



# **Morris Dancing and Pageants in Britain 1885–2022**

**David Milner**

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## Introduction

“Pageants are as much a part of the English scene as a May morning, the Pytchley [Hunt] in full cry, the flag of St George on a village church, the hawthorn blossom in a Hertfordshire garden. They stir the most saturnine among us, because they are apt to hold the drabness of the present up to the picked moments of the past – moments that have stirred the blood and quickened the senses.”

*Evening Post September 1946.*

“The central idea of Mr Parker’s production was that a pageant is essentially a local affair, presenting the historic life of that locality, as far as possible amidst its own surroundings. The players are local residents who give their services voluntarily and, when they can, make their own uniforms and dresses. Pageants, as Mr Parker viewed them, were to be held in the open air, without artificial scenery or any of the ordinary accompaniments of a stage. They differed from older displays like the Lord Mayor’s procession in that, in place of being in dumb show, they were presented more ambitiously with music, dialogue and dramatic movement.”

*F A Mackenzie: Wonderful Britain: Its Highways, Byways and Historic Places ed. J A Hammerton 1930*

This article deals with the pageants that occurred in Britain from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>. (For the Republic of Ireland see Appendix E). These pageants were largely focused on national historical themes and events or those related to the town where they took place. They contained theatrical re-enactments of a selection of episodes from local and national history, processions, plays, tableaux, songs, dancing, mock-fighting, and accompanying events. Their purposes included education, entertainment, and/or an endorsement of civic or national pride. They involved months of planning, sometimes hundreds or thousands of performers, building of grandstands and often huge audiences plus associated events such as dinners, church services, dances, shows, or exhibitions.

The locations were nearly always outdoors, including parks, fields, old castles, abbeys, and other open spaces. They were organised by planning committees – many with a paid pageant master who provided the outline ideas and often the scripts – and the oversight of the organisation and volunteers who made the shows happen. They sometimes purported to refer to earlier activities, specifically the local medieval civic processions and mystery/miracle plays.

Morris dancing was included in many of them, though it is not now certain what form this dancing took. This article considers the pageants that featured morris dancing and begins to explore the role it played in perceptions of British life, as well as analysing its appearances in pageants. It also draws conclusions relating to the perception and performance of morris dancing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This article draws heavily on the Kings College London project: The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain 1905–2016. The open access website contains a database of pageants with descriptions of each episode, lists of organisers, attendance, costs and participants, and much else. There are links to sources of evidence, articles, and publications dealing with pageants and their antecedents.

## What is a Pageant?

The word “pageant” is used in two senses when describing medieval events. It can refer to the whole of a procession, play or set of scenes. It may also be a scene acted on a stage or platform or a piece of stage machinery.

This article focuses on overall events that contain tableaux, plays, processions, dance, song, etc. and it is this definition that fits the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century pageants, which are “sumptuous spectacles arranged for effect” (OED), particularly concerned with historical events, both national and local. The modern pageants most often contain a procession and several scenes, episodes, or acts which each depict a particular historical or themed event. These episodes could be short plays, speeches, tableaux, processions or musical performances. Often there were interludes between the episodes, with dancing, music, or a scene change.

Given this usage of the word, other 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century events described as pageants seem to be better described as different kinds of community events – processions, carnivals, festivals, fairs, or fetes. For example, George Frampton describes the 1889–93 St Mary Cray May Day events as pageants. Yet the 1891 programme is headed “May Festival” and newspapers report these events as a “festival” or a “procession”, albeit one containing historical



personages. Attendance was 5,000–30,000 people. Incidentally, in 1891 Paul Valentine, a dancing master from Drury Lane, was hired to teach the morris dancing at the maypole to the music of the Cray Band. This was eight years before Cecil Sharp encountered the Headington Quarry dancers. Others are indoor dramatic performances – plays or revues on the scale and in the style of a village drama group. One of the first of these were the three Woodsome Hall village pageants in Yorkshire, 1906–1908, which featured a procession, choral singing, madrigals, morris dancing and a hobby horse ride and tilt.

Later examples include:

- Tudy and the Time Travellers (St Tudy Cornwall 2004) included performances from the Saffron Maids Morris dancers in a hall and the church.
- Walton May Pageant 2022 – was an afternoon event with a procession, music, terrier racing, and a fayre.
- Newchurch Historical Pageant and Country Fayre 2003 (Romney Marsh) presented “depictions of smugglers, residents, and famous visitors through the ages” by people in costume (not as set scenes), and included displays on historic warfare, a fairground organ, a craft tent, food stalls, agricultural demonstrations, a clipping service, an exhibition, as well as morris dancing by a local team.

## Early Morris in Relation to Pageants c.1485–c.1630

This period has been well covered by several researchers, notably Forrest, Cutting, Salter, and Heaney. From the available sources, morris dancing appears to have been undertaken in two main arenas – the court and civic occasions. What its precise form was is still open to conjecture. Forrest, in particular, traces an evolution from the court to urban streets and church sponsorship over the period 1485–1600.

### The Court and Associated Events

Performers would likely have been professional entertainers who had invested a lot of money in elaborate costumes, probably paid for by court officials. Events were often complex affairs, sometimes spread over more than one day, with stages, scenery, temporary buildings, pageant castles, set-piece short plays/dances, mock battles, and much-rehearsed material. The performances were either stand-alone or formed part of wider entertainments. These might have included the midwinter Lord of Misrule processions, Christmastide revels, court visits, and weddings. Morris dancing is mentioned as a performance piece, often involving a storyline of dancers, a fool and a maiden who is being courted. It is very uncertain whether the dancing resembles what we know today as morris, though it clearly was seen as a distinct and recognisable description of a particular genre of performance.



### Urban Civic Occasions

These consisted of a range of activities, including Midsummer Watch processions, (dancers funded by guilds), Lent processions, royal organised processions, May/Whitsuntide games, guild feasts, and civic summer processions. These were organised by civic authorities and guilds. It is unclear who exactly were the morris dancers involved – they were, or could have been, hired performance groups, dancers drawn from the organisers,

professionals, or amateur groups. It is possible, indeed likely, that dancers included a mixture of all of these. Costumes and paraphernalia were provided by the authorities or the performers. Many of these activities were processions.

Performances at court or civic occasions were lavish spectacles, focused on display and show, and not designed to raise revenue. They were ways that the court and associated nobility/civic dignitaries could demonstrate status or as a means for authorities to impress on the populace their wealth and power, and provide an outlet for the general population when in holiday mood, as well as helping to cement bonds of community.

A mayor-making series of ceremonies continued in Norwich until 1835, featuring a dragon and procession, organised by St George's Company and then the Guild of St George. But there is no mention of morris dancing in these ceremonies by name at any time.

## Church Sponsorship

Records relating to church sponsorship are mainly found in rural areas. The focus was on church ales (fundraisers) or plays. The latter were often associated with the character of Robin Hood and contained morris dancing. The church paid for some dancers' costumes. Church-sponsored events were focused on raising revenue and funds, and the morris dance was an integral component of this objective. However, from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century dancing was proscribed in a variety of places, and by 1630 church involvement had largely been discontinued.

## Morris Overview: c.1485–c.1800

Morris (or Morisk, or one of its variant spellings) dancing formed an integral part of a range of courtly, civic, and church events. These events were discontinued during the 17<sup>th</sup> century as new forms of social expression took root. None of them are aligned to the pageants of Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Britain, though they may have contained some common elements. It suited the organisers of the later pageants to use this word and refer to the medieval activities in the court and the street, especially as the pageants were largely concerned with historical themes and re-enactments.

Morris from c.1620 to the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued its rural association until some forms began to appear in the industrial towns of northern England at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other forms persisted in relatively small areas of England (the South Midlands, East Anglia, Welsh Borders), in rural locations, performed by small groups of people who either enjoyed the activity and/or used it as an opportunity to raise funds. Other than possibly in the northern industrial versions, morris dancing never again regained its place as a performance explicitly supported by civic, ecclesiastical, or worldly authorities in the way it had in the late medieval period.



The words of dancing master Edward Scott in 1899 summarise an attitude which

has been consistently and constantly expressed by observers throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and up till 2022: “The Morris-dance appears to have been little better than an absurd species of pantomime, scarcely worthy of notice were it not for the interest which attaches to it on the score of antiquity.” Many of the pageants that featured the dance appeared to treat it in line with this opinion.

## Modern Pageants and the Role of Morris Dancing

“The Morris-dance, although formerly common enough in ‘Merrie England’ may now be reckoned amongst the things of the past... and one of the novelties...”

*Chepstow Weekly Advertiser 2 August 1890*

According to commentators of the time, Britain in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century seemed to be in the grip of “pageant fever”. Towns put on immense spectacles involving thousands of performers, with thousands more watching from ticketed grandstands. Special trains ran to venues and the words “pageantitis” and to “padge” were coined.

These pageants built on some previous traditions. They drew on the distant medieval processions and plays, the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century *tableaux vivant*, 19<sup>th</sup>-century civic processions, Mayday/Whitsun celebrations, and household entertainments. Particularly important was the idea of “Merrie England” (or the Welsh/Scottish equivalents) – a semi-mythical utopian rural past, with a history dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century this concept drew on a number of books and writings including Arbeau (16<sup>th</sup> century), Tollett (1778), Strutt (1801), Douce (1807), Brand (1813), Drake (1817), Hone (1826–32), Chappell, (1838–40), Knight (1845–6), Gutch (1847), and Chambers (1863–4). The Merrie England Society (a latecomer in 1911) had its object as “the propagation of May festivals, the encouragement of national songs and dances, the brightening of outdoor life, the fostering of local pageants and festivities, and the preservation of desirable old customs”.



Some socialists were of a like mind: the Labour leader in 1908 stated that “not only, then was Merrie England once a reality, but its reality ... is full of promise and instruction to us concerning the merrier England that is to be”, and the Bermondsey Labour Magazine of May 1928 headed its cover with “Labour Rule means A Merrie England”.

Roy Judge’s article on the connection between the idea of Merrie England and the development of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century May Day celebrations makes the point that these celebrations of Merrie England may not bear much resemblance to what had occurred in earlier centuries. It is likely that the idea of Merrie England was consciously adopted as a mechanism to engender national solidarity using this lens to view the past. De Ferris was also active in organising large-scale May Day events. A *Daily Telegraph* article commented that the Wantage Pageant of 1885 was “in point of fact the real old May revels”. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, morris dancing was seen as a component of this view of the past, important enough to justify its inclusion in a pageant. Roy Judge, and the Redress of the Past researchers Keith Chandler, M Freeman, and M Simons write extensively on this topic.

Given the numerous expressions of theatrical morris during the 1880s and 1890s and their focus on antiquity, Merrie England, and its recreation, it is no surprise that pageant organisers presented morris in the way they did. This antiquarian interpretation of the morris dance as part of the Merrie England trope has continued to inform the way the dance is often presented today by current dance groups, in terms of costumes and explanations of dance

history, even if the characters are no longer such an integral part of the dance. Now, the “village morris” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, rather than any Merrie England mythological imagining, is evidently the source material.

This method of presentation nevertheless often encompasses the idea of re-enactment, rather than a presentation of a modern dance form. It serves to cement in the common mind the idea that morris dancing belongs in the past and its continuation is focused there. Keith Thomas commented: “Historical myths have an imaginary utility and a social function, ratifying as they do our deepest assumptions ... People hold on to outdated images of the past because they need them.”

Other dance forms such as ballet and possibly bhangra have avoided this categorisation. This interpretation meant that morris dancing and, to a lesser extent, other expressions of British folk dances were inserted into modern pageants because of the association with this trope as well as to add colour and variation. Morris appeared in only 16% of the total number of modern pageants. It may also explain the falling percentage of pageants over time that contained any morris, of whatever type. This may reflect the view that these forms of dance were outmoded and not relevant to the purposes the pageants were created for. Other possible reasons are explored later in this article.

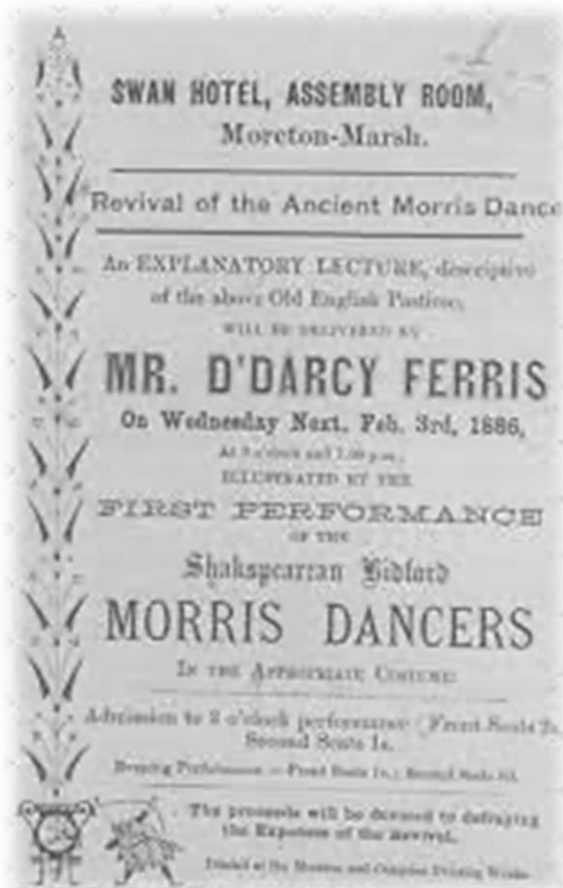


## Modern History of Pageants

F A Mackenzie summarised pageants as being a community event, offering “the great incentive to the right kind of patriotism; love of hearth; love of town; love of country; love of England”. Pageants told the “story of England through the idiom of local experience”. This did not stop later pageant organisers using different motivations to tell different stories.

It is generally accepted that the first major pageant was put on in Sherborne, Dorset, in 1905. This pageant produced the format that became a common standard. This was made up of:

- a pageant master (very often paid) and often a contributor to music and words.
- unpaid performers (mostly local)
- the involvement of local groups and societies
- episodes depicting selected chronological local or national historical events
- local history placed in a national context
- the importance of a sense of community
- the importance of education and propaganda
- the backing of civic authorities and people of influence.



Louis Parker remarked: “I believe I have ... discovered the means whereby I, too, may add my might towards bringing rural life in England back to its old-time innocent gaiety while reviving ... the noblest sort of patriotism.”

However, Sherborne 1905, was arguably not the first such pageant. Roy Judge has written in detail about the way that D’Arcy Ferris promoted the morris in pageants in the 1880s and 90s and the Redress of the Past authors also discuss 19<sup>th</sup>-century forerunners of modern pageants.

In the 1880s D’Arcy Ferris (or Ferrars) began his promotions. He was born in 1855, and by 1881 was in London as a “violinist and professor of singing”. He soon moved to Cheltenham and taught, sang, and conducted choral societies, advertising himself in 1884 as a “Designer and Director of Fetes, Festivals, and Functions”. In 1885 he presented several pageants (Billesley, Southam, Lockinge (Festival of Ye Summer Quene), and Grimston). These featured a variety of material which harked back to the Middle Ages, medieval times, or Merrie

England. This material included a Lord of Misrule, a “Maurice Dance by Mummers”, plays about Robin Hood, a Christmas play of St George and the dragon, a wassail bowl, a hobby horse tournament, a highland dance and a boar’s head procession. The Lockinge programme promised: “Ye Morris daunce shall be daunced bye laddes of ye royal burgh of Wantage.”

Clearly Ferris was interested in the dance form (which he saw as late medieval) as he hoped “to revive this ancient custom ... during the coming winter” with elements of a still-alive

dance form incorporated (1885–6). At that time he had but little experience of it, later commenting: “This was a handkerchief dance but not very correct.”

His interest in revival led him to Bidford-on-Avon, where he had personal musical connections. He discovered that morris at Bidford-on-Avon had been danced some 25–30 years before. This got him interested in recovering the dance form in a systematic way. He trained up some dancers in a reconstructed Bidford style, using notes and first-hand information from two dancers, one from the Bidford area and one from Bledington/Idbury. He then took this new team (the Shakespearean Bidford Morris dancers) on tour round the south Midlands and London, selling tickets for a 90-minute show, which included an introductory lecture. The first performance was in Bidford in January 1886. His dance team appeared in 28 performances in 1886 before Ferris realised that there would be no grand revival of the art form and moved on to other things. The Bidford team continued dancing into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Ferris organised several other pageants, notably the Ripon Millenary festival in 1886, featuring six sword dancers, three musicians, a clown and singer, all from Kirkby Malzeard, kitted out in new costumes. There were also a “group of captivating morris-dancers, represented by ... the most daintiest little damsels”. This festival attracted an audience of 20,000 over three days and had 500 performers. The programme was typical – bringing together historical incidents, Merrie England-type activities, music, a play, a procession of all the performers, choral singing, knightly sports, sword and ribbon dancing, and jousting. A similar event, the Ripon Historic Festival in 1896, and again in 1906, also featured the Kirkby Malzeard dancers, as well as morris dancers.



*Dancing the May Pole before Wedding Party (Milkmaids in background,  
Morris Dancers on the left.*

*Builth Wells Pageant 1909: Maypole dancers and morris dancers on left*

Other pageant-style events were held in Antrim and Ratline Island (Feis na nGleann) in 1904, Plymouth in 1888 (tableaux of all the British sovereigns), and a grand event at Chepstow Castle in 1890, cited by Roy Dommett, at which “some 20 people processed onto the stage to

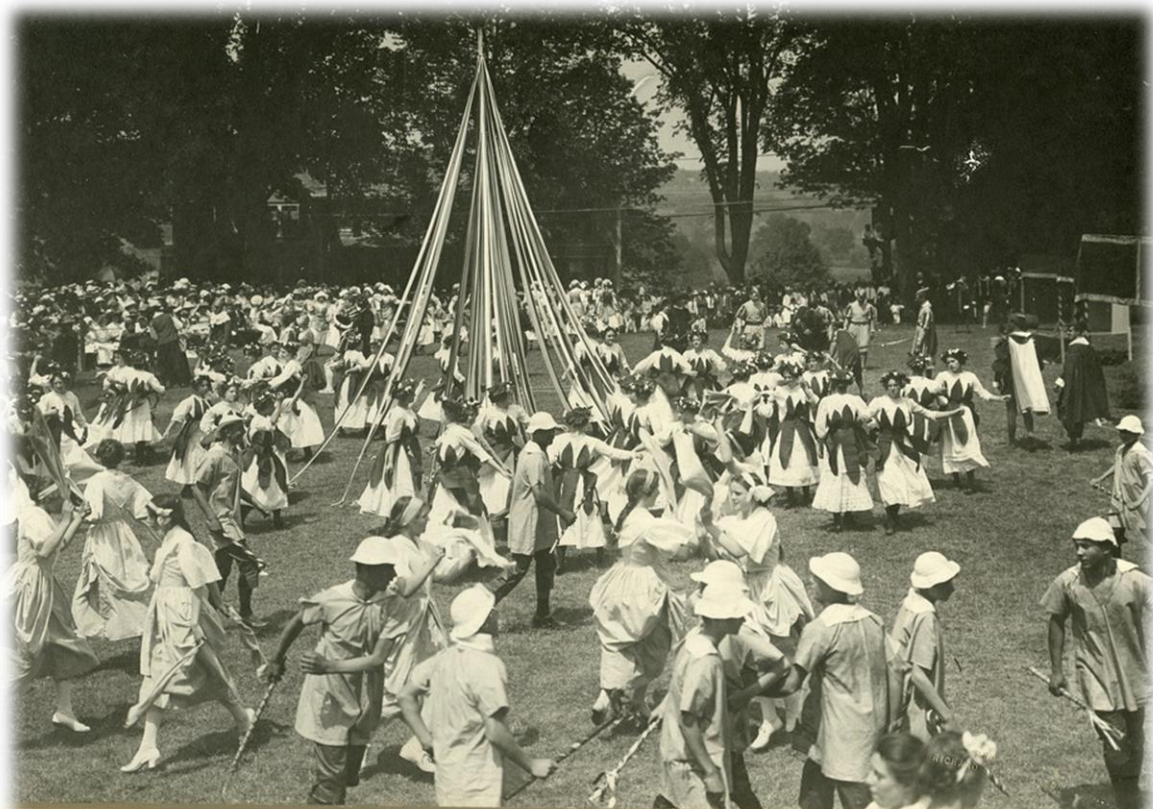
## Morris Dancing and Pageants in Britain 1885–2022

the Morris 4/3 step”, wearing bells, ribbons and carrying sticks as part of a scene from Sir Walter Scott’s novel *Kenilworth*.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw well-attended *tableaux vivant* presentations at Winchester in 1999 on the occasion of the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Alfred the Great.

20<sup>th</sup>-century pageants have attracted some attention from well-known artists – Arthur Bryant, G M Trevelyan (historians), Ralph Vaughan Williams, Edward Elgar, Benjamin Britten, Gustav Holst (composers), E M Forster, Arthur Quiller-Couch, Noel Streatfield, and Rosemary Manning (novelists) were all involved with at least one pageant. L du Garde Peach (Nottingham pageant master 1949) wrote *The Town that Would Have a Pageant* (1952) as a satirical play.

Pageants were not limited to the UK – several were held in New England before World War I, for example Massachusetts 1912 and Philadelphia 1908. Other locations included Quebec, Cape Town 1910, and Calcutta 1912. The Melbourne Chaucer Pageant 1913 and Malta 2003 both included morris dancing. This photo from Massachusetts 1912 is headed “May Pole and dancers”. Note the Merrie England-style costumes of the morris dancers.



PAGEANT AT LANCASTER, MASSACHUSETTS,  
JULY 4, 1912.

### EPISODE I.

The PROLOGUE

### EARLY ENGLISH FÊTE

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there was a distinct set of sports known as the May-games. It was customary for citizens of all estates to go out into the woods after the midnight preceding the May-day to cut down the May-pole, adorn it with branches and flowers, and bring it into the village, where they danced around it and performed other pastimes all day long. Bishop Latimer wrote: "Coming to a certain town on a holiday to preach, I found the church door fast locked. I tarried there half an hour and more, and at last the key was found, and one of the parish comes to me and says, 'Sir, this is a busy day with us, we cannot hear you; it is Robin Hood's Day.' I was fain, therefore, to give place to Robin Hood."

In the May-games Robin Hood presided as Lord of the May and Maid Marian as Lady of the May. His companions were those famous in his ballads, who always accompanied him on his adventures. There were tests of archery and morris-dances. In the morris-dance, which was considered an essential feature of May-day, the hobby-horse or a dragon made a part of the dance with Robin Hood and his companions.

## Patterns of Pageants

Morris is “A grotesque dance performed by persons in fancy dress costumes, usually representing characters from the Robin Hood legend, especially Maid Marion and Friar Tuck”. *New English Dictionary* 1908

Morris dancing is not a major component of pageants when it does appear. Typically, a morris dance is inserted into a street, market, or court scene or appears as a brief interlude in or between episodes. It generally serves as illustrative material, a colourful moving distraction, or as background, rather than as a highlighted activity. It is also important to remember that what is meant by a morris dance in a pageant programme is not certain, just as we do not know exactly what a morris dance in the 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries looked like. One of the few films of early pageants shows the morris dancing at the 1905 Sherborne Pageant to have drawn heavily on the Merrie England myth and the examples of theatrical morris from the 1880s and 1890s, rather than the village teams of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In another example, the 1908 Winchester Pageant featured “Morris men”. There is no mention of a dance and the morris men’s role was seemingly to drag a huge wooden horse onto the stage while singing *Pastime with Good Company*, a song composed by the king they were entertaining. Another example is the 1908 Chelsea Pageant featuring maypole dancing and minstrels “doing the king’s favourite morris dance”. However, the dance *Dargason* was performed off-stage. An awareness of how pageants were presented is useful to help position the role of morris in them and in society in general.

Morris dancing in pageants took place in the context in which the organisers placed their events. The urbanisation and continued industrialisation of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century provoked a reaction from artists and thinkers. Earlier in the century romanticism had addressed issues of alienation that social and industrial changes were judged to cause. Thinkers and artists in particular searched for an ideal society in which labour could flourish. Many of them held that the countryside had an important role in fostering health and community. This neo-romanticism went hand in hand with the formation of earnest associations, for example the formation of the Folklore Society (1878), National Trust (1895), the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (1926), the Arts and Craft movement (1880–1920), and the search for “traditional folk songs and singers” that represented and validated a view of the countryside as a source of community. Pageants drew on these themes, hence the emphasis on Merrie England/the Middle Ages before 1914, and after 1918 on rural heritage, in an attempt to present an unchanging continuity in the face of changing cityscapes and rural life becoming a memory. The theme of pageants being used to confirm continuity has been investigated by many academics, including the Redress of the Past researchers, Deborah Ryan, M Freeman, and Ayoko Yoshino.



*St George slaying the dragon in the St Albans pageant of 1953*



The pageant masters were open about their aims. De Ferris wanted to present rural life as a series of achievements that offered an alternative to the increasing bustle and noise of industrial Britain and a connection to a past but continuing Britain. An 1888 *Daily Telegraph* article commenting on the Irish Exhibition at Olympia stated he had “composed and gracefully carried out a ‘Morris dance’” in which “some twenty characters of historic interest bring up memories of Strutt’s Sports and Pastimes”. Clearly this performance drew more on theatre than on the dance as practised in villages and set the tone for the future use of the morris.

Louis Napoleon Parker, regarded as the inventor of the modern pageant, was active in the folk revival, and hoped the “community bonanza” of pageantry would kill off “the modernising spirit”. However, while he included forms of morris dances in his pageants, he made little attempt to investigate or make links to the old village dances and dancers in the way de Ferris had initially done.

Another major Pageant Master, Frank Lascelle, produced events featuring visual spectacles involving hundreds of people in huge landscapes depicting the past, with dance a component, but small, part. This emphasis on rejecting

modernism infused pageants throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Authors who became involved, including T S Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and E M Forster thought they could use pageants to compose “valedictions” to modernist thought modes. The presentations were an opportunity for modern spectators to recognise themselves in the pre-modern events and activities depicted in the pageants.

This view of the past could enable a reconciliation with modernity by showing how it could be moved past or through, with previous values being incorporated, leading to inspiration for a new future. This, through a process of celebrating events in pre-industrial national and local urban and rural life, enabled people to view their place of living as part of an ongoing continuation of historical changes in a rapidly altering world. Morris dancing fitted well into this, providing an artistic link which drew on the same themes, but which like them, could also be viewed as showing how outmoded the past was.



The 1905 Sherborne Pageant was successful in its objectives of raising the profile of the town and increasing visitor numbers. Soon, several other small towns adopted a similar tactic – Warwick in 1906, Romsey, St Albans, Thirsk, and Bury St Edmunds in 1907, Stafford in 1913, Hertford in 1914. Another objective was the (re)awakening of civic pride and a consequent spillover to realising pride in a national patriotism. These pageants involved a good percentage of a town's population and organisations working together to achieve a common aim. English pageants in the period before World War I tended to deal with topics no later than the reign of Elizabeth I, avoiding, for example, the Civil War or the Industrial Age. They addressed aspects of the Anglo-Saxon roots of Englishness and the associated Christianity. Between 1918 and 1939 pageants focused more on the later Middle Ages and succeeding centuries, including events drawn from WWI and economic and social history. One common theme throughout this period was the depiction of scenes in which the town was seen to have played a part in the wider world, for example a visit by a monarch, the award of a charter, a battle, an ecclesiastical/theological dispute or the founding of a major industry. These themes lent themselves to involving settings in which dancing and other entertainments were shown. The historical nature of the episodes meant that some sort of country dancing or morris dancing was often used as background or to provide colour. It may also have been a way to involve larger numbers of people.

The pageants in Scotland and Wales also took note of the origins of their nationhood, national identity, and civic culture, using different episodes and events to those in English pageants. Increasingly, links were made between the contributions of the local place to the national story. This led to an increasing emphasis on the distinctiveness of the local history, rather than a focus on national events. As Parker had told a meeting of the Society of Arts in December 1905: "Pit of local patriotism, I think, springs a far finer national patriotism than any founded on rifle-clubs and Morris tubes" (*sic*). Morris dancing was used as a generic activity found in the past, rather than as rooted in a particular place and time. Post 1945, the tendency to depict the lives of more ordinary people was noticeable with a corresponding decline in the focus on the Middle Ages.



*Mummers and dragon from the Shropshire Historical Pageant, Ludlow Castle, 1934.*

The 1950s saw a decline in pageants, though some survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as Axbridge (a ten-yearly repeat), Arbroath (18 pageants after 1945), the 2022 Platinum Jubilee Pageant (London) specifically celebrating 70 years of Elizabeth II's reign, and the Becket Pageant inspired by the 1519 London City Pageant. It is significant that the Queen's Jubilee pageant featured Asian/Bollywood dances, with no morris or British dances other than a maypole ribbon dance. This may signify the perception by the organisers that traditional British dances are of historical interest only, with little relevance for 21<sup>st</sup> century civic or national life. The opening ceremony for the London Olympic Games drew on the tradition of pageantry for its effect. Indeed, the Isles of Wonder in the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games resembled several scenes in the Towards Tomorrow Pageant of Cooperation at Wembley in 1938. Elements of pageantry have been incorporated into events such as the St George's Day celebration in Derby in 2013, featuring a procession, performances by four morris teams – Dolphin, Stone Monkey, Ouse Washes Molly, and Black Pig Border Morris – theatre companies presenting a theatrical street café and a “hilarious St George's Day pageant”, a broom dance, craft fair, maypole dancing, a mass choir, a flash ceilidh, pantomime jousting, plus scenes from two Shakespeare plays. Interestingly, the organisers stated: “Our aim was to celebrate Merrie Olde England and our eccentricities ...”, seemingly once more sidelining these activities into a pigeonhole for those interested in strange things. This view of morris dancing has become commonplace. It would be interesting to consider the extent to which the morris community is responsible for its development and continuation.

Most pageants contained propaganda, in that the selection of historical scenes often promoted a pro-establishment, imperialist view of British history, with figures of authority to the fore, and where ordinary men and women were merely the backdrop to events. The prevailing ethos of pageants focused on pre-industrial society, on drawing on the past for continuity in a world of change, on reasons of commercial and civic promotion together with a lack of consideration/depiction of political movements and change. Morris dances found an admirable place in this dominant framework (see below for some exceptions to this rationale). Finally, and inevitably, given the nature, size, and material that pageants dealt with, it would only be possible for dances to make a small, very minor contribution.

## Pageants as Propaganda: Case Studies

Not all pageants were organised to promote civic or national pride or to promote Merrie England. The following examples were pageants with an explicit message pertinent to the aims of the organising body, with content relating to these aims.

**Pageant of Empire (Wembley 1924)** was a six-week series that emphasised events in the formation of the British Empire, the role Britain played in creating and developing it, and the way the constituent parts related to the motherland. The scenes included “Days of Queen Elizabeth”, poems, and songs about empire.

**The Girls’ Friendly Society** enjoyed royal patronage and at one time had 300,000 members. It produced a series of events in the 1920s and 30s. Most of these were plays but are described as pageants because they feature appearances by a list of characters – for example *The Quest*, written by Louis Napoleon Parker, well-known pageant master, performed at the Royal Albert hall in 1925, or *The Signpost*, by J A S Edwards in 1924. These productions emphasised the value of virtue, obedience, modesty, thrift, and good character, as well as the obligation of the rich to support the poor. Lead historical characters with few exceptions were placed firmly in a framework of male power.



**The Girl Guides’ Lancashire Pageant: Camp Fire Tales** in 1925 featured 250 performers and a march-past of 5,000 Guides.

**Nonconformist churches** held at least 75 pageants on the theme of “Noble Women” between 1915 and 1947.

**The Women’s Institute** produced pageant plays from 1926 to 1938.

The common theme of these female-produced shows was that of the importance of women and the presentation of role models for the adjustments demanded by social change.

**The Manchester Pageant of 1926** aimed to “symbolise the growing power of the people through the centuries ... beyond the veil of smoke and the forest of chimneys our civic life is based on heroic and romantic incidents ...” as well as promoting Manchester as a place to visit, live, and work.

**The Communist Manifesto Centenary Meeting and Pageant** in the Royal Albert Hall in 1948 gave a potted history of Marx’s theory of social change, based on the *Communist Manifesto*. It followed the 1934 London Pageant of Labour, the March of History Liverpool 1937, Towards Tomorrow Wembley 1938, and the Pageant of Chartism 1939. All celebrated a socialist/communist view of history with a strong political message.

Significantly, none of these are recorded as featuring morris dancing. It is likely that such dancing was seen as having little or no relevance to the interests of those promoting the pageants or the struggles they were engaged with.

Mick Wallis (*Pageantry and the Popular Front: Ideological Production in the ‘Thirties*), Alex Hutton (*Revisited: People’s history in historical pageants in Britain, 1905–2016* (lecture)) and Zoe Thomas (*Historical Pageants, citizenship, and the performance of women’s history before second-wave feminism*) have researched the role of some of these propaganda-heavy presentations.

## Data for Morris Dancing in Pageants: Numbers, Geographical Distribution, Distribution Over Time, Location in the Past and Place

The data for this section is almost entirely drawn from a Kings College (London) project: The Redress of the Past, Historical Pageants in Britain. This significant research covers the period 1905 (the date of the Sherborne pageant) to 2016. Kings College obtained funding for researchers (A Bartie, L Fleming, M Freeman, T Hulme, A Hutton, P Readman) who have produced open access material available on the Redress of the Past website. It includes detailed descriptions of pageants, their contents, managers, audiences, and associated activities. The database compiled by researchers contains 668 pageants, with morris mentioned in 108 (16.2%) of them. Note again the caveat that for most of these references we do not know exactly what was meant by the term “morris”.

**Table 1: Numbers of pageants: total and those with morris dancing<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>Total number of pageants</b>	<b>Average number per year</b>	<b>Number containing reference to morris</b>	<b>% with morris reference</b>
<b>1905–14</b>	84	8.3	39	47.8
<b>1917</b>	2	2	0	0
<b>1918–29</b>	116	9.7	20	17.2
<b>1930–39</b>	174	17.2	29	18.0
<b>1940–44</b>	16	3.2	0	0
<b>1945–49</b>	37	10.6	4	10.8
<b>1950–59</b>	139	13.9	13	9.4
<b>1960–9</b>	27	2.7	1	3.7
<b>1970–9</b>	29	2.9	1	3.4
<b>1980–9</b>	17	1.7	2	11.8
<b>1990–9</b>	13	1.3	1	7.7
<b>2000–19</b>	7	0.7	0	0

The table clearly shows the initial phase of pageant fever pre-World War I and the definite increase in interest in staging pageants during the interwar period. The late 1940s and early 1950s contained the majority of the post-World War II pageants, partly fuelled by a resurgent post-war interest in empire and the concepts associated with war victory, and a recognition of proud nationhood as recovery was marked by celebrations. It is noticeable that in the pre-World War I examples morris dancing featured relatively strongly compared to after 1918, with a corresponding fall off after World War II. This may be linked to changing views of Merrie England/the Middle Ages and to the increasing focus of pageants on social and economic themes, and to an increasing emphasis on locality. The concept of Merrie England became less defined and less relevant to organisers and their public, especially as it was increasingly seen as both mythological and unobtainable. In addition, as the rural past receded, those pursuits associated with it, albeit in the mind, also became less important to display in the public arena. Another factor may be that pageant masters and organisers decided to display more elaborate scenes than morris dancing entails.

<sup>1</sup> Numbers are rounded to one decimal place.

A possible explanation is inherent in the nature of morris dancing, particularly the Cotswold variety. Sets of dancers are small and the space they occupy is not large. Morris dancing is generally performed in a small area, enclosed either by its space or by the crowd surrounding the dancers. The dance does not lend itself to large-scale arenas where it can be easily lost. Country dancing, on the other hand, can be easily choreographed to use large numbers of people and existing films of pageants show this to good effect. Perhaps successive pageant organisers had more awareness of this and, in a desire to promote spectacle, increasingly focused on more dramatic large-scale activities. It is possible to choreograph morris dances for large numbers of people but in some sense this loses the essence of the dance form. Massed dances at morris festivals are frequent but these are seen more as a way for dancers to finish off a time together than as a performance for an audience. The way traditional or folk dance has been adapted in many European countries to become a display form has rarely happened in Britain, despite the efforts of performers like The Outside Capering Crew, the Demon Barbers, Boss Morris or Huginn and Muninn. Although morris dancing appeared in the closing ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games and the opening ceremony of the 1991 World Student Games there have not been many other attempts to present the dance on a big stage.

One more factor may be the increasingly urban locations of pageants, with a corresponding emphasis on urban rather than rural local history. A more complex reason may be that morris dancing became increasingly seen as unsophisticated and unworthy of attention from a hierarchically-minded society, possibly even a threat to the cultural elite from the low culture of the common people. This interpretation is supported by the evidence that morris dancing in the pageants was often performed by children. The way in which adult activities become transferred to and enacted by children is well documented in folklore studies, e.g. May Queens, Bampton flower posies, and the Abbotsbury Garland. All these were once activities carried out by adults, then became something children took round their village before effectively disappearing. In the pageants children were often those who performed maypole, morris or country dances. These activities were therefore apparently seen as suitable for childish pursuits, rather than as dance forms for adults. This demeaning attitude is echoed today in the dismissal of folk dancing as unsophisticated, old fashioned, belonging to the past and something to be laughed at rather than the living vibrant art form it is or could be.

**Table 2: Geographical distribution of pageants by country 1905–2016**

Country	Number of pageants	% pageants	% total UK population
England	532	80.0	84
Scotland	104	15.6	8
Wales	29	4.4	5
Northern Ireland	0	0	3
Total	665	100	100

The geographical distribution is largely in line with this. Scotland is over-represented on a pro rata basis. Arbroath alone had 18 pageants, 16 of which were linked to the events connected with the Abbey. The different cultural, political and social history of the island of Ireland is a strong determinant for the fact that no pageants similar to those in the rest of Great Britain were held, either before or after the division into Eire and Northern Ireland. However, in 1921 a “Pageant of Early Irish Saints” was organised by members of Dublin University.

**Table 3: Distribution of pageants over time**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1905–14</b>	85	70	82	12	14	3	4
<b>1917</b>	2	2	100	0	0	0	0
<b>1918–29</b>	116	102	88	9	8	5	5
<b>1930–39</b>	174	137	79	29	17	8	5
<b>1940–44</b>	16	12	75	4	25	0	0
<b>1945–49</b>	39	32	82	7	17	0	0
<b>1950–59</b>	140	104	74	25	18	11	8
<b>1960–69</b>	27	20	74	6	22	1	4
<b>1970–79</b>	29	24	83	4	14	1	3
<b>1980–89</b>	17	13	76	4	24	0	0
<b>1990–99</b>	13	11	85	2	15	0	0
<b>2000–16</b>	7	5	71	2	29	0	0
<b>Total</b>	665	532	80.0	104	15.6	29	4.4

It does seem that Scotland is slightly over-represented in terms of number of pageants, while Wales has fewer than its population might merit. After 1960 there are none in Wales.

Before 1914 pageants were located predominantly in rural areas, only two were held in major cities. This changed in the interwar years as 14 of the biggest 20 cities staged a pageant. The commercial motives of encouraging local trade and tourist visitors who brought spending power became more imperative. The city authorities worked with industrialists to stage pageants, many as part of “civic weeks”. As the century progressed the staging of pageants became relatively more expensive and possibly more and more difficult to find performers to take part. The Kings College researchers make the point that the planned 1951 Festival of Britain programme of pageants was not delivered as there were objections on this basis as well as a dislike of the implications of presenting what was seen as a triumphalist jingoistic agenda.

**Table 4: Historical time setting of morris in pageants**

55 entries contained an indication of when the dance was placed in time

<b>Date</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> century	1
14 <sup>th</sup> century	6
15 <sup>th</sup> century	6 inc. one in Wales
Henry VIII 1509–47	9 inc. one in Scotland
Elizabeth I 1558–1603	17 inc. one Scotland
James I 1603–25	1
Charles I 1625–49	3
Charles II 1660–85	6
Late 17 <sup>th</sup> century	2
18 <sup>th</sup> century	2 (1745 and late)
19 <sup>th</sup> century	1 (late)
Modern jig <sup>2</sup>	1 (1929)

<sup>2</sup> The modern jig was in a pageant organised by Winchester EFDS.

The episodes, scenes or acts in the pageants ranged from pre-Roman up to the time of the pageant. Many of them contained at least ten episodes set at various dates. The dates were often selected from national events, e.g. Alfred burning the cakes, the sinking of the Armada in 1588, the defeat of Bonaparte, or from locally significant events e.g. the visit of an abbeess, the granting of a charter, or a Civil War battle. It is very clear that the pageant organisers regarded the natural home of morris dancing as in the past. This past was generally located in Merrie England/the Middle Ages, with nearly half the recorded instances of pageant morris being placed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. Typical settings were markets or fairs, presentations to royalty, games, or between-episode entertainments. Only two were set in a time that 20<sup>th</sup> century collectors regarded as the significant period for rural dance teams (mid-18<sup>th</sup> to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century).



This perception that Morris dancing is located in a kind of rural idyll of the past is still current today. This is evident in the costumes chosen by many contemporary dance teams, and in the mentions of origins being found in encouraging fertility dances, sympathetic magic and the links to seasonal customs. These beliefs partially stem from the late-19<sup>th</sup>/early-20<sup>th</sup> century folklorists who were intent on finding a “pagan” ritualistic origin for folk customs and practice. They have been reinforced by elements in the morris community who have persisted with communicating them, rather than researching and/or accepting other

more recent academic proposals regarding origins. Focusing on the past in this way echoes how the pageants presented and used morris dancing. This approach is related more closely to re-enactment rather than to a contemporary art form. This continuing perception has bedevilled many of the attempts to have morris accepted as a contemporary dance form worthy of study, serious presentation, innovation, and development. Performers who treat their material in these ways are beginning to appear in greater numbers and are beginning to achieve some wider recognition outside the circles of the folk movement. The Tradfolk website lists 27 occasions where morris dancing has appeared on TV, music videos, comedy shows, or other media. Most of these position the dance as something unusual or comic, some as background colour. Some recent films have depicted morris dancing in a sympathetic light (*Morris: A Life With Bells On* 2009, *Way of the Morris* 2011, *Hell’s Bells* 2016, *Morris Men* 2022). None of these (with the possible exception of *Morris: A Life With Bells On*) present the dance as a performance art form on a par with, for example, ballet. This is part of the ongoing distinction between high and low culture, with all the class-based tension this entails.

**Table 5: Location of Morris dancing in pageants: 63 entries**

Revels/market/fair	21
Reception of monarch or councillors	19
Mayday/games	10
Standalone	10
Charter-granting	2
Masque	1

The settings that the pageant masters placed morris dancing in are all social occasions. They all present the dance as a performance, rather than a social dance, and this is in keeping with its history. Nearly half showed the dance as an integral part of a civic ceremony and a third (revels/market/fairs) showed the dance as background colour. The stand-alone performances were either in front of the audience as a show, often between episodes or in the pageant as a show for other performers, e.g. the 1938 Blenheim and Woodstock pageant featured the Bampton Morris dancers as an entertainment between two performances. This setting of the dance, as a performance as part of a social occasion, indicates that the pageant masters had grasped one essential context for performance and the role that morris played as an art and entertainment form. It is also no doubt true that the organisers felt that many of the crowd scenes would be enlivened by groups of dancers who performed as part of the show. Some scenes contained over a hundred performers and a dance team would have added further interest to the spectacle.

Placing a formal dance performance in a setting in which an authority figure (mostly a monarch) was being presented is a way to vary the content of the scene and enable the main participants to speak among themselves. Most pageants had no amplification systems, and it would have been very difficult for the audience to hear words and dialogue. Presenting some action, in this case a dance, would have made the scenes come more alive than watching actors speak without hearing them.

## What Were the Morris Dances in the Pageants?

It is very difficult to ascertain what pageant morris dancing looked like. Roy Judge's account of theatrical morris comments on the looseness of the term "morris", which seems to stand as a catch-all phrase. It is an "intriguing label for an entertaining dance".

There are very few descriptions of the dances other than statements that there was morris dancing. There is little indication which style/strand of morris was performed – Cotswold based dance with hankies and/or sticks seems to be the dominant type but it is clear that several pageants, notably those in the north west of England, used local types of morris dance. Several pageants featured a longsword or rapper dance. The few photographs and descriptions readily available show performers wearing a variety of dance costumes, not many of which resemble the typical Cotswold morris costumes (whites, britches, baldrics, sashes, top hats, ribbons, bellpads) worn in the last 100 years. The pageant costumes often appear to be pastiches of a perception of past rural dress, especially for women, harking back to the Merrie England trope.

For example, although not a pageant as defined in this article, the May festivals at St Mary Cray (Bromley, Kent) contained morris dancing, and five out of eleven photographic negatives held in the Bromley Local Studies library feature the morris dancing at these festivals. It bears some resemblance to the form we are familiar with and is obviously choreographed for a staged performance. See Appendix B for detailed description.

The film of the Sherborne Pageant in 1905 shows the morris dance to consist of country dance or possibly stave dance figures. The dancers are mixed gender. The women are wearing dark full cut dresses, described in the *Dorset County Chronicle* and *Somerset Gazette* as being "short red sateen skirts, bodices of green serge with points reaching nearly to the bottom, each point outlined with bells. The head-dress is of white trimmed with bells". The men are dressed in Merrie England fashion, being "attired in coats and knickers of green serge with



bands of red sateen their costume being outlined with bells", which included bellpads on their shins. Quarterstaves and hooped garlands are being carried. There are no hankies or other sticks. This may well be the pattern for many dances described as morris. It seems very likely, as Roy Judge and Matt Simons suggest, that many of the dances in the pageants were invented by those in charge of the dancing and had little or no connection with morris as it was danced by morris teams or in the communities that had morris teams.

In the pageants, dancing described as morris could be maypole, morris, or country dancing, or possibly some kind of choreographed style based on one or more of these.



A closer correspondence to dances as they were performed outside the pageants occurred at Warwick in 1906, under the direction of Louis Parker. Film made of the Warwick pageant clearly shows a North West (NW)-style dance with some Cotswold-style sticking at times, performed in a choreographed manner rather than in the way NW is danced outside the pageants. There were about 60 dancers, stepping and carrying ribboned sticks that are twirled. The women are wearing white blouses and dark skirts covered with long ribbons. The men wear white shirts and dark breeches. They appear to be young

people. A newspaper article and the Old Warwickians website confirms this, describing them as ‘boys and girls’. George Frampton’s article on Louis Parker and morris in pageants 1905–9 cites a newspaper report that the “Morris dancers have a particularly charming and appropriate costume. The girls wear orange skirts over which hang green velvet ribbons trimmed with bells, their tall light-blue hats have wreaths above the brims and the remainder of their attire consists of white chemisettes under green bodices and brown shoes and stockings. Their partners have brown knickers, white shirts, orange and blue ribbons and blue caps”.



This article also suggests that the 1907 Bury St Edmunds pageant featured about 80 children who carried ribboned sticks. A photo shows them in “rows five deep, executing a caper with sticks crossed above their heads”, possibly akin to a NW step-up figure. The 1908 Dover Pageant contained about 120 dancers in three sets of 42, “apparently setting to each other ... displaying little of the uniformity which the scene’s directors ... presumably intended”.

The morris dancers in the 1907 St Albans Pageant appear either as stick dancers in one of the postcards or in a photograph as schoolgirls carrying ribboned sticks. A 1910 Chester Pageant featured morris dancers who appear to be “little girls dressed in primrose and mauve”.

The *Chester Chronicle* et al. stated (cited by George Frampton in his article on the Chester Pageant) that in the 1910 Chester Pageant the morris dancers were little girls dressed in primrose and mauve. Incidentally, the pageant drew on the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century Chester Revels in which 45 hobby horses fought a “concluding mimic battle between men on hobby horses armed with bladders tied to sticks”.

Sixteen dancers in the 1919 Whalley peace pageant film danced processionally, using NW style stepping and figures, easily recognisable as a NW style danced by teams outside the pageants. There did not appear to be any music. They were led by a man dressed in a white shirt and dark tie, a cummerbund, darker breeches, light socks and a hat. All other dancers were women. Their costume was white blouse, dark cummerbund, pale dresses, and dancing shoes (though they could be clogs). Dancers carried two sticks with ribbons.

The 1927 Mount Grace Pageant features a set of six. A film shows them dancing a morris figure of eight hey, using neat morris stepping and hand movements. The dancers are dressed as jesters, with long cap and split skirts with bells. They use handkerchiefs. A tourney horse is visible some way from the dancers and there does not appear to be any music. As discussed above, the contrast in terms of showiness of display between the small set of six morris dancers and the later country dancing involving many people that filled the whole field is very evident.



The 1931 Historical Pageant of Newcastle and the North featured the Winlaton White Star rapper dance team. A 1930 film of this team shows male dancers, all ex-miners and all aged over 60. They dress in white shirt, dark tie, and dark trousers. The five dancers were accompanied by a man in a dark suit and top hat plus another man in a long smock or dress. Music was provided by a concertina player dressed in a similar fashion to the dancers but wearing a waistcoat and cap. The Winlaton team had been founded in 1850 and were well known on Tyneside.

The 1935 Pageant of Burley featured a longsword dance performed by six men dressed as cavemen in skins, rags, and wigs. The film shows they are well coached and dance in a similar manner to dancing outside the pageants. A brief clip shows five of them dancing with longswords in a different location. No music is apparent for either dance.



Film of the 1970 Alexandra Park Pageant in Mosside, Manchester clearly shows a morris team dancing what appears to be *William and Nancy* (Bledington) to a fiddle, flute and melodeon.

We seldom know who taught the pageant performers the dances or where the information for teaching came from. Even less evidence exists for us to begin understanding what many of the morris dances consisted of. It is quite possible that such dances were seen as a good way to provide children with parts in the pageant. The St Mary Cray May

Festivals of 1891–3 provide some insight. Morris was taught by a dancing master from London and we have descriptions and photographs. See Appendix C.

From the limited evidence available it would seem that where morris dancing appeared in pageants it was of two types. In a small number of cases a local morris team appeared in the pageant, or someone with dance experience coached and prepared dancers who performed in a manner similar to dances outside the pageants. The dancing was sometimes presented in costume, and performed as it would have been outside the pageant. In other pageants costume was worn that resembled some sort of Merrie England interpretation. Morris dancing was presented by dancers wearing costume that did not resemble teams outside the pageants and often the dancing itself bore only a small resemblance to morris dancing as we know it. Presumably the organisers of historical pageants described dancing as morris either because they wished to validate their presentation by reference to a long-established dance form or because they had no other words to use.



## Descriptions of Morris Dances, Tunes, Costumes, Performers

Many of the entries in the Redress of the Past database give little detail other than a statement that morris dancing occurred. Other entries contain the names of tunes, dances, named morris teams, costumes worn, and/or some indication of where the pageant master sourced the dances. The following list summarises these more detailed entries.

1. D'Arcy Ferris used his own dance team who danced his reconstructed Bidford style, wearing costumes based on those worn by mid-19<sup>th</sup> century South Midlands village teams, in his pageants before 1914.
2. 1905 Sherborne female dancers wore skirts, bodices, and a headdress, all trimmed with bells. Male dancers wore coats and breeches outlined with bells. Their dance possibly contained country dance or stave dance figures.
3. 1906 Ripon Historic Pageant had eight dancers plus a jester, all young boys wearing white shirts, white hankies, light trousers, bellpads and round brimmed hats.



4. 1906 Warwick Pageant featured choreographed dancing in a NW style with additional country dance/morris figures with twirling ribboned sticks. Female dancers wore skirts covered by long ribbons, chemisettes and underbodices as well as hats. Male dancers wore white shirts and breeches. Both had bells attached.
5. The 1907 St Albans Pageant included girls carrying ribboned sticks.

## Morris Dancing and Pageants in Britain 1885–2022

6. The 1907 Bury St Edmunds Pageant included children carrying ribboned sticks, possibly dancing in a NW style. Girls dressed in striped knee-length dresses, white socks, round beret-type hats. Boys in dark tops, with striped tabard, dark breeches and socks, and round brimmed hats.



7. The 1907 Dover Pageant featured dancers setting to each other.
8. The 1908 Dover Pageant featured 5–6 sets performing a stick dance. Appears to be men one side, dressed in striped Tudor breeches, long stockings, bodice top, and hats with central raised portion. The women are wearing knee-length flared skirts with wide ribbons from the waist, tight bodices with elbow length puffed sleeves, and bonnets.



9. The 1909 York Pageant featured “Morris dancers and sword dancers” with “traditional tunes” as accompaniment. Perhaps the sword dancers were either local, or taught by local dancers. A photo of a tableau labelled “morris dancers” shows nearly all women, the few men are either jester style or formally dressed in a dark suit with a hat. Women’s clothing is divided into five groups with different colours but the same style – waisted long dresses with cut-outs down from waist and neck, bonnets and elbow-length sleeves. Many are holding long crooks or staves.



10. The 1910 Pageant of Great Women at Bristol used *Jockey to the Fair* as a tune for one of the morris dances in the show.
11. The 1910 Chester Pageant had morris dancers (little girls dressed in long dresses of primrose and mauve with white hankies), two maypoles, and dairymaids performing a country dance. Hawtrey, pageant master, stated this part was an “accurate reproductions of those carried out annually in Chester”. How far this observation extended to the way the morris was presented is debatable.



12. The 1912 Scarborough Pageant contained a “fisherman’s Flamborough sword dance”, and “Morris by children beautifully attired”.
13. The 1912 Worsley Pageant included a morris dance in a revels scene and some “celebrated clog dancing of Lancashire character”. The pageant master was de Ferris so we might assume he used dance team sources.
14. One of three pageants in Scotland with morris was the 1914 Hawick Pageant that commemorated the Battle of Hornshole, a post-Flodden incident. A “Morris dance” was performed, possibly in an attempt to indicate that anti-English sentiment on the 500<sup>th</sup> year after the Battle of Flodden would be misplaced. This indicates the association of morris dancing with English rather than British culture.
15. The 1919 Salisbury Peace Pageant showed groups of morris dancers who perform to a song *Sumer is Icumen In*.
16. The 1925 Pageant of Streatham features a song and dance by charity children with a string quartet playing “tunes from Cecil Sharp”.
17. The 1926, 1927, and 1936 pageants at Pledgdon Essex featured folk dancing and the Letchworth Morris in traditional costume dancing to the pipe and tabor played by K Schofield.
18. The 1927 Mount Grace Pageant featured a set of six jesters dancing a figure-of-eight hey using handkerchiefs, morris stepping and hand movements.
19. The 1928 Taunton Pageant used *Green Garters* as a tune. The Somerset branch of the EFDS provided 200 trained performers for the dancing.
20. The 1929 Winchester Folk Dance Pageant was organised by the English Folk Dance Society (EFDS) and contained a sword dance, a morris reel, a fool’s jig, the dance *Lads A Bunchum*, and a “modern day morris jig” (*I’ll go and enlist for a sailor*). The performers were local dancers and presumably were dancing either what they already knew or could learn relatively easily compared to those with little morris experience.
21. The 1930 Milford on Sea Pageant had folk dancing, mummers, and a “fool’s jig” performed by a bear, a hobby horse and a little girl.
22. The 1931 Historical pageant at Warkworth had two country dances and morris using the tunes *Helston Furry Dance* and *Blue Eyed Stranger*.
23. The 1931 Barking Pageant used the tune *Staines Morris* to accompany the entrance of morris dancers who form sets .... The morris handkerchief dance *The Blue Eyed Stranger* was performed.
24. The 1931 Historical Pageant of Newcastle and the North included Winlaton White Star Sword rapper dancers with traditional music by an orchestra of 100.
25. The 1932 Sir Walter Scott centenary in Edinburgh saw “the opening bars of a Morris dance serve to bring on four groups of Masquers disguised as warriors”. The dance features “torches in a whirling circle furiously fast”. Music by Edward German was used

for three dances. German (1862–1936) was an English composer, famous for light and comic opera (including *Merrie England*) and incidental music for plays (including dances), as well as songs and orchestral works. He is regarded as a stylistic cosmopolitan whose music was “quintessentially English”.

26. The 1932 Lancashire Cotton Pageant used music by Edward German for a morris dance.
27. Audiences at the 1932 Historical Pageant of Leicestershire were treated to *The Lutterworth St George* play from an 1863 book by W Kelly.
28. The 1936 Almondbury Pageant had Molly Ashton choreographing the “Old English Dancing, folk and Morris dancing and Maypole dancing”, involving 150 schoolchildren.
29. The 1935 Pageant of Burley featured a longsword dance competently performed by six men dressed as cavemen in skins, rags, and wigs. No music is evident.
30. The 1937 Chester Historical Pageant had ongoing morris at a midsummer fair to the tune *Country Gardens*, plus a sword dance tune *The Sleights*.
31. The 1938 Pageant of Selborne had a morris dance and procession to the music *Robin Hood and Little John*.
32. The 1930 Ipswich Wolsey Pageant has a set of six young people competently dancing as part of a procession to a concertina. They wear long white shirts, darker trousers and are bareheaded. The dance appears to be from Bucknell.
33. The 1938 Manchester Pageant had morris dances to tunes including *Shepherds Hey* played by an orchestra, and Sharps’s *Trunkles* (Bledington).
34. 1938 Towards Tomorrow in London used *The Lonely Plough* as music for a morris dance.
35. The 1948 St Albans Millenary Pageant was associated with a folk dance festival organised by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) with morris dancing to “traditional morris dance” and music by St Albans Morris, wearing some “distinctly dodgy ‘Elizabethan’ costumes, K Schofield in striped britches and plumed billycock hat”.
36. The 1951 Festival of Britain Pageant at Chippenham included dancing by White Horse Morris dancers.
37. 1952 Ingatestone and Fryerning (Essex) included Will Kemp’s Morris dancers.
38. 1953 St Albans Pageant music included *Trad.* arr. K Schofield for the maypole dance and Arnold Foster’s *Toccata on Princess Royal* (Fieldtown jig).
39. The 1963 Reigate Centenary Pageant associated event showed a team dancing *Lads a Bunchum* (Adderbury) to a pipe and tabor.
40. 1970 Alexandra Park Manchester featured Cotswold dancers in white shirts, wide baldric of yellow and red, black breeches, red socks, black shoes, and hats covered in

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flowers. Music was by flute, fiddle and melodeon. They appear to dance *William and Nancy* (Bledington) and to be a morris club team.

41. 1980 Axbridge. A local ladies morris group performed in the square.

42. Fenstanton Morris partly presented/danced in the 1990 Huntingdon pageant.



## Conclusions

1. Pageants were an enduring feature of civic life throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with peaks in terms of numbers from 1918–39 and again in the 1950s before a decline since 2000 to almost none.
2. It is unclear exactly what constituted the morris dancing in most of the pageants, as there are few detailed written descriptions, films, or records of exactly who was performing. It seems likely that much of what was labelled as such was actually some kind of country or social dance. Very few named morris teams appear in the records and photographic records are few.
3. Dancers in the pageant morris dances often wore costumes that were based on the Merrie England trope. Less common was a morris dance team or a coach who presented the dance as it was performed by morris groups. The performance was often adapted for a large stage and/or large numbers of dancers.
4. Morris dances appeared briefly in pageants, often as an interlude, a linking activity, or background; occasionally the programme showed it was a performance for the audience on a par with one of the tableaux or dramatic scenes. The small-scale nature of traditional dance sets and the more intimate performance setting of Cotswold morris and sword dancing does not lend itself to large-scale arena performances and this may account for the way it was used in the pageants. This is less true of NW style dances, with their larger sets and greater number of dancers. However, these dances were traditionally processional, not arena based. All forms of morris would need a reinvention and expansion to make them suitable for large-scale performance.
5. The percentage of appearances of morris in pageants shows a persistent and steady decline from a peak before World War I of 44% to none since 2000. The years 1980–99 showed a slight increase in a small sample size.
6. Scotland consistently held more pageants per head of population over the whole period 1905–2016, England less and Wales possibly slightly less on a pro rata basis. It is not certain what the reasons for these differences are. Northern Ireland and Eire held no pageants, probably because of the differing historical experience and cultural settings in the island to those of mainland Britain.
7. The 16<sup>th</sup> century was the most common time period (26/52 citations) for locating morris dancing when this was identified. This was followed by the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the Restoration of Charles II, each with 6/55. This reflects the antiquarian emphasis placed on medieval/Merrie England origins, and the desire to reflect the continuity of these.
8. Civic or organised festivities were the most common place for morris dancing, where this was stated, with 31/63 citations. Receptions for councillors or the monarch were mentioned 19/63 times.
9. Morris dancing was firmly located in the past, often in some trope of Merrie England or of medieval civic events, with only two mentions placing the dance later than 1820. This reflects the general tenor of pageants as being a historical spectacle.

10. The setting of morris in the pageants (Merrie England costume, usually a pastiche of the dance as it was performed outside the pageants and/or an activity for children) is reflected in many contemporary opinions – that morris is a kind of rural oddity, nice to be preserved but of little relevance to 20th century culture. The way it is often presented in the 21<sup>st</sup> century supports this view in terms of performers' costumes, origin explanations and the focus on re-enactment and preservation. This contrasts with what appears to be the vision of a minority of current performers – that morris dancing is a performance art form which lends itself to attention to detail and innovation, and is a springboard to creating a genuine artistic experience.

## Recommendations for Further Research

1. Searches in local newspapers and publications for those pageants which contained morris dancing may reveal more details and pictorial evidence. Roy Dommett suggested this approach in 1982, and George Frampton made a start in his article *Louis Parker and His Pageant Morris Dancers* published in *Traditional Dance Conference* 5/6 1998. This could form a basis/template for a wider search.
2. The Redress of the Past database contains references to local newspapers in the locality of each pageant. Searching local publications would yield more articles, descriptions, details, and photographs of the dancing and dancers that featured. The study guide produced by the project contains many more ideas for further research.
3. Contacting existing teams, particularly those mentioned by name as having performed in a pageant, would enable primary evidence of the place of morris in pageants to be gathered.
4. There is no evidence of other forms of morris (molly, border, fluffy) being used in pageants and searching for these could be a possible area for research.

## Acknowledgements and Thanks

Many thanks to Kings College London, whose website **The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain 1905–2016** is an invaluable and thoroughly researched resource. It contains a searchable database and full descriptions of over 600 20<sup>th</sup>-century pageants, including lists of organisers and participants. The website includes links to books, articles, films, media references, and other additional material on 20<sup>th</sup>-century pageants and their meanings.

The researchers (A Bartie, L Fleming, M Freeman, T Hulme, A Hutton, P Readman) have, collectively and individually, published several articles and books, and I have drawn extensively from their writings. I have tried to indicate where I have done so in the text of the article.

Without their work this article would not have been possible.

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk> project website home with link to the database

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/about/papers-presented/> includes mp3 talks

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/about/links/> links to useful other sources

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/get-involved/browse/> picture library

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/publications/> books and articles by the research team

I extracted most of the information in the tables and in Appendix A from the Redress of the Past database. The tables and the accompanying analysis are my own contribution, as are the conclusions I have drawn. Any views expressed in the article are my own, though others may share them, or indeed dispute them.

Thanks to the Vaughan Williams Library in Cecil Sharp House for supplying material difficult to find elsewhere. Many of the articles and books cited are to be found in the English Folk Dance and Song Society catalogue and held in the library.

Also, thanks to Pauline Woods-Wilson, 2022 President of the Morris Federation who provided me with the motivation to produce this article. Thanks also to Miranda Robertson, editor of *West Dorset Magazine*, for proofreading and initial copy editing and to Simon Kind for detailed editing.

And to Duncan Broomhead, who signposted Andy Turner's Flickr collection of Morris photos<sup>3</sup>, and to Andy for permission to use ones relating to pageants.

Finally, my thanks to all in the morris and dance community that have given so much pleasure, commitment, artistry and friendship over the years.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763319213/>

## Appendices

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## Appendix A: Mentions of Morris in the Redress of the Past database

Date and place	No. of performances and performers	Master	Audience	Morris reference including context and set date of performance
1905 Sherborne 1,200-year anniversary of town founding	7 with 8–9,000	Parker	30,000	Photo and movies of “Morris dancers and hobby horses”. Episode 7: Morris dance 1437 in a scene re quarrel between town and monastery. Scene 2: The invincible armada 1588 Morris rejoice at victory Scene 3: Bridgewater Canal 1761 opening celebrated by clog dancing of Lancashire character Additional activities included a photo exhibition and church services. Sherborne School Archives <a href="http://oldshirburnian.org.uk/sherborne-pageant-1905/">http://oldshirburnian.org.uk/sherborne-pageant-1905/</a> Somerset & Dorset Family History Society: Sherborne Pageant Participants Project <a href="http://www.sdfhs.org/sdfhs-projects/introduction-to-sdfhs-projects/social-records/sherborne-pageant-participants/">http://www.sdfhs.org/sdfhs-projects/introduction-to-sdfhs-projects/social-records/sherborne-pageant-participants/</a> Sherborne Museum, <a href="http://www.sherbornemuseum.com/">http://www.sherbornemuseum.com/</a>
1906 Ripon Historic Festival		D’Arcy Ferris		Young boy morris dancers featured in a photograph held in <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763319213/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763319213/</a> Reception, knights tournament, Pageant of History, ballet, maypole dancing, procession
1906 Warwick	6 with 2,000	Parker	44,000	Episode X: Elizabeth 1572. c.60 male and female dancers perform a NW style dance with twirlers in front of the Queen and court
1906, 07, 08 Woodsome Hall Village Pageant Yorks		Legge		More like a fete, featuring a procession, morris dance and hobby horse ride, madrigal concert and hobby horse tilt
1907 Thirsk	6 with 213 actors	De Ferrars, Hudson, Gilbert,		Scene 7: A maypole United England: the Defeat of the Armada 1588 – Morris dancers (10 male, 16 female) enter following news of defeat given to worthies and townsfolk
1907 St Albans	6 with 3,000	Jarman	24,000	Episode 8: Orchestral music no dance record

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1907 Bury St Edmunds	6 with 1,800	Napoleon	Est. 20,000	Episode 7: The New Age 1533–78: Morris dance in front of Mary Tudor. Photos of post card of Morris dancers in massed ranks, all children. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763850241/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763850241/</a>
1907 Liverpool	5 with 4,500–5,000	De Ferraris	100–150,000	Episode 4: Midsummers eve 1580 maypole and morris in front of Queen The North West Film Archive holds film of the pageant originally made by Gaumont British Picture Corporation. 13 minutes 27 seconds in length. Record no: 5994. No morris.
1907 Oxford	6 with 3,500	Lascelles		Morris not mentioned but is positive in database search engine. More information may be found in <a href="#">The Oxford Historical Pageant, June 27-July 3 1907 : book of words with illustrations (1907)</a> or Deborah Sugg Ryan 'Pageantitis': Frank Lascelles' 1907 Oxford Historical Pageant, Visual Spectacle and Popular Memory: Visual Culture in Britain vol.8 no. 2
1908 Chelsea	6 with 1,000-1,200	Irvine	Well-attended	Episode 3: Mayday in Chelsea c. 1500 children maypole dance, minstrels do the 'King's favourite Morris dance'
1908 Gorleston Suffolk/Norfolk	8 with 1,000	Phillips	12–24,000	Episode 10: Merrymaking with Morris and maypole dancing and other performers as King Charles enters (17c)
1908 Winchester	8 with 2250,	Benson,		Episode 6: reception of Charles V by Henry VIII 152 Morris men sing a Henry VIII song, Episode 9: Charles II Morris dancing
1908 Gloucestershire Cheltenham	6 with 2,500–3,000	Hawtrey	25,000	Episode 5: Queen Elizabeth at Sherborne House 1574 Morrisers at end of small procession before Queen
1908 Dover	13 with 2,000	Parker	57,000	Episode VI Henry VIII 1520: a Morris dance performed before the King in a Market. <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763850241/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763850241/</a>
1908 Somersham Somerset	4	De Ferraris		Associated events were morris dancing and maypole dancing
1908 Pevensey	6 with 2,000	Strahan	21,000	Merry Andrew Borde at Pevensey 1533 Councillors meeting Morris dancers and other performers enter (not recorded if they danced/performed)

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1908 Dudley	3 with 850	Cooke, Randall		Episode 7: Elizabeth's visit to Dudley 1575 Morris before Queen
1909 Colchester	6 with 3,000	Parker	60,000	Scene II: 1157 Morris dancers entertain the Henry II and the Queen Eleanor
1909 Dore and Totley (Yorks)	1 with 250	Mrs Milner	Large	Associated events inc. Morris dancing Photographs, news-cuttings and images of the script at 'School Pageant, 1909', Totley History Group, accessed 22 March 2017, <a href="http://www.totleyhistorygroup.org.uk/life-in-totley/events/school-pageant/">http://www.totleyhistorygroup.org.uk/life-in-totley/events/school-pageant/</a>
1909 Bulth Wells	1 with 1,000		5,000	Morris dancers <a href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dancing_the_May_Pole_before_Wedding_Party_-_Milkmaids_in_background,_Morris_Dancers_on_left_(4541056352).jpg">https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dancing_the_May_Pole_before_Wedding_Party_-_Milkmaids_in_background,_Morris_Dancers_on_left_(4541056352).jpg</a>
1909 Grand Empire Sudbrooke (Lincs)	2 with 550	Scott	Large	Designed to promote patriotism, organised by Primrose League (Conservatives) Episode 4: QE receiving news of Armada defeat 1588 closes with a morris dance
1909 York	6 with 2,500–3,000	Parker	30,000	Narrative Chorus 5 Scene 6: 1328 large crowd of townsfolk Inc. Morris dancers and sword dancers who dance at end of scene in front of King and Mayor. Tunes were 'Traditional music' The York Archives hosts an online photographic archive of images related to the York Pageants: <a href="https://images.exploreYork.org.uk/">https://images.exploreYork.org.uk/</a> Also <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763850241/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763850241/</a>
1909 Stepney Children's Pageant				Morris dances from Berner Street School and Brewhouse Lane school
1910 Pageant of Great Women Bristol	1 (indoors) with c. 3,000	Craig	3,000	Theatre production premiered in London in 1909 then toured to promote women's suffrage Preceded by Morris dances and old English games Music included <i>Jockey to the Fair</i>

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1910 Chester	6 with 3,790	Hawtrey	80,000	Episode VIII(b): Midsummer Revels c. 1620 maypoles, morris dancers, charge of the hobby horses, Queen's barge <a href="http://cheshireimagebank.org.uk/">http://cheshireimagebank.org.uk/</a> Maypole and morris dancers with giants <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763319213/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763319213/</a> Said to be “accurate reproductions of those carried out annually in Chester” “Extravagant dance displays tightly choreographed”
1910 Farnham	5 with 300	Lovett		Episode 8: May Day 1670 Morris dance in front of pillory, bishop reflects on merrie England restoration
1911 White Castle (Newport/Casnewydd)	1	De ferrars		Episode 9: Only Morris dances, followed by Finale
1911 Pageant of London (Festival of Empire) Crystal Palace	120 with 15,000	Lascelles	1 million+	Aim to cement understanding of the British Empire Part 2: Merrie England May Day Revels Scene 5. Early years of Henry VIII. Village square filled with folk. Morris dancers and children fill the stage
1912 Scarborough	9 with 1,300	Hudson	32,000	Episode 8: Visit of King Richard 1484 fisherman's Flamborough sword dance, Morris by children beautifully attired <i>Shepherds Hey</i>
1913 Lancaster	6 with 2,000 actors,	Hastings	47,500	Episode 2: John of Gaunt, 1359-69. Children Morrised as show for John. Episode 3: Midsummer Revels: crowd includes Morrisers who dance
1912 Bignor Sussex	2	Byng	100s	Episode 5: Ancient Games and Tilting at the Ring 13-1400. Jesters and Morris dancers perform Episode 6: Elizabeth 1592: Morris dancing before Queen on Mayday, Tunes for dances <i>Bobbing Joe, Princess Royal</i>
1912 Petermancroft Pageant Norwich	6	Monck		Episode III: The Black Death Morris dancers perform amid a crowd
1914 Hawick	2 with 500	Murray	Vast	Episode 4: Old Hawick in 1513, The 'Girls Group' featured, inc a Morris dance and country dance. Poss. to mollify the English events of the battle and post Flodden

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<b>1918-29</b>				
1919 Charles Kingsley Pageant Eversley Hants	3 with 3–400	Elliot	4,000	Episode II: Morris dance second on bill
1919 Whalley Peace Pageant				Film of NW Morris dancers in procession
1919 Salisbury Peace pageant	1 with 2,000, procession plus 3.500 children	Stevens		Episode XIV: Merrie Sarum 1500–47 Mayday Festival: inc. groups of Morris dancers who perform to sung <i>Sumer is Icumen In</i>
1919 Nottingham Pageant of Peace	13 with 1,600, reviews WWI events		20,000 attended thanksgiving service	Episode VIII: Scene 2: A Stuart Holiday: Morris dancing etc. with a great dance <a href="http://www.britishpathe.com/video/300-years-of-city-history">http://www.britishpathe.com/video/300-years-of-city-history</a> .
1920 Merstham Surrey	2 with 20	Gritton	100s	Episode 2: Tudor Morris at a wedding Episode 3 Mayday: dancing at an inn
1922 Nottingham Quincentenary Pageant	? with 12,500 400 year town charter anniversary		40,000	Associated list of events – sports and entertainments inc. folk dancing and maypole dancing
1922 Preston Lances	2 with Parts I, 2,3 on different days, 10-11,000,	Berry	100,000	Uninterrupted sequence of 'Guild' pageants held every 20 years from 1542 to 1922, then 1952, 1972, 1992 2012 inc Guild Courts, processions all week plus musical events Day 3 Scene 1: Merrie England: Morris dancers and a maypole performed by infant school children to unspecified folk music. There was a choir of 5,000 children

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1924 Middleton Parish Church Historical Commemorati on Pageant Rochdale	6, part of longer festival of Alkington church history with c. 500			Episode VII: Mayday Revels 1514: 24 morris dancers, 34 maypole dancers, country dancers. May Queens party led by dancers, hobby horses, jesters. Followed an episode dealing with the aftermath of Flodden
1924 The Cambridge pageant	2			Incident XI: the Fun of the Fair inc. Morris dancers, mummers, round the maypole
1925 a Pageant of Streatham	7 with 100	Massey		Episode IV: Benefactors of old-time song and dance of charity children played by string quartet Morris dance tunes from Cecil Sharp
1926 Oxfordshire Pageant	2 with 11–1,500	Bryant		Set in St Frideswides Fair: The Fun of the Fair 1450. Morris dancers and a mummers play
1926 Norwich	6 with 1,000	Monck	12–14,000	Episode 10: A thanksgiving after rebellion 1745 Morris dance amidst discussions of rebellion, a market and the future of the town Pageant film from 3.23. <a href="https://eafa.org.uk/work/?id=1787">https://eafa.org.uk/work/?id=1787</a> after an EFDSS display
1926 Antiquates of Selborne	2 with 1,500	Kelly		Episode III: The Visitation of the Priory by William of Hykeham 1387 Morris procession enters with fool, hobby horse etc. and dance, bringing the prior and canon into the dance to the music of <i>Robin Hood and Little John</i>
1926 Leeds Tercentenary Children's Pageant	2 with 5,000	Shires	c. 75,000	Associated events inc. exhibitions, military tattoo. Episode VII: The Granting of the Charter Scene II: A Stuart Holiday 1626 Crowd scenes inc. Country and Morris dancing and a 'great Dance' Film of <i>Pageant</i> , British Pathé, at <a href="http://www.britishpathe.com/video/300-years-of-city-history">http://www.britishpathe.com/video/300-years-of-city-history</a> .
1926,1927, 1936 Pledgdon Green Essex		A.A. Thomps on and Marquis d'Oisy		Folk dances and "Letchworth Morris in traditional costume will dance to the pipe and tabor played by Mr K Schofield"

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1927 Pageant of Mount Grace, Yorks	3			Focus was history of Mount Grace Priory. <a href="https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-pageant-of-mount-grace-1927-online">https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-pageant-of-mount-grace-1927-online</a> shows Morris dancing.
1928 Taunton	5 with 1600	Trevilian	20–30,000	Somerset Branch EFDS provided 200 trained performers. No mention of Morris but one tune used was “ <i>Green Garters</i> ”
1929 Lady Godiva Procession and pageant Coventry	1	Seeley	150–300,000	Episode X: The Great Fair Amusements in Medieval Times: Morris dancers, hobby horse
1929 Winchester Folk Dance Pageant	2	Bell		Produced by Winchester EFDS to tell history of English dance. Music by a Wethersfield Quintet. More of a fair. Period 1: Henry IV 1400: sword dance, horn dance, Episode 2: Elizabeth 1570: Morris reel, fool’s jig Episode 3: 1660 Charles II: <i>Lads a Bunchum</i> Episode 4: Modern day Morris Jig ( <i>I’ll Go And Enlist For A Sailor</i> (song or dance?) Local dancers
1929 Stanway Glos	2 with 350	Palmer		Episode 6: Lord Elcho comes to Stanway crowds feasting and merry Morris dancers to please him
1929 A Dream of Old Bulwell, Notts	4	Wheeler, Carey		Episode XI: Bulwell Wakes features a Morris dance
<b>1930-9</b>				
1930 Milford on Sea, Hants	1	Platt, Mrs Morris	150–200,000	The village of Milford 1647 had folk dancing, mummers and a fool’s Jig performed by a bear, a hobby horse and a little girl
1930 Salford Historical pageant 700 <sup>th</sup> anniversary	7 with 6,000	Hoodless	50,000	Associated events - lots of them inc. The EFDS x2 and ‘National Dances’. Episode IV: Queen Philippa and John of Gaunt Welcome the Flemish Weavers, whom Sir John Radclyffe has brought to settle. Salford Great Fair: features entertainment troupes inc sword dancers, Morris dancers Episode VII: Prince Charles Edward, the young chevalier, publicly blessed at Salford Cross. Lively atmosphere, features clog dancing

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1930 The Grand Historical Pageant of Gloucester	7	Rogers, Tilstone	50,000	Associated events inc dancing, dog exhibition, parade, motorcycle football matches. Scene IV: Visit of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn: 1535 Morris dancers enter before the thrones, dignitaries and perform.
1930 Wolsey (Ipswich) Pageant Suffolk	9 with 1,000	Monck	25,000	Part 1 Ipswich open space. Morris dancers perform and a procession of Guilds <a href="https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAC9WBY6JFCL6L8NJ18ECVCAMGO-30-JUNE-1930/query/ipswich+pageant">https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAC9WBY6JFCL6L8NJ18ECVCAMGO-30-JUNE-1930/query/ipswich+pageant</a> at 0.22-0.27
1931 Historical Pageant of Newcastle and the North	10 with 6,000, part of an Empire Fair (replaced “civic week”)	Lightfoot	120,000	Other events included the Winlaton Sword dancers <a href="https://www.britishpathe.com/video/miner-dancers">https://www.britishpathe.com/video/miner-dancers</a> filmed in 1930 Episode VIII: Fair at Newcastle town Moor. late 18 <sup>th</sup> C. A sword dance, maypole dancing. Music was unspecified traditional music. Music by orchestra of 100 and choir of 500 NEFA has 15 minutes of film of the pageant, catalogued as Film no. 21203, also available at <a href="https://www.yfanefa.com/record/25989">https://www.yfanefa.com/record/25989</a> (no morris - Highland dancing at 13.32)
1931 Historical Pageant Warkworth Northumberland	2 with 250	Kennedy		Traditional revels (between Episode III (16 <sup>th</sup> C) and IV 1715. 2 country dances, Morris (2 dances, tunes <i>Helston Furry Dance</i> , <i>Blue Eyed Stranger</i> ) and Maypole dancing were demonstrated, probably by children.
1931 Barking	12 with 2,000	Lascelles		Lots of associated events. Scene IX: Elizabethan Barking, a Fair. Staines Morris accompanies the “entrance of Morris dancers who form sets and the crowd arrange themselves to watch”. The Morris handkerchief dance <i>The Blue Eyed Stranger</i> is performed
1932 Lancashire Cotton Pageant	16 with 12,000 inc. 5,000 children	Genn	200,000	Episode IX A Lancashire market day. Presumed incidents inc a Morris dance (music by Edward German) and Maypole Virtual Belle Vue has news cuttings from the preparation of the pageant. <a href="http://185.121.204.150/ChethamLibrary/#/search?term=cotton%20pageant">http://185.121.204.150/ChethamLibrary/#/search?term=cotton%20pageant</a>
1932 Historical Pageant of Leicestershire	12 with 6,000	Lascelles		Lots of associated events Episode V Scene 1: Street in Leicester 1513 with the Lutterworth St George Play – hero combat from W Kelly LSTG Play 1863, Pageant includes horses, mules, donkeys, dogs, hawks, boars

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1932 and 1933 Laycock				Spectacles included Morris dancing
1932 Sir Walter Scott centenary Edinburgh	4 with 1,500, part of a year- long set of events		16,000	Episode XV: The Masque late 16 <sup>th</sup> C. Royal High School Boys. Based on the novel <i>Kenilworth</i> . “The opening bars of a Morris dance serve to bring on four groups of Masquers disguised as warriors.” The dance features torches in a ‘whirling circle’ ‘furiously fast’. Music Edward German Three dances from King Henry VIII. <a href="http://www.scotiana.com/discover-sir-walter-scotts-memorabilia-collection-inside-abbotsford/">http://www.scotiana.com/discover-sir-walter-scotts-memorabilia-collection-inside-abbotsford/</a>
1933 George Herbert Tercentenary (Pageant of 17C rural life)	4 with 500	Jackson		Several associated events. Episode IV Scene II: George Herbert as rector among his people. Holiday and fun. Morris dancers, Robin Hood, mummers and gipsies. Scene III: Merrymakers on the Green: Maypole and country dancing.
1933 The Greenwich Night pageant	9 with 2,500	Bryant	100,000	Associated events inc. a service (8k), exhibition and shopping week. Act 1 Scene 2: King Charles II at Blackheath 1660. Crowd watch the King pass. A party of Morris dancers enter “who dance for a minute or two to the delight of the audience”.
1934 The Pageant of Abinger Surrey	2 with 400	Harrison		Episode VI: Towards Our Own Times 19C. Outside the church several notable personages assemble. Entertainment of Morris dances and other country dances
1934 Pageant of Runnymede	14 with 5,000	Lally	90,000	British Pathé film <a href="http://www.britishpathe.com/video/historical-pageant/query/Runnymede">http://www.britishpathe.com/video/historical-pageant/query/Runnymede</a> . Details of the pageant and British Library exhibition, <a href="http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2015/04/the-1934-runnymede-pageant.html">http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2015/04/the-1934-runnymede-pageant.html</a> . Morris not specifically mentioned
1935 Tower Hill London Pageant				Billed as a Tattoo. Film shows what could be women dancing some kind of Cotswold based Morris (or not) and a separate scene with dancers holding garlands <a href="https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAA40JJTIRADSBKXF7XOXT6O6U-TOWER-OF-LONDON-PAGEANT-REHEARSALS/query/pageant">https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAA40JJTIRADSBKXF7XOXT6O6U-TOWER-OF-LONDON-PAGEANT-REHEARSALS/query/pageant</a> Possibly more information in <i>The Pageant of Tower Hill</i> , PB Clayton and BR Leftwich pub. Longmans 1935

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1935 Pageant of Burley, Hants	2			Longsword dancing by people dressed in skins as ‘cavemen’
1936 Almondbury Yorks	4	Blackburn		Molly Ashton choreographed the “Old English Dancing, folk and Morris dancing and Maypole dancing” Part of wider carnival celebration of history of Almondbury school. Dancing involved 150 schoolchildren.
1936 The McAdam Centenary pageant: Romance of the Road	2 and 400		c. 1,400 and 4,000 in procession	Scene II: The Pilgrim Way 14 <sup>th</sup> C . A pilgrim train illustrating Chaucer’s character types. Morris dancers “tumbled and tripped”
1937 Chester Historical pageant	8 with 6,000	Monck	24,658	Many associated events for a week. Episode VII: Elizabethan Revels 1599. The midsummer Fair , Morris dancing is “ongoing”. A tune used is <i>Country Gardens</i> , arr. C. Sharp. Also, a sword dance tune <i>The Sleights</i> arr. A.J. Armstrong
1938 Blenheim and Woodstock		Platt		Bampton Morris dancers performed between the first and second performances
1938 Pageant of Selborne: Gilbert Whites Village	2	Kelly	2 000	Repeat of the 1926 pageant with revisions. Episode III: The Visitation of the Priory by William Of Wykeham 1387. Mayday celebrations include the prior saying he has a love of Morris dancing and a Morris procession with fool, hobby horse etc. They bring the canon and prior into the dance to The Music of “ <i>Robin Hood and Little John</i> ”
1938 Manchester Pageant	10 with 10,000	Monck	80,000	Lots of associated events. Episode III: Manchester receives its first charter from Thomas Gresley 1301. Annual fair with a performance by Morris dancers tunes inc. Shepherds Hey (orchestra), Trunkles from Bledington (Sharp)

## Morris Dancing and Pageants in Britain 1885–2022

1938 Towards Tomorrow, a pageant of cooperation by London Coop Societies.	? with 3,000,	Gyseghe m	60,000	Episode I: A crowd comes in led by Morris dancers who perform. Fair setting. Music could be <i>The Lonely Plough</i> Several scenes seemed to resemble the <i>Isles of Wonder</i> that opened the 2012 London Olympics.
<b>1945–9</b>				
1944 Guildford Pageant Play		Tom Pope		Tom Pope the organiser taught the Morris dancing – more of a procession than pageant
1946 Bristol Civic Pageant	12 with 760	Davies		Scene IIIa: St James Farm 1587. Mixed Morris dancers (only content)
1948 St Albans Millenary pageant	6 with 1,000	Swinson		Associated was a folk-dance festival organised by EFDSS (1400 attended) Episode V: Queen Elizabeth visits Gorhambury 1572 Morris dancing and cheering. Music was ‘traditional Morris dance’
<b>1950–9</b>				
1951 A pageant of Anglesey	5 with 150 Arts Council sponsored Arts	Jones	150,000	No Morris but in the prologue 12 girls danced to traditional Welsh melodies Episode VI: a royal romance in the Queen’s Garden at Windsor 1423 A traditional Anglesey dance (the Welsh garter dance) is taught by Owen Tudor to the Queen Much of the speech was in Welsh.
1951 Festival of Britain Pageant of Chippenham	2 with 2-300	King	3,500–4,000	Scene 1: “The dance” “White Horse Morris dancers took part”
1951 A pageant of the Brandanes Bute	4 with 700	Forsyth		Scene IX: The Penny Wedding: 8 dancing children and 4 male Highland dancers
1951 Ipswich	8 with 2,000	Jenkins	13,000	Associated was a church service attended by 3,000. Scene VI: Charles II at Ipswich. Merrymaking inc maypole, country and Morris dancing

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1952 Pageant of Thornhill Yorks	8	Coney	12–3,000	Episode IV: Marriage of Elizabeth de Thornhill to Henry Saville 1370. Team of Morris dancers with hobby horse entertain the crowd. Episode VI Men perform a sword dance. Further dancing. Episode VIII: Morris dancing in scene of restoration of the monarchy
1953 A pageant of two parishes Ingatestone and Fryerning Essex	1 linked to coronation of EII	Christy		Episode V: Visit of Queen Elizabeth Tudor 1561 Will Kemp's Morris dance
1953 St Albans Pageant A masque of the Queens Visit to the Abbey 1428	7 with 1,600	Swinson	18,989	No specific Morris dancing reference Episode V: Queen Katherine's royal visit in 1428 has a large crowd for a festival mass. People enter with a maypole and do some dancing, local people perform a theatrical version of St George and the dragon. Music included <i>Trad</i> (arr K Schofield) for the Maypole dance and <i>Arnold Foster Toccata on Princess Royal</i> (Fieldtown jig)
1953 Coronation pageant Widnes	4 with 2,200 school children			Scene 5 includes a mummings play
1953 Edwinstowe Coronation Pageant Notts	4 with 200	Westcott		Episode V: Sherwood for the Queen. Fair setting inc. Morris dancing
1959 Bury St Edmunds	11 with 1,000		28,803	Associated events inc. Magna Carta commemoration service, exhibitions, an American night. 113 Americans took part.
<b>1960–9</b>				
1963 The Unsheathed Sword: Reigate Centenary pageant at Reigate Priory	11	Hummel		Film, 'Borough of Reigate Centenary Film': with morris dancers in the street, as part of the centenary celebrations not at the Priory. <a href="http://sasesearch.brighton.ac.uk/view/?film=6077">http://sasesearch.brighton.ac.uk/view/?film=6077</a> on the BFI Player at 44.23 <a href="https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-borough-of-reigates-centenary-film-1963-1963-online">https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-borough-of-reigates-centenary-film-1963-1963-online</a>

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<b>1970–9</b>				
1970 Alexandra Park Manchester				<i>William and Nancy</i> (Bledington) to fiddle, melodeon and flute. A Morris dance team. <a href="https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-alexandra-park-pageant-27-june-1970-1970-online">https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-alexandra-park-pageant-27-june-1970-1970-online</a> at 8.15. Possibly more of a carnival procession plus large fete/community gathering.
1976 Pitminster and Corfe Pageant, Somerset	2 with 80			Taunton Deane Morris performed at a garden party the weekend before
<b>1980–9</b>				
1980 Axbridge Pageant Somerset	2 with 300 Same script as 1967 and 1970 plus additions	Griffiths	3,000	Before each performance a local ladies' Morris dance group performed in the square
1983 Dover Castle Pageant	1		5,000	Henry VIII entertained on his way through Dover to the field of the Cloth of Gold 1520 by Maypole and Morris dancers
<b>1990–9</b>				
1990 Huntingdon pageant	3	Phillips		Part 3: Queen Elizabeth at Hinchingsbrooke 1564 presented by Hunstanton Drama club Fenstanton Morris danced
<b>2000–2019</b>				
2015 Walton Hill Pageant				More a procession/parade than a pageant. Newspaper article mentions Morris dancers

## Appendix B: The Sherborne Pageant 1905

This is one of the best-documented of all the pageants, with the script, still and moving images, newspaper reports, and a well-researched archive held at *oldshirburnian.org.uk*. We have the names and some occupations of people who took part in the morris dance in Episode 7. Both men and women were listed. There were 14 dancers plus Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Little John, a jester, a dragon, Friar Tuck, and four hobby horses. Ether Creemer Rowe, assistant mistress at Sherborne School for Girls, was the morris dance choreographer.

Episode 7 dealt with the quarrel between the town and the monastery in 1437. At the end there is rejoicing at the instatement of Allhallowes Church as the parish church. Robin Hood and Maid Marian step forward, Friar Tuck, Little John, Gallor (butcher in Sherborne who smashed the parish font in the quarrel), and a townsman change into hobby horses. Six young girls and six young men “properly dressed for the Morris dance” come forward.

Film of the event shows two minutes of the dance. The official account records it as: “led by maid Marian and Robin Hood, a merry troop of damsels with their swains combine in the gayest of Morris dances. The men with ashen staves, the damsels with wreathes of ivy and flowers intertwine in a charming dance, while a rustic musician, perched on a barrel, keeps time with pipe and tabor to an old English melody sung by a Dramatic Chorus in Lincoln green, a diminutive jester plies his impudent bladder; a benevolent dragon stalks solemnly and ludicrously around, Friar Tuck, Little John, and two other outlaw, curvet and prance as grotesque hobby horses ... delightful and diverting interlude”.

Overall summary of the Pageant

<http://oldshirburnian.org.uk/sherborne-pageant-1905/>

<https://oldshirburnian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Historical-Pageants-Local-History-Study-Guide-web-quality.pdf>

Script of the pageant

<https://oldshirburnian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Sherborne-Pageant-script-by-LN-Parker-Walter-Raymond-Sherborne-1905.pdf>

This interesting film of the march past does not show any morris dancers

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/sherborneschoolarchives/17572075623>

The morris dance is from 30:30 to 32:20. It appears to consist of country dance figures and is not recognisably morris as known today. The dancers are wearing Merrie England-type costumes.

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/sherborne-pageant-film/>

<https://www.dorsetlife.co.uk/2015/03/the-mother-of-all-pageants/> Description

<https://sdfhs.org/projects/sherborne-pageant-participants/> List

<https://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/M125280/The-Sherborne-Pageant-Morris-Dancers-in-the-Greenwood>

The four hobby horses



Sherborne 1905 morris dance cast  
Note the costumes in both these pictures

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/print-of-the-sherborne-pageant-Morris-dancers-in-the-greenwood-bw-photo--479492691640492126/>



## Ethel Creemer Rowe (1875-1965)

### Character in the Sherborne Pageant:

Choreographer of the Morris Dance in episode 7 and was one of the dancers.

### Episode 7:

Maid Marian appears, in a gown of russet and Lincoln green, her nut-brown hair adrift in the breeze. Led by her and Robin Hood, a merry troop of damsels with their swains now combine in the gayest of Morris dances. The men with ashen staves, the damsels with wreaths of ivy and flowers, intertwine in a charming dance: while a rustic musician, perched on a barrel, keeps time with pipe and tabor to the old English melody sung by a Dramatic Chorus in Lincoln green; a diminutive jester piles his impudent bladder; a benevolent Dragon stalks solemnly and ludicrously around; and Friar Tuck, Little John, and two other outlaws, curvet and prance as grotesque hobby-horses, bowing acknowledgments to the rapturous applause that greets this delightful interlude. Robin Hood and his company quit the scene, only to be recalled by the persistent demands of the spectators, who will brook no refusal, for a repetition of their dance, which is accordingly renewed with variations.

Ethel Creemer Rowe was born in 1875 in Kensington, London to Robert Rowe (1843-1912), a glass merchant, and Francis Amelia Rowe (née Cooper) (1845-1937).

She trained at Dartford Physical Training College.



Rehearsals taking place for the Morris Dance

She joined Sherborne School for Girls in 1900, just one year after its founding, and remained until her retirement in 1935. As Assistant Mistress she was responsible for physical education (teacher of Swedish Gymnastics, chip carving, fencing), and in 1910 she became the first Housemistress of Aylmar.

She retired in 1935 to Sandy Down, Boldre, Lymington, Hampshire and died on 3 November 1965.

## Appendix C: Morris dancing at St Mary Cray May Festival 1891–3

The same movements for the morris dance were used in 1891–3 and the following description combines accounts from 1891 and 1892.

The morris dance was performed in two circles (one 45 feet and one 15 feet in diameter). Danced by 32 characters (half men, half women). The men were dressed as follows: four soldiers, four outlaws, four woodmen, four in red hoods, jerkins, and hose. Each carried two sticks three foot in length. The girls were selected from two of each colour of dress. With partners they start off in a long line in twos, those who lead off taking longer steps than those following. The girls advance to the centre, all holding hands, then dance four steps to the right, and four back again. While they were doing this the men were performing a circular hey, still holding both sticks, and striking as they passed each other. With a change in the music, each girl robbed her partner of a staff, and again the couples passed in reversing circles, the tapping of the sticks being repeated, as they met they struck each other's sticks three times. The dance concludes by the men who first kneel in the outer ring, which they resumed, the girls behind them. The men having crossed their sticks, rise, take the girls by the left arm, bring them to the front, who in turn kneel, men standing inside. All again cross their sticks. Girls afterwards rise and go off in twos from the point from which they first started, followed by the men.

In 1891 the Crays' Temperance Band played Lt. Dan Godfrey's *Ploughboy Quadrille* for the morris.

In 1892 a tune used was Godfrey's old air *The Curly Headed Ploughboy*.

The 1893 programme states the dance was performed to old English ditties.

*Abridged from Dartford Express 9 May 1891, Kentish Mercury 13 May 1892.*

Paul Valentine also taught a coconut dance for 24 men. A photograph taken at the 1893 festival shows seven men, five wearing fez-type hats and two turbans. They all have coconut shells attached above the knee, in their palms and one at their waist. Another dance he taught was a kind of garland dance, dancers carried a half-hoop of roses.

## Appendix D: Irish Historical Pageants

J F Dean **Rewriting the Past: Historical Pageantry in the Dublin Civic Weeks of 1927 and 1929** New Hibernia Review Vol. 13 No 1. Spring 2009

J F Dean et al **All Dressed up: Modern Irish Historical Pageantry 2016**. A must go-to overview, fully referenced.

1921 a Pageant of Early Irish saints was organised by members of Dublin University. Brief film <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/irish-pageant>

1928 Castleknock: the Battle of Castleknock.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BD3HkB9n0nE>

1985 Achill Island Pageant (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5qxDajd0E0>)

2016 Lismore Pageant (<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/lismore-pageant-to-mark-town-s-25-years-of-heritage-status-1.2639852>)

Very probably little or nothing on morris dancing in any of these

## Appendix E: Sources

### i) Film and photograph (in addition to Sherborne 1905)

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/> has several films of pageants. Only those listed below show morris dancing. The films show the way pageants were presented and give valuable insight into what they must have involved for organisers and spectators.

1906 Warwick Pageant. Compilation of scenes including NW style Morris danced by c. 60 people 16.41–17.58, followed by a country dance by the same dancers, who also appear in the march past 22.49–22.59 <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-warwick-pageant-1906-online>

1907 Bury St Edmunds. Film of the pageant. Episode 7 has morris dancers before Queen Mary plus a final procession of actors. To view register for BFI from a library, college or university. Also has Sherborne Pageant 1905 film.

<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1241830/synopsis.html>

**1909 Bulth Wells Pageant.** Photograph showing maypole and morris dancers [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dancing\\_the\\_May\\_Pole\\_before\\_Wedding\\_Party - Milkmaids in background, Morris Dancers on left \(4541056352\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dancing_the_May_Pole_before_Wedding_Party_-_Milkmaids_in_background,_Morris_Dancers_on_left_(4541056352).jpg)

**1919 Whalley Peace Pageant.** NW dancers processing in dresses with a sash and bobbins are shown at 0.12–1.48

<https://www.facebook.com/NWfilmarchive/videos/whalley-peace-pageant-1919/674182899772923/>

or

<https://www.nwfa.mmu.ac.uk/viewVideo.php?token=1190agw2619Hq6704ZYm4143b49>

**1927 Pageant of Mount Grace.** Dancers dressed as jesters from 1.40–2.00, also then start of a longsword dance at 3.17–3.27 plus a big country dance at 2.40

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-pageant-of-mount-grace-1927-online>

**1930 film of Winlaton rapper** dancers who performed at 1931 Historical Pageant of the Newcastle and the North.

<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/miner-dancers>

a longer record of the pageant.

<https://www.yfanefa.com/record/25989>

**1930 Ipswich Wolsey Pageant** film. Cotswold set dance as part of a procession

<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAC9WBY6JFCL6L8NJ18ECVCAMGO-30-JUNE-1930/query/ipswich+pageant>

**1934 Pageant of Runnymede.** Film and archive material: Morris not specifically mentioned

<https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/115805/>

and

<http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2015/04/the-1934-runnymede-pageant.html>.

**1935 Pageant of Burley.** At 0.30–0.46 six men in wigs and dressed as ‘cavemen’ in skins and rags perform longsword figures. The final few seconds show five similar men dancing  
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-shakespearean-recital-and-pageant-1927-online>

**1935 Winterbourne Girls School Pageant.** Some step dancing by pupils at 3.40–3.55 plus lots of country dancing  
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-winterbourne-girls-school-silver-jubilee-pageant-thornton-heath-1935-1935-online>

**1944 Guildford.** The film of the pageant is still to be located  
<https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/local-news/film-pageant-play-4850867>

**1970 Alexandra Park Manchester.** Morris dancing by a local team at 8.20–8.28  
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-alexandra-park-pageant-27-june-1970-1970-online>

or

<https://vimeo.com/101095234>

or

<https://www.nwfa.mmu.ac.uk/viewVideo.php?token=4799agw28131w7h564104aP5nxZYml288b49Hq2dw>

## ii) Pictorial representation

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/magpielane/sets/72157713670953573/with/49763319213/>  
Andy Turner’s Flickr pages have several photos of morris dancing in pageants -Ripon 1904, Bury St Edmunds 1907, Dover 1908, York 1909, Chester 1910. There are also hundreds of other early 20<sup>th</sup> century photos of morris.

**1909 Bath.** “almost an outdoor morris dance”  
<https://www.hippocard.com/listing/minuet-dagger-old-Morris-dance-scene-gardens-flag-1909-bath-pageant-rpc-postcard/4804967>

**1909 York.** Online photographic archive  
<https://images.exploreyork.org.uk/>

**Chester 1910.** Photos of many scenes  
<https://www.cheshireimagebank.org.uk/frontend.php>

**1913 Lancaster Historical Pageant.** Photo of four hobby horses from revels episode  
<https://www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/lifestyle/cast-hundreds-took-part-historical-pageant-lancaster-1913-657394>

**1913 Stafford.** Photos of various pageant/processions – no morris  
<https://www.search.staffspasttrack.org.uk/search.aspx?&PageIndex=22&SearchType=2&ThemeID=301>

**1932 Lancashire Cotton Pageant.** News cuttings

<http://185.121.204.150/ChethamLibrary/#/details/ecatalogue/14944> and subsequent pages

**1951 Manx Pageant.** Included traditional Manx dances with 100 children wearing red sashes

<https://www.manxmusic.com/media/News%20images%202017/The%20Pageant%20of%20the%20Isle%20of%20Man%20or%20Manx%20Pageant.pdf> 1951

**1932 Lacock pageant.**

<https://wshc.org.uk/lacock/lacock-unlocked/places/item/the-lacock-pageant.html>

### iii) Books

**Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain** Eds. A Bartie, L Fleming, M Freeman, A Hutton, P Readman

Articles on 20<sup>th</sup> century pageants – context with specific examples discussed by contributors

Inc. Hulme, T. (2016). Historical pageants, neo-romanticism, and the city in interwar Britain.

**Historical Pageants Local History Study Guide** Eds. A Bartie, L Fleming, M Freeman, A Hutton, P Readman

2020 Background to pageants, suggestions for further research methods, case studies of research into individual pageants.

Keith Chandler **“Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles”**: **The Social History of Morris dancing in the English South Midlands 1660–1900** 1993 Contains a discussion on the dance and its relation to Englishness and the social reality of the dance's context.

John Cutting **History and the Morris Dance: A Look at Morris Dancing From its Earliest Days Until 1850** 2005 A chronological setting out of references to Morris and how it might have been presented with explanations of its evolution over centuries.

Joan F Dean **Pageant (Forms of Drama)** 2021 Maps the cultural evolution of pageants historical with a focus on historical themes and theatrical techniques.

Darcy de Ferris. **Book of Pageants and Revels** Held in the de Ferrars family collection (not consulted).

J Esty. **Amnesia in the Fields: Late Modernism, Late Imperialism and the English Pageant-Play** ELH Vol 69 No. 1 Spring 2002 Explores the way modernist authors like Eliot and Woolf in the 1930s drew on pageant plays because they are democratic, turning everyone into an artist. No morris mentioned.

J Forrest **The History of Morris dancing 1458–1750** A detailed study focusing on the reasons for the way Morris dancing changed over the time period. Contains details on the medieval pageants.

Mark Freeman **The pageants of St Albans: an illustrated history: how the people of twentieth-century St Albans performed scenes from the city's past** 2020

An account of the St Albans' pageants.

David Glassberg **The new pageantry in America: historical pageantry: the uses of tradition in the early twentieth century** 1990 A survey of pageants in history inc USA .

Sophie C Lomas **Festival of Empire: Book of the Pageant** 1911

Details of the London Pageant including historical accounts of the scenes depicted, the script and a description of each scene.

Ellis Oberholtzer **The book of the pageant: Philadelphia** 1908

Louis Parker **Several of My Lives** 1928 Autobiography of a major Pageant Master (not consulted).

Mike Salter. **All About the Morris** 2014 Mostly deals with 20<sup>th</sup> century dance but contains a summary of medieval references.

Thomas Sharp **Dissertation on the pageants or dramatic mysteries anciently performed at Coventry** 1885

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=blRJAAAACAAJ&pg=PA200&lpg=PA200&dq=Morris+dancing+in+pageants&source=bl&ots=yv9CP-iUh&sig=ACfU3U2CEtYufuyUMjj5yrzwNCmgb8YsvA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi9yrC31sD1AhUDgFwKHYAlAXo4jAEO6AF6BAGTEAM#v=onepage&q=Morris%20dancing%20in%20pageants&f=false> describes the 1554 Coventry pageant including morris dancers.

Ed V Nunning, J Rupp, G Ahn J Rupp chapter **Ritual, and Narrative ch. Narrative, and Identity in English Pageant Fictions of the Interwar Years** 2014 Explores how 20<sup>th</sup> century pageantry and pageant fictions are governed by a dynamic of ritual and narrative but hold different potentials for collective identity. No morris.

R Witherington **English Pageantry: An Historical Outline** 2 vols 1918, 1920. Standard work on early pageants.

Ayoka Yoshino. **Pageant Fever: Local History and Consumerism in Edwardian England.** 2011. (not consulted).

**iv) Articles**

Bartie, Fleming, Freeman, Hulme, Readman and Tiupman in **The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Twentieth Century England** International journal of research on history didactics, history, education and history culture 37 pp. 19–35

An overview of the rationale for pageants, drawing on specific examples

[https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/130855742/YEARBOOK\\_PAPER\\_FROM\\_CISH\\_REVISIED\\_FINAL\\_VERSION.pdf](https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/130855742/YEARBOOK_PAPER_FROM_CISH_REVISIED_FINAL_VERSION.pdf)

A Bartie, L Fleming, M Freeman, T Hulme, A Hutton, P Readman '**History Taught in the Pageant Way**' **Education and Historical Performance in Twentieth Century Britain** 2018 in History of Education Vol 48, Issue 2 2019

Commentary on the role of pageants in enlisting the past in the service of the present and future

A Bartie, L Fleming, M Freeman, T Hulme and P Readman in **Performing the Past: Identity, Civic Culture and Historical Pageants in Twentieth Century English Small Towns** in Small Towns in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries ed. L Klusakova et al 2017 Summarises some examples of pageants and explores the motivation for holding them

T J Buckland '**Black Faces, Garlands and Coconuts: Exotic Dances on Street and stage**' Dance Research Journal 22:2 (Fall 1990) has a paragraph on St Mary Cray May Festival.

[https://www.academia.edu/1776395/Black\\_Faces\\_Garlands\\_and\\_Coconuts\\_Exotic\\_Dances\\_on\\_Street\\_and\\_Stage](https://www.academia.edu/1776395/Black_Faces_Garlands_and_Coconuts_Exotic_Dances_on_Street_and_Stage)

Roy Dommett **Travelling Morrice and the Forest of Dean Morris** The Morris Dancer No. 13 August 1982 Cites the reference in the 2<sup>nd</sup> log of TM 29 June–4<sup>th</sup> July 1925 to 20 dancers processing onto the stage at the 1890 Chepstow Pageant

George Frampton **Louis Parker and his Pageant Morris Dancers, 1905–1909**

Traditional dance 5/6 1988 Conference paper

References the following articles:

- i) *Dorset County Chronicle* and *Somerset Gazette* 15 June 1905 Account of the Sherborne Pageant including a description of Morris dancers' clothing.
- ii) *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser* and *Leamington Gazette* 7 July 1906 Account of the 1906 Warwick pageant including a description of the Morris dancers' clothing.
- iii) *Bury Free Press* 6 July 1907 and 13 July 1907 Picture of morris dancers (children) who performed at 1907 Bury St Edmunds Pageant.
- iv) *Dover Express and East Kent News* 24 July 1908 and *Dover and County Chronicle* 1 August 1908. Pictures of 120 morris dancers (children) with sticks setting to each other.
- v) *Hampshire Chronicle* 27 June 1908 Description of the morris dancers dragging a wooden horse across the performance area.
- vi) *West London Press* 26 June 1908. Postcard showing May dancers in a morris-type set.

- vii) *Hertfordshire Advertiser and St Albans Times* 13 July, 20 July 1907. Pageant postcard showing stick dancers and photograph of 112 schoolgirls carrying ribboned sticks.

George Frampton. **Chester's Pageant Morris dancers**. *Morris Dancer* 1991  
References the following two newspaper articles:

- i) *Chester Chronicle and Cheshire and North West Advertiser* 16 July 1910
- ii) *Chester Chronicle and Cheshire and North West Advertiser* 23 July 1910

George Frampton *St Mary Cray's Pageants 1889-1893 Bygone Kent* Vol 16 No 5 May 1995. Local newspapers and the programme describe these events as May Day Festivals or processions.

George Frampton **Norwich: Dragons and Kemp – Tradition and Revival** *Morris Matters* Vol 31 No 1 Contains an account of the 1556 Norwich pageant that accompanied the mayor's installation

M Freeman **Splendid display; pompous spectacle: historical pageants in twentieth century Britain** in *Social History* 38 2013

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/84194/1/84194.pdf>

Article examines the organisation, nature, and context of historical pageants in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Britain, focusing on four pageants in St Albans – 1907, 1948, 1953, 1968. Considers changing motivations and contents for pageants

M Garland **A history of Cotswold Morris dancing in the twentieth century** PhD Thesis University of Essex 2017 Contains a brief account of how Morris was used in the early Pageants. <https://repository.essex.ac.uk/21805/1/Thesis%20for%20Repository.pdf> pages 38-9

T Hulme **Historical pageants, neo-romanticism, and the city in interwar Britain** in *Informationen zur modernen Stadtgeschichte*. 2016

A Hutton (Lecture) *Revisited: People's history in historical pageants in Britain, 1905–2016*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCmPs1LA6Q>

Roy Judge **Mayday and Merrie England** *Folklore* Vol 102:ii 1991

References the following:

- i) *Daily Telegraph* 31 August 1885, *Wallingford Times* 28 August 1885, *Reading Mercury* 29 August 1885, *North Wilts Herald* 28 August 1885, *Graphic* 12 September 1885, *Pictorial World* 3 September 1885 for accounts of the Wantage Pageant.
- ii) Louis Parker **Historical Pageants** *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 54 (1905)
- iii) Keith Thomas **Perception of the Past in Early Modern England** 1983
- iv) J. B. Glazier **Towards Socialism** *Labour Leader* 21 August 1908, also 14 and 28, 4 September 1908

Roy Judge **Merrie England and the Morris 1881–1910**. *Folklore* vol 104 1993  
references the following:

- i) Photographs of Morris at St Mary Cray May Festival held in Bromley Local Studies Library
- ii) Dartford Express 9 May 1891, Kentish Mercury 13 May 1892: dance descriptions at St Mary Cray
- iii) Pageants Box 6, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library: music for morris at St Mary Cray
- iv) Kentish Mercury 13 May 1892: reference to *Curly Headed Ploughboy* as dance tune and involvement of Paul Valentine, dancing master.
- v) Dartford Express 2 June 1893: Valentine teaching a cocoa nut dance, more detail is in T. Bucklands **Black Faces, Garlands and Coconuts: Exotic Dances on Street and Stage** *Dance Research Journal* 22:2 (Fall 1990)
- vi) *Chepstow Weekly Advertiser* 2 August 1890
- vii) Edward Scott **Dancing in all Ages** 1899
- viii) Cecil P Gooden **The Story of the Sherborne Pageant** 1905

Roy Judge **D'Arcy Ferris and the Bidford Morris** *Folk Music Journal* Vol 4 No 5 1984

Mudlark <https://pasttenseblog.wordpress.com/2020/05/01/may-day-in-south-london-a-history/comment-page-1/> London radical histories and possibilities: May Day in South London: a history. Summary of the way May Day has been celebrated in the UK over centuries, with particular reference to South London and the way celebrants have been subversive and conflicting with authorities up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Deborah Ryan **Pageantitis: Frank Lascelles' 1907 Oxford Historical Pageant, Visual Spectacle and Popular Memory** *Visual Culture in Britain* 8(2)

Matthew Simons **Morris men dancing Englishness c 1905–1951** partial PhD thesis for de Montford University 2019

[https://dora.dmu.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2086/18685/SIMONS\\_DOCTORALTHESIS.pdf](https://dora.dmu.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2086/18685/SIMONS_DOCTORALTHESIS.pdf) discusses the history of Morris dancing in relation to English culture

Renee Stewart **Ralph Vaughan Williams and the Two Surrey Pageants: The Abinger pageant (1934) and England's pleasant land (1938)**. No morris. (not consulted) *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society journal*, 53 (February 2012), p. 22-23

An account of RVW's involvement in these two pageants

Shilarna Stokes **Authoring the Environment: Landscapes, Crowds and Communitality in Louis Napoleon Parker's Edwardian Pageants**

*Theatre Notebook* The Society for Theatre Research. Vol 72 No. 3 2018. Discussion of how Parker used landscape in the Pageants at Sherborne 1905 and Warwick 1906

Zoe Thomas **Historical Pageants, citizenship, and the performance of women's history before second-wave feminism**. Research at Birmingham University Duncan Tanner Essay prize *Twentieth Century British History* 28 (3) September 2017

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/185500466.pdf> No mention of morris dancing.

Mick Wallis **Pageantry and the Popular Front: Ideological Production in the 'Thirties** *New Theatre Quarterly* Vol 10 Issues 38 May 1994. (not consulted). Examines British working class projects and looks in detail at *Music of the People* London April 1939

Ayako Yoshino **Between the Acts and Louis Napoleon Parker – the creator of the modern English Pageant.** Vol 15 no 2 Literature of the 1930s 2003

**Travelling Morrice and the Forest of Dean Morris** *The Morris Dancer* No. 13 Aug 1982

v) **Websites**

The invaluable and key information source is the Kings College London project: **The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain 1905–2016.** The open access site contains a database of pageants with descriptions of each episode, lists of organisers, attendance, costs and participants, and much else. There are links to sources of evidence, articles and publications dealing with pageants.

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/> and

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/publications/>

has a full list of relevant publications – books, articles, media

Examples of two modern pageant types 2022

<https://www.royal.uk/platinum-jubilee-central-weekend>

<https://www.becketpageantforlondon.com/> description of 1519 Watch Pageant and arrangements for 2022 re-enactment.

[https://www.pressreader.com/uk/who-do-you-think-you-are-](https://www.pressreader.com/uk/who-do-you-think-you-are-magazine/20200505/284348316712065)

[magazine/20200505/284348316712065](https://www.pressreader.com/uk/who-do-you-think-you-are-magazine/20200505/284348316712065) Brief 20th century commentary on pageants.

<http://theshakespeareblog.com/2014/06/shakespeare-and-the-warwick-pageant/> Brief account of the 1906 Warwick Pageant focusing on a boy, one of the participants.

<https://www.harrymottram.co.uk/2021/08/11/axbridge-pageant-2022-news-photos-of-the-august-performance-in-londons-cecil-sharp-house-released-the-show-will-be-repeated-this-winter-in-axbridge-ahead-of-the-pageant-next-year/>

Report of a play at Cecil Sharp House in conjunction with the 2022 Axbridge pageant.

<https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/events/pageants-and-folk-arts-exhibition-cecil-sharp-house/>

<https://www.oldwarwickians.org/page/?title=The+Warwick+Pageant+of+1906&pid=292>

Contains a description and commentary on the 1906 Pageant.

<https://www.search.windowsonwarwickshire.org.uk/search.aspx?&PageIndex=3&SearchType=2&ThemeID=311#searcharea>

Collection of Warwickshire material including many pageant items.

<https://stalbansMorris.org.uk/history/> Reference to performing in the 1948 St Albans Millenary Pageant.

<http://www.scotiana.com/discover-sir-walter-scotts-memorabilia-collection-inside-abbotsford/>

Image of central page in 1932 Sir Walter Scott centenary Edinburgh Pageant programme.

<https://www.messengernewspapers.co.uk/news/7236806.festival-time/> Stretford 1997 Pageant but seems more of a procession/parade. Includes morris dancing and reference to 1909 Pageant.

<https://newchurchvillage.org/history/celebration-newchurch/history-day/historical-pageant/> Seems to be more of a fete, photo of a morris team dancing.

<https://www.Morrisfed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MM-31-1.pdf> Mayor making in Norwich.

<http://www.ststudy.co.uk/pageant-archive.html> St Tudy 2004 small scale modern example – seems more of a play than a pageant.

<https://www.icknieldwayMorrismen.org.uk/about-us/Morris-dancing/history-of-the-side> reference to Wantage Pageant: Darcy Ferris/Ferrar's 1885 Pageant Festival of Ye Summer Quene.

<https://stalbanmorris.org.uk/history/> Brief mention of costumes worn when performing at the 1948 St Albans pageant.

<https://www.derbylive.co.uk/about-derby-live/news/10000-people-take-part-in-st-georges-day-celebrations/> 2013 pageant-type day in Derby no morris appears.

<https://wshc.org.uk/lacock/lacock-unlocked/places/item/the-lacock-pageant.html> Article on 1932 Lacock Pageant: no morris dancing.

<https://sites.google.com/a/springgroveMorris.org/spring-grove-Morris/history/kingston-pageant-1911?overridemobile=true> Accounts of celebrations for 1921 Coronation, including children morris dancing.

<https://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/12957153.pictures-may-pageant-features-caterpillar-children-bikers-and-Morris-men-in-walton-on-the-hill/> and

[www.waltonmaypageant.co.uk/](http://www.waltonmaypageant.co.uk/) More a parade than a pageant.

[https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Woodsome\\_Village\\_Pageants\\_1906-8](https://huddersfield.exposed/wiki/Woodsome_Village_Pageants_1906-8). More like a fete plus a procession.

<http://www.manchesterMorrismen.org.uk/events/2003malta.php> Visit to a pageant in Malta 2003.

<https://must.unimelb.edu.au/1913/01/31/chaucer-pageant-1913-2/> Reference to morris dancing at a 1913 Melbourne Australia Pageant.

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/latest/events/may-day-2022> programme of a day of Pageant-like events including morris dancers in Pennsylvania USA.

## Morris Dancing and Pageants in Britain 1885–2022

<https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:rj430p61j>

Picture of morris dancers Massachusetts 1912.

<https://tradfolk.co/performance/Morris-dancing/popular-culture/> Lists morris dance appearances in popular culture since 1971.

# David Milner

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