

M O R R I S

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vol 1 no 3
summer 1978

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NEXT ISSUE OUT
MID OCTOBER

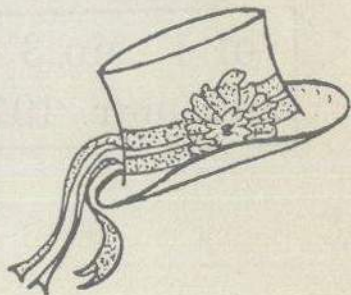
EDITORIAL

Once again in this issue we include contentious articles by morris men which we think will raise the hackles of at least some of the membership.

We realise that these are minority views and could safely be ignored ; which in effect WMF has done for several years. However, this is a vocal minority whose opinions hold sway in the Morris Ring, which as you all probably know, remains staunchly anti-Women's Morris.

It is very refreshing therefore to read the policy statement of the EFDSS which we print opposite. It confirms the editor's view that there will be some fascinating developments in the Morris world in the next few years, —events which of course we will be covering in these pages.

We are making a special effort to publish the next magazine before the WMF AGM in October, so the copy date for the next issue by which date we need all contributions is SEPTEMBER 9th 1978.



The English Folk Dance and Song Society

state their position on

Women's Morris

In response to representations made to the Chairman of the National Executive Committee by members of a Men's Morris side, and similar expressions of concern made at the Annual General Meeting of The Morris Ring, that in permitting the public performance at EFDSS sponsored events of Cotswold Morris by Ladies, the Society was not upholding its responsibility as guardian of our traditions, the NEC and staff devoted part of the time at their Conference in April 1978 to the consideration of this matter, including evidence obtained from various authorities in this field. The following policy statement was agreed by the NEC at its June meeting :-

"The Society is the guardian of tradition. Tradition lives and changes. Conservation of the tradition is, therefore, only a part, though an important part, of the Society's task. Another part is to watch for, and nurture, the traditions as they develop.

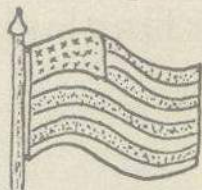
By forbidding Women's Morris we might be applying a false influence to the natural development of a living tradition. We must recognise that it may become a future tradition in its own right.

At the present time we cannot dismiss Women's Morris as irrelevant. Nor does it appear that approved censorship or discrimination linked with gender are in line with current social thinking.

The society approves and encourages high quality performance of all aspects of folk, wherever it is found.

The EFDSS present policy, therefore, does not forbid the public performance of Morris by women."

MORRIS in the U.S.A.



The " American Morris Newsletter " (editor Fred Breunig) first appeared in April 1977 as " the only publication in North America devoted solely to English Morris and Sword dancing ". It's clear from the steadily growing numbers of teams listed that in the States, interest in Morris has increased enormously over the last few years among men and women (and we can't be the only side to have noticed that more and more of the American visitors at festivals and tours are Morris dancers themselves.)

The Newsletter prints articles on aspects of Morris dancing and display, reports of recent tours, days of dance, and information on teachers and instructionals. Sides write in to the " Team News " page on their programmes, progress and problems (11 contributions in the last issue — doesn't anyone feel inspired ??) A few familiar names appear - an

article by Russell Wortley on Music for the Morris is reprinted in the first issue and Morris Sunderland wrote replying to questions about whether he thought it was OK for Americans to dance the Morris (yes - with respect for tradition), for women's sides to dance Morris (yes, but not in public) and for mixed sides to dance Morris (definitely not !).

Most familiar of all is a letter criticising the sloppy dancing and poor presentation of many of the newer sides. The author calls for more attention to be paid to basics, and for more appreciation of the hard work and dedication involved in producing good Morris. (Where have we heard that before? - In fairness we have to report a recent comment on the general standard of American Morris: " At the Marlboro' Ale I saw 29 sides and not one poor side amongst them ". We may have a lot to learn!).

It appears that several American sides may visit England this summer or next. If the enthusiasm and attitudes of recent visitors to Windsor are anything to go by, they'll certainly be worth looking out for. We're hoping to exchange copies of Morris Matters for the

American newsletter, and will print details of visiting sides as we hear of them.

(Thanks to Roy Dommett for sending us copies of AMN).

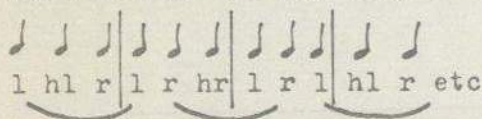
morris quotes



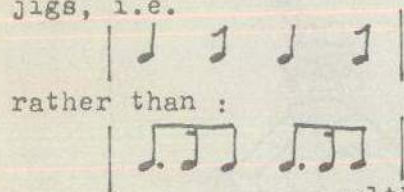
PLAYING for the MORRIS

Rhythm

As a general rule there should be a note for every step in the dance. It is not true conversely that every note has a step. Carried to extremes this produced at Abingdon for "Maid of the Mill", a jig with 6 notes to a bar, played in $\frac{3}{4}$ so that the 1-hop-2-3 went across the bar thus +



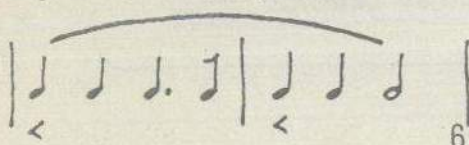
This does not mean that jigs are all played as single jigs, i.e.



rather than :

although this is an acceptable simplification when desired.

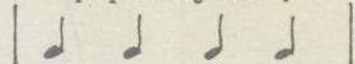
Care must be taken to emphasise the right phrasing when playing polkas. These were originally written and played in 2 bar phrases :



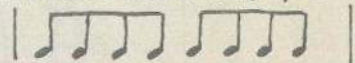
First, there is the normal emphasis on the first beat of each bar. It is a strong beat for the dancer when the main effort is made. If the music over-emphasises this it can drive the dancer into the floor, producing noise rather than lift. The effect is similar to "on-beat" drumming.

Second, the final beat of the bar and hence the step is de-emphasised or even suppressed. The danger here is that the body "lift" at that point might be lost. The 2nd and 4th beats in a bar are the "weak" or "off-beats" but are significant because they are where the lift or elevation of the dancer occurs, particularly the 4th in a morris double step.

Most morris tunes are in 4/4 or common time and use the hornpipe rhythm :

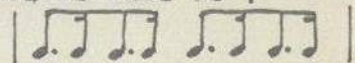


Bars are usually thought of as divided into 8's :

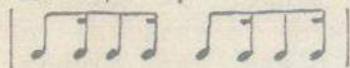


but they are played "broken"

Musical notation normally indicates this as :



but it is seldom played as broken as that, except at Chipping Campden. The better representation is a half-way form in 12/16 :



i.e. without the dots. This produces the good "jaunty" playing of Kimber or Wells.

A good musician allows one to dance comfortably, i.e. the music fits the natural rhythm of the movement rather than forcing it. Even the above implies too great a regularity because the 4 beats in the bar are not evenly distributed. Not only are the weak beats retarded towards a jiggy rhythm, but the amount depends on the strength of the dancer's preceding movement. Thus it is impractical to write it down exactly because it would be too complex to follow. It is better to examine the mechanism of the body motion.

Body Movement

Body movement is not even within a bar because it is continually starting and stopping from the reversals of vertical motion at contacts with the ground. It takes longer to rise up off the ground than to fall back. This is why jigs are more exciting than reels for country dancing — the music is a better fit to natural movement. The degree of brokenness is related to the

effort being put into the dancing or to the effort being demanded by the playing.

Start by considering the simplest basic movement, 2 springy, jaunty dance-walk steps per bar with weight on the balls of the feet, heels not touching the ground.

(Judges of jig dancing competitions sometimes put their hands under competitors heels to be sure they were properly off the ground.) Increasing the effort makes the movement into "capers", 2 plain capers per bar. Alternatively, accenting the off-beat with a body lift or hop produces the hop-step or "single" step.

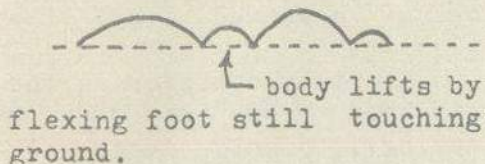
Try dancing in a room in front of a window with cross pieces at eye level and observe the bar movement against distant objects as a measure of vertical movement of the head and hence body centre of gravity. It is difficult and unnatural to move so that the eyes remain steady. Comfortable dancing makes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

The diagrams here show how the centre of gravity of the body alters in level during various movements.

1. Ordinary walk :



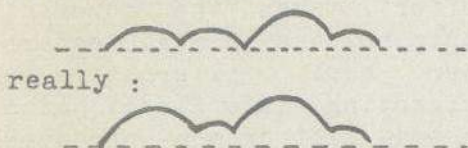
2. Dance walk - jaunty :



3. Hop :

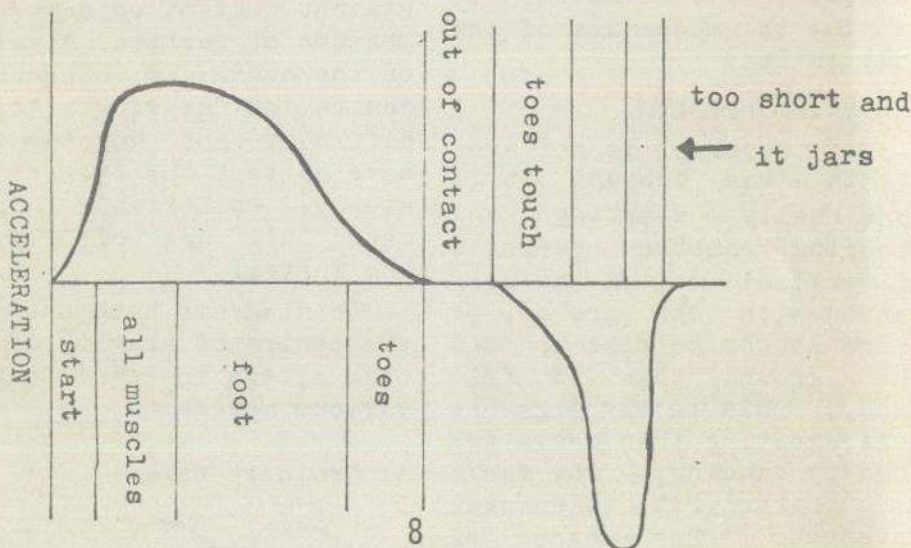


4. Morris double step :



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

Movement is determined by contacts with the ground. Newton's laws of motion apply. The higher one goes the longer it takes. The converse is that the slower one plays the higher one should go, not the longer one stays in contact with the floor. The stopping of the downward motion, the reversal of direction and the acceleration up off the ground is done primarily by the spring in the foot and ankle. (The thigh and knee contribute more to the larger, longer capers.) Absorbing energy and stopping motion can be faster than acceleration where one has to produce a force and do work. (The thigh and knee contribute more to the larger, longer capers.)



The conventional static position is with body upright, heels together and toes turned out and weight distributed so that heels are just touching the ground. The basic dance position is on the balls of the feet with the heels off the ground and the body leaning forward a little, shoulders back and head upright.

sink

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

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

single steps

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

Some village traditions had their own characteristic basic step, each needing its own rhythmic subtlety. The essential differences in the single steps (1 hop 2 hop) are :

Brackley, Hinton
Headington — stiffish leg

Bidford — on hop foot drawn back and lifted so " back-peddalling ".

Bampton,
Chipping Campden — raise free foot up on the step and kick it forward on hop.



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

A few traditions consist of long sequences of basic step, perhaps with a break of 3 or 4 strong beats, but most consist of strings of different movements. The finishing action of a figure

(called a break after the term in step dancing) may be in the same speed and rhythm as the basic step as at Brackley or Eynsham. If it is a simple jump or a very emphatic pause and jump as in some Abingdon and Chipping Campden dances, the movement takes longer and the musician has to allow the dancer "air". *

phrasing

The most common dance phrase is 2 double steps, 2 back steps, a step and jump, ie :

| l r | h l | r l r h r | l h l r h r | l a ft - ||

The rhythm of the double is not quite the same as the single steps. The single step is in this case a back step, which normally contrasts in style, energy, hand movements etc. to the normal basic step. With the jump in the 4th bar there must be small variations in pace throughout.

More complex is :

| l r | h l | f.tg. aj(r) | l - h l h l | f.tg. aj - |

the springs in bars 2 & 4 and the rhythm of the galley in bar 3 depend on the

* This explains why it is not useful to practise following a metronome -- the musician should fall behind in discreet bits and 'stretch' the music to fit the movements.

tradition. At Longborough and Fieldtown the movement of the galley goes through smoothly and the beats are very regular even if the tune is written in 6/8. At Sherborne the galley is a step forward and then a turn on the hops so that there is spring through the weak beat and the hops are emphatic.

Note that there may be a de-emphasised step or hop on the final weak beat of a bar preparatory to the next movement, especially if it is a particularly strong one. As it is small it needs to be delayed - ie late. This shows in a series of half capers. Despite the name these are single capers, one to a bar, thus :

| l a r - | l a r - |

Often they include a preparatory hop or change step :

h r | l a r h r | l a r - |

or :

| l a r l | r a l r | l a r - |

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

Slow Capers

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

| l r | a | R a L a | R a L ||

or 3 ie :

| l r | h l | r a L a | etc..

The music should be played accordingly.

notation

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

| ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ |

for the morris step,

| ♪ ♪ ♪ |

for the sidestep and

| ♪ ♪ ♪ |

for the half capers.

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

Jigs

Although these are essentially a display of the dancer's skill, the musician has a key role. Before the jig starts there needs to be an understanding on who is leading whom because the musician and the dancer can not both follow — this is unstable! Normally the musician should expect the dancer to follow except on the slow capers. Some dancers

learn dances by rote, responding to the specific tune. They can have trouble with an unfamiliar musician. Many dancers like to cover a fair bit of ground in a jig and the music needs to be slower to allow this; otherwise it will degenerate into a run around.

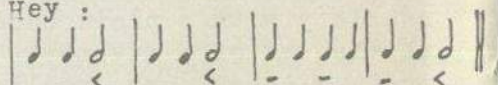
Stick Dances

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

1. Speeding up during the tapping

The dancers need to develop larger arm movements to fill up the music. If the musician follows the dancers they will gallop away with the

dance. Sometimes the dancers can not hear the music because of the noise, concentration and fun. The musician must be prepared to say something and to hold them back by emphasising key beats and hesitating. For example a typical Shepherd's Hey :



2. Moving off

As the tapping is usually either stationary or stepping on the spot the dancers need time to accelerate into the next movement. It is necessary to hold off the music a little.

Otherwise the rhythm of playing follows the size of movement called for by the chorus.

" Right - so that's six pints of Grimblethorpe's and one gin and tonic."



KEEPING MORRIS MASCULINE

I recently attended the weekend conference and A.G.M. of the Morris Ring of England.

This year it was held at Nottingham instead of Cecil Sharp House and included dancing and informal discussion. One informal discussion was entitled "Ladies and the Morris"; whilst no votes were taken on this subject I will endeavour to summarise the feelings of those present and to add my own.

Discouraged

There were some sixty men present at this discussion representing about twenty per cent of the ring sides; views were expressed by about a quarter of this company. No-one spoke in support of admitting women to the ring and as a general summary, the feeling was that women should not be admitted either to the ring or to individual sides and should be discouraged from dancing morris in public.

One man expressed a view which gave marginal support for women dancing, as he maintains a close liaison with a ladies' side who do ladies' dancing rather than

women's morris; another from a university side pointed out that his side could not bar women from joining because the University Union rules do not permit sex discriminating societies.

Female Musicians

Concern was expressed about sides who can only continue to dance because they rely on a female to play their music.

The Ring Squire reported that he had refused to recommend one particular side for Ring membership because it has a woman musician; when he asked for a retrospective mandate he received wholehearted support for his decision.

The Bagman reported alarmingly that he had had correspondence from the Women's Morris Federation in which a proposal had been put forward for discussion at one of their meetings that the word "Women's" should be dropped from their title!

(The results of that meeting are not known at the time of writing, but it is known that one or two women's teams have already dropped the gender from their team's name.)

Dedication

Surely with a little dedication to keeping morris sides all male some of these problems of mixed sides could be solved.

For example, one university side, because it could not keep women away, disbanded and en-bloc joined a local (Town) Morris Side -- voilà, no women. If a side loses its musician and a woman volunteers to fill the gap the problems may seem to be solved, but when a male musician again becomes available it is very difficult to say to the lady "push off". It would be better (ideally) to manage with a tape-recorder for practice, not performing in public until a man can be found. *

As good as the Men?

What is the motive behind "Women's Morris"; are the girls really trying to maintain tradition or are they trying to show that they are just as good as the men?

Firstly, morris dancing is a tradition, whether the origins are known or lost in antiquity, in fact it may be

* This is NOT recommended. Any recorded music is NOT capable of 'following' the dance in the way that a competent human (even a woman!) musician will do. For a full explanation of why this is so, see Roy Donnatt's article starting on page 6.

considered traditional from its antiquity alone.

The evidence from ancient records show it to be a predominantly male activity, therefore to maintain tradition it must be performed by men -- to do otherwise is to break with tradition.

Secondly, the very nature of the dance suggests an athletic basis (as an accomplishment of athletic feats not a competition)

Fertility

It suggests the performance of fertility rites -- "Bean-setting" for example; it suggests the celebration of festivals, great jubilation and high spirits -- for example "Capers" exist in all traditions. "Gloryshears" is a display of prowess and victory with its leapfrog movement. There are examples of fighting -- "Trunkles" or "Lads-a-bunchen". These are all male activities; in the ultimate, could women really match the men at them?

There is no reason why women should not know something of how the dances are done, or even have a go amongst themselves. I have taught morris to women and would do so again, if asked, not for them to perform in public, but because they have expressed an interest and wanted to learn a little for their own enjoyment.

Does it not heighten our appreciation of someone else's performance when we have tried their artform for ourselves ?

Magnificently Maintained?

However, knowing about the dancing does not give women licence to display, in public, traditions which can be, and often are, magnificently maintained by men. In fact, because of the qualities of the morris, are not women performers attempting to show how manly they are ? A peculiar claim even for Women's Lib.

Surely the essence of the Women's Liberation Movement, which seems to be a major driving force behind women's morris, is being misconstrued.

It is certainly right and proper for women to have equal opportunities in employment, to be paid the same wage for the same job, or to hold the same position of rank, or even for household duties to be shared by both sexes. But these matters are concerned with day-to-day living, not with re-enactment of rituals, of traditions which are maintained not just for the pleasure of the performers, but because the public at large likes to see them.

Morris dancing is not unique in this respect; Father Christmas is now only a ritualistic figure, regardless of whether children believe in him or not, would a female Father Christmas be the same ? Should the principal boy in a pantomime be played by a boy, or the dame by a girl ? I think not, for if we extend these arguments to a conclusion, we would see women campaigning for a totally uniform society.

Would it not be better to retain a sensible difference - let us have feminine women and masculine men. Let us preserve our traditions faithfully.....Ladies please keep to Ladies' dances. Keep Morris masculine.

your chauvinist

Morris dancer

John Wilson

(Squire of

Towersey Morris Men





Foot up



Foot down



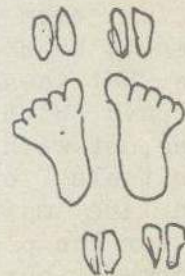
Side by side



Leg across



Hook leg



Shepherds' hey

of the Morris

by Cherry Simmons.



Back to back



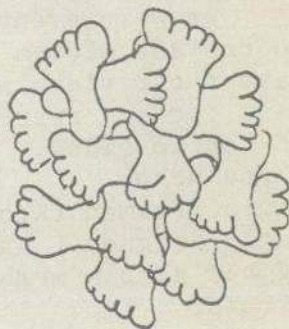
Round



Corner



Hands round



All in

WMF Constitution

— The debate continues

Following Jenny Joyce's article in the last issue, we phoned a number of people to try to find out the general feeling about whether or not to drop the word 'Women's' from our title. We were surprised that so few sides had even discussed the issue and of those we spoke to, many were rather vague in their opinions. This confirms our view that the subject needs an airing and that after some informed discussion another vote might give a more realistic result.

We were eventually able to contact eleven people who gave their views as individuals or as representatives of Morris sides.

These were:

Laura Freeman (Acorn),
Sandy Grigson (an associate member also a member of Jack Straws,
Jo Lewis (Holden's Golden's)
Nicola Coggles (Penfords Mill)
Val Parker

Sarah Jarrett (Strand-on-the Green)
members of Invicta, -New Esperance, Bourne Bumpers, Fleur de lys and Ruth Frazer (starting a new side in the Cheltenham area).

low standards

Those who were clearly against the idea felt that only the worst men's sides those unacceptable to the Ring, would want to join and that this would lead to a lowering of standards (Bourne Bumpers). It was also suggested that men in W.M.F. would completely change the atmosphere, to the extent that there might even be men on the committee !!
(the nominal Editor of this magazine - a member of W.M.F. committee - is trying hard not to take this comment personally!)

Invicta describe themselves as a "generally conservative side" who also point out that if W.M.F. becomes a mixed federation there would be no single-sex organisation for women -- although the men would still have the Morris Ring. Fleurs de Lys fear that a mixed federation may well lead to mixed sides of dancers - a concept with which they strongly disagree.

grim warning

Several people, including Val Parker and Sandy Grigson doubted whether there would be any men's sides who would want to join even if the name was changed but there was a grim warning from Sarah Jarrett that antagonistic men's sides would join purposely to ruin things for us.

However, Sarah did feel, as did Val, Sandy and Ruth Fraser, that a nondiscriminatory group would definitely be desirable though there were reservations about the timing. Sarah thought that we should not rush into this and that Women's Morris needs to be accepted in its own right before we start pushing things.

Val made several points in favour of holding back the floodgates; a) people need time to get used to

change, we should work towards this one rather than have it "thrown" at us ;b) on a point of organisation "well established" men's sides may be "impatient with our rather fumbling, inexperienced ways" and great changes would be essential if we were to "accommodate male sides".
c) there is no point in antagonising the Morris Ring, their tolerance is desirable. Although we may not have realised it, apparently there has been much "tentatively laid groundwork" towards friendly relations with the Ring which has been jeopardised by the mere suggestion of our proposed name-change.

size 10 clogs

However, she did feel that the word "women" should be deleted from the aims of the federation. Her general feeling is summed up -

"We need to doff our size 10 clogs, once in a while, and exercise tact and a lot of patience. At the AGM I urged that the aim for a future non-sexist morris organisation should be seriously considered as a possibility, and was distressed that the proposal was put forward then and there. It was too impetuous and far too soon.

Give the world time to get used to women morris

dancers at all, before trying to bulldoze down all the barriers. A joint society might then actually grow."

Nicola Coggles also was uneasy about interfering with the Ring. She felt that women's dancing should complement the men's, though on the whole her side were in favour of the change.

There seemed to be some concern expressed that the nature of WMF, should not change. Laura Freeman, for example, said that members of her side were happy with the emphasis that there is in WMF on such aspects as research, liason and the historical information about women dancers, though it was stressed that this was simply something which should be borne in mind.

Acorn feel the advantages of a nondiscriminatory organisation are great. There would be an extension of cooperation and liason between Morris sides, men's, women's, and mixed, which would make life a lot easier and more pleasant.

They also made the important point that the public would be more likely to see the Morris as Morris and not as two separate forms of dancing, men's and women's.

Other sides which were wholeheartedly in favour of the proposed change were New

Esperance and Holden's Goldens.

Jo Lewis, of Holden's, pointed out that sexism does not belong in the folk tradition and that the last paragraph in the constitution ("WMF exists --- to further the aims of women's Morris") is very discriminatory. They were worried about the double standards implicit in the title of WMF and about the generally low standards in women's Morris anyway. Older sides know where they are going, but new sides could get a totally lopsided view of what the Morris is all about. (this seems to be a very real fear among members of WMF which we have seen reflected in discussions at General Meetings !)

Conclusions which can be drawn from this survey, seem to be that many sides are in favour of an eventual nondiscriminatory Morris Federation though some would like it to happen later rather than sooner.

Ruth Fraser makes the valid point that it is "wrong that an association involved with such a wide activity as Morris should bar people who are so much involved".

Patty Cohen
Jenny Joyce

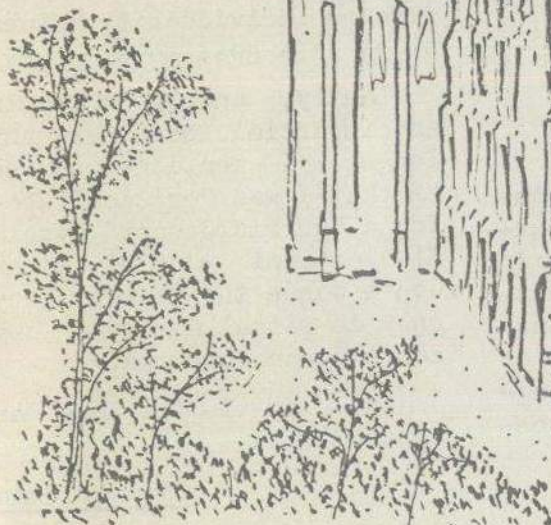
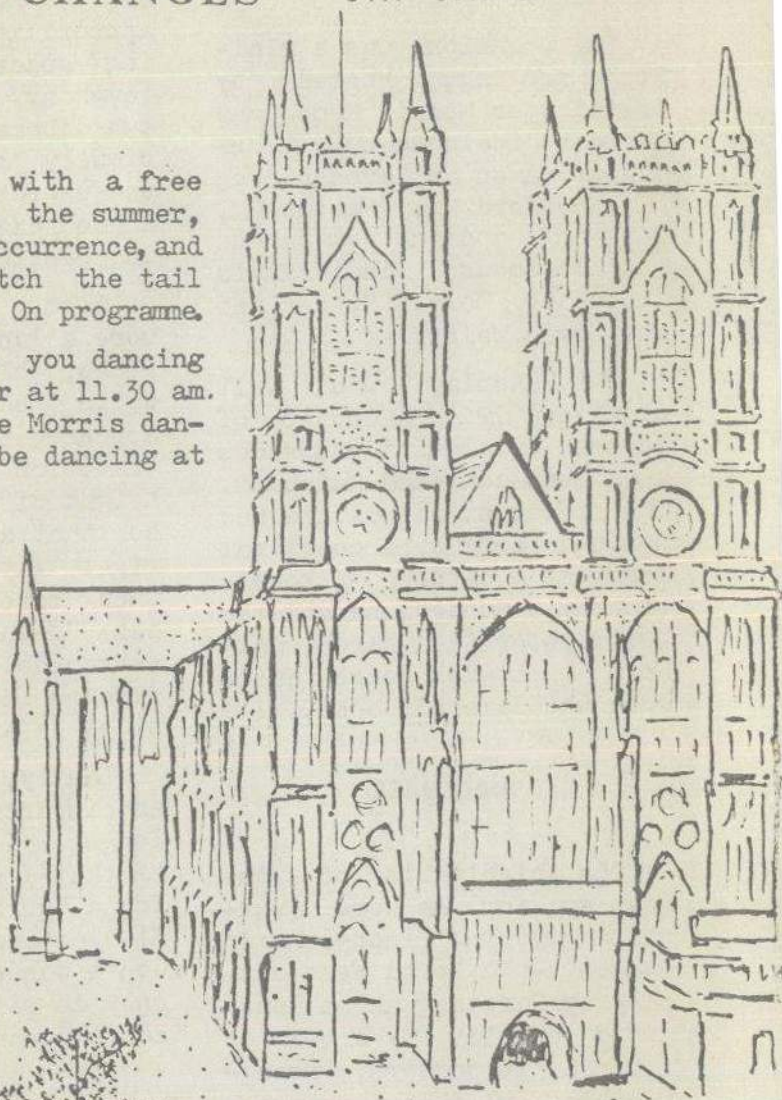
REVIEW

RING THE CHANGES

Jill Coleman

I was left with a free Saturday during the summer, an infrequent occurrence, and chanced to catch the tail end of a What's On programme.

- So we'll see you dancing in Westminster at 11.30 am.
- No, that's the Morris dancers; we'll be dancing at 3 pm.



Needless to say, 11 am saw me standing on the steps of Westminster Abbey

It was a bitterly cold day but the dancers drew a large crowd, predominately foreign, many of whom were getting their first taste of "traditional English Morris dancing".

The occasion was a mini-Ring meeting, hosted by Westminster Morris Men, and the cast included such illustrious names as Ravensbourne MM, Bedford MM, Exeter MM, Garstang and a few famous (or infamous) individuals including Morris Sunderland and David Welti.

The display was well organised with a couple of dances by individual sides and then a massed display. The interest was maintained between sets by a continual dogfight between Morris (Snoopy) Sunderland and the Westminster (Red Baron) unicorn - I was never quite sure who came off best.

highlights

The highlights of the display for me were (surprisingly) the 2 non-Cotswold dances - a North West display by Garstang and a longsword display by a team of Arsenal supporters, recognisable by their red rosettes.

However, as an impartial observer, there were one or two criticisms I had which might be made of any large Morris gathering, viz, whilst a side was dancing, the rest of the Morris (who took up approximately half the viewing space) were chatting, laughing, practising their own display/music and so obviously not interested in the performance. Surely not a good example to their paying public!

Also, most of the sides wore a 'uniform' kit - baldricks, black breeches and white shirts; they all appeared to dance a standard tradition at a regulation height of 2" above the ground so that a typical spectator might watch two dances and then move on, assuming he has "seen the lot". Not an easy problem to overcome but perhaps individuality between sides is a goal to aim for.

Lastly, unable to remain an impartial observer any longer, I mentioned to one MM that I was "critical" being a "morris dancer" myself. His comment - "But women don't dance the Morris, they only do ritual dances. They don't dance Cotswold."

Who am I to deny an expert?

Jill Coleman

WOMEN'S MORRIS - A Critical View

by George Frampton

Being one of the few privileged males to attend the Cardiff A.G.M. last October, I sat patiently, somewhat perplexed, hearing the motion that the Women's Morris Federation should change its name to something more egalitarian being hustled through without adequate discussion, especially since the apparent majority failed to appreciate the broader political issues involved.

Facetious

It wasn't a total surprise to me to witness a letter deploring the result of the eventual postal vote from one of the proposers in the last 'Morris Matters'. I feel it is important to place things in perspective before the facetiousness of the initial argument is lost in a cloud of feminist idealism.

The proposal to effect the name alteration to 'Morris Federation' overlooks one large point; there is already an established body purporting to represent Morris clubs in Great Britain. I don't propose to discuss the merits of the "sen-only" attitude maintained by the Morris Ring majority, since there are, in my view none. But it seems ludicrously obvious to me that W.M.F. (or M.F.) cannot exist as an effective body despite the Ring. Some merger or cooperation must be forthcoming.

Perhaps the Ring does need the prover-

bial 'knee in the groin', which this proposal was tantamount to. To paraphrase a recent Ring newsletter, "It is felt that Ladies should be allowed to dance the Morris, provided they don't call it Morris" - this would give the cause no hope. The only hope remaining from this direction, is that attitudes are changing.

Perhaps if Roy Donnett had been elected Ring Squire (he came second) we may have had a new Golden Age. We can now only speculate. Fortunately, there seems to be as many sides proud of their non-Ring status, as those diametrically opposed, so whether the policy of 'splendid isolation' can survive remains to be seen.

Loss of Sympathy

The best advertisement for their own cause was witnessed at Sidmouth and other festivals last year, when Windsor and Holden's Golden's were dancing a highly polished brand of Morris to leave green (and/or red) faces on male morris men observers. I suggest this does more for the Cause than missives resplendent with adjectives like 'sexist', which will guarantee the loss of sympathy, rather than its gain in the 'conservative' quarter. The aspirant expectation of the hard-core sen-only brigade, is that the novelty of women's morris will wear itself out with time. I hope they are proven wrong.

Apart from the continued survival of women's morris, the second half of the solution lies with how each club chooses its repertoire. One of the criticisms of women's morris, is that their dances don't seem particularly feminine. Personally, I would drive miles out of my way to see Windsor dance their Badby, and Stag Hill Ladies dance at all. Whilst each side dances ostensibly Morris, I would call neither side really 'tomboyish'.

Each side must make its own decision as to whether they want to be a 'Ladies' side, a Women's side or a Tomboy side. I only wish to generalise as to each description to avoid betraying my 'male chauvinism'. Personally, I find it a pity that Windsor have adopted a trousered image, even though I am told it provides for practicality. Whilst their 1977 image was energetic, I have never thought of them as 'tomboys', and feel their success lies with their high standard of finesse rather than in their actual repertoire. I hope this isn't the start of a trend, but I think dress is important in maintaining one's credibility.

Obscure Traditions

With the growth of Ladies Morris, men's sides have capitalised on the surfacing of the obscure traditions. Until recently, few men's sides were aware of Stanton Harcourt Ilmington, Wheatley or any of the Northamptonshire traditions, with the exception of the odd dance.

George E. Frampton,
Musician,
Fleur de Lys Ladies, Godalming, Surrey.
Cup Hill Men, Hambleton, Surrey.
Stag Hill (Surrey University).

There seem to be plenty of dances in Lionel Bacon's book, together with Roy's researching, to avoid gross aggravation. The W.M.F. edict to avoid dancing Hampton, Abingdon and Chipping Campden seems on the surface noble, respecting the living traditions, although I feel that each club could exercise a little more care in respect of tradition.

'Masculine' Dances

For example, it would be difficult for the public to accustom itself to overtly 'masculine' dances like 'Vandalls of Hammerwich' performed by sides in knee-length dresses, brandishing 2-foot lengths of dowel. Again, I find it difficult to take seriously any ladies side, in breeches or whatever, who perform hook-legs a la Bledington, or Fieldtown galleys.

Whilst I have spent a good part of last year telling anyone who'll listen that folklore traditions are means to the end of entertainment, and not ends in themselves, I feel a balance must be struck so that Women's Morris can be seen to complement rather than oppose its male counterpart. In particular, I wish to avoid a future repetition whence a men's side refuse to dance at the same site as a women's side.

The credibility of women's morris is not merely there for the taking, first of all it must be won.

WANTED

BROAD CUPID

Although only three Badby dances have been published, the names of several more are known. One of these is "Broad Cupid". In spite of exhaustive searching, I still haven't found a tune with even a remotely similar name. Can anyone help?
Alan Whear, 24 Alexandra Rd., Windsor.

NORTH WEST NOTATION

Nicola Coggles of Penford's Mill Morris would be grateful for notation of any North West Clog Morris Dances. (They already do Knutsford, Lancashire Garland, Ashton and Hindley.)
Nicola Coggles, 48 Bramble Lane, Mansfield,
Notts.

REVIEWS

Is anyone interested in reporting on Folk Festivals, Days of Dance or Displays they've been to this summer? Morris Matters would like to hear from you. Let's know who's been where, what's been happening, and what you thought of it all.
(See address on back page.)



Competition Morris?

Dear Editor -

In a recent article the idea of a possible return to "competition morris" was mentioned. Whilst realising that competition, in most areas, tends to stimulate and assist in the constructive progression of ideas, I do feel that in this particular case it could do more harm than good.

Comparisons between sides are, I suppose, inevitable. However, true comparisons and consequent judgement, on a competitive basis, should only be made when the styles of dancing are the same. A return to "competition morris" would, in fairness, require a standardisation of the style of dancing and the establishment of a common term of reference by which all sides/dancers could be judged. We should soon be back to the attitudes and opinions that existed in the days when they aw-

arded bronze, silver and gold "dancing" certificates!

Sides should be encouraged to develop their own style and not merely copy or adopt an existing style. This does not mean changing a dance just to be different. It means adopting the policy of letting a dance evolve in such a way that, to the dancers, it both looks and feels right. If it doesn't feel or look right to the dancers, then what will the audience (in most cases the general public) make of it. This is not a suggestion that sides should, in effect, "play to the gallery", but a request for sides to think of the "dance" not as the demonstration of a museum piece but as the performance of a living tradition.

The words of the one legged cyclist should echo in all morris dancers' ears.... "It's the way you put it over that counts".

Comparisons, and judgements,

could be made when they are applied to the standard of dancing within the side. Surely much of the "magic" of the morris comes from seeing a group of people moving, dancing, and in some cases falling asleep, as one unified body. At an instructional in Bath, the point was made that if your stepping is going to be high, low, or apathetic, then it should be uniform (as near as physically possible) throughout the side.

Compare two morris sides, say Bampton and Old Spot, watch them dance and then say which one won! It should not be possible with good sides to draw up a list of first, second and third, as the styles are different.

The answer lies in the dilemma of the one legged cyclist. If you were clever then you would say that he leans against the saddle from the other side, and then he doesn't have to bother about putting it over, at all, but that's not nearly as interesting..... or is it?

Dave Clarke.
(Musician, Holden's Goldens).



Reply to David Welti

Dear Editor -

Whilst I admire David Welti for writing to Morris Matters and having the courage of his convictions, which incidentally is more than I can say for some of his sex, I must confess that his article left me somewhat perplexed.

Although he admits his views to be "dichotomic", he also claims to have been cited as a purist and, whilst on one hand he claims that the Morris is part of a Pre-Christian religion and therefore a "men-only" pursuit, he seems to be able to cope with the existence of "so-called women's dances".

I cannot help but feel that the patronising attitude he talks about is itself substantiated in his own sentences, i.e. "I am all in favour of women".... "I prefer to see women dancing in a feminine way"??!!

As someone who has always been proud of her gender and has always despised any patronising attitudes towards womankind in any walk of life, I should have liked a clearer definition, both of the feminine way in which Mr. Welti would allow us to dance and of the, from my experience, unsubstantiated remark about patronising male

Morris "groupies". No! Mr. Welti, I have not noticed and I can assure you that no woman worth her salt wants or condones this kind of treatment.

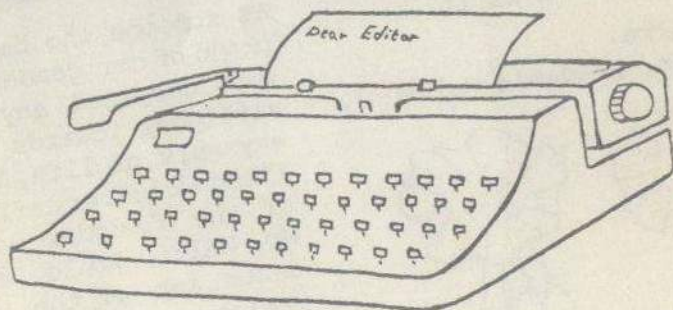
Another puzzling statement was the reference to women "aping men's worst habits". Not only does this seem to be uncalled for but also he does not illustrate or define which of his own sex's habits he finds so nauseating.

Also, I consider it is male chauvinism to assume that different strengths and assets apply according to gender and that the female is the weaker sex. O.K., so not all women have the physical strength to perform the Morris with the complimentary vigour and I agree that, by them, the dances

which require vigour are best not done; but then I would also say the same to the many men seen dancing who either lack the physical strength or do not care enough to put in the dignity and pride of performance and therefore also fail to produce the assets to match the dance.

To conclude, can I say that we are now living in the 1970's - nearly 1980's - let's apply today's standards and the rationality with which our generation is supposed to have been blessed, and work towards the good showmanship in dance and the preservation of the heritage that belongs to everyone who cares about it.

Rose Jones.
(Holden's Goldens).



Morris at Headington 1928

Dear Editor -

I gather that several WMF members on talking about Morris to relations and friends at work are greeted with the enthusiastic reply "Oh I used to do that when I was younger". We have met several people in the Bath-Bristol area who danced in their youth and I thought the memories of one of these ladies might be of interest to you.

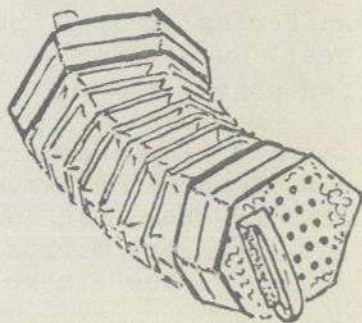
I was introduced to her by Joan Weed (now dancing Morris in Toronto, Canada). They worked in the same office and during a chat Joan discovered that Mrs. Cooper had danced with Headington Quarry. I met Mrs. Cooper in the spring of 1977 and she recalled as much as she could about her experience of the Morris. She told me that from about 1928-1930's the men and young women of Headington and Headington Quarry practised the Morris together once a week at St. Andrew's school. They would practise both stick and hankie dances for the first part of the evening then they would do some country dancing for the rest of the time. "Young" Mr. Kimber (she thought his name

was Jack) did the teaching. On these occasions nobody wore kit, only the fashionable clothes of the time.

When it came to dancing in public the men put on the display and Mrs. Cooper could not recall the girls ever joining in this activity. Later the teaching of the children, especially the young boys, was taken over by two ladies, both of whom were involved with the school and the guiding movement in the village. We have tried to trace both Miss Stace and Miss Stavely (the latter lived in Quarry Road, Headington Quarry) without success.

If anyone has any information about these ladies or the women of Headington and Headington Quarry we would appreciate hearing from you as we would like to build up a fuller picture of the Morris activities of the villagers.

Barbara Butler.
(Somerset Maids Morris).



Letter from the North-East

Dear Editor,

For a Southerner used to a lively folk scene with an abundance of morris sides (and a sprinkling of excellent ones), coming to the North East can be quite a shock.

There are many folk clubs here, with varying types of music. Irish music is still the rage, with Northumbrian tunes the old favourites but the recent revival of bouncy "English" bands has not yet had an effect on Tyneside.

Similarly, the local morris sides do not reflect the wave of enthusiastic young sides that have appeared in the South resulting in exciting and vigorous dancing. We seem to see, from established sides, very much what has been present for some years - a mixture of Ring sides whose dancing is gentle and correct, and young or student sides whose dancing is energetic but suffering from too much beer! Surprisingly there are few Rapper teams in the area.

When Sandgate Morris was formed in January 1977, almost half the members had arrived from the South, and had done some morris before, whilst to the others (as to

most Geordies) the term morris meant sword dancing. The idea of dancing North-West morris seemed most acceptable as the majority of the local sides dance Rapper or Cotswold and we felt in a stronger position since the dances we chose have always been done by women. We needn't have worried, since the dances are almost totally unknown here, and in addition to striving for the public's acceptance (Are-you-from-Holland?), we were met by animosity from the local men's sides since they too appeared ignorant of North West dances, and assumed we were going to dance Rapper or Cotswold style.

Now that we have been dancing for two seasons, we meet less serious opposition to our dancing. We do, however, seem isolated from the rest of the women's morris movement. The side is understandably reluctant to join WMF since the only benefit appears to be that of insurance: meetings, tours, and instructionals are held too far away to consider taking a whole side and in doing North West we are outside most of the discussions that take place at such meetings. We have discussed the question of whether we might benefit from seeing other

sides dance. The arguments against are firstly, that each North West side has its own interpretation of the dances, but there are few enough dances for us to be repeating each other's performances, and secondly, it has been suggested that we might develop our individual styles better if we dance in isolation. There is a problem of communication in that dances are still being collected but not broadcasted - inevitably the collectors are jealously guarding their all too rare notes!

However, while we are in isolation in Newcastle we can neither gain knowledge of how present North West (men's) teams dance, nor of how other women are developing the dances or to what standard. There are also two problems stemming from the same root - the erosion of regional differences which is prevalent today.

Sandgate Morris is a team which consists partly of Londoners, and performs dances from Cheshire and Lancashire, in the North East. On occasion we are asked to represent the area, for example at a British Council teachers' summer school, or on the Norwegian Tourist boats docked at

North Shields, and yet we know only one dance which may come from this area, but which probably originates from a point further West.

On the same count we are quite possibly performing these Cheshire and Lancashire dances without any of their original flavour. They are certainly being danced in an atmosphere devoid of the ritual and ceremony which accompanied performances in the streets of North Western towns. How much are we adding to the levelling of English traditions, into one broad culture?

Whilst many of the English ritual dances probably share the same source at present, are we not destroying hundreds of years of development region by region, without advancing ideas far the future?

Sheila Spencer (Shoz)



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