



RATTLE UP

My Boys

AN OCCASIONAL BROADSHEET FOR THOSE
WITH AN INTEREST IN LONGSWORD DANCE

Issue 1, Series 4 Winter 1993

In 1989 John Ledbury contacted me for information in connection with a study he was engaged in. He was particularly interested in the then unpublished results of the various surveys I had undertaken over the years and also asked about a range of teams who currently dance longsword. I was pleased to be able to help with many of his requests for information but I had no clear idea of John's purpose until I received a massive, and impressive, tome through the post. This was John's Master of Arts thesis.

Having in mind the many (at least three) requests for reading lists or bibliographies I contacted John for permission to print parts of his thesis. It proved to be a difficult job to edit his work but it neatly fell into three sections and I am pleased the John has agreed that the three sections can be printed in RUMB.

The extracts published over the next few issues will cover:

1. **General introduction to the study**
2. **A historical survey**
3. **A detailed analysis of three teams - Barnsley, Lord Conyers and Highside**

AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY OF THE LONGSWORD DANCE

part of the thesis submitted (successfully) by John

Ledbury for his Master of Arts degree

My interest in Longsword dancing stems from an active participation in aspects of English Folk Music, starting in the Folk Song Clubs of Birmingham in 1963. This developed into an interest in Morris Dancing through meeting members of the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men in local Folk Clubs, while a student in Sussex from 1966 to 1969.

After moving to Sheffield in 1969 I joined the Sheffield University Morris Men with whom I learned to dance some of the Rapper (short sword) dances of North-umberland. I saw the then recently formed Barnsley Longsword Dancers perform the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance at a Folk Festival in Sheffield and shortly afterwards saw the two long established local teams from Grenoside and Handsworth. Over the next few years I watched a large number of the Longsword dance teams who were active in the north of England.

In 1974 I began teaching Cotswold Morris dances to the newly formed Lord Conyers Morris Men at Kiveton Park. All the time my interest in the Yorkshire



*John Ledbury, engrossed, watching Goathland Plough Stots dancing at Beckhole outside the pub on their 'Plough Monday' tour in January, 1992.
Photo by Trevor Stone*

tradition of the Longsword dance was increasing, culminating in the desire to undertake some serious study on the subject.

The preparation

The ground-point of my investigation was to observe at first hand as many as possible of the Longsword performances taking place around the 1990/91 mid-winter period. This was necessarily limited by the number of teams that dance on Boxing Day and the distance involved in travelling to see any performances away from the Sheffield area. The first team observed were Lord Conyers Morris Men who danced in Rotherham on Saturday, December 22nd, 1990.

The two long-established teams in the Sheffield area, Grenoside and Handsworth were both observed on Boxing Day, 1990, Grenoside performing outside the Old Harrow public house in Main Street, Grenoside, and Handsworth on the pavement outside St Mary's Church, Handsworth. Barnsley Longsword Dancers were seen at Spencer's Arms public house at Cawthorne on Sunday, December 30th, 1990.

Travelling further afield Goathland Plough Stots were followed around their perambulation of their North Yorkshire moorland parish on Saturday, January 19th, 1991, and finally Highside Longsword Team were seen dancing on the occasion of the Plough Blessing service at St Andrew's Church, Kirkby Malzeard, near Ripon, on Sunday, January 27th, 1991.

Background reading

Descriptions of dancing from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were obtained from printed extracts published by the Folk-Lore Society, in County Folk-Lore and British Calendar Customs. In addition to notations on how to perform some of the dances Cecil Sharp's books give much historical information of Longsword dancing in nineteenth century England and earlier related customs in ...



*John dances with the Lord Conyers Morris Men, seen here performing the pousette.
Photo supplied by John Ledbury*

mainland Europe. Useful twentieth century sources of Longsword dance information are the Journals of the English Folk Dance, and English Folk Dance and Song Societies, articles in *The Morris Dancer*, and *Rattle Up My Boys*. In addition to material generally available through libraries, use was made of two locally available sources: the Sword Dance Archive of "The Morris Ring", housed by Ivor Allsop, former Squire and Archivist of "The Morris Ring" and the Russell Wortley Collection, housed at the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language at the University of Sheffield.

This historical evidence is analysed by categorising descriptions of the following aspects of performance: location and earliest recorded reference, time of year, costume, music, swords, extra characters and occupations. Accounts from the nineteenth century and earlier are spasmodic and early twentieth century methods of collecting Longsword dance information were by no means comprehensive.

Cecil Sharp for example, while seeking information for Part III of *The Sword Dances of Northern England*, circulated a letter to incumbents of parishes in the Diocese of York, thereby restricting his area of search to the East Riding and the part of the North Riding to the east of the Great North Road.

After examining the location and earliest recorded reference, the time of year the dances were performed is recorded and relationships with Christmas, Plough Monday or other times of year examined. The costumes worn by the dancers for their displays are examined and reasons for change over a period of time considered. The music, both in terms of the instruments used and the tunes played on them, was the subject of very little attention in early descriptions of the dance and not always treated with the greatest of respect by later collectors. This has resulted in Sword Dance musicians using popular airs and ones connected with other forms of ceremonial dance, often Border Morris.

As a considerable amount of research has already been carried out and much written work published about the "traditional" teams, Goathland Plough Stots, Grenoside Sword Dancers and Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers, it was decided to concentrate on the three newer teams, two of whom, Barnsley Longsword Dancers and Lord Conyers Morris Men, were conveniently close to provide detailed study material, and the third, Highside Longsword Team, provided an interesting contrast with Barnsley as both teams danced the Kirkby Malzeard Sword

Dance. The two aspects of the dance that give rise to the most disagreement, the Lock and the music, are both approached in different ways by the two teams.

The three teams chosen for the case studies are to be described in detail later, and their approach to the performance of Longsword dancing. Visual evidence of the teams' performances is supplemented by interviews with dancers, and audio tapes in the case of discussions with Barnsley Longsword members. The small numbers involved in the Highside Team made an informal discussion in a farmhouse kitchen, followed up by letters and telephone calls, an ideal means of collecting the information I needed to understand both the dance and the dancers. I compare the three teams and look at their dancing in the light of both the "tradition" and the current "state of the art". As a result of this the conclusions reached are a comment on the current state of Longsword dancing in Yorkshire.

DISPLAYS WITNESSED IN MIDWINTER 1990/91

Lord Conyers Morris Men

Saturday 22 December, 1990

After meeting in the Effingham Arms public house Lord Conyers Morris Men danced their own Sword dance in nearby College Street in Rotherham town centre at 1.30 p.m. on the Saturday before Christmas, 1990. The dancers were wearing brown waistcoats unbuttoned over white shirts and cricket trousers, and performing to the accompaniment of a button accordion player. An additional character dressed in a chef's hat and apron and a false red nose appeared during the later figures of the dance passing among the crowd, distributing pieces of cake. The dancers were ignored by the majority of Rotherham Christmas shoppers and had to compete for pavement space with a road sweeping machine. This lack of response failed to give the dancers the lift that a good crowd reaction can give and this is reflected in the way the dancers performed at a leisurely pace. The dance was repeated in Kiveton Park, outside The Forge at 2.30 p.m. with the addition of an extra figure - the Ride Lock.

Lord Conyers Morris Men also performed the same dance on March 30, 1991, outside the City Hall at an international folk festival in Leuven, Belgium. This time the festival atmosphere and the large, enthusiastic crowd, including flag wavers, alpen

horn players and members of folk dance groups from all over Europe, gave the dance a noticeable lift. The music was augmented by a second musician playing a fiddle, the dancers were eight in number, wore no waistcoats, but had shirt sleeves rolled up and were accompanied by a hobby horse, but no cake bearer. This role was in fact played by the same man, who had actually made a brief appearance as the hobby horse in Rotherham before the dancing began. There were also an additional two figures which were not performed in Rotherham.

The discrepancies between the two performances of the dance were due to work commitments and injury. Only seven dancers were available for the Christmas performance and the dance was adapted accordingly, with the last pair in figures which would not adapt for seven men omitted, and the logistics of folk dance festivals abroad presented certain difficulties in having all kit at the right place at the right time, thus the swords were present but the waistcoats were not. In the eight man version the figures of the dance fit the music and the pace, although the same, appears less leisurely.

Grenoside Sword Dancers, Wednesday, 26 December 1990

On a wet Boxing Day Grenoside Sword Dancers emerged from their meeting place at the fiddler's home at the top of Main Street, Grenoside, and marched down the village in formation to give their usual performance at 11.00 a.m. in the road outside The Old Harrow public house. The team's usual kit of Paisley patterned jackets, white trousers with a red stripe, black clogs and black and gold cricket-style caps was augmented this year by badges inscribed "I danced with Ted". This reason for this became apparent after the first performance of the Sword Dance when Ted Frost announced his retirement as Captain after 27 years. The dance was performed to the accompaniment of a solo violin, using the tunes published by Cecil Sharp. The figures danced were as published by Sharp.

After the handing over of the Captain's office the audience was entertained by displays of Cotswold Morris by Escafeld Morris Men and North-Western style dances

by Old Ooty, before the Sword Dancers returned for a second performance. Dave Brookes marked his first performance as Captain by making a fall onto the wet road for the mock execution, which had not previously been braved on this occasion by his predecessor, who merely lost his cap. Cecil Sharp commented that the Grenoside Sword Dance was by preference performed indoors, conflicting with the more generally held view that these dances were normally outdoor performances. This would have solved the problem of the Captain's fall onto the wet road, but this dance, more than any other of the Yorkshire Longsword being performed in iron-shod clogs, has the appearance of an outdoor performance. Between the 1880s and the First World War the Grenoside Sword Dancers would perform during the Christmas season in the village streets and at the "big houses", houses of the local gentry.

Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers

Wednesday, 26 December 1990

Because of the wet weather a smaller crowd than usual gathered outside St Mary's Church, Handsworth to see the Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers do their third and final performance of the day at noon. They had previously danced at The Anglers public house on nearby Richmond Road and at The Cross in the neighbouring village of Woodhouse, which used to be the home of the dance before it moved to Handsworth over a hundred years ago. In Christmases past the team are reputed to have toured the local "big houses", including the Vicarage and the Grange, then danced at the local public houses, before setting off on foot for the surrounding villages.

The display started with a performance of "The Handsworth Tup", a self-written Mummings' Play in the local style of "Tup Plays", finishing with a variant of the Boosbeck Sword Dance. There was then some communal carol singing, led as usual by Father Kenneth Loveless, a retired clergyman with a long standing devotion to ceremonial dance who is now an annual visitor to the Sheffield Longsword



*Grenoside Traditional Sword Dancers at the climax of their performance outside the Old Harrow pub, Grenoside on Boxing Day 1991.
Photo by Trevor Stone*



*The Handsworth Sword Dancers perform their dance outside the Handsworth Parish Church on Boxing Day 1991
Photo by Trevor Stone*

dance displays at Christmas, to allow performers to prepare for the Sword Dance, for which the dancers and musicians wear military style tunics with boots and gaiters. The music on this occasion was provided by a solo melodeon. The music published by Sharp was Napoleon's March for The Ring and The Clash, and The Girl I Left Behind Me or The White Cockade for the remaining figures (plus The Keel Row for The Roll). The current sequence of tunes was devised to suit the individual figures in 1958 by the team's regular musician, with subsequent modifications to suit the melodeon. These include British Grenadiers, Cotton Socks, Nellie Gray, Cock o' the North, Kafoozalum, John Peel, Country Gardens and Bobby Shaftoe, in addition to The Girl I Left Behind Me and The Keel Row, but not Napoleon's March or The White Cockade.

No additional characters were present this year, although on some previous recent occasions two clowns have been observed, whose duties included sweeping the circle in which the dancers were to perform and generally entertaining the crowd. After the Sword Dance, dancers and audience retired to the warmth of the Cross Keys public house to sing carols of the local variety, as sung in the public houses to the north of Sheffield during the weeks coming up to Christmas.

Barnsley Longsword Dancers

Sunday 30 December 1990

On yet another wet day Barnsley Longsword Dancers arrived at the Spencers Arms in Cawthorne, a village to the west of Barnsley, in time to dance at 1.30 p.m. They had previously danced at the Shaw Inn, their regular Tuesday night practice venue on Racecommon Road in the centre of Barnsley. The display started with a performance of the Haxby Sword Dance. This was performed by eight dancers, bare-headed, wearing tabards with red and white rosettes and a white sash, black knee breeches, red socks and black shoes, linked together by wooden swords.

The figures danced were as published by Cecil Sharp. The music played as a



Barnsley Longsword line up to perform the Kirkby Malzeard Longsword dance outside the Spencer Arms, Cawthorne on the first Sunday after Christmas in 1990. Photo by Trevor Stone

duet on concertina and violin started with a very slow rendering of The Girl I Left Behind Me and then suddenly quickened its tempo to start the Single-Over and alternated for the remainder of the dance with Three Jolly Sheepskins. After the Haxby dance the dancers removed tabards and turned shirt collars up to give a performance of the Newbiggin Rapper Dance to the accompaniment of a solo violin with and an additional character dressed as Father Christmas.

The third and final dance in the display was the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance from near Ripon in what was once the West Riding of Yorkshire (now part of North Yorkshire). For this the dancers turned their shirt collars back down and donned red and white cricket-style caps. The six dancers were "called on" in turn by the Captain to the song You Noble Spectators and after singing the last two verses in

unison performed the figures of the dance. They were accompanied by violin and piccolo to the airs of Lass o' Dallogill and The Oyster Girl.

Goathland Ploughstots

Saturday 19 January 1991

Following the blessing of the plough at the parish church Sunday, 13 January (first Sunday after Epiphany), Goathland Ploughstots set off on their perambulation of the parish in dry but freezing weather on the following Saturday. At 10.10 a.m. the procession left the "Reading Room" led by one of the dancers carrying a banner inscribed "Goathland Plough Stots" "God Speed the Plough". Behind him came four "stots", young boys - two in kit similar to the dancers and two in smocks - dragging a replica of a plough guided by the Fool. Writing in 1814 George Walker gives the German stotze, meaning prop or support, as the root for the Northern Middle English word "stott", meaning bullock. Next came the remaining eleven dancers walking in pairs with their swords, with the melodeon player and "Auld Isaac", another Fool character with "There He Goaz" across his back. They processed to the tune of D'Ye Ken John Peel.

The procession paused outside the Post Office and the dancers formed into two teams of six, thirty yards apart. They were dressed in either pale blue or pink jackets with a white waist-band, bare-headed, and grey trousers with a red stripe. One team had dancers alternately in blue and pink, while the other had four pink and two blue jacketed dancers. The musicians, who had by now increased to three in number, wore jackets that were half blue and half pink.

Four figures of the dance were performed, identified by the dancers as Numbers One, Two, Three and Five. Each figure started with a High Clash, in which two swords were held stationary with their points crossed and the other four clashed against them, and finished with The Rose, as at Sleights.

After parading around the green the party split into two groups, each consisting of



One of the two teams fielded by the Goathland Plough Stots reach one end of the village - seen here performing in January 1992 at the edge of the moorland which surrounds the village. Photo by Julian Stevens

six dancers, two musicians, including a lady accordionist, not wearing special kit, a Fool and two boys. One group went up the village, around the railway station, and the other down the village to The Mallyan Inn and then to Darnholm, both groups eventually meeting up at the Birch Hall Inn, Beck Hole for lunch.

One or two figures of the dance were performed outside each occupied house, including figure Number Four, the figure not performed at the Post Office.

After lunch at about 2.30 p.m. three figures of the dance, Numbers One, Three and Five were performed by one set of six dancers outside the Birch Hall Inn with the Lock of swords placed around the neck of a by-stander, obviously known to the dancers, but no mock execution performed, and hung over a hook above the



The Highside Longsword team, after the annual Kirkby Malzeard Plough Blessing ceremony, pose for photographs with the outgoing vicar outside the village church in 1992.

Photo by Trevor Stone

door of the inn, instead of breaking the Lock. The dancers then dispersed for the afternoon and met again at 8.00 p.m. for a meal and social evening.

Highside Longsword Team

Sunday 27 January 1991

On a particularly cold January Sunday Highside Longsword Team attended a Plough Blessing Service in the Parish Church of St Andrew, Kirkby Malzeard, near Ripon. The name derives from "church settlement by the Castle of Malessart", Roger de Mowbray's castle destroyed in 1176. "Malessart" signifies an irregular clearing in the woods. The church stands at the north east end of the village, opposite the Church of England Primary School. Because it is situated at the edge of a steeply sloping hillside, the village itself spreads to the south west from the church towards its "high side". At the end of the service which included the hymn, We Plough the Fields and Scatter, the Longsword Team performed the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance in the rather constrained space between the rood screen and the front pews.

After the service and posing with the Lock of swords for some photographs in the churchyard the dancers repaired to the Henry Jenkins Inn and just before 1.00 p.m. gave a repeated performance of the dance inside the public bar. The figures were performed in the usual sequence: The Captain's Song, The Clash, Single-Over, Double-Sword, Double-Under, Double-Over, Your-Own-Sword, The Clash, The Lock with Single-Under repeated as a chorus after each figure. The dance was accompanied by a variant of The Girl I Left Behind Me played upon a melodeon. The Lock was not the usual hexagon as described by Cecil Sharp in connection with this dance, but a double triangle. After the performance at the Henry Jenkins Inn the dancers then retired to the home of one of their members at Skelding on the moors to the south of the village for lunch.

My study examined the "tradition" of Longsword dancing in Yorkshire in three stages. The first of these was to observe at first hand what was taking place over the midwinter period from Christmas 1990 into the New Year of 1991. The second

stage was to analyse as much published material as possible to gain a thorough understanding of the tradition in the period preceding its apparent demise in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the revival of interest in it in the twentieth. Finally case studies to be published in a later issue were undertaken of three dance teams who have used contrasting approaches to contribute to this revival over the last twenty five years. These approaches and those of the longer established teams observed over the midwinter period were compared with the tradition as defined by the published material. The first two case studies feature locally based teams, Barnsley Longsword Dancers and Lord Conyers Morris Men, and are extensive, while the third concerns the more recently formed Highside Longsword Team, who are included to contrast their approach to the revival of the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance with that adopted by Barnsley Longsword Dancers.

Comparing the details ...

Later in this article I have drawn a number of conclusions about the teams studied but before that here are a number of aspects compared.

Location

The historical evidence shows that, by the nineteenth century at least Longsword dancing was virtually confined to within the county boundary of Yorkshire. Records of it are plentiful throughout the county, from the Yorkshire Dales, Cleveland Hills and North Yorkshire Moors in the north, in the Vale of York, on the east coast and in the south around Sheffield. By going further back to the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries, references can be found to what appear to be a similar style of dancing in the neighbouring counties of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumberland, but these are often isolated instances, vague in their descriptions and difficult to extract anything positive from. The only example of an apparently indigenous Longsword dance from outside the confines of Yorkshire surviving into the twentieth century is the Greatham Sword Dance from the south east of County Durham, near Tees-mouth. This is from only just outside the old county of Yorkshire and further north in Durham around Tyne-side can be found the closely related tradition of Rapper (short flexible sword) dancing. Elsewhere in Durham are nineteenth century references to other Longsword dances, at Gainford, Haswell, Hurworth, Piercebridge, Staindrop and Witton

le Wear, but little is known of these, and a dance from Chopwell performed with short rigid links. There is also an eighteenth century reference to one from Northumberland, possibly at Barden Mill. Claims that the Greatham dance represents some form of missing link between the Longsword and Rapper traditions would, however, appear unfounded as, although in recent revivals of the Greatham dance flexible bed laths have been used to link the dancers, these were bent as little as possible and before the regular performance of the dance ceased in the 1920s rigid steel swords of 36 to 40 inches in length were used. The few examples from the south of England, from Sussex, Hampshire and Devon are equally isolated and vague, but to the north up the east coast of Scotland, records of Sword dances on the mainland are given some credibility by the continuing tradition of the Papa Stour Dance in the Shetland Islands.

Contemporary Longsword dancing uses material collected in Yorkshire and is danced by teams based all over England and abroad. A survey in 1980 and 1981 identified sixty eight teams who performed Longsword dances. Of these two teams were based in mainland Scotland, one performing the Ampleforth Sword Dance, including the associated play, as well as dancing Rapper, and the other the Papa Stour Sword Dance, one was the Shetland team who are the present "custodians" of that particular tradition, and one in Hong Kong, who performed a mixture of Longsword figures as well as dancing Cotswold Morris. Of the English teams listed twenty three are from the old (pre-1974) county of Yorkshire. From this it can be seen that while this Yorkshire tradition can now be seen further afield, it still has its roots firmly based in its native county. By 1989 seventy eight teams, from England and abroad, thought to dance Longsword had been identified, indicating an increasing interest in this type of dancing.

These roots are strongest where there is a continuity, or near continuity of tradition, from the teams dancing in the last century. Teams from Flamborough, Goathland, Grenoside, Handsworth and Loftus were recorded as active at the time of the initial survey, as well as the Shetland team. Of these Goathland Plough Stots, Grenoside Sword Dancers and Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers were observed at first hand over the 1990/91 midwinter period. Also over this period the three revival teams, who were to become subject of the case studies were observed.

All teams observed were Yorkshire based (neither Lord Conyers Morris Men nor Highside Longsword Team featured in the 1980/81 survey, as neither were active performers of the Longsword dance at that time, and Lord Conyers Morris Men are also missing from the 1989 list) and all exclusively male in their membership, also in line with historical accounts of the tradition. Violet Alford extended the theory of the ritual dance being by tradition a men's dance, often unmarried men, to the possibility that it was confined to virgin youths in earlier times. She puts the Longsword dance into the ritual category, not only for its seasonal nature, but for its inclusion of circle, snake and bridge figures, all common in magic making. If this is the case the ritual from which it is descended must have changed dramatically at some point in its history, as she also cites a rock drawing from 3,400 BC as the earliest record of a chain dance, and this features seven female participants.

Time of Year

The historical evidence identifies the time of year at which the Longsword dance was performed as midwinter. Various theories exist to connect this with calendar customs connected with the winter solstice, the start of the agricultural year or merely a time of public holiday. Whatever the reason the tradition appears to be being upheld both by the established teams and the new. Grenoside and Handsworth both dance on Boxing Day, as do some of the newer teams including Highside, and Goathland Plough Stots dance on the Saturday following Plough Sunday, whenever this may be fixed in the church's calendar. Highside also dance at a Plough Blessing Service in January. Barnsley now have a well established date and venue to dance at Cawthorne on the Sunday after Christmas, while Lord Conyers are still trying to establish Longsword dancing in the Rotherham area on the Saturday before Christmas.

The impression gained from most of the accounts of the Longsword from the last century is that their annual midwinter outing was the only time that the dance was performed, which puts it in line with other seasonal observances. The tendency

among modern dance teams from any aspect of English folk dance is to dance on frequent occasions, irrespective of whether the season is appropriate or not. Consequently Grenoside dance regularly at their annual July festival and at other times to suit themselves. Handsworth dance regularly during the summer, performing both their Longsword dance and dances of the Cotswold Morris. They have recently added their own interpretation of the somewhat scanty notation available for the Salton Sword Dance from the Vale of York. Lord Conyers also dance regularly throughout the summer, performing mainly Cotswold Morris with their Longsword dance included on an occasional basis. All three of these teams were seen on the streets of Sheffield during July, 1991, taking part in the Cultural Festival run to coincide with the XVI Universiade. Barnsley also dance out fairly regularly and are now the established hosts of an annual dance weekend based on Cawthorne on the second full weekend in June, but Highside undertake very few commitments during the summer months, with their only regular out-of-season appearance being at Masham Sheep Fair on the last Saturday in September, all outings in their case being dependent upon the availability of all members.

Contemporary Longsword dancing can thus be seen to reflect the tradition that prevailed in the last century to dance at midwinter, but also reflects modern attitudes and increased leisure time in bringing the dance before the public on a great many other occasions as well.

Costume

We see the transition in the costume worn by Longsword dancers over the nineteenth century, from ribbons, bows and rosettes sewn onto shirts and hats to more elaborate dress, often military uniforms, and in some cases political colours. The twentieth century revival saw the retention of some costumes and the influence of the EFDS and EFDSS in the introduction of breeches and waistcoats. These were



The costume worn by Handsworth when Sharp visited in 1913 has changed little (top left), Barnsley put on a waistcoat decorated with bows and ribbons to dance their Haxby dance (top right) and the Goathland Plough Stots showing the Musician in his two colour jacket.

the favoured costumes for displays of country dancing where the waistcoats worn by the "gents" were often matched to the skirts worn by the "girls". More recent revivals have departed from this costume and ribbons have even started to make a revival.

Of the teams observed over the midwinter period the dancers of Grenoside and Handsworth appeared very much as described by Cecil Sharp. Goathland dress half their dancers in blue, the other half in pink (no orange), but no longer turn out a team in each colour to agree the political preference of their audience. Instead they alternate the colours within the teams of dancers, with the musicians showing even more apparent political neutrality, by having tunics half of one colour and half of the other. The influence of military uniforms still shows its presence in the form of a red stripe down the trouser legs, but the dancers no longer wear the peaked caps of a few years ago.

Barnsley's combination of the pre and post First World War costumes of the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dancers with the inclusion of their own identity as is their subtle adaptation of this for the other dances they perform. Both Lord Conyers and Highside wear waistcoats, Lord Conyers as an easy modification of their Cotswold Morris costume and Highside as part of a costume designed by themselves specifically for the dance, and not based on anything worn by previous Kirkby Malzeard teams.

Music

The instruments used by the teams observed, either as solo or in small combinations, showed little change from those described in earlier accounts of the Longsword dances, with the exception of the virtual absence of percussion. Barnsley used to possess a drum, but had no spare man to play it, and Lord Conyers possess both side and bass drums, which they use for other performances but not, as yet, for their Longsword dance. Grenoside, as has been the case for as long as I have been watching them, danced to a solo fiddle and Handsworth to a solo melodeon, although on other recent occasions this has been used in combination with an accordion, concertina or fiddle. At Goathland the number of musicians gradually increased to four during the early part of the morning, three melodeonists and an accordionist, who split into two combinations of two to accompany the two groups of dancers. Barnsley boast a number of musicians, some of whom interchange as dancers, and on the Sunday following Christmas, 1990, used various combinations of concertina, fiddle and piccolo. Dancing at Thurlstone the following June they danced to the music of a pipe and tabor, a rare example of the inclusion of percussion. Lord Conyers danced to a solo button accordion on the Saturday before Christmas, but had added a fiddle by the time they danced in Leuven, Belgium, the following Easter. Highside danced to a solo melodeon.

Of the tunes used, Grenoside showed no change to those collected and published by Cecil Sharp, while those used at Handsworth included *The Girl I Left Behind Me* and *The Keel Row* of the four tunes Sharp noted for the dance and supplemented these with a further eight. Of the tunes used at Goathland *Pop Goes the Weasel* and *Cock of the North* were among those described by Sharp as having been used for the neighbouring, and closely related, *Sleights Sword Dance*, in 1912. The others were commonly used dance tunes.

The controversy surrounding the tune or tunes known by variations of *The Old Wife/Lass of Coverdill/Dallowgill* is discussed in some detail later. When this tune is called for by the Captain for the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance, the Highside musician strikes up *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, as has customarily been used in Kirkby Malzeard for the Sword Dance, while the Barnsley musicians respond with the tune played by Joe Winspear at North Skelton as *Lass o' Dallogill*, alternating this with another from the same source, *The Oyster Girl*. For the Haxby Sword Dance they use *The Girl I Left Behind Me* as quoted by Sharp as the tune most frequently used and alternate this with *Three Jolly Sheepskins* which Sharp published as a tune for this dance, although he learned it from a gypsy fiddler in Staffordshire. Lord Conyers seek in their choice of tunes to use those that were associated with Longsword dance tradition, preferably ones that are or were in general use rather than tunes associated with any one specific dance.

It can be seen from the above that the music used for the Longsword dances of Yorkshire suffers a little from anonymity, with tunes from elsewhere in the country

being imported to compensate for a perceived deficiency, and from a certain amount of confusion. The present rarity of the use of percussion would suggest that it is also a little less boisterous than it was in the last century.

Swords

All the teams observed over the winter period used steel swords, with Barnsley additionally using wooden ones for the Haxby Sword Dance. In general it has been observed that dances are performed with swords of the appropriate material as collected, the Askham Richard, Flamborough and Haxby Sword Dances being usually performed with wooden swords, while steel ones are otherwise almost always used, by adult teams at least.

The availability of local materials and manufacturing techniques enabled all three teams subject to the case studies to have made locally or make their own steel swords. Barnsley have also established a local supply of wooden swords for the Haxby Sword Dance.

Extra Characters

Apart from Captains, where appropriate, extra characters are almost absent from Longsword dancing today. This was certainly not the case in the last century when teams were accompanied by "Toms", "Madgies", "Plough Stots", characters involved in or left over from Folk Plays.

Over the 1990/91 midwinter period Lord Conyers were accompanied by a mast-type hobby horse and a cake bearer, two characters more often associated with the Cotswold Morris. There used to be a two man hobby donkey at Goathland prior to the 1860s, but no references have been found to Longsword dancers handing out cake. Grenoside had their Captain, whose roles include singing the



*Handsworth have added to their Boxing Day performance a mumming play which climaxes in a short sword dance based on the Salton dance.
Photograph by Trevor Stone*

two songs, holding the Lock aloft and then being "decapitated" by it, positional movements around the set during the middle figures of the dance and leading the dancers off at the end. At Handsworth there were no extra characters present this year, although on occasional Boxing Days past the dancers have been accompanied by two clowns. At Barnsley the Captain called on the Kirkby Malzeard dance and bore the Lock off at the end. No extra character was present for the Haxby dance, although "Father Christmas" was used to call on the Rapper dance.

I had only seen the Goathland Plough Stots away from their home base and at other times of year before, and their "Saturday following Plough Sunday" performance in their home parish proved something rather more spectacular that I had previously witnessed from them. The dancers were accompanied by a banner, four boys pulling a plough, driven by one of the Fools, while another Fool, known as "Auld Isaac" completed the party. Highside had their Captain to call the dancers on, but he did not also play the drum as recorded on paper by Cecil Sharp and on photograph by Keighley Snowden. It is also worth noting that the

neither Barnsley, nor Highside employ the services of a pikestaff bearer, as added to the team by D'Arcy Ferris.

Occupations

From available accounts of Longsword dancers' performances it would appear that the dance used to be performed by agricultural labourers. With the changes in farming in the nineteenth century the agricultural communities broke up, but sometimes the men who had been involved in the Longsword dance remained together as a social group in an industrial environment, particularly mining. Hence, several Longsword dances were collected as being or having been danced by miners.

Of the three dances observed at midwinter claiming continuity with teams in the past, Goathland, Grenoside and Handsworth, only the Goathland Plough Stots appear to have their roots in agriculture. The dance ceased to be performed in the mid nineteenth century, as the agricultural communities were shrinking and was only revived after a break of some sixty years in 1923. Goathland is still described as having the majority of local people employed in farming or related industries, although a number of unoccupied houses not danced outside in January, 1991, were identified as holiday accommodation. The Grenoside Sword Dance only ceased a few years before Cecil Sharp's visit in 1911 and he identified the performers of it as miners. Cindy Sughrue's research into the men featured in a 1885 photograph, the year an article on the team appeared in the Pall Mall Gazette, identifies them as predominantly quarrymen and iron moulders, with several close family ties and all from the same end of the village. A shift from quarry work to mining between the date of this photograph and Sharp's visit is in line with the trend in the Sheffield area in general. The Handsworth Sword Dance, despite a lapse of several years and a shift of base from Woodhouse to Handsworth, was still being performed when Sharp collected it and was danced by colliers.

Grenoside and Handsworth are now suburbs of Sheffield, and not quarrying or mining communities. Handsworth Colliery was the last pit inside the Sheffield City boundary to close some twenty years ago. There would appear to be few occupational, close geographical or family ties between members of either of these two teams, or between members of the three teams subject to the case study. The dance team or club has now become its own focal point with its purpose being to dance, rather than the dance being just one form of expression of a social group defined by occupational, local or family links.

Conclusion

In general it can be concluded that Longsword dances are still performed in their native county of Yorkshire, the established ones being augmented by occasional new ones. Midwinter is still regarded as the appropriate time for their performance, although they can now be seen at other times of year as well. The costumes worn vary considerably, reflecting changing fashions over the last hundred and fifty years. The music has changed very little since the early twentieth century, but lacks the element of percussion that was often present in the nineteenth. Swords can be procured by dancers in whatever shape, size or material they feel appropriate for the dance concerned, and there appears to be no substitution of wooden swords to replace lost metal ones, as was thought to be the case in the last century. Very few extra characters now accompany the Longsword and tasks like collecting money tend to be undertaken by spare dancers. Finally it is apparent that the close occupational and social links of the old dance teams have been replaced by membership of a club.

John Ledbury. 1990

BOXING DAY OUTINGS 1992

Check first if you require accurate details. All times are approximate!

Claro Sword

10.30	Old Swan Hotel
11.30	Hotel St George
12.30	Harrogate Arms, Harlow Hill

Flamborough Longsword

12.00 'ish	Rose & Crown Timoneer Hotel
2.15 'ish	Dog & Duck Square

Grenoside Longsword

11.00	The Old Harrow, Grenoside
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Handsworth Longsword

11.15	The Crown, Woodhouse
12.00	Parish Church, Handsworth

Highside Longsword (Kirby Malzeard)

1.00	Grantley
2.00	Kirby Malzeard

Spen Valley Longsword

12.00	New Packhorse, Hartshead Moor
12.45	The Royal, Cleckheaton
1.30	Old Saw, Gomersal
2.30	Wheatsheaf, Gomersal

Other teams - other times

Barnsley Longsword,

Sunday, December 27th

12.30 'ish	The Shaw, Barnsley
1.00 'ish	Spencers Arms, Cawthorne

Claro Sword

Sunday, January 10th

11.30 'ish Dancing in the street after the Plough Blessing to be held at St John's Church, Knaresborough

Fiarmere Longsword

Sunday, December 27th

Touring the Saddleworth area during the day - check with Eddie Beswick for fuller details.

Highside Longsword (Kirby Malzeard)

Plough Blessing

For details of the plough blessing and subsequent dance tour in Kirby Malzeard contact Ted Dodsworth (0765) 620374. It is usually mid to late January

Kirkburton Rapier Dancers January 1st

12.15	Carlton Club
12.45	The George
1.30	The Junction
2.15	The Smiths Arms
3.00	The Woodman, Thunderbridge

Goathland Plough Stots

Saturday, January 19th

10.00am to 3.00 'ish tour of Goathland and Darnholm
The Goathland plough blessing is held on the previous Sunday

The next issue will carry a miscellany of material comprising mainly reports from trips to Italy and to the USA.

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