

Bah! Let's  
Just go 'round  
again... no  
one'll notice!



# Morris Matters

# PUB MORRIS

It's awfully good of you to help us out... but is there any chance of the tempo being a "little" slower?!



# PUB MORRIS

Don't Worry - I've found a 'last-minute' replacement musician... I'm sure it won't take 'im long to pick it up!



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27 Nortoft Road, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 0LA; phone 01494 871465

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EDITORIAL

As I write this we are enjoying summer at last...in this issue you can read about some of the events to look forward to and some of those you may have missed. I attended one festival where the procession was so long we had time after doing our bit to go back to the start...and watch the teams who hadn't even set off on their romp round the town. It left me wondering who or what are processions really for; the audience, the organisers, the teams? You often don't get to see the teams dance normally because of all the stopping and starting. Some teams have it down to a fine art; they may come from somewhere where the processional dance is part and parcel of the repertoire, or at the other extreme they just walk and use it as a photo opportunity! What do you feel about processions – do you groan if you hear the event includes a procession or look forward to it? Is it the audience rather than the performers who get “procession fatigue”?

At long last I have created an index of sorts for Morris Matters. If anyone would like a copy, it is as an EXCEL spreadsheet so you can search on author, topic etc ( some of the early titles were a bit hard to classify!). I can send it on disc or as e-mail. If a disc please send me a **virus free**, 3.5” high density, double sided disc and first class SAE – if e-mail write to me at [Beth.Neill@care4free.net](mailto:Beth.Neill@care4free.net).

This issue also has “part one” of Roy Dommett’s autobiography; he has undertaken to start writing part two now! So we can look forward to that. Also in a future issue we should have ( with colour pictures again I hope) an article on Preston Royal from Chas Marshall. I should note here two minor errata – one was that photo number 4 of the Flag and Bone Gang should have been credited to Ruth Dodsworth and also the original idea for a “colour supplement” came from Chas Marshall.

And now on to the articles – enjoy reading them and please, if you attend an event you think is of interest – write about it; if you have a subject you feel strongly about - write about it. Don't wait to be asked/ begged/ cajoled by me. Some good friends did a lot of last-minute scribbling for me this time!

*Beth*



**ROY LEONARD DOMMETT**

**= THE AUTHORISED AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

**THE STORY SO FAR! ( TO 1985)**

I was born in 1933, married in 1955 and have 7 sons, and a daughter.

The morris discovered me at Bristol University in the early 1950s where I met Alan Browning, musician, rapper enthusiast and friend of Peter Kennedy. Through sharing a room with Alan at the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE)'s hostel in 1954, I became a founder member of the Farnborough Morris, originally centred on the RAE, and over the years did most jobs: leader, announcer, fool and playing. I also danced for several years with another non-Ring side in the area, the Border Morris, based at first at Woodlarks, near Farnham, and then at Holybourne, Alton, under the leadership of Miss Mary Ireson, a fine pre-war dancer.

The collecting started in 1958, as did the calling for barn dances. A slack period at work enabled the copying of dance material from the Sharp microfilms in 1960. There followed a short, but very intense, period of gathering manuscript material together and visiting many of the earlier collectors, including most of the survivors of the early Travelling Morrice tours of the Cotswolds. There were many collecting trips to the Cotswolds in those days, by public transport, with Frank Purslow mainly. In this period, there were interviews with old dancers at Abingdon, Bampton, Bidford, Eynsham and Ilmington and the meeting with men who knew something of the morris at Ascott, Ducklington and Leafield. This was complemented by uncovering manuscripts on Ascott, Border Morris (as the West Midland dances are now called), Oddington, Stanton Harcourt and Wheatley.

I was asked to dance with the Abingdon men through Frank Purslow's connection with them at the Reigate Ring Meeting in 1960. For several years, the numbers were very low, and my older children helped too make up the numbers at practices and on tours. The team survived the loss of Tom and James Hemmings and Major Fryer over a very short period. There was an invitation to teach the Abingdon dances to the Rover Scouts at Longworth in 1967 with Jack Hyde, the Abingdon bagman. From this grew the recovery in numbers. My sons and I last went out with Abingdon in 1970.

An association with Thames Valley morris started at their feast in 1956 and in 1961 we formed a club, to revive dances from manuscripts, that met at Jim Brooks and Chris Penton's houses. Lionel Bacon asked us to teach Oddington and Wheatley at the instructional meetings in 1962 and 1963. For many years, we enjoyed the October morris weekends, run by the club, at Sandy Balls, Fordingbridge. We did an Oddington instructional again in 1978. After so many years of performance, the Thames Valley Oddington is not a revival!

The filming started in 1962, when the future of all the traditional sides seemed in doubt. Since then, I have tried to cover interesting interpretations and revivals, which would otherwise be ignored, although over the years, the emphasis has swung from the

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Cotswold morris to Clog and Border. It is now quite impossible to keep up with the number of exciting things being done.

The local village mummers, who trace themselves back to 1880-ish in Crookham Village, asked me to play for them, in procession, from place to place in 1963. This I still do, having also tried being the Doctor, King George and Father Christmas, and having, as of 1985, 4 sons in the play.

I met Tubby Reynolds first during National Folk Week in 1967. The close friendship led both to an identification with Bath City Morris, for about 10 years, but also working together on instructionals across the country; teaching whoever asked whatever they wanted to learn. This stopped about 1980, after a very successful teaching tour of the eastern USA. Bath City learnt a number of little known traditions so that they could be filmed as well as worked out in a club atmosphere. These included Ducklington, Stanton Harcourt and Ascott-under-Wychwood and the girls trying the first of the stave dances. We did a tour of the Cotswold villages to do their dances in 1978.

My first Ring meeting was in 1956 at Lichfield and since then there have been many. I was a guest speaker at Taunton, Ipswich, Cardiff, Isle of Wight and Reading and conducted the orchestra in the cathedral at Gloucester. For a few years I was an area representative on the Ring Advisory Council. I twice stood for squire when work looked slack and there was some anniversary coming along which I felt I could contribute to but each time I failed at the last vote. I did not spend enough time canvassing but concentrated on doing the instructionals, often with new, uninfluential sides.

The series of Advanced Morris Instructionals at Halsway in the period 1964-70 were the most influential; indirectly affecting the growth of morris in the West of England and challenging many on style, standards and traditions. The attempts to interest dancers in clog morris and border failed at that time; although the border instructional at Ledbury in 1972 did succeed in interesting the local sides. Sidmouth has always seemed the best of the Festivals but it always seemed impossible to give top quality instructionals year after year so the visits have been limited to 1971/2, 1976/7, 1979 and 1982, giving a course of classes and lectures. The morris competitions and the celebration in 1979 have been good filming opportunities.

Some clubs have built up a close friendship over the years, even though the faces may be changing. The Oxford University Morris Men (OUMM) first because there were collectors there when I was trying to meet the collectors and the tradition. May morning, Cotswold tours, Ancient Men tours, including the never-to-be-forgotten Hampshire tours and the appearance at Llangollen have helped build, after 25 years, some life-long contacts. I helped Oxford City out for a while when they were very short of numbers, as they and OUMM did for Abingdon. [Oxford] City, in those days, was a model of how a morris team should perform in a pub.

Another annual event, now dead and gone, was the Cardiff Morris weekends at Boys Town, St. Athan, near Barry. Where else has anybody had to get another lorry load of beer delivered, on a Sunday, sale or return? Some clubs have had repeat instructionals: Cardiff, Great Western, Chelmsford, Men of Wight and Chanctonbury Ring, such that

they are all old friends. Over a number of years, Sherborne instructionals with Kennett Morris raised them to the heights of an invite to Sidmouth and of course, in my opinion, the best Sherborne ever done!

Sidmouth 1971 invented the term, "Women's Ritual dance" – I taught North West (NW) dances. Only a handful of NW dances were known in 1965 outside the Manchester Morris Men notebooks but by 1970, it was nearly 50, as people were encouraged to teach or pass on notations. A number of women went home and decided to form morris sides in the next few years, one of the first being at Bath University. As a defence against bad teaching of bad Cotswold by men, I did some instructionals and got the Women's Morris Federation<sup>1</sup> (WMF) archive started, and later I supported the WMF notation group in producing a glossary and some descriptions suitable for inexperienced leaders. The arguments on who should or who should not dance left me cold, as it was not up to outsiders to tell anyone what they might do or not do.

I have run instructionals for the Ring (for example, Ascott); Sherborne at Chippenham; foremen's weekend for the Morris Federation and Border and Fieldtown for Open Morris. New people with new ideas to graft onto the old tradition. I have seen a lot of the problems of newish clubs and have advised that recruitment etc. will be a problem if attention is not given to it from the start. I helped the Morris Federation indirectly through close friendship with Betty Reynolds, the first president, but then Marguerite (my wife) and I have helped anyone genuinely interested in furthering the morris.

I went to the USA for morris first in 1978 at the invitation of Tony Barrand and did an instructional tour. The following year I went to California, Berea and Knoxville as well as doing a tour with Tubby. Then in 1980 I did the Cotswold morris at Pinewoods Camp of the Country Dance Society for 3 weeks. Our great trip was to Adelaide for the Australian Morris Meeting in 1983. Abroad, one has to accept mixed morris and goings-on that would not do in England, but it does teach what is morris and what is just our culture.

I have tried to get at dancers in print through short articles in magazines rather than learned work in journals. It offends the few genuine research workers but it helps keep certain publications in circulation.

Like all old morris dancers, one slowly relapses into parochial activity. For a couple of winters I instructed Fleur de Lys at Godalming. Since late 1982 I have taught Minden Rose at Alton, a garland and short stick team, mostly interpretations or inventions. It has taken a lot of years to be confident enough to compose dances. I like to think that I brought the idea of garland, ribbon and stave dances to the attention of the world. The stave is the most interesting, based on fragmentary sources, but now done by a number of southern clubs; my wife ran a club that did nothing else for a few seasons.

*R.L. Domett*  
1985

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<sup>1</sup> Now the Morris Federation (ed)

## BEYOND THE BLACK BOOK WITH BERKSHIRE BEDLAM

### A Personal View of a Modern Morris Tradition

*In part 1, I looked at the origins and early history of the team, up to the point where most of the original members left. I now want to discuss the motivation and ideology of the current side.*

#### The “New” Team

The switch from the “old” to the “new” team has seen both continuity and change. Under Jeff Bates’ foremanship, the emphasis was on the standard of dancing. The aim was to dance as energetically as possible. The dancing was the *show*, and every dance was a *show* dance. In retrospect it might be said that we only had one gear - top gear!

When Jeff left in 1987 things began to relax, and the comic possibilities of “The Coconut Dance” (a hand-clapping dance using coconut shells, which break as they are hit together) first began to be realised. When I became foreman in 1992 I wanted to take things even further. I wanted to combine the high standards of the “old” team with the “fun” of my university side. Up to this time I had come across teams which appeared to embody only one or other of these characteristics, but very few had both. Either a team danced well but came across as somewhat straight-laced (some might say boring), or they had lots of fun but could not dance (which is equally self-indulgent).

I wanted both. It became apparent that certain dances could still be danced well, but that others could be taken less seriously. Helped by the performance workshops run at Sidmouth by teams such as Seven Champions (with whom we now share some members), we realised that our dances fell into specific categories (not all necessarily exclusive). There were show and spectacular dances, stock or “filler” dances, coming-on and going-off dances, and humorous dances, all of which could add variety and contrast to our performances.

A long stand certainly requires attention to the sequencing of dances, and we try to tailor each performance to the specific circumstances of the time. We use our judgement and experience to read an audience and adapt accordingly. The individual context of a performance will influence our choice of dances. We now appreciate when to do a “show” dance or “fun” dance or fill some time with a “stock” dance.

Our approach to our dances has become even more flexible as a result. Established dances (both “traditional” in the stricter sense and made up by the “old” team) have been modified, others dropped altogether, and new dances composed. With their emphasis on height and energy, for example, we found that many of the “old” team’s dances were simply too long. We have tended to shorten them where appropriate to make them more manageable - for an audience, that is, not just because we got exhausted dancing them!

There is certainly nothing “sacred” about our dances - they are simply dances, not rituals. Our dances are actually in a constant state of flux. We dance them out when they reach equilibrium, but they can always undergo subsequent alteration in the face of

changing influences. A good example is “The Wheel of Fortune”, a rather long coming-on dance inherited from the “old” team. We wanted to perform it as part of a ceilidh spot at Warwick Folk Festival in 1998 because it has an interesting shape, but it would have put us well over the time limit with the other dances we wanted to do too. We made the decision to cut one of the sequences, with the result that we now have a “better” dance, which we perform much more frequently.

This is not to denigrate the “old” team by any means. We can only do what we do today because we have been through that phase in our development. Perhaps we do not get as much as height in our dancing as we used to<sup>2</sup>, but I’m not convinced that we are more relaxed about standards; it’s just that we have more to think about. I like to say that I have gained “gravity” as I’ve got older. It means that whilst I may not get off the ground as much as I used to, I can do things now as a performer which I could not do when I was eighteen.

The discovery of “fun” dances in particular has been a revelation for us. Humour provides contrast and variety in a performance, not just at a solo stand. At massed stands teams generally perform their show dances, as it is the one chance they get to impress. But after a while, even “show” dances can end up looking very similar. A humorous dance will grab the audience’s attention, wake it up, and hopefully make the team more memorable than all the others. Our “fun” dances are a way of making us different.<sup>3</sup>

In Berkshire Bedlam, we want to stand out from the rest. We *are* competitive. We want to be the best. We want to get the biggest round of applause. Not only does this flatter our egos, but it also affirms that we have impressed and/or entertained the audience: that they have marvelled at our dancing, laughed at our fooling, or simply taken the piss out of our posing. In short, we want to be watched. Our hobby is *showing off*, and morris dancing is merely a means to an end.

Our public image is very important to us, and we have thought a great deal about how we present ourselves to the public. When Jerry took over as foreman, he asked the team how we wanted to appear. As amateur? As self-indulgent? As ridiculous or embarrassed? Of course not: we want to appear as fun, lively, extrovert, exciting, boisterous, arrogant, and loud!<sup>4</sup> I do not think many teams on the whole think enough about how they appear to the general public. It’s not that they don’t care exactly, it’s just something which is very rarely considered.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> At our 21st birthday party, the “old” team danced for the first time (for some of them) in five or six years. Even then some of them were still getting higher off the ground than we do.

<sup>3</sup> Conversely, of course, a well-performed straight dance will stand out amongst self-indulgent teams who are messing about.

<sup>4</sup> Basically an exaggerated version of ourselves!

<sup>5</sup> It seems to be generally accepted today that morris is something to *do* rather than to *watch*. Although morris dancing is implicitly a “spectator sport”, how many active morris dancers actually go out to watch other teams? This shows how little audience awareness matters to most teams. They assume that the audience will accept what it is given, and it does not really matter if no-one watches as long as they enjoy themselves. By taking the trouble to go out and watch

I believe that morris dancing is ultimately about self-expression. This is on two levels. First, I can express myself as an individual.<sup>6</sup> Second - and more important - I can make a statement about belonging to a group of other people - my "gang" if you like. Our dances thus make a statement about us. They say who we are and reveal to an audience our aims in dancing the morris. That is why we have developed a number of new dances recently. I guess the "traditional" Leaffield dances did not permit us to express ourselves fully, so we had to make up our own dances. Only *we* could come up with our new dances. It is a deliberate policy to develop new dances. The creation of a new dance helps team bonding.<sup>7</sup>

In general someone (usually, but not necessarily, me) comes to practice with a new dance about three-quarters complete. It then becomes "team property" and we all play around with it, experimenting and refining the ideas. Everyone has a chance to have his or her say. Even if a dance does not ultimately work out, we do not consider that time wasted.

Ideas for new dances<sup>8</sup> come from a diverse range of sources: West End stage shows, the Generation Game, overseas dance troupes, for example, in addition to watching other teams and workshops.<sup>9</sup> Often several influences are incorporated into a new dance, but they are put together in such a way that the dance nonetheless fills a single niche in our repertoire. It is probably true to say that there is very little "new" morris. After all, there are only a finite number of figures to be done using six dancers in two rows of three. But I do like to think that we can put together old patterns in new ways.

The idea for a dance can change dramatically once it has become "team property". "The Mazurka" was originally meant to be a fighting dance to take the place of "Old Marlborough" and complement "Albemarle's Hop", but using a 3/4 tune. It was based loosely on "Sweet Jenny Jones" from Adderbury, but incorporating the Berkshire Bedlam heel-and-toe step. The hey is based upon that from the Moulton tradition. Originally I had wanted "The Mazurka" to be danced to the tune, "The French Assembly". The idea was that the dance should progress from hand-clapping through foot-stamping on to face-slapping, in the usual buffoon-like manner. The fact that the tune was in 3/4 time would give it an added clockwork feel. But Gareth did not know

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other teams, I certainly became much more aware of good and bad habits, and I make sure that my team copies the good bits and - just as important - avoids the bad bits.

<sup>6</sup> Jigs are therefore still important to us. Everyone (or at least every pair) has their jig. When teaching the old jigs to the "new" team, however, we experimented with formations and often turned them into "set" dances. We have an eight-man dance ("Arse about Face") which was - and still is - a very nice two-man jig ("The Back-to-Front Jig").

<sup>7</sup> We also run the "Bunfight" every year, which is a ceilidh for our own pleasure. We always do a spot. We enjoy dressing up in silly costumes and making people laugh. It helps to stop us taking ourselves too seriously. The creation process for the spot also takes a considerable amount of time and adds variety to our practice season, possibly in a similar way to other Cotswold teams taking up Border or Molly during the winter.

<sup>8</sup> And Bunfight spots!

<sup>9</sup> There does not appear to be much new morris around nowadays, but I cannot overestimate how important it was for me to go out and watch other teams when I first started dancing. It gave me such a wide knowledge and experience of styles and traditions.

“The French Assembly” and played “The Mazurka” instead. The following week Gareth came to practice having learnt “The French Assembly”, but by then the team had got used to “The Mazurka”. This is a less snappy tune and it no longer felt appropriate to progress on to the buffoonery: we kept the choruses to the simpler hand-clapping.

“The Dance of the Little Fairies” is the best example of a team effort. I had developed the heel-and-toe and back-steps in 5/4 time having been inspired by the Seven Champions’ “Take Five”. Lee then remembered a good sticking chorus from one of Roy Dommett’s Wantage weekends, which we rapidly adapted to 5/4 time. Finally, Jane came up with Herbie Flowers’ “The Dance of the Little Fairies” to replace the corrupted version of “The French Assembly” which Seven Champions occasionally use for their dance.<sup>10</sup> The rest, as they say, is history.

I’m not sure how I would feel if I saw another team performing one of our dances. The standard response is that I should feel flattered, but I know that I would actually be quite indignant. It is not just a dance, a collection of steps and figures, which has been taken, but something deeper, a statement of who we are which does not belong to anyone else. That may sound precious, but it is true nonetheless.

### Silly Dances

“The Coconut Dance” was our first “fun” dance but it soon began to be over-used. I remember one Rochester Sweeps Festival where we did it about three or four times because all the other teams were generally doing very similar dances. After this we started looking at new ideas, such as “The Mazurka”. Ironically, “The Mazurka” is probably the dance which diverges most from our usual style, but it also encapsulates best our attitude to morris. It was designed to be a silly, throwaway little dance, a bit of fun. But a good fun dance must nonetheless still have a solid foundation. It is true to say that good dances are based on movement, not dramatisation. The dance must work on a purely dance level as there will be times when the humour will not work or may be inappropriate.

The audience certainly needs to know what is “correct” before they see the humour. A “fun” dance needs to build towards a climax. It’s useful to have a *range* of possible silliness. How far a joke is taken will depend on how receptive the performers and audience are on that specific occasion.

Our definition of a “humorous” dance is thus fairly flexible. It depends on the circumstances. Berkshire Bedlam’s fighting dance, “Albemarle’s Hop”<sup>11</sup>, is usually regarded as a “show” dance when performed outside, for there is an interesting hey in

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<sup>10</sup> I’m determined to get a dance to that tune somehow!

<sup>11</sup> “Albemarle’s Hop” is another dance that has been shortened by the “new team”. We felt that it was too long so we rarely danced it out, but we were also loath to drop it from the repertoire because of its unique characteristics. After cutting out one of the figures we again think that we have a better dance. Indeed, it actually makes more *sense* now, and it is likely that this dance will be the subject of further development in the future.

which the dancers form a line across the middle of the set, all turning at different times as if by clockwork. If it is raining, however, and the dancing can only be done indoors, then "Albemarle's Hop" becomes a "fun" dance as there is usually much pushing and shoving as we attempt to form the line in a confined space. The humour is derived from keeping the dance going at all costs, in spite of the lack of space.

In humorous dances the whole team acts like a *collective* fool. Like jigs, humorous dances depend to a greater extent on the personality of the performers, who must therefore be confident in what they are doing. Confidence and competence permit improvisation. This may sometimes lead to mistakes, but if we are honest about them mistakes can actually enhance a performance.

"Jolly Jockey Sticks" arose out of the last Wantage Weekend. It has a non-stop stick-throwing chorus. Even the best dancers are going to drop a stick occasionally and it is rare to get an entire chorus right. Because of this we were initially reluctant to take it out, and we were very surprised by the reaction when we eventually performed it in public for the first time. The audience liked it because they saw us dance well and then we tried this dance: they applauded when we got it right, and they applauded even more when we got it wrong! I don't think anyone could have expected how well "Jolly Jockey Sticks" would be received, but it says a lot about our strengths that we can contemplate including a dance we cannot even get right!

It is true to say that we can only devote energy to fooling around in our dances if we are not using it to think about things such as stepping, hand movements, or whereabouts we should be at any given time. It is said that the fool was traditionally the best dancer in a team. If we are *all* to act as fool, therefore, we *all* have to be the best dancers.

Showmanship comes with experience. Roy Dommett has contrasted beginners, who are controlled by the dance, with experienced performers, who *express themselves* through the dance. Tony Barrand makes an analogy with social dance. We do not go to ceilidhs to learn long, complicated figures in which our whole attention is devoted simply to getting through. Instead, we want to do easy, familiar dances that allow us to make the best use of our energy - that is, flirting with our partner. In display dances such as the morris, we should flirt with the whole audience.

### A "New" Tradition?

In recent years we have developed dances in 3/4 time ("The Mazurka") and 5/4 time ("The Dance of the Little Fairies"). We find it easier to develop something completely new (although firmly based in the "Bedlam" tradition) than, for example, to introduce steps and figures from other recognized morris styles. Indeed, with the changeover in membership during the 1990's, we no longer regard our style as, "Field Town" or even, "based on Field Town" (although we are loath to sever the ties entirely). It is now *our* tradition. It has its own internal structure. There are areas where we feel free to make

up completely new things and other areas where we would not mess about.<sup>12</sup> Introducing a new heel-and-toe step is fine, but we would not tamper with the double-steps in a dance. Our heel-and-toe dances provide variety in stepping. It might even be argued that our double-step and heel-and-toe dances constitute two different traditions, a bit like teams who dance a “mixed” repertoire, but that might be stretching things too far.

We have created a modern, evolving, living morris, hopefully of interest to a modern audience. We believe that teams are more interesting when they perform their own dances. They *think* more about what they are doing, usually resulting in a higher quality of performance. The creative process leads to greater team bonding and pride.

Black face teams (Border and Molly) have generally been more flexible in their approach to making up new dances because so little original material survives. Cotswold teams tend to have had a rather more rigid approach because there is greater documentation. But whilst we should certainly respect the past, we should not have too much *awe* for it. Today the morris is mature enough to make any source its own.

### The Future

I believe that we have more in common with the “traditional” teams than most revival sides, even though we are a thoroughly modern morris. Unfortunately, like most “traditional” teams, we may ourselves be extinct in five or ten years’ time. It will be our 25th Anniversary in a couple of years’ time, and we are not getting any younger. We need some new men. It is sad to see so many contemporary sides go through hard times and disappear.

Whilst there may be no Berkshire Bedlam in the future, however, we are generally optimistic about morris dancing. Dog Rose Morris look like they will be around for some time<sup>13</sup>, and there are a number of young people getting involved in the folk scene in bands. Some of them may turn to morris. There may have to be a huge decline in the existing morris scene before the new wave takes over, but such is the way of these things. I appear to have come full circle. Isn’t this where I started?

*Jameson Wooders*  
*April 2001*

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<sup>12</sup> We do seem to have a different sort of hey in each dance. This is one area where we don’t mind experimenting: the hey is fair game. Indeed, we even had to invent a new type of hey for a basic sidestep and half-hey dance we’ve just developed.

<sup>13</sup> Paul (who has been in the team longer than anyone) compares Dog Rose to how Berkshire Bedlam danced when he first joined.

## TRANSATLANTIC SWORDS

### ***DERT 2001***

Black Adder hosted this years Dance England Rapper Tournament in the beautiful Yorkshire village of Masham. It was a brilliant weekend of dance, with many fine rapper teams coming together, and overcoming the external problems caused by the foot and mouth epidemic and snowy weather conditions, to perform in the competition.

This competition is held annually and has different categories which are open to any rapper side that wishes to take part. The first section is the Open section, which is divided into Open Evolved Dance (own dance) and Open Traditional Dance, and any team which has not previously won in either of these sections, can enter. The second section is the Premier Evolved Dance and Premier Traditional Dance. Only winners of the Open section can compete in the Premier section. There are prizes for the Best Musician, Best Character and The Steve Marris Trophy, which is awarded to the team judged best overall. Throughout the competition there are exhibition dances performed by those teams wishing to dance, but not compete.

This year, the judges - we had been told - had been carefully selected for their particular specialist knowledge and best possible, unbiased, judging. They certainly worked hard for us, not only in the judging itself, but they also filled in a comments sheet on each aspect (music, presentation, characters, stepping, Buzz Factor, sword handling and dance technique) of the team's performance! For new and experienced sides alike these comments can give reassurance that you have a great dance, and also give ideas to make it even better!!

The weekend started on Friday night as we drove through snowy streets to find our accommodation. After 4 hours of driving it was very pleasant to find a pub, meet up with familiar faces and catch up on all the news! Saturday morning gave the teams a chance to dance in the pubs around Masham (and lose some of the nerves!) before the competition commenced in the Black Sheep Brewery at 2:00 p.m.

Insword were the first to compete and such was the good atmosphere and friendly support, that pleasure in the dance took over from the nerves and I enjoyed every moment! In our group the other teams were, Mabel Gubbins, Short Circuit B and the winners Black Swan; and in the Open Traditional we saw Black Boy come first in front of Dark Horse. There were 6 teams battling it out in the Premier Evolving Dance, and the judges awarded first to Short Circuit A, second to Stone Monkey and joint third to Northgate and Thrales. Others competing in this class were Pengwyn and Ryknild. The last team category was the Premier Traditional, another hotly contested event in which Sallyport came first, Newcastle Kingsmen came second and Addison third.

On Saturday evening each team was bussed out to Ripon and given a list of the pubs, complete with what beer and food they served, whether their floors were wooden or carpeted and - most important of all - whether they were rapper friendly! This meant we were free to eat, drink, dance and socialise as we chose! When the time came for us

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to be bussed back to Masham, many continued the evening at the Black Sheep Brewery.

Three workshops were held on Sunday a.m. – a choice between stepping, dancing and tumbling. My choice was the tumbling where I helped out being one of the shoulders which supported the would-be tumblers (my shoulders carried the bruises for 2 weeks after!).

At 1:00 p.m., there was a massed stand and dancing in the pubs around Masham, but whilst we stayed and watched the dancing for a short while, Insword opted to set off on the long journey home. I really did enjoy this weekend, the venue was great, there were many opportunities to socialise, and dance, and do it at a pace that suited each team individually. The competition and the workshops were entertaining and I was glad to have been a part of it. Thank you so much to Black Adder, and everyone else that made the weekend such a success!

*Sue Graham*  
*June 2001*

### **2001 Half Moon Sword Ale**

Insword arrived in New York for the 2001 Half Moon Sword Ale somewhat under par. Marian and I were getting over the 'flu, Rhian had a tummy bug and Sally, our Betty, had what was later diagnosed as pneumonia. Happily Marian, Rhian and I recovered and along with Sue Graham, Jill, Sue Holmes and Gavin, our musician, went on to enjoy an extremely enjoyable, well-organised weekend. Poor Sally degenerated into a shivering heap and was unable to don her wig, tasteless mini dress and fur coat, bought specially for the occasion, and we greatly missed her banal banter.

Spread over two days in February, the Ale was attended by thirteen American and one Canadian, Sword and Molly teams with the UK being represented by Pig Dyke Molly and Insword. The Longsword teams closely followed the English traditional dances, with the exception of Orion, who did a captivating dance to the tune of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five".

The Rapper teams had a mix of traditional and invented figures but there was no evidence of the "Tommy" or "Betty" characters. The teams who did have a character used them in one specific dance only, their "foolish" dance. Half Moon and Velocirapper did this to great effect. A few of the sides included a tumble in their dance, most did them without the swords as they lined up at the end of the dance after the lock had been made. This had the effect of making it look like an afterthought rather than part of the dance.

Of the Molly teams, Pig Dyke were very popular with their flamboyant black and white kit and their "big band" sound and Handsome Molly had clearly collected their dance style from Seven Champions.

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On Saturday we danced at various venues in Manhattan – thankfully all were indoors, as it's rather chilly in New York at that time of the year. At the opening massed stand, in the Port of Authority Bus Terminal, Insword were introduced as “a genuine English Rapper Team” and in Sally's absence Gavin sang the traditional calling-on song in a very un-genuine Geordie accent. I think he got away with it.

We then split into four groups, travelling from venue to venue on the Subway. Our tour danced on a stage at the Donnell Library and in the Dairy in Central Park. In both cases the audience turned up specifically to watch the dancing. We all regrouped for another massed stand at the Staten Island Ferry Terminal. If the daytime events all seemed awesomely mind-blowing (we had neck ache from looking up at all those tall buildings) at least the evening entertainment was more comfortably familiar... with eating, drinking and social dancing at a community hall in Brooklyn.

We stayed in Brooklyn for the Sunday starting with Brunch for all the teams at Deirdre's large brownstone house. We then split into tours for one performance – Insword were amazed to be dancing on a stage in a huge marbled gallery of the Brooklyn Museum of Art – before a final massed stand in the Picnic House in Prospect Park. It was then that we got to go to our first pub of the weekend, however by that time all Insword really wanted was a cup of tea!

Wherever we went we drew a large attentive audience who seemed genuinely intrigued and not at all embarrassed by the dancing. This was rather disquieting as we are rather more used to being either ignored or heckled! At the final venue the massed stand was more like a show, performed to a packed seated audience. The American teams are clearly used to this type of performance, which is very different to our usual pub tours. It certainly made each spot seem more of an occasion but on the other hand there was little scope for the impromptu dance.

One thing for sure is that Half Moon were wonderful hosts. They have the organisation of the Ale down to a fine art and their warm welcome and attention to detail provided us all with a memorable weekend.

*Jenny Major*  
*June 2001*



## WHAT'S NEW – SIDMOUTH 2001

It's Sidmouth International Festival time again and this year's morris programme is as full as ever, with new ideas mixed in with the old favourites. Sporting thirteen teams of morris, sword and step dancers, plus workshops, shows, street displays and processions, there is something for everyone.

One of the pre-festival delights is an event that embodies the spirit of morris dancing for us – the appearance of Great Western Morris in the Market Place on Thursday 2nd August, before the festival officially opens. This year will be particularly special because of the team's continued involvement throughout the week.

Saturday starts with the official opening – a new ceremony this year with several dance spots along the Esplanade and room for everyone to watch. Saturday evening is the now well-established Sword Tour led by Andrew Kennedy and North British. They will be joined by Dorset Buttons Rapper and a new exciting team - Black Swan. Look out for Sally appearing as her alter ego. All teams will be performing and running workshops throughout the week. The venues for these are new so check the programme beforehand.

Sunday is an intense day of dance. Sue and Sally, with help from Tony Forster and others, start the day with a workshop for beginners encompassing all types of morris dance in the Bulverton Marquee. For a preview of the booked teams, there is the morris procession from the Arena to the Esplanade. All teams busking at the festival are welcome to take part and can either let the procession marshals know in advance or simply turn up at Knowle Drive (above the arena) at 10:00a.m. Thanks to John Swift and Jill Griffiths who have done a tremendous job running the processions for five years now; this will be their last year (all congratulatory pints welcome). We are pleased that John Golightly will be understudying the role with a view to taking it over in 2002.

As the procession arrives on the Esplanade, the dancing starts in earnest with teams crowding the sea front – it's a great atmosphere whether you are dancing or watching and we hope to see you there!

We also hope to see you at the John Gasson Memorial Jig competition, which is all set for a record entry this year with the new double jig category. This is described by Tracey Rose in the footnote. In the last few years, the young dancers from Ditchling Morris have made a great impact in the competition and this year they're bringing their mums and dads, and a Wyvern, to help keep us entertained throughout the week. Great Western Morris will be hosting the Sunday night morris party in the Anchor Gardens. Last year's spots, culminating in Swan Lake, were out of this world – who knows what treats are in store for this time!

It was once heard said that some men would willingly crawl half a mile on broken glass to see Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish perform – they will be appearing (without the glass) alongside the black-faced Shropshire Bedlams, one of the most consistently

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spectacular teams on the morris scene. Each team will run a workshop during the week, which will be well worth searching out in the programme.

Black faces will also be proudly worn by Ouse Washes Molly Dances. Look out for their dramatic dances, bright colours and try their high stepping dancing style in a series of workshops at the Bulverton Marquee. Two excellent teams with a repertoire of North West dances hail from Dorset and Warwickshire. Chinewrde make a welcome return to the festival with their slick disciplined style and impressive manoeuvres. They will be complimented by Dorset Buttons' North West team with their lively and colourful performances. Each team will lead a dance workshop at the Bulverton. New for this year are the Ad Hoc Mummers who will perform on two days only and feature a some unusual plays – more details in the programme and newsletter.

Precision stepping with shoes and clogs will feature in the English style of Instep and the Appalachian styles of Roughshod and Alive and Kicking - definitely something for everyone. A special new event for this year will be the English dance finale on the last Friday afternoon, which will feature all thirteen teams in a captivating Arena show. The torchlight procession and the lighting up of the night sky will be, as ever, the last big spectacle of the festival for 2001.

Tickets available from The Festival Office, PO Box 296, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 9TL 01296 433 669, [sidmouth@mrscasey.co.uk](mailto:sidmouth@mrscasey.co.uk). Web site: [www.mrscasey.co.uk/sidmouth](http://www.mrscasey.co.uk/sidmouth).

*Sue Swift and Sally Wearing*  
*June 2001*

### **Footnote from Tracey Rose:**

The John Gasson memorial Jig Competition this year is being expanded to incorporate a section for double jigs. We have decided to add this section to encourage dancers who are not confident enough to enter the solo section but need the confidence boost of entering the double section and hopefully moving on to the solo section another year. The solo section is still the main competition. Numbers will be limited so they need to contact me if they want a place. The criteria for the double jig are that there are two dancers and one musician and obviously no Irish jigs or step dancing etc. Any one team can lodge up to two single and two double entries..and an individual *could* be in both a single and a double jig. Since this is the first year this may not be an issue, but in future years it would hold that a winner in either category (single or double) could not then enter that category the following year – but they could enter the other one!

## USEFUL SOURCES (PART 2)

### A continuation of snippets found in...

**Oxford : A Dictionary of English Folklore.** OUP, £20

by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud, both of the Folklore Society.

*Antrobus Soul-Cakers* : ... One of the very few surviving mumming play teams which have a claim to be traditional ... at Halloween and the following two weeks ... last characters to enter are the Wild Horse (Dick) and his Driver

*Bacup Britannia Coconut Dancers* : ... every Easter Saturday ... trace their lineage back to the early 1920's ... taught the dance by the Tunstead Mill Nutters ... a starting date of 1857 is pretty definite ...

*Bampton Morris Dancers* : ... can claim an unbroken tradition (apart from during the First World War) of dancing over the past 150 years ... two hundred years is possible given the family traditions involved ... the contribution of particular families, and individuals such as William 'Jingy' Wells, Arnold Woodley, and Francis Shergold, in keeping the dance alive must also be acknowledged ...

*Betley Window* : painted glass window ... dated between 1509 and 1536 ... portray, in colour, six dancers, a musician, a hobby horse, a friar, a fool or jester, a female character, and a maypole ... long thought to be one of the most important pieces of visual evidence ... this evidence is, however, problematic ... call into serious question their relevance to England ...

*Castleton Garland* : ... Oak Apple Day ... in itself is unique ... main event is a procession ... costumed attendants ... village schoolgirls ... stopping outside each of the pubs, where the schoolgirls dance ... earliest known reference ... 1749 ... hybrid of Royal Oak Day and a Jack-in-the-Green custom ...

*Church Ales* : ... lasted well into the 17th century ... held to raise money for the church ... spring or summer, often called May games, Whitsun ales, Summer games, or ... King game or Robin Hood game ... could even be organized as benefits for individuals ... the election of a King and Queen or Lord and Lady ... examples of the medieval tendency to put people in charge of festive events ... no evidence that these ceremonial positions were treated as parody or burlesque ... treated with good-humoured respect and dignity ... spring ales in particular were also notable for their bowers and the use of greenery ... first decades of the 17th century, parishes ... replaced church ales by church rates ..

*Cross-Dressing* : ... despite the Biblical prohibition ... (Deut 22:5) ... men dressing as women ... is a recurrent feature of traditional customs ... and is regularly mentioned as a feature of other events such as ... private Christmas parties ... there is no evidence of ... ritual, fertility-enhancing function ... has other more prosaic features ... until the 17th century women were routinely debarred from taking part in all performance milieux, including the legitimate stage, and this prohibition would have even stronger in the realm of customs which involve heavy drinking, rough horseplay, and fighting ... in our

society men dressed as women have been regarded as inherently funny, allowing scope for ribaldry and innuendo which normal social mores would hardly allow if women were taking part ...

*Foliolate head* : ... an ornamental motif common in sculpture and woodcarvings in churches from the Norman and Gothic periods ... where rich ornament was desired and secular or humorous themes allowed ... history is well established. They reached England early in the 12th century from France, as part of a repertoire of grotesque figures in a style called 'Romanesque' ... ultimately derived from the dignified leaf-masks of late Roman art, representing gods and supernatural beings ... the carvings thus combined two favourite subjects of medieval artists, foliage and the human face ...

*Green Man* : ... use to designate a foliate head was only invented in 1939 ... civic pageants in Tudor and Stuart times ... were preceded by 'whifflers' ... Savage Men or Wild Men, covered in shaggy hair, or in leaves. The latter type were commonly called Green Men ... in the 17th century, the Distillers' Company had as its heraldic arms the 'Green Man and Still', in which the supporters were naked, club-bearing, shaggy figures ... 'a fit emblem for those that use that intosticating licker which berefts them of their sennes' ... the design was still used on 18th century pubs. By the 19th century its meaning was seemingly forgotten... almost invariably replaced by the more popular figure of Robin Hood or a forester dressed in green ... nowadays ... several 'Green Man' pubs have repainted their signs yet again to show either a head peering through leaves, or a Jack-in-the-Green ... Lady Raglan ... applied it to the type of ornamental church carving previously called a foliate head ... this was pure speculation, ... she further asserts this to be identical with ... 'Jack-in-the-Green, Robin Hood, King of the May and the [Castleton] Garland ... central figure in the May-Day celebrations throughout Northern and Central Europe'... thus items with widely different functions and histories were conflated on the basis of a single visual trait, leafiness.

*Helston Furry Day* : ... a series of processional dances ... on 8 May.. the Twelve o'clock dance is the best known ... participation is only by invitation ... Hal an Tow ... dropped in the 19th century, but deliberately reintroduced, in suitably cleaned-up form, in 1930 ... earliest reference... 1790 ... identifies nearly all the essential elements which have survived to the present day ... at certain points in the 19th century almost disappeared ... since the turn of the 20th century, the custom has gone from strength to strength ...

*Hooden Horse* : ... recorded in about 30 places in east Kent and nowhere else ... took place at Christmas ... performing, singing, and collecting money ... the central character was the horse ... had a Groom (or Waggoner or Driver) ... who carried a whip ... also a Jockey ... a man-woman and musicians. The earliest mention is in 1736 ... better description ... 1807 ... died out about 1908 ...

*Jack-in-the-Green* : ... urban street calendar custom enacted on May Day by chimney sweeps ... dressed up in their finery ... with added ribbons; one dressed as the Lord, another as a Lady, and one or two clowns. They had musicians and carried a brush and shovel which they clashed together rhythmically, and a regular feature was a donkey for one of them to ride ... the Jack-in-the-Green, a man inside a wood or basketwork frame, from well above his head to his ankles, on which was fixed an abundance of greenery and flowers ... In the earlier period, the sweeps would be accompanied by their boys,

whose capering and antics were popular with the crowds, but the boys disappeared from the scene after public opinion turned against the use of children in the trade ... highly regionalised ... earliest references ... late 18th century ...

*Mayor of Ock Street* : ... one of the few remaining mock mayor ceremonies ... said to date from about 1700 ... first recorded reference only occurs in the 1860s ... the annually elected Mayor on the Saturday nearest 19 June ... elected by the inhabitants of the street and the Morris Men ...

*Maypoles* : ... the very symbol of the traditional May Day, but its history is not a simple one ... no reason to believe that the maypole was a new thing in the 14th century, but neither is there any evidence to show that it existed much before then ... from the 15th century onwards, references to maypoles proliferate ... finding, decorating, and erecting of the maypole emerges as an important part of community life ... as popular in urban as in rural communities ... target for those opposed to the festivities ... specifically mentioned in King James I's Book of Sports ... as a lawful pastime for the people on Sundays, after evening service ... after the Restoration ... symbol of the return of the good old days ... slow but definite decline from around the turn of the 19th century... by the time the Victorians began reinventing May Day there were few old maypoles left, leaving the field conveniently clear for their reintroduction in modified form ..... the pole seems to have had two essential qualities, first it was a focal point for the celebrations, and second, it was a useful place to hang garlands and greenery .

*Milkmaids Garlands* : ... regular custom for May Day and the following days in English towns from the 17th to early 19th centuries ... would dress up in their finest clothes (borrowed or hired if necessary) ... dance in front of their customers' houses ... their entourage would include a musician and the emblem of the custom, the garland ... was a pyramid-shaped structure of polished metal utensils and vessels such as tankards and plate, the shinier the better ... topped off with flowers and ribbons ... would carry the garland on her head ... the head of an attendant male or even ... on poles between two men like a sedan chair ... first mentioned in the mid-17th century ... still going strong in 1776 .

*Minehead Hobby Horse* : ... less spectacular, and less well known, than the Padstow Hobby Horse ... briefly on the eve of May Day, on the Day itself, and the following two days, accompanied by musicians and attendants called Gullivers ... attendants ... reintroduced in 1967 ... description of the horse, from 1895, shows that it has not changed significantly ... earliest known account dates from 1830 ...

*Molly Dancing* : ... performed by men ... in East Anglia in the 19th century and up to about the Second World War ... not as well developed or complex as other dance forms ... sometimes dismissed as 'just jiggling about' ... loosely based on 19th century social dances ... wore ordinary clothes, decorated with ribbons and rosettes, and usually had blackened faces, and had at least one man dressed in women's clothes, while in some teams they all wore female clothes ... earliest reference ... 1820s, although the word 'Molly' in this context does not appear before 1866 ... had a reputation for being rough and ready, and even somewhat threatening ...

*Padstow Hobby Horse* : ... day-long custom ... the 'Obby 'Oss cavorts through the narrow streets to the sound of massed accordions, drums, and singing..... by no stretch of imagination does it look like a horse ... one acts as a Teaser, dancing in front

*Wishford Magna* : ... unique manorial custom ... every Oak Apple day ... under the terms of a charter of 1603 ... the inhabitants should ... 'go in a daunce to the Cathedral Church' ... a party led by the rector proceeds to Salisbury Cathedral where four women in 19th century costume carrying bundles of wood, dance on the Green .

**Entries about outdated scholarship and speculative ideas which are still influential, here précised...**

*Paganism* : Meaning any religion with several gods and goddesses. Elizabethan Protestants tried to identify Catholicism with paganism, by seeking similarities with the only two pagan cultures they knew, the Greek and Roman. Generations of writers referred to Flora, Ceres or the Saturnalia to explain English Festivals. Nineteenth century scholars showed that Germans and Celts had myths and rituals of their own which were closer precedents. Claims of pre-Christian origins had great appeal, pagan beliefs, especially Celtic, were seen by many as admirable, while the Christian tradition seemed repressive and dull. But showing that a custom or belief is older than Christianity does not mean that - when found amongst Christians - paganism is still alive. Ghosts, witchcraft, belief in dreams, and non-rational thought and action, fate, luck, omens, and touching wood, are not seen as inconsistent with faith. Celebratory activities, dancing, special foods, drinking, disguise, bonfires, are 'secular' not 'pagan'. Much is known about pre-Christian religions in England, but evidence of tolerance or continuity at the conversion is very scanty. No Saxon pagan shrine has been found under a church. Christmas and Easter were fixed before the English conversion by earlier Roman and Jewish cultures. Since every day celebrated at least one saint, every pagan festival necessarily coincided with one. Surviving hero-legends have no religious content.

*Survivals Theory* : This was one of the big ideas which helped nineteenth century folklorists aspire to scientific respectability, although now long and widely discredited. By applying the insights of evolution to human cultures, with the assumption of development in stages, certain aspects were assumed to live on unchanged, gradually losing their original purpose and meaning, becoming the folklore of the uneducated, conservative and uncreative common people. A serious religious belief becomes a superstition, a ritual becomes a calendar custom and a burial custom becomes a children's game. Given this, folklore could be examined and used to reconstruct the mind and practices of previous cultural stages. These were held to be relatively predictable the world over, although not synchronous. At its crudest this theory took a cavalier attitude to both history and geography. Argument proceeded by piling up supposedly relevant examples until the sheer bulk overwhelmed critical faculties. As the twentieth century progressed, the theory was rejected by anthropologists and social scientists, yet in a watered down version is still accepted by popular writers as the basis for all folklore commentary. As its basis is purely conjectural, it can be used to support any view which is fashionable at the time, such as fertility, phallic symbols or female deities.

*Origin Stories* : For centuries folktales have explained and justified. Secular stories to account for local customs can even contain some degree of historical accuracy. But some origin theories were proposed by intellectual observers and now permeate popular culture. One type claims a historical core of fact underlying a fantastic or nonsensical item, e.g. a dragon legend is really a memory of Viking attacks, a nursery rhyme is really about the Plague, or folk customs are survival of fertility cults. Performers, press and public now largely ignore individual origin tales in favour of the single all-purpose pre-historic/ pagan fertility one.

*Revival* : The meaning depends on the perspective, from an upsurge in public interest, to restarting a custom after a lapse, as well as the deliberate introduction of a custom into a different community or social context. Stops and starts are the nature of tradition. Problems exist with a new series of performances copied from elsewhere, as with the modern spread of morris styles, leading to questions of authenticity and of who owns folklore. The common sense position is that they are part of our common heritage and belong to everybody. Victorian and Edwardian reformers were expert in the art of 'revivals' which, while claiming to be genuinely traditional, were either invented or changed so radically as to retain only a tenuous connection with the original source, but which helped to create a generalised notion of common culture.

*Merrie England* : Used to describe a particular Arcadian attitude to the past, prevalent in Victorian and Edwardian times, but with a continuing power today. It is imprecise and unscientific but has had a profound effect on many traditional festivals and customs. Essentially nostalgic, assuming that however much society had progressed it has lost something important on the way, and that this is in terms of 'community'. The social classes were held together in an interlocking web of duties and obligations, and at certain points in the year the people sang, danced and made merry. The adherents of the Merrie England school sought to recreate this golden age, and one of the key tools was to reform the pastimes of the poor which had lost their innocence and their traditional values. But before customs could be reinvented they had to be shorn of the undesirable features acquired from having been in the hands of the working classes for too long. The transformation was only possible because of other changes brought about by a sustained attack on traditional working class merrymaking, and violent sports. Customs where people got drunk or where the sexes met unsupervised were reformed or removed. In most cases pressure was brought to bear at local level, and Merrie Englandism came after the battles were won, extolling the virtues of past May Days and old time Christmases, both of which were completely transformed during the nineteenth century. These new features were presented as 'traditional' and accepted as the real thing with an invented history, based loosely on early antiquaries to legitimise them, but with a great deal of embroidering and imagination. The features of many festivals which we now take for granted, and which we believe to be 'old', have been shaped by the Merrie England process.

***Roy Dommett***  
**2000**

## DOMMETT'S DELIGHTS

Fleet Morris always partake in Red Nose Day but this year due to the lack of morris-friendly pubs in Fleet we decided to have our own Red Nose Party in our practice hall. The idea was to dance our entire repertoire past and present. Ruth - one of our long-standing members - produced the dance list of 43 dances, many of which are "Fleet's very own" thanks to Roy Dommett, and members of the side.

When Roy was an active member of Fleet we would occasionally have fun evenings just trying out choruses that Roy had either seen other sides dance and wanted to try them out or ones he had thought up. If Fleet liked a chorus we would then find a tradition to suit and adopt/adapt accordingly. Hence our very own choruses. However as you just can't keep a good dance down, other sides dance them as well. We currently have about half of these in our regular performance collection.

Our traditions currently are

- ❖ Adderbury
- ❖ Ducklington
- ❖ Bampton
- ❖ Lichfield
- ❖ Fieldtown.

When we started Stanton Harcourt was one of our traditions but has since been dropped. Also, if we enjoy dancing a chorus we change the tradition to suit.

**Adderbury** our "*stick*" repertoire is

- Bean Setting
- Brighton Camp
- Constant Billy
- Dip and Dive
- Horsham
- Lads a Bunchum
- Landlord
- Shooting
- 3 Musketeers
- 67

"*Hankie*" dances are

- Black Joke
- The Bell,

"*clapping*"

- Shepherds Hey.

Out of these dances the **Adderbury** ones that are exclusive to Fleet are probably *Dip and Dive*, *Horsham* and *The Bell*. The rest are of course variations on a well-known dance performed in our style.

The chorus of *Dip & Dive* is 1 and 5 and 2 and 6 dib the floor then hit sticks over the heads of their middles. Whilst they are doing this the middles are clashing in the air

then dishing. The middles usually wear yellow “hard hats” like building site workers. This happens twice then all caper round on spot and repeat the process. Usually goes down well with the audience.

*Horsham* is loosely based on a Horsham dance, to the Pony and Trap polka, danced with two sticks – long in the left and short in the right. The chorus sequence is:

Left floor, left partner, together, right partner, together, right partner, together, right partner

Left floor, left partner, together, right partner, “strop” forward, back, forward, then clash forward, back, forward.

The Horsham chorus is danced by other sides to Jenny Lind, sometimes Adderbury, sometimes Lichfield

*The Bell* is an eight-person corner chorus dance. We dance on with a “round” with 7 leading and 8 last, ending up with 3 rows. A row of three front and back and the middle row consists of dancers on the outside with 1 musician in the middle. The chorus is danced as two corners – the outside corner 4 being first corners and the other four dance second corners. Other than the formation the figures and chorus are traditional.

67 is danced to the tune Gary Owen and started life as a 6 person dance on Roy’s 67<sup>th</sup> Birthday tour. We subsequently adapted it to an 8 person dance and the set changes direction during each chorus to up and down and sideways. The chorus is two groups of four hit up and down across the set then dance a star half way. The middle four hit sticks up and down and dance a half star; whilst they are doing this the end couple on each end of the set hit up and down, pass right shoulder to the end of the set, which thus changes direction.

**Bampton** are all hankie dances and consist of

- ◆ Bonny Green
- ◆ Carol’s Dance
- ◆ Furzefield
- ◆ Glorishears
- ◆ Highland Mary
- ◆ Maid of Mill
- ◆ Over the Hills
- ◆ Owl Dance
- ◆ Rose Tree
- ◆ Speed the Plough
- ◆ Step and Fetch Her
- ◆ Trunkles
- ◆ Matilda’s Weave

*Carol’s dance* is so called because one of our members liked a particular tune so a Bampton dance was adapted accordingly. It is a good one to finish on as it can incorporate the dancing-off sequence of Bonny Green. What is different about Carol’s dance is that it is a dance for multiples of six. The formation is one line until the

rounds. Thus, the first two come on from opposite sides face to face, dancing a foot up, meeting and retiring followed by the chorus – they then end up back to back. The next two from opposite sides face the first two and dance a half gyp – chorus again passing so the original two are not facing anybody and the second two are facing each other. The last two dance on, facing the original first couple who are at either end of this long line and in the long line formation a whole gyp is danced and during the last chorus the six split to a line of two with three on each side and dance a round half way; if there are twelve dancers at this point on the second half of the round, we merge seamlessly into one large round, complete the sequence of music and break into the waves and capers of Bonny Green. Chorus is side step left, side step right, step jump to meet, side step left to pass right shoulders, side step right, back to back, two capers. Tune is Lilibulero

*The Owl Dance* is performed to a French tune Roy liked. We diagonally wend our way down the set, ending the first half of the chorus inverted, then dance diagonally back to place: i.e. 2 and 5 dance in place whilst the four remaining diagonally swap places. Then 1 and 6 dance in place whilst the other 4 swap places and so on. This is best danced in the half-light of an evening whilst making hooting noises or danced at the seaside making seagull noises and flapping arms.

*Matilda's Weave* – a dance for eight. The chorus starts with the two rows of four facing each other and numbers 4 and 5 pass with a right side step and numbers 2, 1 and 3 form a line behind 4 on the diagonal whilst 7, 8, and 6 form a line behind 5 and on each side step, pass shoulders and reverse the set. After the next figure the set returns to place during the Chorus. Tune is Sherrif's Ride. The name was chosen when Fleet was gathered in a tea shop during a Winchester Festival a few years ago.

*Speed the Plough* has been shown at Roy's workshops and to my knowledge Pigsty also dance the chorus, which is a corner dance. 1 and 6 pass back to back with a left side step, then 2 and 5 pass back to back with a right side step, then middles caper passing right shoulders to create a circle and a half round is danced, then repeated back to place with middles capering past the other shoulder so the half rounds go the other way. The sequence goes side step left for all, side step right for all, two capers for all – if not crossing, dance these on the spot. Stolen by Roy from Countryside!

*Over the Hill* – corner dance: chorus is:- 1 and 6 dance a foot up to meet and return to place whilst 2 and 5 side step in place and middles dance side steps. 3 dances behind 1 and in front of 2 capering in 4's place whilst 4 dances in front of 6, behind 5 capering in 3's place. Then 2 and 5 dance the foot up to meet and retire to place, whilst 1 and 6 side step in place and middles dance in front of the stationary pair and behind the moving pair, capering back to their original places.

We have adapted *Step and Fetch Her* to a dance for 12. Six stand in usual set formation facing up and the "spare" six stand outside the set 3 either side. During the side steps in the chorus the "dancing set" of odds and evens pass and continue on towards the waiting odd and evens on the outside of the set who then swap places, caper across the set, dance a hey and then dance the next figure. Then the set swaps again during the next chorus.

## Ducklington

- Bobby Shaftoe
- Cuckoo's Nest
- Dearest Dickie
- Jockey in the round
- Lollipop Man
- Nutting Girl
- Princess Royal
- Spanish Lady
- The Full Monty

The only dance that is "ours" alone is the *Full Monty*. A dance for 8 to the tune of "Old Woman Tossed Up". It is two sets of four standing side by side, so to the audience there is a row of four in front with four behind. Chorus in fours facing on the diagonal is: show left, show right, show step jump to centre, double step to the diagonal place and caper round so the two sets of four create two squares. Then dance a slow passing left shoulders, caper round to opposite place and repeat the show sequence again. The idea for two sets of four is when we are short on numbers to give some a rest.

*Jockey in the round* is danced in twos for as many as will with the musician in the middle. It looks like two circles when we start dancing going in opposite directions.

The other Ducklington dances are variations of dances and choruses that other sides dance. *Spanish Lady* is danced by Jackstraws; one of their members thought it up – Roy showed it to us and we modified it to suit our style. The same with *Cuckoo's Nest* Roy showed us a chorus years before we used it as the chorus for Cuckoo's Nest – it is similar to Windsor Morris's *Lovely Nancy*. No idea which chorus came first.

## Lichfield

- Chicken in the Basket
- Ring O'Bells
- Vandals
- Windmill

*Chicken in the Basket* and *Windmill* were demonstrated by Roy at a workshop as being choruses/dances from the Basque region. Fleet adopted and adapted to suit Lichfield. Shinfield Shambles also dance the choruses but in a Border Style.

## Fieldtown "stickies"

- The Clock
- Waltzing Matilda
- Country Gardens

## Morris Matters, Volume 20, Number 2 July 2001

*The Clock* is danced by an Australian side I believe – Roy showed a video of the dance at a workshop and we had to break off into teams and dance what we thought we had seen. Fleet took part in this and made up a chorus. We dance a short chorus then a long chorus then repeat the short then the long. We decided the long chorus was too long to perform throughout the dance. The short chorus is a half hey, stick up and down with partner in place then cross over the set - then the other half of the hey same sticking back to place. The long chorus is the first part, followed by 1 and 3 facing each other and 6 facing away from the set and 2 facing up with 3 and 5 facing. Everyone hits either the person they are facing or the floor, then turns left – this continues for four hits when the middles end up facing each other and the others are facing out of the set. The middles hit up and down whilst the end four dance round so the whole set is facing across then we change sides and the “long chorus” repeats itself only the ending this time is the end four facing across sticking, whilst the middle two dance round to face, then we all change sides. Roosters also dance this brilliantly turning it into a comedy number.

*Waltzing Matilda* chorus is right right, partner partner, left left, partner with slight pause then left left, partner partner, right right, partner and pause then off into a half hey and repeat whole process.

*Country Gardens* is proving interesting to us – we are still trying to resolve the chorus so we hit in time to the music and do not syncopate it – watch this space we may dance it out next season.....

The first dance on our list was at the Red Nose Party was **Acton**. Roy introduced this dance by telling us he saw it on TV in the 50's danced by Tony Hancock, Sid James and others as a “skit”. It is a dance “border style” dance that the public can join in with and after we had performed it a couple of times in front of other morris teams it became a massed dance for a while. We also “complicated” it for a competition we took part in many years ago. It is a great dance to teach to children (Brownies etc). It is danced in rows of multiples of three behind each other facing front. With sticks on shoulders, take four steps forward, four steps back repeat – middles turn right and hit butts and tips with person opposite, then turn and face left hand person and hit butts and tips. The three then dance a reel back to place – either one reel taking up the music, or two quick reels. And the variations during this dance are only limited by the imagination.

*Denise Allen*  
*June 2001*



NOTICE BOARD

Dave Townsend has sent through details for the "... at Witney weekends"... dates are as follows:

Concertinas at Witney	29-30 September 2001
Fiddles at Witney	13-14 October 2001
Melodeons at Witney	17-18 November 2001
Strings and Bows at Witney	2-3 February 2002
Accordians at Witney	16-17 February 2002
Winds at Witney	2-3 March 2002
Plucking at Witney	16-17 March 2002
Voices at Witney	30-31 March 2002

For details and booking forms please write to :

**Hands on Music Weekends**  
**PO Box 1162**  
**East Oxford D.O.**  
**OX4 4WS**

I was one of the people who took part in the dance from London to Norwich in April 2000 just to prove that Will Kemp isn't the only one who can put up with such pain, tedium and miserable discomfort. Actually it was quite a laugh.

Anyway, being the arty crafty type that I am, I was compelled to make a figure of Will. It sells for £7.80 ( incl. p & p) Since the figure is hand made in fine detail, I can paint it in your own colours. This beautiful model represents a lovely piece of Morris history, fit to grace the mantelpiece of the noblest of homes.

Phone **Howard Templeton** on **01603 503484** to request an order form (which includes a colour photo of the figure) with no obligation to buy. I look forward to hearing from you

**Golden Star Morris Reunion**

Calling all ex-Golden Star morris folk., You are cordially invited to attend the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party-cum-reunion on 14-16 September 2001. For information phone **Roger Graham-Leigh** on **01603 483460**. We look forward to seeing you.

WANTAGE WORKSHOP 8-10 MARCH 2002

*A Gourmet Weekend of Morris, Eating and Drinking*

**The Nature of the weekend.** The workshop will be held at the wonderful old **Lain's Barn** near **Wantage**. The weekends starts on Friday night with dancing at the Ridgeway Youth Hostel, on the downs above Wantage. There is a full day and evening at Lain's Barn on Saturday, with more until teatime on the Sunday. Excellent food is available at the barn as well as good beer & cider. Sparkling conversation, wit and debate should continue into the small hours.

**What will be in it?** Offers (I believe serious ones) have been had from: **Tim Radford** (once of Adderbury Morris) who has volunteered to return from America especially to do so many things that he could fill the whole weekend alone; **Simon Pipe** (Outside Capering Crew & Jig Champion) and **Brian Mander** (Redbornstoke Morris & Outside Capering Crew) who may well do some jigging and Brian may do *Ampthill* with me; **Darrell Hurtt** (Hammersmith Morris) will tackle *Welsh Morris & Fair dances*; Tony Forster (Pig Dyke Molly & Yaxley Morris) on *Molly*; **John Bacon** (Ditchling) on *Raglan*; **Jethro Anderson** (Pigsty) on *Fieldtown*; **John Lewis** (Great Western) on *Repertoire and Performance*; **Jameson Wooders** on *Beyond the Black Book with Berkshire Bedlam*; **Sally Wearing** and **Sue Swift** on *Old Dances/New Tunes*. **The great news** is that **Roy Dommett**, the lad himself, has offered to do a session on **Basque dances**. Apart from the aforementioned, you could expect to find : comparisons of "Black Book" Cotswold traditions in contrasting ways; contemporary traditions and their evolution; creating dances from incomplete materials; cocktail making; dances for unusual numbers; archival film; something Bordering on Morris and who knows how many aching limbs and ribs. Don't expect to come away thinking that Morris can ever be the same again.

**Who should attend? You!** Well, if you are pretty interested in Morris and are experienced in Cotswold. If you only know North West or Sword dancing, you may find yourself watching others enjoy themselves too much!

**What should I do?** Tell me that you will come! Give me money! We need at least 40 people to attend and stay at the Ridgeway Hostel to guarantee that we can have the place to ourselves. Also, the more that come, the cheaper it will be.

**So how much will it be?** About £65 for the whole weekend of dancing, eating and sleeping. Sad to say, the drink is extra, but more or less at cost.

**When do I do it? NOW!** Send money to **Adrian Williams, 20 Verne Drive, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2PS**. More info from [Adrian-Williams@Beeb.Net](mailto:Adrian-Williams@Beeb.Net) or 01525 406332. Deposits of £10 must be paid to me by **25 August 2001** & the rest of payment to me by **19 December 2001**.. cheques made payable to "The Morris Federation". Please include all contact details (phone, address and e-mail if available)