

MORRIS MATTERS

Vol. 2. N°4

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EDITORIAL

As from next issue, Morris Matters is an independent publication. At the AGM of the Women's Morris Federation, it was agreed that the magazine should no longer be produced under the auspices of WMF but should 'go it alone'. (WMF member sides will, of course, continue to receive the magazine under their yearly subscription unless they decide to 'contract out'.) We feel that this decision reflects more accurately the growing readership of Morris Matters, which now includes more subscribers from outside WMF than in it. We shall, of course, always be willing to print anything sent to us on behalf of WMF - in fact we hope that people will continue to contribute as they have done before.



Like everyone else, we are suffering from inflationary pressures outside our control (mainly the large increases in postal and printing charges over the last two years) and

so inevitably Morris Matters is going up in price. Subscription from Vol 3 No. 1 will be £1.50 for four issues. Cheques, Postal Orders, etc. should be made payable to 'Morris Matters' and sent to 24 Alexandra Rd., Windsor. In the last English Dance and Song, Dave Arthur was kind enough to say that Morris Matters was 'well worth the £1 a year subscription' - well we can only hope that he and all our other readers will think it well worth £1.50 !



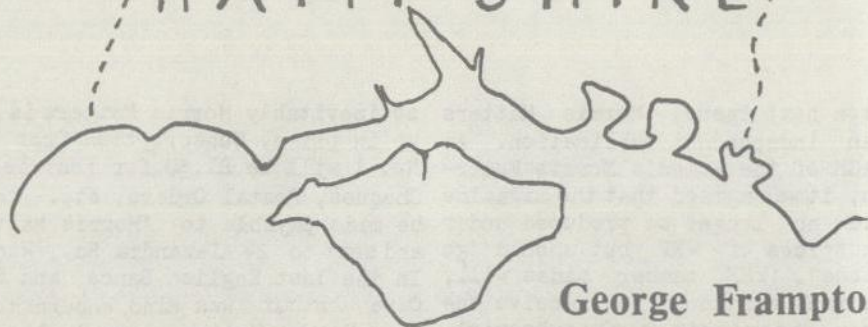
We would like to include a diary page in future issues. If you'd like to advertise your tours, instructionals, ceilidhs, etc., please write in with details. In addition to this, Morris Matters will now be open to commercial advertisers, at what we think will be very reasonable rates - BUT if you can get your copy to us by the beginning of January 1980, your ad will be included FREE in Vol. 3, No.1, covering February, March and April 1980.



This issue of Morris Matters was written and compiled by Patty Cohen, Jill Coleman, Mouse Dismore, Jenny Joyce, Cherry Simmons, Frankie Stringer and Alan Whear for Windsor Morris, 24 Alexandra Road, Windsor, Berks. SL4 1HN.

morris in

HAMPSHIRE



George Frampton

Historically speaking, although Hampshire once bristled with importance, owning Winchester as the capital of England, and both Southampton and Portsmouth bustling sea-ports, the momentum that the Morris was given in renaissance England failed to spill over the austere days of the Commonwealth. The nett result being a few scraps of Harvest Home non-social dance, certain Mayings and a few oddities.

In Tudor times, the sum of 4d. was paid to 'the Mynstrells for playing with the morys-players before my Lady of Exeter' on a visit to Sir William Gifford at Itchell Manor at Crondall in 1555. At Southampton in 1562-3, 3s4d. was awarded to 'singers, players and Morris Dauncers on Maye Daye'; Further records point to sundry expenditure made on 'disgysinge apparell' for the festivities. The Southampton records point to many similar awards being made between 1428-1635 for courtly entertainments other than our 'dauncers'. Mayday was obviously, even in the sixteenth century, an important time for the Morris. At Newport in the Isle of Wight, a Lord and Lady were elected to preside over the day's

activities, which included rising at dawn, adjourning to Parkhurst Wood to 'fetch home maye'. The houses and streets are then decorated with such greenery. Later in the day, 'ye said commen people are spedde competellie with greene Bowes, returne home in Marchinge assaye - the Commoners before, the Keapers following them, next the Minstral vice, and Morisse Dancers after'. This celebration of the first Elizabethan era, and is somewhat curiously akin to Mayday today in Great Wishford, Wiltshire.

Another important occasion was Whitsuntide. This was often celebrated in the form of a Kingale, which was a booze-up licenced by the church in aid of its upkeep. By 1585, this was abused to the extent that Bishop Cooper of Winchester instructed his clergy to 'suffer not any Church Ales, Morish dances or Riflings within theire parishes. Part of the good bishop's objection lay in that the 'heathenish and ungodly custom' was practised 'upon the Sabath Dayes, and other dayes appointed for common prayer.' After this date, no further mention is heard of the Morris, although the Kingale in 1595, ten years after the Cooper edict, raised £2.17s.1d.

The May-day custom of chimney-sweeps dancing around a Jack-in-the-Green are applicable to Hampshire, but are by no means peculiar to the county. One Hampshireman claimed it originated in London, growing out of the Dairymaid's dance. The Jack-in-the-Green custom was reported at Farnborough, St. Mary Bourne, and Southampton. At Hurstbourne Priors, the Jack was accompanied by sweeps holding brushes and shovels in their hands, which they rattled one upon the other. At Burley, the Jack was the village postman, a John Bromfield, who danced to the music of several fiddlers. This last instance was in 1852, the last recorded occasion of the custom in Hampshire.

The event at Burley was part of a much larger Mayday event involving a Maypole dance at Shabbon Bottom. During the reign of George IV, a more grandiose occasion was in operation at Avington Park. A King and Queen was elected, and there was much marching to and fro with bands and 'instruments of musick' and much waving of sashes and flowers. Six or eight dancers processed, but the dances appear to have been 'social' ones, 'The Triumph' and 'Over the Water to Charley' being named. No maypole was used at Avington, but both Cheriton and West Meon had maypoles. Again, social dances were more in order at West Meon, 'The Triumph', 'Sir Roger de Coverly' and 'Speed the Plough' being favourites.

Some form of non-social dancing survived in Hampshire at Harvest Home time. In the seventeenth century at Merdon, the tenants of the Manor danced the 'haydiggle' as a condition of their tenancy. Since this custom died out by 1700, one must speculate whether the Lord exacted any retribution on this account. At Swainston on the Isle of Wight,

in 1867, the family coachman danced a 'Greensleeves' bacca pipes-type jig over crossed whips, singing as he danced :-

'I vow a man can never be drunk,
Never be drunk, never be drunk,
I vow a man can never be drunk,
If he dances Peter O'P.'

Solo jigs would certainly seem the order of the day. At Cheriton; about 1815, 'old Joey B,' danced a jig called 'the Flowers of Edinboro' to the strain of a pipe and tabor, and fell off the table on which he was performing, it being slyly greased by a mischievous wag. One hundred and fifty years later in Cheriton, another harvest home dance was still practised, that of the broom dance. Victor 'Turp' Brown, is portrayed performing the dance at a sprightly eighty-plus years of age, in Bob Copper's 'Songs and Southern Breezes'.

Very few dances, social or otherwise, have survived the test of time in Hampshire. In 1911, Alice Gillington published a book of Didakei ditties and gypsy dances collected in the New Forest. Vague notation and the tunes for ten dances are given, and may yet prove the sole indigenous source of Hampshire dance known. At the turn of the century, Cecil Sharp was apparently given the address of an old morris dancer at Farringdon, but failed to follow it up (indeed, it is by no means evident that he ever visited Hampshire for any purpose).

Hampshire proved a rich mine the folk song collector, but neither Hammond nor Gardiner mention dance in their accumulations.

Hampshire is likewise rich in its mummings' plays. It is likely that in other parts of the country, ritual dance and drama are interwoven such as at Reversby in Lincolnshire, but in Hampshire this

does not seem to be the case. Tiddy reports on two plays at Burghclere, the first was imported from Dorset and involved the ensemble dancing around to the 'Greensleeves' tune. The second play concludes with some sort of step-dance and the singing of a carol. It is, perhaps, dangerous to read too much into the incidence of dance in mumming. The Crookham mummers (led by Roy Dommett) processed in 1976 to the tune 'Cock of the North' in something less than an ordered fashion, and marched onto their pitch in a semi-circle, but this hardly constitutes a dance. The most complicated figure performed in some plays amounts to little more than a three-handed reel, but probably not in Hampshire.

So what happened to the Morris? The last instance of the Morris being performed in Hampshire before the revival at the start of this century was at Farnborough before 1840, when 'a party of eight men besides a fiddler, made two sets of four-handed reels. George Sturt also makes reference to 'clattering dancers', perhaps due to bells being worn. The dancers were intended to rival the efforts of the mummers, each being performed on Boxing Day. Whether the dances were imported or local is questionable. Sturt rumours that the local rector, one Charles Eckerswell may have been responsible for instigating the custom, he left the parish in 1839, about the time the custom died out.

In Hampshire today, the Morris is in a fairly healthy state. Two of Hampshire's greatest sons, Roy Dommett and Lionel Bacon have been responsible for collating many of the (Cotswold) Morris dances performed today. There is no definitive Hampshire Morris, indeed there are few dances collected from South of the Thames detailed enough for practical use. Today's Farnborough

Morris perform a repertoire of dances which they have created, loosely centred on one Cotswold village tradition, and few sides have sought to emulate this.

I wish to thank Theresa and Tony at Cecil Sharp House, and the Hampshire County Library for their help in this project.



The result of a questionable interpretation of the Bucknell arm movement.

MUSIC WORKSHOP

Alan Whear

For various reasons, the second half of the article on emphasis in playing will be held over to the next issue, so I would like to devote this edition of Music workshop to some advance notice of the musicians' weekend in Windsor.

The date has been fixed for Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th Jan. 1980. At the moment the structure of the weekend looks something like this :-

Saturday 19th

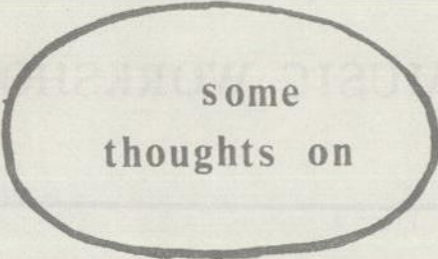
11-00am - 1-00pm	1st session
1-00pm - 2-30pm	pub lunch
3-00pm - 6-00pm	2nd session (with teabreak)
6-00pm -	evening meal
Evening -	socialising (possibly with a pub session)

Sunday 20th

10-30am - 12-30pm	3rd session
12-30pm - 2-00pm	pub lunch

The main emphasis of the weekend will be on the practicalities of playing for the Morris, and giving everyone that comes some direct help and feedback on their own playing. I feel that this is something that is clearly lacking in the Morris today. We have got used to dance workshops as one of the most important ways of learning movement, but musicians, on the whole have to learn the most fundamental part of their art on their own. The idea is to try to do something about this, and during the weekend a group of good experienced musicians will be discussing, demonstrating, and generally helping out anyone who wants to improve their playing. With a bit of luck it may start a trend!

Anyone interested in attending should write to me at the address on p3. as soon as possible so I can send final details, maps etc. There will be a small charge (about a pound or two) to cover the cost of the Saturday evening meal, hiring rooms etc., but you need not pay this until you come to Windsor.



some
thoughts on



the Badby Morris

Jenny Joyce

It is becoming common for more and more morris sides to take a hand in developing and interpreting the Cotswold village traditions for themselves, rather than adhering closely to the particular details as noted by Sharp and the other collectors. There are many reasons why this is becoming more acceptable. For one thing, comparison of Sharp's published work with his fieldnotes shows that he was selective about what he published, and he was not averse to altering slightly what he actually collected if it led to a neater and more consistent picture of the tradition. This has led to the realisation that to follow word for word the written notation (itself a clarified and edited version of what an old dancer could recall of dances done several decades ago) is not necessarily the best way to carry on the morris as a living tradition. (Of course it is essential

to know and understand what was collected before changing or re-interpreting it - there has to be a firm basis to work from.)

But why do sides want to alter or extend the published material? Well, one good reason is that it's more satisfying to do something different, and with so many sides about these days, the one way you can be sure that you won't be duplicating the dances of the other sides you're on tour with is to make up your own! This applies not only to the dances themselves, but also to the interpretation of the dance sequence. Different sides have different characters, and the Fieldtown that suits Great Western, for example, may not suit Whitchurch. It's a good thing that people are looking critically and in some detail at how they want to dance - it can only lead to better performance in the end.

If there are good reasons to re-interpret and develop such large and well-documented traditions as Fieldtown and Adderbury, for example, it becomes a necessity when you look at the "backwater" traditions such as Ducklington and Kirtlington. Often these consist of a couple of notated dances, with perhaps the names or tunes for a few more. Information on the style and detail of stepping is usually non-existent and much imagination and guesswork is needed just to get those scraps that exist into a danceable form.

In this article we'd like to describe our experience with one such tradition and to explain how our interpretation of what little is known about it led to our choosing to perform it in a certain way. Our reasons for choosing a particular development are obviously personal, but we hope that by describing in detail the process of developing a particular style, we will encourage others to have a closer look at their own choices. (We don't intend to reproduce material published elsewhere, nor to give notation for dances we've made up ourselves, but references to the published sources, and tunes and names of dances not published are appended at the end of the article, and we would be happy to pass on notation to anybody wanting it.)

Badby is situated in the North-West corner of Northamptonshire. George Butterworth collected all that's known about the tradition, and Sharp later published three dances in Morris Book V. Butterworth met one of the old Badby dancers, Ephraim Cox, on one occasion only it seems, and all we know of the Badby morris comes from this one meeting.

Badby is one of the "simple" traditions, the stepping sequence

in the figures being three double steps and the leg across:-

"A slight spring is made on to each foot in succession...synchronously with the spring, the free leg is smartly swung in front of, and well across, the supporting leg, so that on alighting the two legs are crossed." (Sharp) It is notated :-

| l - r - |
xr xl

(and vice versa when the first spring is onto the right foot).

The arm movements are two wide twists (at shoulder height in front of the body) for each double step, followed by two high horizontal circles in the leg across. The twists (the opposite way round to Bledington) are executed mainly with the wrists and forearms and give quite a different 'feel' to dancing a double step from the more usual swing up and down of, say, Fieldtown. For one thing, the arms are held out in front of the body and there is very little shoulder movement; this means that the upper part of the body doesn't move much. The lift in the arm movements comes twice every bar, on the first and third beat, and these correspond to the two lifts in the double step. (This is in contrast to the down-up hand movements - there on the third beat the whole body rises with the raising of the arms and the shoulders and thus this beat feels quite different from the first beat of the step. - fig. 1.)

We decided to dance the double steps with a fair amount of spring, which leads to a syncopated step, especially in 4/4 tunes. (This was a decision made partly because we prefer morris to look energetic and partly because we wanted contrast with the other tradition we dance.) So this leaves us with a springy double step with the spring on the first and third beats being about equal.

The leading foot is given as being the left; this allows two possibilities. The first one, the one that Sharp chose (probably because he found it neat and therefore aesthetically pleasing) is left foot lead first half, right foot lead second half- fig.2. The second possibility (which we chose) is that each half of the figure starts with the left foot-fig.3. Since this means the left foot must be in the air at the end of each phrase, it alters the sequence of the step in the last two bars. You will see that in the third bar, the hop of the last double step is suppressed. (It is unpleasant, though possible, to dance l r l hop, left, right..... try it!) Leaving out the hop means that you have to use up the time by springing into the air - as in a caper. Thus the leg across consists of two springs; first onto the left foot, then onto the right :-

| l r l Ω | $\frac{l}{xr}$ Ω $\frac{r}{xl}$ hr |

(this is why we put in a feint hop on the right foot before the next figure; it helps to maintain the flow after the two capers.) The spring before the first beat of the last bar is uncommon - in the other traditions which have two capers as

the 'break' (e.g. Adderbury and Bampton) the phrase ending is preceded by two single steps, the final hop is not suppressed, and so the spring occurs later, in the middle of the two capers.

We decided to emphasise this feature of Badby - the initial spring into the leg across. It coincides with the arms being raised from doing wide twists at shoulder height to high above the head for the circles. This means that all at the same time the body, the arms and shoulders and the free leg all rise together which 'feels right'. With a little help from the musician to emphasise the beat you spring off from, the movement feels entirely natural. (Whether the original Badby dancers ever did it is a different matter, of course !)

When we first started dancing Badby we envisaged it as having a fairly even stepping sequence - we thought that as it had three double steps instead of two doubles and two singles there would be no difference between them. However, after attending various instructional where a lot of emphasis was being put on ebb and flow, phrasing and contrast, we found we had to change our ideas.

Figure 1

l	r	l	hl	r	l	r	hr		
up		up		up		up			BAIBY HANDS
down		up		down		up			FIELDTOWN HANDS

Figure 2

First half

l	r	l	hl	r	l	r	hr	l	r	l	hl	r	-	l	-	
													xl		xr	

Second half

r	l	r	hr	l	r	l	hl	r	l	r	hr	l	-	r	-	
													xr		xl	

We made a decision early on not to turn on the leg across as we wanted to preserve its shape. Thus any turning must be done on the third step - this works quite well because as the third bar consists of three very subdued steps with no spring, it's very easy to turn on them. This has led us to a particular way of doing some of the figures - for example at the end of the cast or the hands round when the dancers are facing up or down the set, we use the third step for turning to face so that the leg across is danced in position. In stick dances where opposites clash tips, butts, tips in the leg across, it is essential to be back in place in good time. Again, you can position yourself during the third bar so that you're prepared for stick clashing.

As far as the dances are concerned, as can be seen from the list at the end of the article, there is full notation for only three. Old Black Joe is a sidestep and halfhey dance, Shepherds Hey is either stick-tapping or clapping and halfhey, and Beaux of London City is a shooting-type dance. The list of dances that used to be performed contains eight more names. Several of these, e.g. Trunkles, Balance the Straw and Cuckoos Nest, are common Cotswold names, and it isn't difficult to adapt the dances and tunes from other traditions to the Badby style. The tunes for Saturday night and Bobbing Joe have also been collected, together with another couple of unnamed tunes which could be used as the starting point for inventing new dances.

Roy Dommett once produced a list of dances that a typical Cotswold side would have been likely to do. If you compare the Badby list with this, you can see the obvious gaps. For example, there is a lack of corner dances, and no slow capers

were collected. It is of course feasible to invent or adapt slow if you want them, but the problem arises of how to maintain the consistency of the tradition. For ourselves, we've found it easier so far to stick to fairly simple corner dances, using only sidesteps and plain capers. This is also true for the column dances, e.g. Cuckoo Nest. It is also worth remembering that Badby is quite isolated geographically speaking, from the rest of the Cotswolds, and some of its figures (the cast and hands round) have more in common with the Country Dance than the conventional Cotswold Morris. So perhaps one needn't be confined to what is seen in the other Cotswold tradition when extending the Badby??? It's thought, anyway.

Well, it's perfectly feasible to start with a relatively small amount of hard information and finish up with a tradition that's internally consistent, and feels good to dance.

NAMED BADBY DANCES (RD)

First Morris
 Second Morris
 Trunkles
 Old Black Joe (P)
 Beaux of London City (P)
 Broad Cupid
 Shepherds' Hey (P)
 Flowers of Edinburgh
 Balance the Straw
 Cuckoo's Nest
 Saturday Night

(P) These dances are published in The Morris Book, Part V, Cecil J. Sharp, E.P. Publishing Ltd., and in A Handbook of Morris Dancing, Lionel Bacon, published by The Morris Ring.

And although this article has been concerned only with the Badby tradition, the ideas are applicable to whatever you dance. It is always worth thinking about and trying out the different possibilities of interpretation. Then you can make a

conscious choice based on what you as a side want to achieve and what your particular strengths and weaknesses are. With luck, this will lead to a wider variation in styles, more satisfying performances, and better dancing all round!

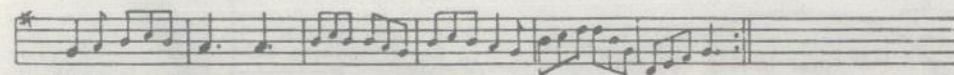
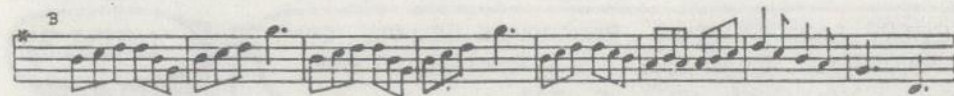
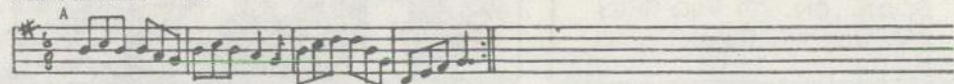
Additional tunes for Badby

BOBBING JOE - Ashby

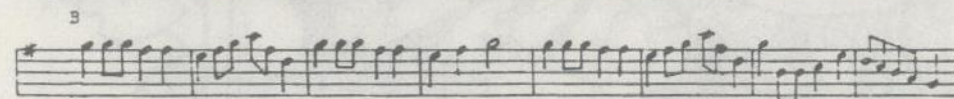
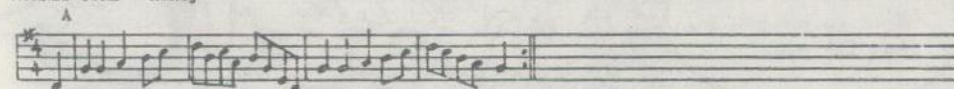
(R.D.)



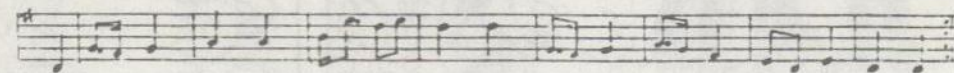
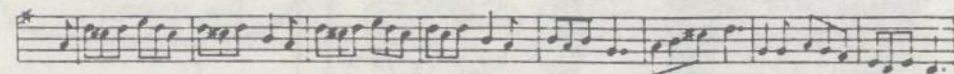
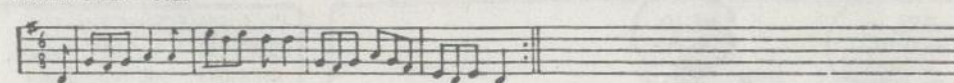
SATURDAY NIGHT - Cox



MORRIS TUNE - Ashby



MORRIS TUNE - Cole



THE CONTINUING ADVENTURES OF...

DUTCH ELM MORRIS



PETER LORD '79

THE LEGENDARY BEDBURY MORRIS MEN, BELIEVED MISSING SINCE THE GREAT WAR, HAVE BEEN MIRACULOUSLY DISCOVERED IN THE SNUG BAR OF THE LAME BADGER.

RON VOALE AND THE DUTCH ELM M.M. HURRY TO THE SCENE, ONLY TO FIND THEY ARE NOT THE FIRST.....

LOOK AT IT BOYS! THE NOBLE ART OF THE MORRIS DEBASED BY SORDID COMMERCIALISM - A PATHETIC SIGHT...



CHEAP SOUVENIR STALLS, PROGRAMME SELLERS, CAMP FOLLOWERS, T.V. CREWS... IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU PUKE ISN'T IT LADS....

Get your lovely clockwork morris man!!! Fill 'em up with beer and they fall over!!



LADS??



ARE MY BALDRICS STRAIGHT?

HELLO MUM!



I'M ASHAMED OF YOU!! LETTING THE SIDE DOWN. ANYWAY, THE BEDBURY MEN ARE DANCING IN FIVE MINUTES.



A FIVER TO SEE BLOODY MORRIS! IT'S A SCANDAL

NEVER MIND THE BAG'S PAYING

THAT'S RIGHT, GENTS, PUT YOUR MONEY IN THE HAT! ... MOVE ALONG IN FRONT THERE!!



Testing 1-2-3

SUPERMIKE

Give it five point six

TENSE



THAT'S IT! HERE THEY COME!



OH....PUT YOUR CAMERAS AWAY EVERYONE

'ERE! WHAT'S GOIN' ON, GEORGE?

BUGGERED IF I KNOW



HAS THE MORRIS ESTABLISHMENT BEEN TAKEN FOR A RIDE?? FIND OUT NEXT EPISODE!!

Morris Matters talks to

Jenny Potts

of Rivington

Recently there has been a tendency for the North-West Morris dances to be promoted as especially suitable material for women's sides, mainly because of the indisputable role that women have played in preserving and developing the tradition throughout this century. And yet it has always been difficult to find out much about the dances and their background. Until we saw Rivington Morris (a women's side from Lancashire) our only experience of women performing the North-West had been of Southern-based sides who usually danced it as just part of their repertoire. The result was very different from the dancing of say, Garstang or Colne Royal. However, Rivington's performance seemed to be very much in the style of the other North-West teams. We decided to find out more about the aims and history of the side, and went to talk to Jenny Potts, founder of the side.

MM Can you tell us a bit about how the side started? Did you start with the dancers and go round looking for notation, or was it the other way round?

JP We got the notation for Marston from WMF. At the time we didn't really know that there were Morris dances about locally. We thought we'd do Knutsford, and some of the local dances from the WMF notation. I got talking to Pruw Boswell who was in the Garstang girls' team when she was a little girl. She told me that there were one or two dances in her area that the girls used to do in processions, and so I went to see some of the people concerned. Once it had occurred to me that there were dances around that used to be done by girls', women's or mixed teams, so we'd be perfectly justified in doing them, it seemed a shame to do the same dances that everyone else did and not to do the ones that were disappearing.

So we learned Marston, which kept everybody happy because we were all dead keen to start dancing, and we had a version of Ashton, so that was two to start with. Then one of our musicians said his aunt used to morris dance in the 1920's-30's and sent us on to Ormskirk, and from then we've had enough of our own dances not to bother with the WMF dances. Through advertising Pruw and I managed to get information about the Blackburn dance, and a bit about Darwen - some of the local dances - and I'm hoping to start work on Warrington soon.

MM So what kind of teams performed these dances - what period are they from?

JP The early 20th century, really. You had all different kinds of teams. The Blackburn team, for instance, started just because they had a band - kazoos and some concertinas - and they thought it was a shame to have a band and no morris dancers. They'd seen lots of other morris dancers you see, so they copied them. And there were other teams like the little girls in Horwich - when there weren't enough men to carry on the Horwich men's team after the First World War, the leader of the men's team taught the girls and they kept it going. So when the Horwich men reformed, there were still some women living who could teach the men again, and so the Horwich men now dance what was originally the Horwich men's dance - though it's been through the girls' team in the meantime.

And you had the Mayday processions with the May Queen festivals. The little girls used to form troupes for these processions. So you got the nice little girls' teams in their frilly dresses, and you got the really eccentric teams, inspired I think by the jazz bands - bright and gaudy and making a lot of noise. They all used to compete in the processions - they had judges standing along the streets, so you had to be very careful all the time! Nowadays of course, in the competitions, you go on and do your 20 minutes and that's it.

MM So how do you see the role of your team, of Rivington, now? Are you trying to recreate the way the dances were done at a particular time? They were performed by little girls, but you don't dress or dance like little girls!

JP Well, I don't see why we should dress like little girls - after all we're women! Little boys used to dance, but the men don't dress like them. I'm trying to dance the way women in the seventies dance. There are other women's teams who go back to the way it was last danced by little girls, but I think that since the girls were only interpreting the men's dance in their own way, why can't we interpret the men's dances ourselves without going via the girls' teams. You have to realise that in the early part of the century they were still fairly Victorian in attitude, and little girls in frilly dresses were the thing. There were older girls - up to 18 - and there were the more exuberant teams like Blackburn, who wore bright costumes. Because they were in the procession they wanted to put on as much show

as possible - the bands, the noise of the clogs and so on. I based our kit on that idea - I wanted to make as much show as possible. The men's teams were like that and I think maybe the women would have liked to have been like that.

- MM So you're not really trying to reconstruct what it was like in the 20's, you're saying that it was like that because of the social context, and since the context has changed, the way you dance morris is different.
- JP Yes. I don't see why what sex you are has to be involved in the morris. I don't see why women should dance like little girls just because that's all our sex has to base its ideas on - why can't we just be morris dancers who base ourselves on the way the tradition is developing at the moment?
- MM However, at least with the long history of girls' team doing NorthWest, you can't be told you shouldn't be doing it because you're female!
- JP There is every justification for women doing North-West - no question about it. I haven't heard a good argument against it. But I think there are some men whose attitude is - well the girls kept it going and stopped it dying out, well that's good, thanks very much girls, now back to your families and the kitchen and leave it to us!
- MM Yes, well, perhaps we'd better leave that!
It seems that collecting plays a vital and important part in the NorthWest Morris.
- JP I think it's absolutely vital. I don't think a morris team who lives in Lancashire or Cheshire should dance without collecting. (In fact, I don't think any of them do dance without collecting). After all - the tradition is still alive. Nowadays it's alive in the form of fluffy morris - competition morris - but they are direct descendants of the thing that was going on at the beginning of the century. It seems pointless, really, to be part of a tradition that's still going on (you probably noticed that the public is very involved in the morris around here - there are always people in the audience who have been dancers themselves) without putting as much into it as possible to stop the dances from simply disappearing. Why do dances you can see other people doing when you could be dancing your own? I find I can't justify living in Lancashire and not dancing local dances.
- MM What about the mechanics of collecting? Presumably you get a name or you might have an old photo, and you get on to someone and you hope it will jog their memory.....
- JP Yes. And often advertising works very well. You usually get someone answering an advert. What also happens, which is nice, is that you'll find that one of the, e.g., 1910 team taught the 1920 team and one of them taught the 1930 team, and this is quite handy as it means you've established what happened over two or three generations of a team, you can say when it started, the dance was probably like this..... A lot of the

present men's teams have traced their dances through the girls' dances, simply because it's the women who are still alive. Most of the men dancers were a generation older and so they've died. So there's always a chance that as you trace a dance back you're dealing with a man's dance that was taught to girls.

MM Is it ever possible to find out for sure, or is it always supposition?

JP Well, it helps to find out where the person that taught the dance came from. Often you find that they moved into the area and started teaching the morris at school. They may have come from Crewe, or one of the big colleges, and so it may be that they're bringing a Cheshire dance into the area. Or perhaps someone imported a morris team to teach their own team - that happened with the Aughton team. They brought the Mobberley boys up from Cheshire to teach them the dance.

MM How complete is the information that you collect - is there a lot of reconstruction and guesswork involved?

JP I personally find the dance itself difficult to work out, because these women don't talk in terms of figures - they just say, well, we went into the middle and then we shook our sticks - it's all very broad. And they want to tell you a lot that isn't to do with the morris really - they just want to reminisce. It's quite interesting too - the little girls were highly respected and much loved in the community. Being in the morris team was the highlight of their lives at the time. They weren't aware of it's being part of a tradition, it was part of their lives. And they don't realise that they're telling you something of real interest - it was just something they did.

MM There's another aspect of morris in the North-West that isn't so common amongst teams that dance Cotswold traditions. That is the way people jealously guard their material from each other. Is this attitude as universal as it seems?

JP The thing is that no-one in the North-West publishes that I know of, except Don Howison. I think it's because there are so many people doing research for themselves, they're a bit scared to say anything in case someone else slams them for it. And because nobody publishes, you get no feedback, so you never know if your ideas are right. You don't know anything about anything except your own pocket of information - no overall idea of what was happening at the time. So you have to go and talk to other people and nobody wants to tell you all of it - they might give you a few hints, but that's all. You have to get on with them, of course, and very often it's better if you're not a woman, either. I don't know why we're so secretive - I suppose it's because everybody else is secretive - I don't know who started it off! But the advantage of there being no published dances is that people have to go out and collect, and so your own dances become your identity and you do become very possessive about them.

- MM There also seems to be a lot of bad feeling about people from outside the area (dare we say from The South) performing dances from the North-West.
- JP Yes - that's a tender spot! I don't think it's a matter of where they come from - it's a matter of how they do it, how much they know of what they're doing, and how much they've thought about it. I think that's the general point of view among the people I've spoken to up here. It's not the fact that they're from the South that people resent, or the fact that they're from out of the area, but the fact that they've never been here, never seen the dances in their context, and never really thought about what a North-West team does, and why it's like that.
- MM Can you say what you see as being the essence of North-West, how it differs from Cotswold, for example. It's very hard to define.....
- JP What I did when we started was to encourage the side to see the Jemmers, the Horwich men, and all the local teams. I see the essence as being to do with the straight lines, the very "inflexible" stepping, the fact that you do tend to stick to one step throughout the dance..... You stand straight - there's not much body movement involved and you don't need to be particularly bouncy or athletic to do it. (I think that when we get irons on our clogs it'll change our style - you've got to stand a lot straighter in irons. Your whole sense of balance changes. And you can't cut corners - you go straight from there to there or else you fall over!) And the costume is important - the colours and the general gaudy look of everything - as much show as possible to brighten the place up. It's all very different from Cotswold - you don't have to be a born dancer at all. The enjoyment you get out of it is different - if you do it well it's because everyone has worked together as a team. I can't imagine what a "good" North-West dancer would look like - you know a bad one when you see one, but a good one shouldn't be noticeable.

But it's not just to do with how well you learn the steps. You can get the step and you're all pointing in the same direction and you're all doing the right thing with your arms, and it still looks like a load of people who don't know what the hell they're doing. It's the whole character of the dance, and what they were trying to achieve and why they did those dances the way they did. It seems to be something that all the teams in the North-West have in common. I don't know if they could define it for you, but they all have it. And then you've got people jumping on the bandwagon, suddenly realising that North-West is a good dance to do - it's different and it's good for processions..... When you've put a lot of work into something getting the right character, and the right appearance, collecting the dances, and all this, and then people come along from outside your area and they don't dance it properly, and they don't research what they do dance - well obviously you get a lot of resentment, and there is a lot of resentment. I think it's just self-defence. And it's not just this area - any team that dances its own unpublished dances probably feels the same.

Roy Dommett
and Tony Reynolds

Women's Dancing

- some common faults

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

1. TOO MANY DANCES, TOO SOON.

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

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

Principles are no substitute for good dance basics. Most cant about the 'tradition' ignores that the tradition had very good and experienced examples to copy, and that the teachers in the traditional sides, this century at least, have been insisting on good grounding. Dancing out is part of the making

of a dancer. It should not be delayed but introduced with care.

2. SET TOO SMALL.

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

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

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

3. WEAK STICK TAPPING.

The stick is an implement not an extension of the hand like a handkerchief. It should be wielded like a tool, with confidence and vigour, with a good preparatory swing but no follow through. Accidents happen through this particular lack of control. If this is thought to be

unfeminine then you do not understand the Cotswold Morris, and you probably play lousy tennis and can not chop wood.

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

4. WEAK POSTURE AND FITNESS.

Pulling the stomach in and raising the rib cage gives the dancer a sense of elation as well as elevation. Slack body leads to slack mind and to slack dancing.

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

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

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

5. SELF DISCIPLINE.

Can you recognise the following faults? Talking in the set and delaying Once to Yourself or missing calls. Arguing in public especially having post mortems as soon as the dance stops. Temper. Sloppy on and off. Begging the sixth dancer to come and dance. Behaviour in pubs - it's not your pub, you have obligations. Who

likes to see women the worse for drink? Whatever your personal beliefs on sexual roles and positions in society, the morris is no place to sail against accepted conventions. Too much dancing by an individual or a side in the summer is "overdancing" - to lose the "magic" of an event, to get bored so that numbers drop, is not worth it. The traditional dance season was short and in the late spring - do not overdo a good thing.

6. CARING.

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

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

It is suprising that sides do not often chose local names to identify themselves, nor introduce local associations into dance titles. The dance movement is not wedded to a tune otherwise there would be only one tradition.

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

7. COSTUME.

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

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

A well designed costume can emphasise the upright posture needed for NW Morris.

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

shoes

Height in the heel of shoes throws the weight back and this is wrong for the Cotswold Morris. To maintain the appearance of the morris step with the soles parallel to the ground (that is not to curl the apparent shape and look comical) requires that the toe is "pointed"

downwards which strains the leg the wrong way. A heel reduces the shock-absorbing travel of the foot and ankle muscles in landing in steps, jumps or capers. The strain on muscles is greater, the risk of injury higher, the stepping looks abnormal and there is not the distance for acceleration to get the body up off the ground or smartly into movements and the "guts" goes out of the morris. Look at the height of a "character" shoe.

wobbly fat

The advent of the bra liberated women by allowing them to participate in active sports without embarrassment or discomfort. We do not believe anyone can come up with a good aesthetic reason why breasts should fly around in the Morris. Wobbly fat is distracting where ever it is on the body. There is the choice of tailored bodices (Irish), good waistcoats (American Morris) or coveralls (tabards) and pinafore tops to provide control. This is the way chosen by most genuine European Folk costumes. There are other ways - please recognise it as a problem. Women appear to move in a way protective to their breasts, thus inhibiting good arm movements, good clapping and good stick tapping. Arm movements should always be large and expressive and the hands well away from the body at hits, claps, etc. The technique has the same objective as stage movements, to look normal to an audience it has to be exaggerated in performance.

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

ROY DOMMETT and TONY REYNOLDS

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Congratulations, Betty and Tubby !

We'd like to congratulate Betty and Tubby Reynolds on behalf of all our readers on their having been given the SIDMOUTH SILVER JUBILEE AWARD this August. Since the award is of great satisfaction and interest to their many friends, we are pleased to reproduce a copy of the citation here.

XXV INTERNATIONAL FOLKLORE FESTIVAL

1979 Sidmouth Silver Jubilee Award

conferred upon

Tony ('Tubby') and Betty Reynolds

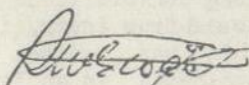
whose interests have fostered Song, Morris, Country and Playford Dancing and inspired countless Musicians.

Of their many activities the most noticeable is their unique relationship with students at Bath University, for although outside the framework of the University, they have nevertheless nurtured a very lively folk scene inside its 'walls'.

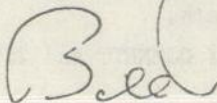
Betty as founding President of the Women's Morris Federation, and Tubby as M.C. and teacher of dancing have made a marked contribution to the more conventional folk scene, and their hospitality is legendary.

There is no more distinguished husband and wife team, and their friends thank them for their past enthusiasm and may they long continue to be an inspiration to the folk world.

On behalf of the English Folk Dance and Song Society

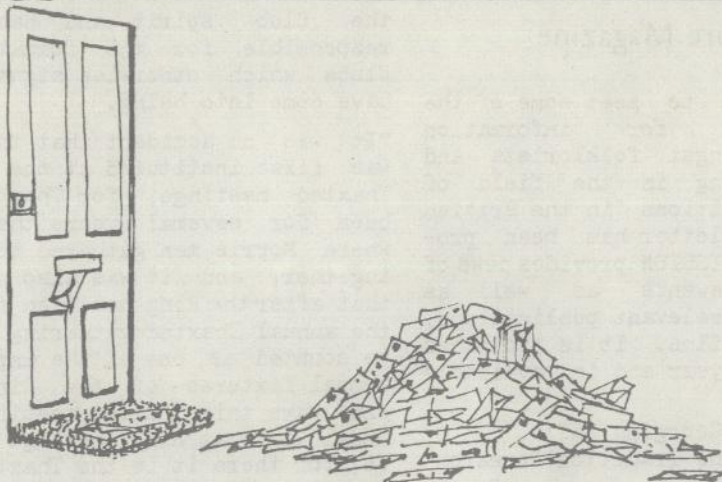


Area Council Representative



Regional Development Officer

MAILBAG....



Visit to Lancashire

Dear Editor,

Apart from three years spent living near Bingley, W. Yorks, I've spent the rest of my life in the South. I've seen several North-West sides (including a few traditional teams) mainly at Sidmouth, plus numerous Southern North-West sides. However, I hadn't seen the N.W. Morris in its own environs until a few weeks ago....

We were guests of Rivington Morris and toured with them and Carlisle Morris. We had only seven dancers and therefore geared ourselves to the exhausting prospect of 6 dances on and one off! The first surprise of the day, however, was the length of the dances performed by the other sides - one Rivington or Carlisle dance was approximately twice the length of our longest dance so we collectively heaved a sigh of relief and relaxed for the rest of the tour.

The second surprise of the day was the audience. I've danced mainly in tourist areas where the crowd is

swarming with camera-snapping Japs or garrulous Americans and the few English people are convinced that we're visiting Scandinavians. The Northern crowd seemed very friendly and generous - they were even prepared to interrupt their Saturday morning shopping to laugh at our jokes and applaud our routines.

Although we danced mainly in modern precincts, the atmosphere seemed to blend in with the tradition of the dance. People from the crowd remembered dancing in their youth and, apparently, would accost a modern dancer and tell them details of their own dance. Much of the collecting, therefore, is obtained from living dancers - a tale I had heard about but never truly believed.

In conclusion, may I recommend a visit, preferably to a traditional weekend, and you might find, as I did, that the Northwest Morris is a whole new tradition.

Jill Coleman.

MAILBAG

New Folklore Magazine

In an attempt to meet some of the requirements for information exchange amongst folklorists and others working in the field of cultural traditions in the British Isles, a newsletter has been produced. TRANSMISSION provides news of forthcoming events as well as details of relevant publications, records and films. It is published four times a year and is available from:-

Paul and Georgina Smith,
Culture and Tradition Research
Press,
0 (Nought) Westfield Rd.,
BRAMLEY,
Rotherham,
Yorkshire.

The Ring - What's gone wrong?

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

"It was the purpose of the Ring to provide a means by which the Clubs could be brought into touch with each other and so receive mutual encouragement, and this has remained its fundamental object throughout, based on the belief that, as in the old days of the Cotswold Morris, the dance can flourish as it should only in the atmosphere of a Club whose members are closely associated together. There is no doubt that the Ring's existence has fostered

the Club spirit and has been responsible for the formation of Clubs which otherwise might never have come into being.

"It was no accident that the Ring was first instituted at one of the Thaxted meetings, for Thaxted had been for several years the place where Morris men gathered to dance together; and it was also natural that after the Ring had been founded the annual Thaxted gathering should be counted as one of the important annual fixtures of the Ring. In many ways this Thaxted meeting is a model of what Ring meetings should be; for there it is the Thaxted men who are the hosts and make the necessary arrangements for the meeting, while the other Clubs are their guests. Similar meetings have been arranged by clubs in other parts of the country, and I hope there will be many more. To provide a more central place of meeting for those clubs who cannot easily get to Thaxted, regular meetings once or twice a year were instituted at Cecil Sharp House. The value of such gatherings cannot be exaggerated; it is universally agreed. Yet the size of them cannot grow beyond a certain limit without defeating their object, for the Morris cannot be danced in hordes or it will lose its character; and it is not in these large gatherings, valuable and inspiring as they are, but in the Clubs and in their regular meetings, that the true spirit of the Morris is to be found. Another function of the Ring, which I hope will be developed more than it has been, is to provide an opportunity for experienced members of Clubs to meet and discuss anything concerning the welfare of the Clubs and of the Morris generally; and there may be

MAILBAG....

many further ways, not yet attempted, in which the Ring can help the Clubs in the future, always preserving the essential relationship between the Clubs and the Ring. For the Ring is in no sense a 'super-Club'; it claims no right to prescribe policy for the Clubs that belong to it, nor has it ever been suggested that every Club should follow a standardised pattern. Every Club associated in the Ring retains its own independence, and through its association in the Ring each Club contributes to the well-being of the others. There is not, and I

hope there never will be, a 'Ring style' of dancing; and if the Clubs ever begin to feel that the Ring is something over and above and superior to themselves, then it will be failing of its purpose."

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

Roy Domnett.



WARNING - Competition Morris can Damage your Health!

Sir-Your leading article brings to mind my single experience of epidemic hysteria. This occurred in a double-decker-busload of morris dancing girls on their way home at night from a long day's competition. They were laid out on the verge of a main road, and a fleet of ambulances ferried them to our casualty department.....

The episode started about 10 pm; by 2 am it had completely evaporated. There was no recurrence by the group or by any individual.....

(From the British Medical Journal,
15th Sept., 1979)

★ ★ ★
*
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PRESENT PROBLEMS

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