



RATTLE UP My Boys

AN OCCASIONAL BROADSHEET FOR THOSE
WITH AN INTEREST IN LONGSWORD DANCE

Issue 4, Series 4 Spring 1994

SEE ISSUE 5 for
'CORRIGENDA + ADDENDA'

CASE STUDIES IN LONGSWORD DANCING - BARNESLEY LONGSWORD, LORD CONYERS MORRIS MEN AND HIGHSIDE LONGSWORD

FINAL PART OF A THESIS BY JOHN LEDBURY

In the concluding part of his thesis (parts 1 & 2 were featured in earlier issues of RUMB) John Ledbury explores the sword dance scene as exemplified by Barnsley Longsword, his own team Lord Conyers Morris Men and Highside Longsword.

My approaches to the study of the three teams in these case studies have differed considerably. Barnsley Longsword Dancers were originally members of a Folk Song Club, who decided to form a team to dance the traditional dances of Yorkshire. The first one they learned, the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance, is still part of their repertoire and has become associated with the team. "Kirkby Malzeard as danced by Barnsley" is certainly an established part of the contemporary Longsword scene. They now also dance the Haxby Sword Dance and the Newbiggin Rapper Dance. Lord Conyers Morris Men also grew out of a Folk Song Club, but were formed specifically to dance the Cotswold Morris, which remains the mainstay of their repertoire. It was only after thirteen years of dancing that they decided to add a Longsword dance to their repertoire to dance at midwinter, and took the unusual step of composing their own. In contrast to both the other two, the Highside Longsword Team were based upon experienced Morris Dancers in the Ripon, North Yorkshire, area and, because of their proximity to Kirkby Malzeard decided to form a team specifically to perform that dance, although the choice of a different name denies any claim of continuity of tradition with previous teams there. The fact that their melodeon player's father also played the melodeon for the revived village team in the 1920/30s would give them a reasonable claim of a direct link with this team, who also had a father-and-son link with the pre First World War team via their respective Captains.

Barnsley Longsword Dancers have less active members now than they did at one time, when, in the words of Tom Owen, "there was competition to get into the first team", but are still a thriving club. Lord Conyers Morris Men, with nineteen active members on their books, are now nearly as large as they have ever been, while the Highside Longsword Team are currently operating with just enough to take the parts of

A CHANGE OF SUBJECT

Apologies to those who expected the main item in this issue to be on the subject trailed in issue 3. A number of people have expressed interest in the concluding part of John Ledbury's thesis and so I have brought it forward and delayed the report on a visit to see Basque dancing until later.

musician, Captain and six dancers. This has its limitations as shown by the fact that they were unable to perform at Masham Sheep Fair in 1991 because of insufficient numbers and that they had to cease operations for a period in 1988 when one of their members broke his wrist. This could, however, well change dramatically if they succeed where the Barnsley team failed in creating an interest in the dance within the village. The relatively healthy state of these teams is reflected among Longsword teams generally.

BARNESLEY LONGSWORD DANCERS

Formation and Membership

The decision to start a team of Longsword dancers from the members of Barnsley Folk Club was made at Whitby Folk Festival in the August of 1968. Jim Potter, who was to become the first Captain of the team had attended a series of Longsword workshops at the Festival given by the late Kathy Mitchell and discussed with others on the beach and during a boat trip the idea of starting a team in Barnsley to perform some of these traditional dances of Yorkshire.

The idea was put to Folk Club members and by the end of September there were nine men interested, including two current members of the Handsworth team, Ivor Allsop and Clive Turner. The former of these went on to teach the team for their first fifteen years, and both men for a time danced with both Handsworth and Barnsley.

Over its twenty four year life the team has grown, attracting new members, via the Folk Club for the first five or six years and subsequently from outside, and now has its own separate identity. In 1991 it boasted fourteen regular dancers, including six or seven singers and three or four musicians.

Choice of Dances

Information about Longsword dances was initially obtained from the English Folk Dance and Song Society, and Cecil Sharp's books, 'The Sword Dances of Northern England'. After careful consideration the choice of the dance to learn first was narrowed down to two, the Kirkby Malzeard, and Escrick Sword Dances. Of these the former was chosen as it best met the team's requirements: it was not at that time danced regularly by any other team; there was no village team in Kirkby Malzeard; it was a complete dance in itself without a break between figures; it only required six dancers; and it had a song associated with it. There was also a record available of the music for the dance.

The dance was learned according to Cecil Sharp's published version, including the hexagonal lock. A double triangle lock was used by the revival team in Kirkby in the



*Barnsley Longsword performing their version of the Kirkby Malzeard dance in Thaxted churchyard at the 1991 Thaxted Morris Ring meeting
Photo by Gordon Ridgewell*

1920s,³ but if this had been in their repertoire when Cecil Sharp visited they chose not to show him!⁴ The only major departure from Sharp's publications, and from the EFDSS record, was the decision not to dance to the collected tune, 'The Girl I Left Behind Me',⁵ but instead to use 'Lass o' Dallogill',⁶ This also enabled a fast tempo to be used, thought appropriate by the Foreman for a tradition where the dancers were known to have given displays of gymnastic ability between dances, rather than what he considered to be the EFDSS "plodding speed" Other teams can now be seen to be influenced by Barnsley's style of dancing at quite a fast pace and jumping over swords at mid-calf height.

The original idea was to learn the dance, take it back to Kirkby Malzeard and try to reintroduce it, and then to start again with another dance They went two years running in the mid-1970s to Kirkby Malzeard and danced at the Village Fair at the Primary School They succeeded in creating some interest, including a visit from the son of the Captain of the 1910 team who came over from Pickering after reading an article in *The Dalesman*. Some discussion ensued concerning the shape of the Lock, hexagonal or double triangle, and a little initial hostility was encountered from local women towards these men from Barnsley performing "their dance" In spite of the interest generated they could not muster more than four local people interested in learning the dance, which remains in their repertoire and is regarded both within the team and widely outside as "Barnsley's dance"

A desire to expand the team's repertoire led to the learning of the Haxby Sword Dance.⁸ An increased membership made an eight man dance feasible and the use of wooden swords gave further contrast. As with Kirkby Malzeard the dance was not being danced regularly by any other team, there was no current village team in Haxby and it was a complete dance in itself without a break between figures.

The closely related tradition of the Northumbrian short sword or Rapper dance was chosen to give further variety, and the Newbiggin dance used to be practised at a separate session Now all practising is done on a Tuesday night

These three dances now comprise the Barnsley Longsword staple repertoire, although others have been learned over the years The Papa Stour dance, from the Shetlands

was practised regularly in the mid-1970s,⁹ but never danced out, the Sleights Sword Dance was learned in the early 1980s for a trip to Holland and remained in the repertoire for about a year.¹⁰ The Ampleforth Sword Dance was once learned to demonstrate at a workshop and other less common dances have been tried out,¹¹

COSTUME

At the time the team was formed financial circumstances limited what they should wear. Military type jackets, like those worn by the Grenoside and Handsworth dancers were considered, but ruled out on grounds of cost (Shortage of funds was also the reason for the original team's reputation for travelling by hired minibus, as not many members owned cars.)

As the first dance to be performed was the one collected from Kirkby Malzeard a compromise between the kit worn by the 1880s team for the Ripon Millenary Festival and retained by the 1911 team observed by Sharp,¹² and that worn by the revival team of the 1920s was decided upon. Red and white caps from the former and knee breeches from the latter were chosen, along with a white shirt and black shoes. Black breeches, rather than the bottle green worn by the revival team, were readily available from Potter's Camping Emporium, while red socks, rather than the yellow of the 1911 team, maintained the town's colours of red and white

When the Haxby Sword Dance was added to the repertoire, the red and white team was maintained by wearing a white sash as did the Haxby dancers, and by pinning red and white rosettes (multicoloured in the description of the Haxby kit) to the shirts, as the Haxby men had danced bareheaded, so did the men of Barnsley For ease of changing kit between dances the pinned-on rosettes were subsequently changed to rosettes on tabards that could easily be slipped on or off

When the Sleights dance was performed the original (Kirkby Malzeard) kit was worn without the caps, as it is now to dance the Newbiggin Rapper Dance Thus by a few subtle changes in what they wear the team manage to vary their dress from dance to dance.

MUSIC

Kirkby Malzeard

The tune collected by Cecil Sharp for this dance was a variant of 'The Girl I Left Behind Me', which is on the EFDSS record but the Captain's Song calls for the music to "strike up and play T'aud Wife of Dallowgill" A tune called Lass o' Dallogill was popular among the Longsword dancers of the Cleveland area and the variant of this played by Joe Winspear for the North Skelton Sword Dance, was chosen for the dance.¹⁴ This choice was influenced by the fact that the team's first musician, an

speed at which the Foreman wanted the dance to be performed.

Shortly after the team had started to perform they were dancing at Whitby Folk Festival and, when their own musician was called back to work midweek, they pressed into service Bert Cleaver, a pipe and tabor player from London. While dancing outside The Plough public house he sought a variation from the many repetitions of 'Lass o' Da'logill' and changed to 'The Oyster Girl', another tune played for the North Skelton Dance.¹⁵ The alternation of the two tunes has remained the team's standard for this dance.

Haxby

This is danced to The Girl I Left Behind Me,¹⁶ played very slowly for the first figure, and then up to normal tempo, alternating with the third version of Three Jolly Sheepskins,¹⁷ published by Cecil Sharp, as appropriate for this dance even though he had collected it from a gypsy fiddler in Staffordshire.¹⁸ The slow tempo start is a variant introduced by Barnsley Longsword Dancers.

INSTRUMENTS

At one time they owned a military side-drum, but never had sufficient spare men for anyone to play it.

SWORDS

The team's first set of swords were borrowed from Sheffield Teachers' Club. They then experimented with a different material for steel swords and had one made from stainless steel by a local blacksmith. This, however, proved unsatisfactory as it did not have sufficient spring to restraighten after the bending necessary to tie the Lock and did not ring well when clashed against the other swords. The original swords were later replaced by a set made by Specialised Products of Sheffield to the team's own specification.

When the Haxby dance was added to the repertoire a set of wooden swords were bought from the English Folk Dance and Song Society. These were thin and easily breakable and thirty replacements were made via connections with Barnsley Council. Because of the possibility of breakages they always carry at least one spare wooden sword, and have now reached the stage of needing to have another twenty made.

EXTRA CHARACTERS

Barnsley Longsword Team do not often have the luxury of enough men turning out to allow for extra characters on a regular basis. This was one of the reasons for dropping the Sleights Dance from the repertoire, as it required two Fools who were added to the set for the final figure.¹⁹ When numbers allow they occasionally present a "Tommy" and a "Betty" to accompany the Haxby Dance.

TRADITIONS

Tuesday before Christmas Eve

For the last four or five years the team have tended to go out on what would normally be their practice night on the last occasion before Christmas Eve. They start off at their practice venue, nowadays The Shaw Inn, Racecommon Road, Barnsley, and dance inside a few selected public houses in the centre of Barnsley. Because of the small spaces usually available the performances used to be restricted to the Rapper dance only, but now the two Longsword dances are danced as well. In earlier years the team used to dance out of doors in Barnsley town centre on the Saturday before Christmas, but had stopped this because of frequent inclement weather and interference from passing drunks.

Sunday after Christmas

With the original team including as its only experienced Longsword dancers two current members of the Handsworth team, a post-Christmas time for dancing was sought other than Boxing Day, the day on which Handsworth customarily perform. Consequently the Sunday after Christmas was chosen, as this can never clash with Boxing Day.

Two venues are usually visited. The first is the practice site which has varied over the years as the team have moved from the King George IV to The Wheatsheaf, on the corner of Peel Street and Racecommon Road, to The Shaw Inn, where they dance indoors to an audience of locals and the dancers' own families. This is followed by a drive out to Cawthorne, a village across the M1 motorway to the west of Barnsley,²⁰ where they dance outside at the Spencer's Arms. Here they are watched by a mixture of people from the village and their own following, families, friends and people from a

This occasion has now become nearly as accepted a part of the local "Longsword calendar" as the longer established traditions at Grenoside and Handsworth.

Second Full Weekend in June

Shortly after their formation Barnsley Longsword Dancers took part, along with other invited teams, in a weekend of dancing in Chipperfield, organised by London based Greensleeves Morris Men, members of the team felt that they would like to be hosts to a similar weekend of dancing. A suitable venue in or near to Barnsley was sought and while Cawthorne Village Hall was quickly identified, the procedure for booking it proved something of a mystery. This was, however, solved in time to hold their first such weekend in 1971. These have continued every year ever since.

Annual Dinner

This is a social event that takes place every year on the first Saturday in October at a suitably auspicious venue, such as The Royal Hotel or The Civic Hall in the centre of Barnsley. No Sword dancing is performed, a rule that was broken on the occasion of the team's fifteenth birthday. It is normally purely a social evening with a dinner followed by country dancing to the music of invited musicians, friends from outside the team.

The first two Annual Dinners were held in January. The date then moved to March and finally to October to coincide with the team's Annual General Meeting, which is always held on the first Tuesday (practice night) in October. It is used as the time for the four officers, Foreman, Captain, Bagman (Secretary) and Treasurer, to hand over to their successors and also for the handing out of cap badges to those who are deemed to have reached the required standard of proficiency.

LOCAL INTEREST

There has been a gradual build up of awareness in Barnsley to the existence of a locally based Longsword dance team, but there is still a long way to go before they are widely known. This has been made plain to members of the team when dancing away from home and asked where they came from. Having given the reply of Barnsley, they are frequently informed of the enquirer's home being Barnsley and a total unawareness of a home based Sword Dance team. Conversely the team's first foreman, Ivor Allsop, has overheard reference to a team of Cotswold-style Morris dancers dancing in the town centre by a passer-by who assumed them to be Barnsley Longsword Dancers. There is, therefore, at least some awareness among Barnsley people that there is a local dance team.

The town council is aware of the team's existence and consider them worth inviting to such civic functions as the opening of the Metropole Shopping Centre, a twinning ceremony including some guest Russian cosmonauts and the Civic Hall Centenary. They have also always enjoyed good rapport with stall holders in Barnsley Market, and been welcomed by them to dance there.

LORD CONYERS MORRIS MEN

Formation and Membership

Lord Conyers Morris Men were formed in November, 1974, from members of the Kiveton Park Folk Club, which met on Tuesday evenings at the Lord Conyers Arms in the South Yorkshire village of Wales. The old village of Wales is now adjoined to the east by the larger village of Kiveton Park, centred on the local colliery. The Folk Club claims its own origins from the building of the M1 motorway which passes to the west of Wales, between it and neighbouring Waleswood, and motorway building labourers used to refresh themselves in the Lord Conyers Arms and sing songs, mainly from their native Ireland, in the tap room.

During the early 1970s the Folk Club held annual Christmas Ceilidhs, either at St John's Rooms in Kiveton Park, or as the events grew in popularity at the larger venue of The Lyric in Dinnington, a nearby larger mining community, where many folk club members took their first tentative steps at dancing. Being present at all these ceilidhs as a member of Sheffield University Morris Men, who were booked each year to give displays of Cotswold Morris and Northumbrian Rapper dancing, I was asked if I would be prepared to teach a Folk Club based team, if there was sufficient interest to start one. By the autumn of 1974 sufficient interested parties had been identified and the new team began to practise at the Lord Conyers Arms on Tuesday evenings in the club room for an hour and a half before the Folk Club started. In due course Lord Conyers Morris Men made their debut at a ceilidh organised by the Folk Club at the Brincliffe Oaks public house in Sheffield on May 2nd, 1975.



CHOICE OF DANCE

Over the next twelve years the team developed an extensive, but generally conservative, repertoire of dances of the Cotswold Morris with a few additions from Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Herefordshire. All the time we were conscious that the dancing tradition of Yorkshire was the Longsword dance and that as a Yorkshire dance team we felt we ought to dance one. Of the Longsword dances for which there was practicable notation, only two were from the South Yorkshire area and those were currently being performed on a regular basis by the locally based teams from Grenoside and Handsworth. References to other Longsword dances in the area, in Orgreave and Treeton, proved to be a record of a performances around 1800 in "Argreave" with no description available and a display in the 1880s by the Woodhouse/Handsworth team,¹ and even a reference to Longsword dancers near Staveley in north Derbyshire proved to be a team from Loftus who had moved south en bloc during an industrial dispute in the Durham coalfield.²

It was therefore decided that, rather than import a dance from further north, we would create our own dance in the style of the Yorkshire Longsword. As the team's foreman, or dance teacher, I was given the task of putting together the figures of the dance. The principle used was to consider all available Longsword dance notations and to create from these an "average Yorkshire Longsword dance" with no specific movements from any one source and then to let the team develop it over the next few years. Some basic ground rules, largely my own preferences, were adopted to start with. Decisions needed to be made about the type of sword to be used and the number of dancers. Steel swords were chosen as appropriate to the Sheffield area and for their aesthetic appeal. An eight-man dance was a personal preference on my own part, again for aesthetic appeal, as the vast majority of common dance tunes in the English Folk repertoire are divided into eight bar phrases, to which the movements of eight dancers



Above - John Ledbury's team Lord Conyers Morris Men dance a pousette as part of their own composition aptly named the 'Lord Conyers Sword Dance'

Photo supplied by John Ledbury

Left - Lord Conyers Morris Men display the unusual portcullis lock involving eight swords as the finale in their dance

Photo supplied by John Ledbury

can be made to fit very well. The timing of the six man Longsword dances, where the dancers take their time but not their phrasing from the music, is one of the less pleasing aspects of this tradition. A similar preference of mine was for a multiplicity of Locks, always an interesting part of the dance from both a performer's and the audience's viewpoint, with the constraint that the dance did not come to a pause at the point where the swords were withdrawn and the Lock broken, a negative point also felt by the Barnsley Longsword Dancers.³

In the autumn of 1987 the team began work on "Lord Conyers Sword Dance" using a set of wooden swords acquired when the team was first formed in 1974 from a Sheffield school, who were throwing them away as of no further use to them. Like Barnsley Longsword Dancers who borrowed their first steel swords from Sheffield Teachers' Club, Lord Conyers Morris Men owe something to local education. The Walk On was with the swords held pointing down in an attempt to depart from the military image that many Longsword dances attracted with the acquisition of army uniforms in the mid to late nineteenth century. This was followed by a Shoulders movement, a High Clash, a "Snake" (Over Your Own Sword) and the most basic of the Longsword Locks formed by turning in and crossing hands "right over left". To avoid the break between figures characteristic of the Cleveland dances the Lock was timed to be broken two bars before the end of the music, the dancers taking one bar to withdraw their swords and step back from the centre of the circle, and one to re-link themselves. The middle three figures were all in increasing complexity pairs of Sword-Up and Sword-Down movements with Locks of increasing complexity at the end of each. Single Under and Over finished with what Cecil Sharp described as a "Nip-it Lock", the dancers turning all the way round to the right before tying the swords; Double Under and Over with a "Back Lock", formed by the dancers breaking the circle, rejoining with the next man round and then lifting the swords in over their heads; and Double Sword Up and Double Sword Down finishing with a "High Lock", formed by the dancers doing half a turn to face out and tying the swords above their heads.⁴ The final figure consisted of two ways of dancing the "Hey": the first was a "Pousette" in which the dancers weaved in and out in pairs joined together by two swords and the second a "Roll" in which they passed under and over arches of double swords.⁵ These were followed by the one departure of the original ground rules with the "Ride Lock", unashamedly stolen from the Askham Richard Sword Dance.⁶ The appeal of this movement to the author, though not to Violet Alford who considered it an inappropriate addition to the dance,⁷ has obviously been shared by the dancers who, while preventing from dancing the two Heys because of being a man short in Rotherham at Christmas

1990, still insisted on rejoining the circle to make the final Lock to finish the second performance of the day at The Forge at Kiveton Park.

The dance in this basic form was practised over the winter of 1987/88 and again in the autumn of 1988 before it made its public debut during the Christmas season of that year. It was well received at the Morris Men's Christmas Ceilidh, which had come to replace the Folk Club Christmas Ceilidh, in front of an audience containing active members of both the Grenoside and Handsworth Sword Dancers. By this time it had gradually been refined, including using a video film of the dance to observe it from the outside, which proved a valuable asset in the analysis of some of the movements. Each autumn, as the team start their practice season in September, the dance undergoes a "refit" and many of the ideas that have arisen during the previous year are incorporated into it in time for the new version to be danced out each Christmas. Thus the original concept that the dance should gradually be developed by the team as a whole over a period of years is starting to be realised and the dance is currently undergoing fairly major modifications for Christmas 1991. These include alternating the Under and Over movements in the manner of the fourth figure of the Sleights Sword Dance,⁹ and extending this principle to all three of the middle figures. It is hoped that this will improve the flow of movements as well as shortening what are at present quite long figures. This will also give scope to extend the first figure. The team are also working on modifying the final Lock to tie the swords into a "portcullis".¹⁰

COSTUME

Lord Conyers Morris Men were already an established Cotswold Morris team, with a kit based on green and brown against a background of white shirts and trousers, before the idea of dancing Longsword was born. Modifications to the kit to suit other styles of ceremonial dance had been incorporated over the years of the team's life, while still retaining the green and brown theme. It was felt by the members that if we were to dance the Longsword along with other dances in our repertoire, a minimal change of kit would be an advantage. Thus brown waistcoats were decided upon to be worn with the existing white shirt and trousers, green socks and brown shoes. Headgear is felt to be desirable, but as yet nothing suitable has been identified in the light of the experience of other teams in keeping this in place when both hands are otherwise occupied.

MUSIC

From the outset the need was felt for appropriate music for the Yorkshire Longsword. Longsword dance tunes past and present were considered in the light of authenticity and it was decided to use only tunes associated with Longsword dancing in nineteenth century accounts, but to avoid any associated with any one specific dance. There was a conscious desire not to use the Border Morris and other tunes that have been imported into the "tradition" during the twentieth century. Consequently the Lord Conyers Morris Men's musicians were given a set of tunes to consider which divided very broadly into two classes: steady tempo (4/4, or 2/2 time) tunes and jig (6/8 time) tunes. The steady tempo tunes were chosen, as there were more of them, and four selected, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*,¹¹ for the first and fifth figures, *No Man's Jig*,¹² for the second figure, *Fisher Laddie*,¹³ for the third figure and *The Keel Row*,¹⁴ for the fourth figure. As the dance has progressed different tunes have been experimented with and jig time tunes have been tried for some figures of the dance. The only one currently in use is *The Oyster Girl* for the first and second figures.¹⁵ *No Man's Jig* is now used for the third figure and the two short tunes, *Fisher Laddie* and *The Keel Row* both used for the fourth, retaining *The Girl I Left Behind Me* for the final figure. As with other aspects of the dance the tunes used are also subject to experimentation.

The length of the dance and the precise timing of the changes of tune have, to date, presented the team's musicians with a daunting task, but it is hoped that as the music becomes more established and familiar to introduce some percussion. This would be in line with earlier accounts of the Longsword dance, when "a drum was ever considered absolutely necessary".¹⁶ The team possess both bass and side drums and sufficient numbers, including experienced drummers, to play them.

SWORDS

From the outset it had been decided to perform the dance with steel swords, but as wooden ones were available these were used for all the early practices. This was just as well as early practices with inexperienced Longsword dancers led to a great many breakages. Steel Longswords were available from the EFSS Folk Shop at £16 each in 1988, but these only had a 22 inch blade length, considerably shorter than those we used in practice.¹⁷ Buying swords, especially from anywhere away from the Sheffield

area, was never really an acceptable option. After experimenting with various exotic steels, we sought advice from Trevor Stone. He recommended an EN40 grade steel with typical dimensions of a yard long and an inch wide. These sizes corresponded with the wooden swords we used for practice, but gave no clue to the gauge of metal to be used. However, a visit to see the dancers of Grenoside, armed with a micrometer, revealed that their swords were slightly under 0.1" thick. Lord Conyers Morris Men duly ordered strips of 1" by 0.1" strips of EN40B and set about making a set of swords. After surviving the disagreements that arose between various craftsmen in the team a set of swords were eventually made and, after the blades had been heat treated free of charge by Kiveton Park Steel, prove satisfactory for the dance.

The breaking the Lock and rejoining the circle in time to start the next figure caused some difficulty among the dancers in recognising their own swords. The dancers of Escrick were described by Cecil Sharp as having a "tassel fastened to the lower part of the hilt of each sword, each man having his own distinctive colour, so that he might recognise his sword in the Lock".¹⁸ As the only confusion involved one sword to either side it was decided to mark the sword handles alternately green and brown, in a way that was not obvious from any distance. The first attempt was to stick a green capped drawing pin into the end of the handle of alternate swords. This worked so long as the drawing pins did not fall out during the dance, as occasionally happened. A second attempt was to drill a small recess into the ends of the handles and to paint four of these green. These proved hard to see and have now been augmented by additional green painted recesses around the barrel of the handle. This has not only aided recognition, but helped in other defining rules for the other figures. It is also proving of great assistance in the 1991 modifications to the dance.

EXTRA CHARACTERS

From early in their life Lord Conyers Morris Men have been accompanied by a mast-type hobby horse, often introduced to the audience as "the last working pit pony at Kiveton Park pit", and more recently by a cake bearer who distributes cake among, and collects money from, the audience after the style of Bampton Morris Men of Oxfordshire.¹⁹ It did not seem inappropriate that both these characters should accompany the Longsword dance and they are regularly to be seen with it. Thought is currently being given to the introduction of further extra characters to come into line with some of the earlier accounts of the tradition.

TRADITIONS

The choice of the colours of green and brown for Lord Conyers Morris Men was an attempt to reflect the colours of nature, and the choice of an acorn and oak leaves as their emblem was to reflect both this and an identity with one of the oak trees associated with Robin Hood, the "Trusting Tree" by the side of the road between Kiveton Park and Todwick. They have danced beside this tree at dawn on May Morning since 1976 and have more recently added dusk visits at midwinter and May Eve to dance the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance from Staffordshire. A similar "spiritual home" is being sought for the Sword Dance and so far in addition to performing it at their annual Christmas Ceilidh they are looking for a midwinter venue that feels appropriate. Rotherham town centre has been tried and is still considered worth working upon. To follow this various local public houses have been tried with varying success, but as yet no "tradition" of Longsword dancing has been successfully been achieved.

LOCAL INTEREST

Lord Conyers Morris Men have been so far successful at creating interest for special events. A large crowd gather of May Eve to watch the performance of the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance at Dusk, and many of the same people and others foregather at 5.30 a.m. the next day to watch the May being danced in with Cotswold Morris dances. Similar crowds come to watch the Horn Dance at midwinter, and it is to be hoped that similar interest can be generated for a Yorkshire custom, the Longsword dance. So far not much interest was generated in Rotherham and even less in Kiveton Park itself. It is generally felt that we have not yet found the right venue but, if we do and given the time it took for the other displays to gather their followings, there may yet be an interest among the local people for "their Sword dance".

HIGHSIDE LONGSWORD TEAM

Formation and Membership

The team was formed in 1986 from members of 'Ripon City Morris Dancers', a north west style Clog Morris team, who previously used to perform Cotswold Morris under the name of 'Hornblower Morris'. They also perform a Plough Stots' Play from nearby



*Highside Longsword dance the Kirkby Malzeard sword dance outside the Henry Jenkins Inn at Kirkby Malzeard after the plough blessing service on Sunday January 20th 1990
Note the 'triangular lock' on the tabard of the Captain.
Photo by Trevor Stone*

Skelton upon Ure, under the name of 'Wakeman Mummers' To identify themselves as a separate revival, rather than any continuity with previous Kirkby Malzeard teams, they take their name 'Highside Longsword' from the name by which the moorland side to the south west of Kirkby is known.

After the demise of the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dancers around the time of the First World War, a revival team was formed to dance in the 1920s and 1930s, and there was a further short-lived revival by a ladies' team in the early 1950s. The nearby "Ripon Sword Dancers" perform The Sword Dancers' Play and sing The Sword Dancers' Song, but do not in fact dance a Sword Dance. Douglas Kennedy quotes a "Ripon Sword-Dance (which) seems to have been very like the Kirkby Malzeard Dance, if it was not actually the same dance",

CHOICE OF DANCE

Encouragement to form a team specifically to perform the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance came from a local resident, Mrs Plumstead, who unfortunately died before the first public performance took place. Highside Longsword perform the dance in the form published by Cecil Sharp, with the exception of the Lock.² Instead of the usual Longsword hexagon as described by Sharp in 1911 and previously photographed by Keighley Snowden for The London Magazine in 1906,³ they finish the dance by tying the swords into a double triangle, after the manner of the 1932 team on a film while dancing at Mowbray House, Kirkby Malzeard. Mr W R Wood, Captain of the 1920's team, insisted in a letter to Douglas Kennedy that the Kirkby Malzeard Lock was in fact the double triangle.⁴

After dancing on Plough Sunday in 1988 the team were stopped by an elderly lady who remembered Sharp's visit to Kirkby Malzeard and who insisted that the dancers showed him the hexagonal Lock instead of the double triangle, because they did not want outsiders knowing all their secrets.⁵ Keighley Snowden's description in The London Magazine in 1906 makes no mention of a double triangle Lock.⁶

COSTUME

The dancers wear turquoise waistcoats, buttoned over a white shirt and black trousers. This was chosen by the team members themselves who rejected any claims to authenticity of the military style uniforms worn by the early 1900s team, as these had been introduced by D'Arcy Ferris for the Ripon Millenary Pageant in 1886. The colour came about because of the availability of turquoise material which was surplus from a sample of curtain material and therefore available free of charge. Similarly the bottle green knee breeches and yellow socks of the 1920/30s team had no historical precedent.

MUSIC

When the team first started performing the dance they used Joe Winspear's tune, 'Last o' Dallogill',⁷ as 'T' Aud wife of Dallowgill' was called for in the Captain's Song,⁸ but were told by a survivor of the 1930s team that this was not the correct tune. Consequently they changed, and now dance to the variant of 'The Girl I Left Behind Me', that was played by the father of the current musician, Ray Waite, who played the melodeon for the 1932 team.

SWORDS

Highside Longsword are unable to use the swords used by previous Kirkby Malzeard dancers as these were the possessions of the individual dancers, so as well as there being no team set there is also considerable variation in design, as each man had his sword made individually. The two swords in the possession of Don Waite, brother of the melodeon player, vary in length by 2.5 inches, and the team had a set made by Vibroplant in Knaresborough to the dimensions of the larger one.

EXTRA CHARACTERS

In addition to the six dancers and musician, the team includes a Captain, who wears a grey top hat with red, white and blue streamers, white trousers and has a double-triangle Lock and the team's name on the back of his waistcoat. He carries a curved sword of the cavalry sabre type. His main function is to sing the Captain's song, 'You Noble Spectators',¹⁰ to introduce the dancers one at a time to the audience.

TRADITIONS

Boxing Day

The team first danced out on Boxing Day, 1987, visiting Kirkby Malzeard public houses, a tradition which they have repeated each following year. This continues the tradition described by Cecil Sharp of the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dancers performing between Christmas Eve and the New Year.¹¹

Plough Blessing service is held each year at the parish church of Saint Andrew, Kirkby Malzeard. An actual plough is brought into church on this Sunday to be blessed. The plough in question is the property of the Atkinson family and is used at several parish churches in the locality, so the actual date of the Plough Blessing service can vary by a few Sundays over the month of January.

The local minister was originally approached by Ruth Dodsworth, the wife of the newly formed Longsword Team's leader to dance at the 1988 Plough Blessing service. This was to be the team's second public performance following their debut on Boxing Day, 1987. After initially refusing, the minister accepted the offer and arranged for the team to dance in the churchyard following the service. Because of bad weather this arrangement was changed to the dance being performed inside the church at the conclusion of the service, which has been repeated every year since.

There is no recorded history of any connection between the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance and the plough, although an article entitled 'The Sword Dancers of Kirkby Malzeard' by "Awd Joahn" dated May 7th, 1914, published in The Ripon Advertiser, states that in the vernacular they were generally known as "Plewstots"

After the church service it is the dancers' custom to retire to the Henry Jenkins Inn in the High Side area of the village. The inn takes its name from a one time local man who was reputed to have been the "oldest known Englishman", living to the age of 167 years. It was further claimed by "Awd Joahn" that Henry Jenkins was involved with the Sword Dance at the Ripon Millenary Festival.

Masham Sheep Fair

Highside Longsword perform very infrequently and their only other regular event is Masham Sheep Fair on the last Saturday in September. This was, however, missed in 1991, through lack of availability of dancers. Wakeman Mummings did, however, perform the Skelton Plough Stots Play

John Ledbury 1992

REFERENCES:

BARNESLEY

- 1 Cecil J Sharp, Sword Dances of Northern England, Wakefield, EP Publishing 1977, Part I, pp. 37 - 53
- 2 Sharp, Part III, pp 19 - 36
- 3 Douglas Kennedy, "Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance", letter to Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, vol V, No 3, 1948, p 156
- 4 Sharp, Part I, p 52
- 5 Sharp, The Sword Dances of Northern England - Songs and Dance Airs, London, Novell & Co, 1912-13, Book I, p 5
- 6 Douglas Kennedy, "The 'North Skelton' Sword Dance", The English Folk Dance Society's Journal, 2nd Series, No 1, 1927, p. 30
- 7 Sharp, Songs and Dance Airs, Book I, p. 5
- 8 Sharp, Part III, pp 86 - 90
- 9 E K Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, London, Oxford University Press, 1933, vol II, pp. 272 - 276
- 10 Sharp, Part II, pp 12 - 27
- 11 Sharp, Part III, pp. 50 - 76
- 12 Sharp, Part I, pp 39 - 40
- 13 Sharp, Part III, p 86
- 14 Kennedy, p 156
- 15 Ibid
- 16 Sharp, Part III, pp. 86 - 87
- 17 Sharp, Songs and Dance Airs, Book III, p. 14
- 18 Sharp, Songs and Dance Airs, Book III, Preface
- 19 Sharp, Part II, pp. 24 - 26
- 20 Sharp, Part II, p 23

LORD CONYERS:

- 1 E C Cawte, Alex Helm, R J Marnott and N Peacock, "A Geographical Index of the Ceremonial Dance in Great Britain, part One", Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, vol IX, No 1, 1960, p 38
- 2 Roy Dommert, Long Sword in Cleveland, unpublished paper in The Morris Ring Archives
- 3 Chapter 4, Section 4.2
- 4 Chapter 2, Section 2 1, gives Sharp's names and references for these figures
- 5 Ibid
- 6 Sharp, Sword Dances of Northern England, Wakefield, EP Publishing, 1977, Part III, p 84
- 7 Violet Alford, Sword Dance and Drama, London, Merlin Press, 1962, p 39

- 10 Trevor Stone, Rattle up, my boys booklet, -
- 11 Sharp, The Sword Dances of Northern England - Songs and Dance Airs, London, Novello & Co, 1912-13, Book III, pp. 4 - 5
- 12 Sharp, Songs and Dance Airs, Book II, p. 8
- 13 Sharp, Songs and Dance Airs, Book III, p 2
- 14 Sharp, Songs and Dance Airs, Book III, p. 6
- 15 Douglas Kennedy, "The 'North Skelton' Sword-Dance", The English Folk Dance Society's Journal, 2nd Series, No 1, 1927, p 30
- 16 The Folk-Lore Society, County Folk-Lore, vol VI, Printed Extracts No VIII, examples of Printed Folk-Lore concerning the East Riding of Yorkshire, Nendeln (Liechtenstein), Klaus Reprint Limited, 1967, p 88
- 17 Trevor Stone, "The Design of Swords for Longsword dancing", Rattle Up My Boys, an occasional broadsheet for those with an interest in Longsword dance, Trevor Stone, 1987 - 1991, Issue 1, Series 2, p 2
- 18 Sharp, Part III, p. 20
- 19 Sharp, Part I, p 11

HIGHSIDE

- 1 Douglas Kennedy, "Observations on the Sword-Dance and Mummings' Play", The English Folk Dance Society's Journal, 2nd Series, No 3, 1929, p 23
- 2 Sharp, The Sword Dances of Northern England, Wakefield, EP Publishing, 1977, Part I, pp. 41 - 53
- 3 Douglas Kennedy, "Fresh Light on the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance", Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, vol V, No 2, 1947, p 69
- 4 Douglas Kennedy, "Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance", letter to Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, vol V, No 3, 1948, p. 156
- 5 Stone, RUMB broadsheet, Issue 1, Series 2, p. 4
- 6 Kennedy, "Fresh Light on the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dance", p 69
- 7 Douglas Kennedy, "The 'North Skelton' Sword-Dance", The English Folk Dance Society's Journal, 2nd Series, No 1, 1927, p 30
- 8 Sharp, The Sword Dances of Northern England - Songs and Dance Airs, London, Novello & Co, 1912 - 13, Book I, p. 5
- 9 Ibid
- 10 Sharp, Songs and Dance Airs, Book I, pp 2 - 5
- 11 Sharp, Part I, p. 38

TWO ITEMS FROM CARLISLE SWORD

A number of members from Carlisle Sword contribute to Rattle Up My Boys. This next item was sent in last August by the teams bagman, Jeff Lawson, and is one of those 'higher, deeper, stanger' dance venue claims that makes me wonder just how the team came to be in such strange surroundings - Jeff writes:

"We (Carlisle Sword) danced on May Day on the top of Scafell Pike (3,210ft). The picture is of the teams' squire Andrew Kennedy"

Andrew is shown holding up the lock and looking remarkably wide awake for that time of morning



BOOK REVIEW

BY MIKE JENSEN

SWORD DANCING IN BRITAIN : AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

By Steven D Corrsin, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library leaflet Number 21

We are a small and scattered community - there are probably fewer than two thousand dancers of longsword in Britain in about eighty five different teams.

Most teams have someone who is interested in the background and history of the dance who writes the team leaflet. The majority of dancers are happy to read that leaflet and get on with the dancing and associated pleasures.

The health of our community depends on a proper sharing of concerns so we should be glad when individuals express an interest in finding out more.

What is the best way for such a person to start learning about sword dancing? I have no doubt that it should be through a team subscription to *Rattle Up My Boys*: cheap, readily available, and with a mixture of news, history, and internationalism that is likely to stimulate a wide range of budding interests. Those who want to follow-up a specific topic will have to find the articles in old EFSS journals or elsewhere, and that's where this bibliography comes in.

Stephen Corrsin's booklet is aimed at people who want to gain an introduction to the study. It is a list of almost two hundred books and articles about longsword and rapper dancing. Most of them are readily available, being held by the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. He has selected all the basic material, and gives a couple of lines of summary for each entry.

The preface explains very clearly what he sets out to do - gives a list of journals, including "useful newer journals", some of them American suggests an agenda for future work on manuscript, film, and photographic materials and outlines some of his other work on Continental European and North American literature. This is the longest read in the book, a thought-provoking introduction.

The General section of the book list contains the essential works of reference - E. K. Chambers: *The Medieval Stage*, E. C. Cawte etc: *Geographical Index of Ceremonial Dance*, C. J. Sharp's *Sword Dances of Northern England*, and Roy Dommert's *Morris Notes*. I was surprised not to find Violet Alford's *Sword Dance and Drama* here; maybe he is right to place his book in the Continental Europe section, but she does devote more than sixty pages to Britain and has the only reference to the White Boys' Dance of the Isle of Man of any of the books listed. A find for me in this part of the bibliography is Rhett Krause: *Review of Rapper and Longsword Locks* in one of those "useful" American journals.

The next two sections deal with individual English dances and teams, Longsword and Rapper respectively. Again, all the basic material is listed, from Douglas Kennedy's account of the North Skelton Sword Dance (1927), through Norman Peacock's detailed description of the Greatham Sword Dance (1956), to the Handsworth's team booklet published in 1978. Many of those articles are from the nineteen-fifties and sixties, and Steven Corrsin brings the list up to date with a selection of articles from *Rattle Up My Boys* and recent American journals. Part four lists five articles on Scotland, mainly the Perth Dance, and part five lists ten articles on Papa Stour, making it (with Goathland) the most written about of dances in the bibliography. Part six is a short section on dancing in America.

The last section is on Continental Europe, and lists a growing number of descriptions and surveys in English of a whole continent of linked sword dancing, as well as giving the gist of articles in a number of different languages. There is a study of the Baccubert dance from 1914; a book on sword dancing in north-western Italy in 1942; a conference paper referring to films made in the 1920s of linked sword dances in Czechoslovakia; and Renaat van Craenebroeck's history of sword dancing in Flanders.

It's all still happening, and you can be part of it.

Lists are pure potential: every entry in this book could be the key to the knowledge you are seeking. However, it needs good indexing, and that brings me to my greatest disappointment.

The entries in the bibliography are arranged by author in alphabetical order, so that an alphabetical author index seems unnecessary. The journal index is a splendid idea, but would be much more useful with addresses. These will go out of date in time, but then so will the bibliography. It is the main index that causes most disappointment, because it covers only the titles, and not the topics of the various articles, or better still an index of place names.

This creates problems. Examples: you could not find an article on Kirkby Malzeard by looking under K in the index, you would have to find a reference to "*Three English Sword Dances.....*"; for information on Spen Valley, look under P for "*Profile of.....*"; for Czechoslovakia, look under S ("*Sword Dances in...*"). For the Perth Glovers Dance, you should find, under V, an article entitled "*Varia atque breviora*" (Latin for "Snippets"). Even worse, the word "Arkengarthdale" is not mentioned anywhere in the book, and yet the article which gives us a vivid description of the dance there is, in fact, listed and summarised as "*Recollections by John Tinkler...of dancers in 1869*", although you would have to look for it under "*Th' Owd Lass of Coverdill...*".

You might ask do two hundred entries need indexing? Not like this, they don't, but the time could have been spent more helpfully on cross-referencing, and a brief geographical index.

Having made that complaint, I am glad to have this book. There are plenty of references here that are new to me, the abstracts are clear, and the judgements are sound.

What our beginner in sword dance research next needs is some advice in how to obtain this material, and where to turn for help.

Mike Jensen



The Goathland Plough Stots are one of the teams who can be said to enjoy life to the full. Most of their dance events seem to be surrounded by incident and humour. They are however a serious and hard working side when it comes to charity support, especially when they are supporting local causes.

Shortly before their Plough Tour this year (January 1994) the Plough Stots had a simple ceremony when they presented £1000 to charity. £250 went to MENCAP and the balance was used to purchase a piece of equipment for the local mobile nursing service. The pre-war teams were known for their collecting cry "Help us and help t'ospital" and for their support for good causes and it is good to see this element of the tradition kept alive.

The next issue - issue 5 and the last in this series - will include 'CORRIGENDA AND ADDENDA' submitted by Gordon Ridgwell plus an index to articles I have printed thus far. I already have a number of articles for the next series including a survey on Sword teams in the USA and an item on Basque dances. Other submissions are most welcome.

Be sure to let me know if you change your address

Contributions welcome....

Copyright of all photographs, articles and material used in the Broadsheet rests with the author, or in some cases with the team or performers involved.

Permission must be obtained before submitting material to the Broadsheet. Views in the Broadsheet do not necessarily represent the views of the publisher.

Reasonable efforts are made to check the accuracy of material used and ensure that the author has the undisputed right to publish such material. However, we rely heavily on authors to follow the usual conventions and obtain approval