence from contemporary traditional sides is that each dance reaches a consensus which is not the same every time. The collectors had the problem that informants were not consistent in themselves and other members of the same team offered different details. The collectors chose what they liked or what they thought was oldest, and gave us no help in the matter.

The dances from the Vale of Evesham were obtained mostly between the 2 World Wars. They should be seen as the end of the process that was driving the morris to perform at Christmas, in the dark, with as short a performance as was possible. It was this aspect, not the actual dances, that classified them as Border. This finally leads to the issue of 'blacking up'. The Game Wars, the Black Act and the actions against Woolmer Blacks make it unlikely that it played any part in the spring and summer festivities, but attention should be directed to its use in winter ones, the potential season of the evil ones. However, disguise has been a part of public performance since classical times. The English story is dominated by the Minstrel Troupes since the mid-19th century with their continuation in amateur performance until after World War II.

The absence of evidence is not proof of the absence of the activity, but comparison with

similar social ones gives a strong clue. So much basic raw information has been uncovered in the last 50 years, along with the existence of so many local history societies, that there is now the hope for a definitive doctoral thesis to settle all the matters.

2014 (MM 33-2)

Music and the Morris

Anybody playing fiddle, pipe-and-tabor, concertina or whatever for a morris side for the first time might easily think to himself: Well, I guess I can play 'Constant Billy', 'Maid of the Mill' and a few more of those tunes; all I've got to do is play the tune and, so long as they know the dance, everything will be fine. But, unless he is an extremely insensitive musician, he will find out sooner rather than later how wrong he was.

From which remark you will rightly deduce that this article is concerned less with morris tunes as such, and more with the manner of playing them - with thoughts which I hope may be helpful to both current and prospective morris musicians. For instance, the novice player would do well to take an early opportunity of listening carefully to recordings of traditional morris music men. In Cotswold morris (we are here concerned exclusively with this variety) the incredible drive in the fiddle-playing of Jinky Wells of Bampton will be a revelation, so many worlds away from the smooth virtuosity of Irish fiddlers (this is not a matter of better or worse, but difference in kind); then there's the crisp neat Anglo-concertina of Merry Kimber of Headington Quarry, just to show how different two Oxfordshire morris musicians can sound. Whoever you take as your model or however you try to combine elements from each, beware of being led astray by superficial idiosyncrasies of style and thereby losing the essential elemental pulse which must be maintained from beginning to end of the dance; in fact it is vital that all stylistic frills, all the decoration and twiddly bits, should be made to subserve and not hinder the basic rhythm. At the same time it is equally important that this elemental pulse shall not be wooden and unyielding but responsive to the dancers, strong but subtly pliable. This brings us to a second major consideration, the rapport between musician and dancers.

It should not in fact be long before the novice player discovers that a morris team is not simply a matter of six dancers plus a musician plus a Fool: rather the operative unit is the team or side consisting of six dancers, musician and Fool. The musician (likewise the Fool) must feel himself an integral part of the side and totally involved in it, and to achieve this unity he has, while playing, to be continually watching every movement of the dancers, just as the dancers should be continually listening to (not just hearing) every note of the music. Remarks of traditional morris dancers reveal the reality of this utter integration of music and steps. 'If a man don't know the tune he can't dance' (Benjamin Moss of Ascot-under-Wychwood to Cecil Sharp); 'We used to learn the songs and then there was no trouble, for the steps are just as the words be' (Joseph Druce of Ducklington); 'Anybody that has a good ear can see by the tune what the steps are' (Richard Bond of ldbury). It helps a lot if the musician knows the dances: at Ruardean I was told that the gipsy fiddler, Tite Smith, was a good player but 'he didn't understand the dancing like (his predecessor) Paddy Morgan'. Jinky Wells knew the dances so well that even when he was blind he could tell by the sound of the bells if one of the dancers was out of step.

Choice and control of tempo present another kind of problem to the morris musician. It is surprising how sensitive a set of dancers can be to quite minute differences in tempo and, in this matter particularly, different teams vary in their tastes so you have to get to

know your own side's preferences, remembering at the same time that the optimum dance tempo is often affected by circumstances such as hardness of surface, the weather, lateness of the hour and alcohol consumption. So it's no use expecting to avoid complaints altogether on this matter of tempo. You can only hope to reduce them to a minimum by being constantly alert and responsive to the mood of the dancers. A useful tip, perhaps, is to be on guard against playing the introductory 'Once to yourself' too fast; it's easier to increase the tempo slightly as the dance goes on than to slow it down.

With all this to think about, it goes without saying that you have to know your tunes so well that they come out with the minimum of brainwork. In the case of an experienced morris musician, I have no doubt that at least 95% of his mental activity while playing is concerned with rapport with the dancers and quality of the performance, leaving only 5% for keeping the tune right. It was probably something to do with the tune being part of his inner consciousness, not just in his fingers, that caused Jinky Wells to have the habit of humming the tune as he played it — to the consternation of one BBC recordist whose protest was met with, 'That, young man, is part of my music'.

It is obvious that the kind of rapport between musicians and dancers that I have tried to describe would be harder than ever to achieve with more than one musician and it was certainly the normal practice among Cotswold morris sides to perform with one musician only. He stands still at the head of the set: 'Show up to the music' is meaningless if the musician is strolling around or standing on the other side of the road: in fact he forms a stationary point of reference which should enable the set to avoid drifting down the hill or across the road during the dance. Such details are important, too, from the point of view of effective presentation.

The formal quality of the Cotswold morris can easily be lost through a casual attitude to the music. Just as more than one musician at a time almost inevitably weakens the cohesion of a dance, so constantly changing the musician during a show militates against the formal unity of the whole performance. Above all, the musician should not look like a dancer temporarily escaped from the set. Among revival sides how often this is the case! When a club is lucky enough to have several competent musicians it should not be impossible for them to take turns playing for successive shows and, when they are also dancers, at least to remove their bells before playing. Again, it should not be necessary, but it is necessary, to remind would-be musicians that a public performance is not the occasion for practising or learning an unfamiliar tune, any more than it is the occasion for a dancer to learn an unfamiliar dance.

If more attention were paid to matters of this kind by morris clubs in general, we might hear fewer justified complaints about the poor dancing and rotten presentation which do unquestionably occur and which debase the reputation of present-day morris. This boils down to respect for traditional practice. In some ways, of course, traditional practice has to be modified to meet modern conditions; moreover, we all agree that a live tradition is a changing, evolving tradition. But this does not mean chucking everything out of the window and starting afresh: it means building on what has been passed on to us. In fact, with a re-established tradition as we have it now, the evolution will look after itself without conscious effort. What we need to do at this stage, rather, is to provide a firm basis for evolution by making sure exactly what has been handed down to us about this remarkably complex and fascinating tradition - not only in the way of steps and figures

of the dances but also in attitude to the dancing, style of presentation and so on. For this, it is necessary to sift and evaluate all the sources of information that are available, both published and unpublished; for in many respects these manuscript notes of collectors are a closer approximation to traditional practice than published accounts, subject as these are to considerations arising from the kind of public to which they are addressed, practical limitations of printing, space, complexity, and cost.

There is good evidence that the Cotswold morris continued in full vigour up to the 1830s, only 70 years before Cecil Sharp set about his remarkable work of recovery, yet by the end of the century the number of active sides in the area had shrunk from 80 or more to a bare half-dozen. Though we have to keep our eyes open for the occasional recent innovation which might not have become satisfactorily absorbed into the particular tradition, still by and large, the traditional practice of the 19th century morris team is the net product of centuries of steady evolution.

Thus it is by no means surprising that current experience shows in general that the version of a particular dance closest to traditional practice proves to be the most satisfactory in performance. To take an example, the well-known Field Town dance, 'The Rose', in its published form appears devoid of galleys. The omission of this extra turn in the hey was remarked on by the old dancers when the Travelling Morrice took the dance back to its home village in 1924, but it was not until Sharp's manuscripts became accessible that it could be seen that the dance had in fact been recorded correctly but altered (and emasculated, many would say) in publication.

One further proviso should be borne in mind when approaching the work of collectors. Until complete confidence has been established between collector and informant (and this happy situation may in fact never be achieved in the course of a mere couple of visits) the latter feels some reservation about telling all he knows. These are his dances (if he happens to be the sole survivor of a team) or our dances (if a number of dancers are still around) — and you may be sure there were frequent arguments in the pub about the propriety of giving them away to a stranger from London who will no doubt make money out of them.

I have heard it said quite recently that 'after all, the morris dances belong to everybody'. Few traditional dancers would have agreed with that glib statement. The fact is the morris dances are the jealously guarded property of the morris dancers. It is the 'luck', the mana (symbolised by the cake on sword), the experience of seeing the dances, that belongs to everybody, not the dances themselves. However tenuously, the morris still retains its power to fascinate the onlooker - any morris team worth its salt soon discovers this. It will not continue to do so (and it will no longer be 'morris') unless taken seriously by the performers, however much this essential seriousness of purpose is overlaid by convivial enjoyment.

The success of a morris team depends, perhaps as much as anything, on finding the right balance between seriousness and enjoyment. This basic ambivalence is personified in the Fool. "It takes a wise man to make a good Fool", said Jinky. The Fool is, of course, by no means an 'extra character' (a rather unfortunate subheading in Sharp's Morris Book). He is the essential central figure in a morris. He was often dubbed 'Squire': he directed the dance while he amused the onlookers and so created a bridge of

communication between performers and public. How rarely do we see this happening now? - but it still can and sometimes does happen - and with electrifying effect! Parallel to the Fool is the man with the sword-impaled cake and the money-box for the exchange of gifts with the populace. How often neglected nowadays ['too much trouble'!] - are not too many of our morris teams concerned with the takings to the exclusion of the givings? If presented properly, there is no need to lecture the onlookers on what the morris is all about: it will speak for itself - and if an element of mystery remains, so much the better. The morris is neither an emasculated 'demonstration dance' nor is it a bunch of drunkards who don't know whether they are dancing or not. The Headington Quarry team are reported to have found themselves in that kind of state on a certain occasion at Long Crendon a century or so ago but I don't suppose they were particularly proud of the fact. Another incident of this sort concerns a predecessor of Joe Powell's at Bucknell, another whittle and dub man who, on at least one occasion, was tied to a tree so that he could continue playing!

Which brings us back to the music. The whittle-and-dub or tabor-and-pipe was the regular music for morris in the Cotswold area. It is remarkable that the mediaeval form of the instrument with a small drum suspended from wrist or thumb survived here as a folk instrument through to the end of the 19th century, even though a number of well-known representations and descriptions from the 16th and early 17th centuries indicate the use of the large tabor slung at waist level. This may well have been an importation from the continent which failed to become established in our folk tradition. Sharp reported that many old morris dancers told him they gave up dancing when the whittle-and-dub was superseded by the fiddle, because they found it impossible to dance to the latter instrument (Morris Book Part I, p.34). No doubt they missed the insistent beat of the dub, basically in the rhythm — - - — - - — - - etc., but constantly varied to suit the steps of the dance. By the use of a short double-headed stick a roll was produced which is said to have created a 'quite astonishing noise', giving 'a peculiar fire and character to the tune'. Why don't more present-day players experiment with this technique? Here is a lost art which can surely be recaptured: and nobody would deny that much of the morris music heard today could do with a bit more fire and character. It is worth noting too that older descriptions almost invariably speak of tabor-and-pipe, not pipe-and-tabor; and the performer was nearly always a taborer, not a piper. This alone suggests the importance of the taboring.

Morris dancers and musicians alike still have much to learn about the tradition which has been passed on to us and which we are responsible for passing on to the next generation. Probably the greatest fascination of the morris lies in the scope it gives for apparently limitless discovery of new ways of performing steps and figures or of playing tunes - small variations which sometimes affect to a surprising degree the feel or look of a dance. Every morris practice is in this sense an adventure - at least, that is how it seems to me even after more than 40 years.

2015 (MM 34-1) written in 1975 from a photocopy whose source we have been unable to identify

An Ignored Influence

This account about the influence of Black Face Minstrels is mostly based on "Minstrel Memories…." by Harry Reynolds. All new forms of entertainment leave an impact on popular tastes; minstrelsy evolved and encompassed many activities now recognised as part of our folk culture, leaving us with an unresolvable chicken-and-egg argument as to their respective origins. The beginning of minstrelsy has been traced to the end of the 18th century. The real Jim Crow was born in 1754 on an estate of Squire Crow, of South American parents who were executed when he was nine for the murder of an overseer. He absconded to New York; played fiddle and did negro dancing with a peculiar jump. Using the original "Jump Jim Crow" song, he made enough money to purchase a farm in Virginia in 1787, married an American woman, and eventually owned slaves himself, dying in 1809.

In 1828, white American entertainer Thomas Dartmouth Rice darkened his face with burnt cork, costumed himself as a plantation slave, and won nationwide fame performing this song in variety theatres starting in Pittsburgh. Rice could tell a story, sing a song or dance a hornpipe; he had personality and was slightly eccentric, but he had also tact and shrewdness and was alert for ideas. The novelty was a great success. It is generally believed that Rice's lasting success inspired the creation of minstrel shows. He claimed that his inspiration was an elderly African American he found singing this tune near a stage door one night in Washington DC. Whatever its origins, "Jim Crow" became part of the language, eventually as an identity for the laws and racist attitudes used to oppress blacks in the Southern United States in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Come listen all you galls and boys I's jist from Tuckyhoe,

I'm going to sing a little song, my name's Jim Crow,

Weel about and turn about and do jis so,

Eb'ry time I weel about and jump Jim Crow.

Oh I'm a roarer on de fiddle, and down in old Virginny,

They say I play de skyentific like Massa Pagannini.

Weel about …..

The text here is taken from an early sheet music edition published in the late 1820's. Rice continually added verses to spoof events of the day or fit special occasions. An early edition (undated, but probably from the 1820's) included 44 verses. He added other songs to the repertoire including "Such a Gettin' Upstairs". Rice remained in Pittsburgh for two years, then moved to Philadelphia, Boston and New York. He came over to England in July 1836, appearing at the Surrey Theatre, London. He returned to England in 1838 and 1843, but he seldom worked with minstrel troupes. Mostly he did burlesques such as "The Virginia Mummy" which became a favourite with minstrel comedians for 75 years. He was paralysed in 1858 and died in New York in 1860 aged 53.

The first 'minstrel troupe', the Virginia Minstrels [including Dan Emmett, who wrote "I

wish I Was in Dixie" in 1859], formed in New York in February 1843, playing banjo, violin, bone castanets and tambourine, and avoiding vulgarity. They came to England in May that year, performing in Liverpool, Manchester and London in their "original, novel, grotesque and melodious Ethiopian Entertainment" but disbanded in July. An early success in England in 1846 was the Ethiopian Serenaders, their music being taken from popular operas of the day interspersed with 'Ethiopian' melodies. These included "Buffalo Girls", "Oh Susannah" "The Boatman Dance", and "Old (Black) Joe". The Christy Minstrels were founded by Edwin Pearce (E P) Christy in New York in 1846 and ran until just after he retired in 1854. There soon was an epidemic of 'Christy Troupes' so that the name became identified with minstrelsy. By 1883 there were 32 touring troupes. From 1859 till 1909 there were minstrels continuously at the lesser St James Hall, Piccadilly. Harry Reynolds' Minstrels had a backcloth representing a full troupe of 30 performers and orchestra. Their act ended with unaccompanied singing of old time minstrel medleys. It ran for several years and it brought a minstrel revival to the halls until World War I. The best old minstrel shows were built on a solid foundation of good vocal and instrumental music. Key to a minstrel show was the Interlocutor who was the guiding spirit ensuring variety and interest throughout, more intimately than the chairman of an Old Time Music Hall.

E W Mackney usually accompanied himself on a piano, but for his famous topical song, "The Whole or None", he capered around the stage in a quaint costume. He also played violin, banjo, bones, guitar and was famous for farmyard imitations on the fiddle. His dancing was so good that it led to him being asked to judge championship competitions. Starting in pantomime in 1835 at the age of 9, he became the leading exponent of Burnt Cork Minstrelsy in England. Mackney retired in early middle age and died in March 1909 aged 83. By April 1909 a newspaper said "burnt cork minstrelsy seems to have taken its departure from the list of London amusements, but up to the present nothing of any consequence seems have arisen to take its place." This was still true 20 years later.

Some examples of the use of minstrel tunes in the morris are "Such a Getting Up Stairs" at Headington and Hinton, "Whole Hog or None" at Brill, "Oh Susannah" at Longborough and "The Boatman" at Godley Hill. Early 20th century collectors largely ignored those tunes that they knew had a composer or were derived from popular entertainment; so many more may have been employed than have been recorded. When the right questions were asked, it was found that morris sides often sang, performed stunts or skits or other entertainments - rather as do better modern sides - to augment their appeal and the box. The skills employed often derived from the dancers' involvement in other activities outside of the morris. The so-called Border Morris of Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Staffordshire included black faces and groups of percussion instrumentalists and often used the old song, "Not for Joe", mentioning niggers, banjos and the Wild West Show. It is hard to believe that this ever preceded minstrelsy!

Most intriguing is that amateur minstrelsy followed on after the decline of the traditional Mummers and Christmas dancing troupes in the 20th century when the objective became more the raising of money for charities. This allowed far larger groups in fancy dress. A common costume became the all-embracing "clown" suit. Such an easy-to-make outfit which could be worn over ordinary clothes also became common for the 'jazz' or comic bands which had a similar function in carnivals and processions. Some still exist,

although with more elaborate costumes nowadays, changing annually. [Many such groups' photographs have been published in the last 20 years with the fashion for books of historical local illustrations.] Like the morris, the concept never stood still and constantly evolved; novelty has always been a strong selling point. The final development of minstrelsy was the Black and White Minstrel Show which was a long-running successful show on early TV. The original would no longer be politically correct. What is surprising is how the folk world has steadfastly ignored such more recent performances, having a blinkered view of what is "folk". The book "Morris Dancers and Rose Queens" by Johnny Haslett is a collection of local newspaper accounts of events over a short period in part of Lancashire, mentioning all the other dances and entertainments that went along with the same occasions as the morris - all of which are now largely ignored and so are unrecorded as they are no longer fashionable.

2015 (MM 34-1)

Why Dance – oxytocin

All folk cultures dance; why? Evolution has given us the ability to generate the feel-good hormone, oxytocin, by reasonably energetic rhythmic activity over extended periods. Some vocal Puritans faced with the enormity of Eternity saw little value in leisure and pleasure but it is natural. Done to excess it can lead to a trance state as exploited by shamans and whirling dervishes and even inadvertently by some long distance runners. It has not been reported for morris dancers!

It has always been sought by young people. Whenever social dancing has become sedate there has been an outbreak of more vigorous movement, from Playford's country dances to Rock n' Roll. Historical accounts seldom mention the frequently seen 'high-spirited' versions of once common dances such as Sir Roger de Coverley and the 'can-can' Lancers.

It is desirable – but how to achieve it? The normal morris side is usually a social organization with regular relaxed meetings, so unlike its traditional roots. The good feelings, the lift and inspiration are generated by the intensity of the work. This is often exploited by building up to a climax near the end of the session, leaving the early period for more thoughtful activity, but still giving the dancers what they deserve. In principle they could be mostly in the elevated state throughout, but this could easily be counter-productive.

The prime difference is when dancing out. The 'lift' is communicated to spectators, hence the taking of the dance to the sick or into old fashioned open hospital wards. Performances should not be modelled on practice nights. The reverse should be true to some extent; intensity is the key. This approach carries over to workshops; what is taught has a much greater impact if it has a good feeling associated with it. That is why days of dance and festivals are so enjoyable and must continue to be supported.

My plea is that more should try the traditional model of a few whole-day outings. I started with a side that danced Friday evening and all day Saturday perhaps 5 times a year. It left time for normal holidays and hobbies in between. We were able to perform up to a hundred dances and jigs each weekend, something many modern dancers only achieve in a season.

2014 (MM 33-2)