

Morris



Matters



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This is summer. The weather has varied from wintry to moderate heatwave. In the news I have read reports of my local MP “having a go” at morris dancing with sticks, of a Plymouth artist who realised that almost no-one ever actually paints morris dancers and is hoping to remedy that with lifesize portraits – and own up, who was the 36-year old Bradford man who wrote on the “Secrets” Times blackboard, “I’m a Morris Dancer”?

But it’s been a good year for events. I have a report of the Plough Monday celebrations in Ramsey in January from George Frampton. I was fortunate enough to attend the Mary Neal day at Cecil Sharp House in February where the climax was the handing over of the Mary Neal papers by Lucy Neal to the care of Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Among the speakers was Rhett Krause who was explaining the link he had established with the daughter of Mary Neal’s protégée, Florrie Warren. I am able to reprint the substance of his talk here. Shirley Dixon also provides an overview of the whole day.

While the Joint Morris Organisations day of dance was taking place in (cold, windy and a bit rainy) Nottingham in March, over in the US the morris community was celebrating the many achievements of Tony Barrand and with their help I have been able to capture some of them here. In June, Jerry West attended the Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers day of dance with the Ock Street mayor election and gives a dancer’s eye view of the proceedings. Among other articles we also have Barry Goodman’s final article about morris tunes. So read on...

Beth

New tunes for the Morris – part 3

In this, the third and final part of a series of articles charting Redbornstoke Morris's adoption and development of new tunes for new dances, I'll be concentrating on the most recent of the team's dancing traditions, "Scouthall". As before, I'll be referring to the three vital elements in Morris music – **rhythm**, **phrasing** and **speed** as they relate to the style of dance, and also to the process of developing the tradition itself and how that affected the choice of music.

The Scouthall tradition (pronounced "Scuthle") is the result of a deliberate attempt to create a new dancing tradition to be performed in the summer months. The Ampthill dances had reached an advanced stage of development, and our other new tradition, Marston, while still being developed, was intended to be danced in the winter. We were looking for a "Cotswold-style" tradition that would be sufficiently different from our Ampthill dances to provide a contrast, and would allow us to use figures and choruses that would not be possible in the Ampthill tradition (slow capers, for example, and side-step/half-hey choruses).

The process of development began with a workshop session, separate from our normal practices. In the past we had danced Bledington, Ducklington, Badby and Bampton as our "second tradition" and we looked at aspects of these to establish benchmarks for the "new" tradition. Together, we established a basic step (two fairly gentle double steps followed by a hookleg, repeated) which would work for a foot-up and down, and then decided to introduce a backstep and feet-together-jump between the pairs of double steps for the "half-gyp" and "back-to-back" figures, returning to the hookleg for "dilate" (a variation on "rounds"). From these building blocks a first dance was constructed, based on a side-step and half-hey chorus. We decided to adopt a strong upward hand movement into the side-steps to punctuate the sequence and to provide a good "show" for the audience, and created an adapted form of the "conference hey" between the side-step sequences.

All of this was done as a team – no one member drove the process above the others and all ideas were listened to and tried out, either to be rejected, accepted or used with modification. The new dance having been produced in "draft" form, the issue of music arose. It was Adrian Williams who suggested that the song "'Twas on One April Morning" would work rather well, and, once tried, it turned out that he was right! This was our first "Scouthall" tune, and set the standard for what was to come.

What were we to call this, our first dance in the new tradition? As the workshop had taken place in a scout hall in Harlington, Beds, and the tradition had already taken its name from that, it seemed only right that the first new dance, at least, should also reflect its origins. One of our team had a copy of *Scouting For Boys*, and this title seemed appropriate, not least because we were, and still are, always on the lookout for new recruits!

Scouting For Boys ('Twas On One April Morning)

A

B

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song 'Scouting For Boys'. The first staff, labeled 'A', contains the first line of the melody in G major, 4/4 time. The second staff, labeled 'B', contains the second line of the melody, ending with a double bar line.

The variation in stepping in the figures as described above resulted in some similar variations in the way the tune is played: where the stepping is 2 x double step followed by a hookleg, the music emphasizes the hookleg rhythm thus:

Scouting For Boys ('Twas On One April Morning) modified

A

B

The image shows two staves of modified musical notation for 'Scouting For Boys'. The first staff, labeled 'A', shows the first line of the modified melody with some notes replaced by rests. The second staff, labeled 'B', shows the second line of the modified melody, ending with a double bar line.

while for the half-gyp and back-to-back figures, the emphasis is only on the feet-together-jump:

Scouting For Boys ('Twas On One April Morning) modified 2

A

B

The image shows two staves of a second modified musical notation for 'Scouting For Boys'. The first staff, labeled 'A', shows the first line of the modified melody with some notes replaced by rests. The second staff, labeled 'B', shows the second line of the modified melody, ending with a double bar line.

The style of the dance is quite gentle and flowing, without the big jumps of the Amptill tradition, and needs to be taken at a steady, but not fast, pace. The ideal tempo is about 72 beats per minute, although this may vary according to circumstances – the state of the dancing surface and the fitness of the dancers always have to be taken into account! Some variation of pace has to take place to allow for turns into the hey and the initial surge into half-gyp or back-to-back – sensitivity to what the dancers are doing at any given moment in the dance is vital to the Morris musician, especially when playing for Cotswold-style dances.

The sequence of figures finally settled down as:

Foot-up and down

Half-gyp

Dilate

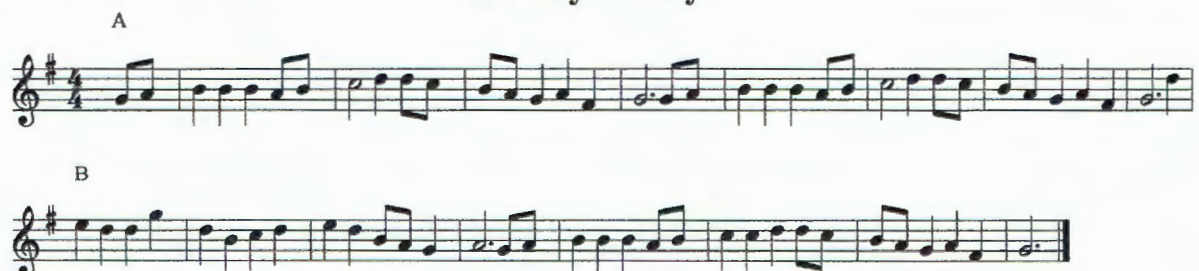
Back-to-back

The music follows the pattern, so that each time a figure is danced the music is different from the last figure. It was also possible to inject some “light and shade” into the music, accentuating the “surge and drop-back” nature of the figures, so that the music and dance reflected each other, creating the kind of synthesis we had been striving for in the Amptill and Marston traditions. I’m sure that there are a number of reasons why this happened, among them:

- Music was integral to the development of the dance
- The side’s “single musician” policy
- That musician tended to be the same person all the time
- Experience gained in combining dance and music while developing our other traditions.

Stick dances naturally followed, the first of which had a flowing chorus involving the striking of a partner’s horizontal stick with three strokes (tip/butt/tip) along the three sections of the stick between and beyond the two hands holding it. The sticking is followed by a half-hey and the whole chorus is repeated. As we had used a song tune for the “seminal” dance in the tradition, we looked for another song that would fit – we didn’t need to look far, as the tune for “Here’s Adieu Sweet Lovely Nancy” almost sung itself as the dance was being composed!

Lovely Nancy



The “A” music is modified for the figures as in *Scouting For Boys*, and the “B” music is varied for each chorus, with particular emphasis on the three even beats of the sticking (the first three beats in each of the first two bars of the “B” music). There’s also an additional strike at the end of each half of the chorus, so the modified music for a chorus may look like this:

:

Lovely Nancy "B" music (adapted)



Ending the dance presented some problems – we wanted to try a different type of ending from the usual “clash and face up” common to most stick dances; the handkerchief dance had a “facing out” finish, but this didn’t seem workable, so we came up with the idea of repeating the sticking once more after the final chorus. This gave rise to a modified “B” music to be played only for this final sticking:

Lovely Nancy Coda



As with *Scouting For Boys*, the dance and music seem to flow very naturally in *Lovely Nancy* (we decided to use the tune name for the dance in this case). Redbornstoke always enjoy dancing this one, especially when in the vicinity of Black Annis Morris from Leicester, who have a song with rather dubious words to this tune, which they insist on singing whenever we dance it anywhere near them!

Neither of Redbornstoke’s existing traditions contained a dance with hand-clapping as a feature, so we decided to include one in the Scouthall collection. One of the tunes we had enjoyed dancing to in the Bledington tradition was Charles Benfield’s version of “Young Collins”; rather than lose the tune from our repertoire, we wrote the dance with this tune in mind. A face-to-face handclapping sequence, punctuated by the standard Scouthall figures, was the format for a dance we called *Old Slapper*, using this marvellous tune:

Young Collins (Charles Benfield)



We performed this dance regularly for some time, but somehow it seemed to lack the excitement and impact we were achieving with other Scouthall dances, even after substituting mere hand-clapping with castanets tied to the hands for added aural impact, so we began to experiment with the dance to try and inject some more life into it.

The first action was reluctantly to drop the “Young Collins” tune in favour of something jauntier – it so happened that I had recently written a tune for a melodeon workshop which fitted the dance, having an up-tempo, major key “A” music and a distinctive “B” music with a rising melody punctuated by a three-note motif that exactly echoes the final three hand-claps in the sequence:

Old Slapper (Trip To Fleetville)

Barry Goodman

A

B

The musical notation consists of three staves. The first staff is labeled 'A' and contains a melody in 4/4 time, starting on a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff is labeled 'B' and contains a more rhythmic melody in the same key and time signature. The third staff continues the 'B' section and ends with a double bar line.

The latest stage in the development of the dance has been to vary the clapping choruses, so that each one is different and more complex than the last (face-to-face, along the lines, diagonal lines, circular). Needless to say, the clapping rhythms allow for some interesting variations in the way the tune is played, both emphasising and complementing the movements and sounds made by the dancers.

With the introduction of slow capers to the tradition, a corner dance and a column dance were composed, each of which required a three-part tune (“A” music for figures, “B” music for plain and half-capers, “C” music for slow capers). In accordance with tradition, the tunes chosen for these two dances were both song tunes, the “B” music of each being augmented to produce a “C” music.

The tune we use for the corner dance is “The Month of May” in a version collected in Bedfordshire by Fred Hamer from David Parrott. David’s song had the title “The Sound of the Drum”, but the tune is similar to that found in the Morris dances from Brackley and Field Town (both contributed by Cecil Sharp). For the column dance, we have taken a song by Peter Bellamy (on Brian Mander’s suggestion), called “Good Enough for Me”. After some discussion, the tune title has led to the dance being called *Boris!* Here’s the corner dance tune:

The Month Of May (The Sound of the Drum)

A

B

C

There are two other stick dances in the Scouthall tradition – one to the tune of “The Blue-Eyed Stranger” (in the version used as a song by Chris Leslie on the CD *Grandson of Morris On*), and a dance with a stick-throwing chorus to a tune written for a song about the Saddleworth Rushcart, entitled “Dance it Away Up the Street”.

The final dance performed in this tradition at the time of writing is a version of *Shepherd’s Hey*, which we use as an “audience participation” dance, and which uses a tune called “The Banbury White Horse”. This tune is suitably gentle for the figure (only one: three double steps, feet-together-jump repeated), while the clapping and body-slapping chorus gives plenty of opportunity for musical variations!

Shepherd's Hey (The Banbury White Horse) Barry Goodman

A

B

The process of selecting and composing tunes for the three Redbornstoke traditions – Amptill, Marston and Scouthall – has been a fascinating insight into the interdependency of music and dance. Dancers respond to the music, but musicians also respond to the dance, either in the creation of tunes which help the dancers to express their intentions most effectively, or by adapting and modifying the music to suit the circumstances of the dance.

Either way, the relationship between the music and the dance, in Morris terms, should always be one of reciprocity – a constant dialogue and a willingness to change and adapt on both sides will lead, ultimately, to a point where the line between dance and music becomes so blurred that the two sides are as one. That, I think, is what we should all be aiming for, whatever the music we play, and may the journey towards that goal be a happy and rewarding one!

Barry Goodman
June 2009

“A life changing moment for a former rugby player”

I sent Tony (AB) some basic questions and his answers are supplemented with notes from an interview with Allen Dodson (AD) for the Country Dance & Song Society (CDSS) newsletter.

MM where did you first encounter morris?

AB When I was young my parents moved to Bletchley on the edge of the Cotswolds, but I never saw any morris dancers. I first saw Morris at Swarthmore College near Philadelphia while there as an exchange student from Keele University in 1967. A group of men in top hats did a couple of Adderbury stick dances and women danced Headington Bacca Pipes and a Fieldtown Nutting Girl jig. Had no impact on me. In 1972, my singing partner John Roberts and I were at the CDSS Folk Music Week at Pinewoods Camp near Plymouth, Massachusetts. A group of men on the camp crew (who later became Greenwich Morris Men) danced Cotswold Morris at the evening social dance. I was ready; St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Men dancing together? It was graceful and it was physical. It was a life changing moment for a former rugby player. I had to do it. I got Jim Morrison (not THAT Jim Morrison), the then Director of CDSS, to teach me the Bampton Fool's Jig and Genny Shimer, former Director, to teach me Nutting Girl. I then did these everywhere at John and Tony concerts with John playing concertina. In 1974 I went back to Pinewoods to learn morris; Ronald Cajolet (Cajy) taught Headington, so that's what I learnt.

MM Which team did you first dance with? What inspired you to start Marlboro Morris & Sword?

AB There were only the Pinewoods Morris Men. So in 1974 I started my own team in Marlboro, Vermont and we danced out on May Day 1975. Eventually there were and still are Cotswold men's and women's teams (Marlboro Morris and Sword: May), longsword (Green Mountain Mummies: Halloween Weekend) and clog morris (The Morris Dancers: July 4th parade) groups of men's and women's teams.

MM What other teams, if any, did you dance with?

AB Apart from a few performances in the 1970s, I've only danced with my own teams.

AD: During the late '70s, Tony started a project that would eventually result in the largest video archive of display dance ever recorded.

AB: I was starting to feel that some of the stuff I had learned and that we were doing was wrong. In 1976 Headington Quarry dancers came to Washington DC and danced at the Smithsonian Institute as part of the Bicentennial celebrations, I went down and filmed them. Some of what they did I didn't like – they did four traditions and I thought, you're from Headington, you have a great dance style, why do you do anything else? But watching them gave me a different feel for what the dances were like.

MM Which English teams inspired you most?

AB It's been people and their teams mostly. Handsworth (Harry Pitts), Barnsley (Ivor Allsop), Monkseaton (Alan and Peter Brown), Windsor Morris (Jenny Joyce and Alan Whear) and, of course, my primary mentor was Roy Dommett; I breathed in his Notes. Roy came to our Ale in 1978 and in 1979 I took a trip to England with the idea of filming as much dancing as I could, with the help of a grant from CDSS to buy film. Roy was more out there than I was in some ways – he was very helpful to me. I went to film Handsworth's longsword dance because Dinah Breunig wanted to teach the Marlboro women a longsword dance and that's where I met Ivor.

MM *Why "mother" as the fool character?*

AB I was intrigued by the Betty of Alan and Peter Brown and liked the symbolic and theatrical potential of the man-woman character. The "mother" name came up because in America "Mother's Day" is the second weekend in May, a day we tour, and as the "Mother of all the dancers" there was nice echo of the Browns' Betty's "Five sons and never a daughter".

AD: *The Marley Clog dances?*

AB: Rhett Krause was a student at Amherst College but danced with the Marlboro men. He won a Watson fellowship, which enabled him to go to England with my 8mm film camera in 1982 and film every traditional dance he could find. In 1988 he was called by his mum who had been told by an elderly neighbour that "all our family were English Clog dancers". Rhett asked, "Why haven't you told me this before?" Dan Marley: "You never asked". One thing led to another and in 1989 Kari Smith went to England, filmed many dancers and did her PhD on nineteenth century clog dancing; we travelled frequently to Connecticut to collect from Dan's sister Anna and ended up collecting 12 complete routines, performing in a group, the New Dancing Marleys.

MM *What was your best ever morris moment?*

AB I love this question! The answer lies at the core of all my teaching of the Morris, sword, or of any expressive form: you dance and practice so as to optimize your chances of this phenomenon happening. The experience is the same one you'll find described by jazz musicians and football players: suddenly you KNOW with certainty what EVERYONE in the set/team/band is thinking and is about to do. AND you know everyone else knows it too.

It can last a moment that can disappear as quickly as you discover it, as soon as you start reflecting on it. It will likely only happen when the skill level and the familiarity with each other and the content is high. In truth, it only happened for me, and for anyone may only happen, a few times but the experience is so special and distinctive that it's worth dancing like it could happen every time. As one of my favorite buttons (UK: badges) says: "dance like it matters!"

Tony Barrand (by email)
June 2009

An anecdote on Tony:

I have to admit that I wouldn't have described Tony as a graceful morris dancer. If it sounds like I said something wrong, let me explain. He was a wonderful morris dancer – no question about it - and there certainly was grace in his dance. But the word “graceful” doesn't capture the essence of his movement, and if I were looking for the right adjectives, it would fall several down the list.

Part of this was because of who he is. If you saw him on tour, he did not look like the archetypical build you might commonly associate with graceful movement. He was not the long limbed lean fellow like Fred Breunig. He was not the wiry guy like Will Fielding. He was muscular and solid; built like a fireplug and looked like the rugby player that he had been, and this requires a different set of descriptors.

The phrase I thought was more fitting was “controlled power”. When Tony leapt – and man, he could leap – it was not something that you might take for granted if the same height were reached by a more slight dancer. It was an emphatic movement. Something solid and substantial was soaring, and it would catch your eye. He would use this to great effect in his jig dances. And I suspect he was rightfully proud of it.

I have emphasized this one part of his dance, and I do not want those who never saw him dance to think that he was a player with a one-shot game. When you watched him you would see that the bell pad shakes, the posture, the hands, and the tips of the handkerchiefs, were all there. He knew they were there. And more importantly he knew how and why they were there, so he could break down the movements and be a very effective teacher to many of us.

Twenty-five or 30 years ago, the Marlboro Ale did not end at breakfast on Monday. Instead, after bouts of leg wrestling and welly wanging, the Ale would end much later in the day at something called the carousal at Poncho's Wreck in Wilmington, which consisted of dancing for ourselves in the parking lot before going inside for Mexican food and beer.

The very last dance of the Ale was Saturday Night. For those who haven't seen it, Saturday Night is a morris dance that looked something like a contra dance, with couple facing couple in a long ways set, working your way down the set and then back up again. As this involved most of the dancers at the Ale, this was a very long dance. It was also tiring as each turn through the dance required double footed jumps which have a way of wearing you out. Half way through the dance, we would be rolling our eyes at each other and saying things like “why are we doing this?” or “are we there yet?”, but always with a smile. The dance was a way to say good bye to all the people you had just spent 3 days with and tire everyone out simultaneously so you could go inside and feel that you had really earned your enchiladas.

I think my particular memory was on that one particularly hot Monday afternoon when one of our visiting English guests passed out unconscious halfway through Saturday night and had to be dragged out of the set. The dance started with me and my partner facing Tony and his partner. The music started and we were dancing. We came to the first double-footed jump and BOOM! – Tony is flying up in the air. I don't mean just jumping

higher than the rest of our group, I mean jumping higher than I ever did in my life. He had done the outlandish thing of starting a marathon dance by putting all his strength into leaping as high as he could. In the parlance of 2009, this was not a “sustainable energy strategy”.

So I ask you, how do men show friendship and affection for each other in public? Well, one traditional way is that you insult each other. So I gave him a sneer and a wave of dismissal, and said, “Tony. What are you doing? You’re just showing off for the girls. You can’t keep that up.”..

Then I got that look. You know, the twinkle in the eye, the big grin beneath the moustache, the smile wrinkles at the corners of the eyes, and the gleam of a gold tooth. He said two words to me (and not the two words you may be thinking of). He said, “Watch me.” Now, Tony never looked back once to see if I were watching him. I don’t think he gave a whit whether I did or did not. I knew he wasn’t watching me because I was watching him. I will tell you all with no doubt in my mind that every jump in every turn through that long, long dance, there was not one of those scores of dancers who was as high as he was. And it looked for all the world like he kept up that same height throughout the dance.

Tony Barrand was never one to “dance efficiently”. And whether it was in that marathon dance or in something much shorter, giving everything he had was just the nature of the man. When I look back at decades of watching morris, this stands out as my prime memory of the morris man in full: Tony Barrand at the top of his game, feeling his oats...and loving every minute of it.

Rhett Krause
May 2009



Bert Lloyd Centenary Event Announced

February 29 2008 marked the centenary of the birth of A.L. (Bert) Lloyd, the renowned English singer, folklorist, journalist, and writer. To mark this anniversary, the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) will publish a biography, by Dave Arthur, entitled **Bert: The Life and Work of A.L. Lloyd**. To launch the publication and to celebrate Bert Lloyd’s life and work, EFDSS will host a day of concerts at its London headquarters, Cecil Sharp House, on **Saturday 15 November 2009**. Guests confirmed so far include Frankie Armstrong, Martin Carthy, Bob Davenport, Roger Digby, Will Duke, Dan Quinn, Alex West, Roy Harris, Louis Killen, Maddy Prior, Dave Swarbrick, Norma Waterson, Martyn Wyndham-Read, Iris Bishop, Lisa Knapp and Sam Lee.

Bert Lloyd (Albert Lancaster Lloyd, 29 February 1908 – 29 September 1982) was not only a world-famous scholar but also a spellbinding singer who inspired many of today’s leading folk performers, giving generously of his time and material. He continues to influence new generations of singers through his books and recordings. Bert’s daughter Caroline Clayton and her husband Ted are pleased to support the occasion, all proceeds from which will be donated to the EFDSS **Vaughan Williams Memorial Library**.

For further information please contact: Gwen Knighton gwen@efdss.org 020 7485 2206.

A Penny for the Ploughboys, Only Once a Year

Plough Monday in Ramsey, 12th January 2009

In Autumn last year, I had a phone call from Gordon Phillips of the Ouse Washes Molly Dancers concerning work being conducted around schools in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire in the past few years. Members of EFDSS will be familiar with most of this, thanks to his article in 'English Dance & Song' in December 2008. Phil was quite animated, and most of the significant details of that conversation were hastily scrawled down on a piece of paper on the kitchen table and investigated further on the internet! Not only did he talk at great length about the Heritage Lottery Grants he had received over the years, from which a programme of instruction into local folklore, custom and dance was devised, but he also shared with me information on research he had been carrying out with Nicky Stockman at schools and archives centres. I am very humbled by this. My own research comprises a thorough appraisal of previous collectors in the area: notably the late Russell Wortley, coupled with an analysis of any printed literature and relevant newspaper transcript I could lay my hands on between 1840 and the current day, which I still endeavour to update.

To cut a long story short, Phil went on to elaborate some of the work he'd been carrying out in Cambridgeshire schools, and announced the intention to 'revive' the Ramsey straw bear the following January. Could I help? Newspaper accounts record a straw bear as having last done the rounds in the town in 1893. However, the celebration of Plough Monday which it accompanied was noted sporadically by the local press for a long time after that: my latest account being 1933, although in correspondence the late Sybil Marshall, who was born at nearby Ramsey Heights, states that she took part in the custom the following year. Gordon Phillips, during his school visits at Benwick, also met Ramsey exile Ann Edwards (who he thinks is related to Sybil Marshall) who recalled the custom in the town in the 1950s – which trumps my attempts in trying to cap its currency, of course! As luck would have it, my car broke down irrevocably on Christmas Eve, and I wasn't effectively mobile again until Plough Monday weekend, and a test drive in the new car up the M11 was out of the question. So it was a venture by train and bus via Huntingdon, with the prospect of revisiting my good friends of the Balsham Plough Monday Club put on hold for yet another year.

And so I arrived in Ramsey before midday. After finding the Junior School in Station Road, I saw – not a decorated plough waiting in the playground – but a decorated nineteenth-century horse-drawn cultivator which belongs to Phil. 230 children were estimated as taking part, but four visiting schools were still to arrive, some on coach, some by minibus: from Whittlesey, Benwick, Chatteris and Wisbech, all very exciting. At around 12.30 p.m., the costumed retinue assembled for photographs, and the straw bear made its appearance. Inside it was Peter Brown, with Jessica Trattle acting as keeper – two of the Ouse Washes dancers.

I was told the straw bear outfit took four hours to put together the previous day. Superficially, it resembled that of Whittlesey, although you could see its animator through the straw. The cultivator led, with straw bear and keeper slightly behind, the procession away from the school, eastwards into Whytefield Road, then south into Great Whyte, the main street of Ramsey. It continued thus, turning east again along Little Whyte until it arrived opposite the green in front of Ramsey Abbey Gatehouse. The spirit of the children

taking part was immense with the cry 'Penny for the ploughboys – only once a year' being sustained throughout the kilometre long route. The processional tune used was 'Speed the Plough' led by Rob Stockman on melodeon. All the children were in costume, with many wearing face paint. They were accompanied by members of the Ouse Washes molly dancers.

On arriving at the Gatehouse green, they were met by scores of onlookers – one suspects largely parents and relatives – and a ridging plough decorated by rosettes and ribbons, which was lent by Ramsey Rural Museum. A short plough blessing took place by Canon Richard Darmody who concluded by asking the children to shout 'God speed the plough' at the tops of their voices. Rev. Darmody told me afterwards that when he saw the number of children present and the state of the weather (it had started to drizzle), he purposefully opted for brevity, especially since he was due to conduct a service with the same afterwards at nearby Thomas a'Becket parish church. Thereafter, we were treated to a display with the dances 'Birds a'Building', 'Mucky Porter' and 'Mississippi Mud Dance'. Then there was a massed broom dance by all suitably armed children to the tune 'Keel Row', concluding with a double broom dance by Andrew Mussell of Ouse Washes and 'Jake' from Ramsey Community Junior School who leap-frogged over the former to finish the dance.

And that was it. The rain wasn't very helpful, although a gazebo was at hand to house the PA and electrical equipment and, ultimately, the musician. Dancing was restricted to the roadway leading to the gatehouse: the grassed area being far too soft and greasy to enable any satisfactory performance there. Before long, the cultivator was being wheeled back to the car, children being shepherded towards the church or coaches, and the Ouse Washes team who had overseen the day were off for lunch at The Angel, after which I sought the bus back to Huntingdon. The children of the Ramsey school were Year 6 pupils aged 10 and 11, and had already performed in the town when the Christmas lights were first switched on in December. The event was reported in the 'Cambridgeshire Evening News' and 'Hunts Post' newspapers, the latter adding that children from schools in Huntingdon and Eaton Socon also took part. A short feature was also broadcast on BBC television's 'Countryfile' programme the following Sunday which included interviews by Juliet Morris with Canon Darmody, Gordon Phillips and Ann Edwards. There are plans to re-stage the event in 2010.

It was my pleasure whilst in The Angel to meet the team, and especially Nicky Stockman who had conducted some research into public archives. My own research took place in the days long before I had internet access. In retrospect, I don't think more progress would have been made if I had! Nicky attempted work at the Cambridgeshire archives, but found that its opening times didn't suit her – and they closed for lunch! More success was obtained at the Huntingdon Records Office, but the key success to date was in unearthing the school log book at Benwick which reports absenteeism between 1878 and 1922, the only clues as to mode of any performance a note for Plough Monday 1907 that 'W Yorke (a truancy officer??) visited bringing one plough-boy in all his war paint' and the observation that 40 boys were absent on the day from a roll of 244, and that in 1922 'six boys allowed by parents to absent themselves from school to parade the village in observance of Plough Monday.' Further success was obtained from school logbooks at Gorefield, Ramsey Forty Foot, Swaffham Bulbeck and Stretham. (Not all logbooks are held at records offices, some are still held by the schools).

Perhaps future success in the county's records offices might be obtained from looking at possible court cases, instances that merited attention by local newspapers hardly stood out – I have yet to see one case where plough gangs or individuals were prosecuted for any archetypal Plough Monday misdemeanour. The national 'Access to Archives' (A2A) search engine seems very disappointing, although some records offices have their own which may steer a user towards a more positive result – Kent's is an example of this. My congratulations to Phil, Nicky and everyone else at Ouse Washes for going out into the field and uncovering and promoting Plough Monday in a new and imaginative way rather than consign the event as an historical bygone.

George Frampton
April 2009

Sidmouth special:

Regular Morris Matters contributor George Frampton will be hosting a daily lunchtime 'In the Tradition' session at The Volunteer Inn in Temple Street, comprising many of the Festival guests plus a few surprises. A quality band will be in attendance to play as and when desired. A collection will be made on behalf of FolkWeek.



'Mary Neal Day' at Cecil Sharp House, 7th February 2009

Among the exciting initiatives coming from the English Folk Dance and Song Society recently was a day of celebrations of the life of Mary Neal (1860-1944), the woman who a century ago saved the Morris from oblivion. As I hope all readers of Morris Matters are aware, Mary Neal applied to Cecil Sharp for songs and dances for the girls of the Esperance Club, and was referred by him for the latter to the Headington Quarry Morris dancers whom Sharp had encountered on Boxing Day in 1899. The traditional songs and dances of England lit up the lives of the poverty-stricken London girls, and Neal enabled them to perform and teach the Morris all over the country, and even in the USA. Sharp's vision, however, was taking the Morris in another direction, that of an art form, and a 're-creation' of an imagined pre-Christian ritual, and he made every attempt to restrain the 'hoydenish' free expression of the Esperance dancers. It was Sharp's attitude that prevailed, and Mary Neal's part in the rekindling of interest in the Morris was almost completely forgotten.

Among the late 20th-century tributes to Mary Neal are, of course, New Esperance Morris, founded in 1973, and Sue Swift's show, 'The Forgotten Mary Neal', performed at the Sidmouth Festival in 1998, but neither of these has probably made much impression outside 'the folk world'. This year, however, Mary Neal's name has been on many other lips, thanks to the efforts of her brother's great-granddaughter, Lucy Neal, who has revealed the impressive story of her great-great-aunt's life, and has provided an opportunity for Morris to be portrayed in a very positive light to a much broader audience than it usually attracts.

Lucy Neal co-founded the London International Festival of Theatre in 1980, and it was work for the 1993 festival which indirectly led to her learning of the existence of Mary Neal's papers. She tracked them down and discovered that this little-remembered relative had been an inspiring campaigner and worker for women's rights and social justice. The papers provide what Lucy Neal describes as 'an historical counter-narrative and a story waiting to be told', and include a typescript autobiography. Realising the importance of finding a permanent safe repository for them, Lucy Neal forged links with institutions and individuals to put together a day of celebration and a formal handing-over of the papers to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House.

New Esperance Morris were one obvious choice of partner for the enterprise, as were Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers, one of the teams which had taught the Esperance Girls a century ago, but Lucy Neal wanted it to be much wider than just a Morris or folk event. She wanted to reflect and celebrate Mary Neal's impact on the lives of the under-privileged girls of Somers Town and her wider work for social justice. With funding from the University of Winchester, the Arts Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, she set up a detailed website quoting from and illustrating the manuscripts, which shows the whole range of Mary Neal's work. And the day of celebration involved not only the morris demonstrations, performances of some of the songs which so delighted the Esperance Club, and a ceilidh, but an address by Baroness Kennedy (Helena Kennedy, Q.C.), readings and performances by pupils from two primary schools, and discussion groups facilitated by leaders in a broad range of performance arts.

The programme was a splendid showcase of Mary Neal's ideals of inclusiveness and inventiveness. The local primary school, Edith Neville School, and a rural school of similar size had been invited to put on a performance for the day, and responded with enthusiasm. Two

choreographers, Laurel Swift, Morris dancer, and Freddie Opoku-Addaie from the world of contemporary dance, worked with the pupils to present some traditional dances and some new creations, and it was great to see what fun they had. After the main performances, children were involved in other creative activities, including sewing and baking, and everybody got a chance to try Morris in a workshop run by New Esperance. The discussions, around the topics of performance and creativity, were inspiring, and Lucy Neal had even tracked down Vida Brown, the daughter of Mary Neal's principal dancer, Florrie Warren. Vida talked to us about her childhood and her own life in dance, as dancer and teacher with the New York City Ballet.

It is a great pleasure to see, in several events recently staged by the EFDSS, so many newly introduced to the music and dance which is so much, and so wonderful, a part of my life. The historian in me rejoiced at the recognition given to Mary Neal's impressive campaigning and work. Lucy Neal's place in the arts world gave her access to publicity which is usually accorded only reluctantly to 'folk'; articles and interviews appearing in 'The Guardian' and 'Time Out' and on BBC Radio 4 'Woman's Hour'. Shirley Collins, the EFDSS President, sees the placing of Mary Neal's papers in the institution named after the man who became her great rival as representing 'reconciliation and forgiveness'. For me, it also represents the coming together of the two attitudes to Morris. There should be a high standard to aspire to, and to inspire our audience, but there must be an enthusiasm and an inclusiveness, or else who will be attracted to discover the wonderful world of traditional dance and song for themselves?

Shirley Dixon
July 2009

Finding Vida

In the late 1970s, my high school friends and I were just starting to dance rapper and morris and we took it for granted that we were doing something new in this country. But one day an elderly American lady in the crowd said, "Oh yes, morris dancing. We did that when we were your age." The first time I heard this we just assumed she must be mistaken. She would have been referring to the 1920s after all (at the time we didn't know much about Cecil Sharp's trips to the US and the lasting influence of him and his several followers here). But then we heard similar from several older people and started to realize that while dancing out in regular teams was new in the 70s, morris dancing itself did have a long history here already and it was, in my opinion, too little known.

In about 1977, someone brought a copy of the Esperance Morris Book to our town contra dance. We were all fascinated, as it was the first we had heard of Mary Neal and Florrie Warren. But what leapt off the page to my eyes was the brief notice that those two had travelled to America in 1910, that Florrie had become engaged to an American and stayed here. As I learned more about the Esperance dancers, what then happened to Florrie became a compelling mystery with a unique American twist. Here we had this wonderfully vivacious and talented young woman, described in so many superlatives by those who knew her, and likely the most successful teacher of the morris dance prior to 1910. At the height of her popularity in the morris revival, she comes to America, has a successful whirlwind tour, and then – as far as I knew at the time – is never heard of again. Had she indeed married? Where in the world had she settled? Were there children who would know her story?

I thought that investigating Florrie's fate was the most interesting bit of morris research that had not yet been done. I was surprised by how few others shared that interest, and I suspect this

is largely due to the perception of the American trip as one small side branch in the larger story of morris in England. Back in England, Roy Dommett had always been keenly interested in Mary Neal and her colleagues and spread some of his enthusiasm to me. In America, Cynthia Whear tried to re-create the Esperance spirit, dress, and style in her short-lived team, the New Esperance Morris, in about 1980. She shared all my fascination about Florrie's fate, and we had many long conversations on what might have happened to Florrie and how we might find out.

For many years I could accomplish nothing useful, and did not have enough information to know where to begin. I did try various public records for people named Florence Warren. But this only turned up notices of several Florence Warrens of about the right age who had died young in circumstances of various degrees of tragedy. I recall finding an account of a Florence Warren who died of consumption alone and penniless at 24, and let out a long involuntary "Noooo!", and thinking, "It just can't end like this." (Not to mention an indignant, "Who was this cad who must have left her at the altar?"). I hope an account of how I did trace Florrie's life might be of interest to someone considering similar research. I suspect that the same could have been done much more quickly in this day of the internet and computerized records. In the 1980's this research was instead a matter of hand written letters, long drives to libraries, and much time with microfilm and dusty reference books.

The first breakthrough was through my correspondence with Roy Judge, that wonderful researcher. He told me a copy of Florrie's engagement notice was in Cecil Sharp House and that it named her fiancé as Arthur Brown. Finally a name to work with! (In time though, my enthusiasm was tempered by realizing exactly how many Mr. Browns there were in America, and realizing she would have made my task so much easier if she had instead married an Arthur Lukaskiewicz).

I then started a search of the New York Times microfilm for any mention of a Brown-Warren marriage. My hopes were not high as only a tiny fraction of marriages in greater New York are ever actually noted in the paper, I was not sure where they had married, and I certainly hoped this was not an engagement that would stretch on for years. Doing research from primary material so often involves hours of drudgery rewarded by occasionally finding nuggets of new interesting material, and it was one such Eureka moment when the February 23, 1912 copy of the New York Times noted that the marriage had taken place on Valentine's Day at the home of Emily Burbank, the American writer who had first proposed the American trip.

The new critical information in the 5-line marriage announcement was that the groom was from Springfield, Massachusetts. A review of that city's public records showed that Arthur Brown had indeed lived in the Springfield suburb of Longmeadow but had moved to parts unknown about the time of the marriage. It did, however, list him as an attorney. Knowing Arthur's profession was enormously helpful. I found out that the largest libraries had copies of the Martindale-Hubbell Attorney Directory, a yearly multivolume list of all attorneys in the United States. It did seem at times that being named "Arthur Brown" gave one a disproportionate inclination to go into law. A combination of logic and brute force narrowed it down to a small number of Browns. Following their entries year after year, I noted when they dropped off the Directory, presumably representing death or retirement.

A name, state and approximate year of death was enough for the Social Security Administration to work on, and they eventually gave me the approximate place and date of death of an Arthur Brown of Illinois. This was followed by a call to the local library to search

their newspapers for a 1963 obituary. Eventually, the obituary came in the mail, containing the proof that this was the correct Arthur Brown, as it did mention that he was the widower of Florence W. Brown. It also noted that he was survived by their three daughters, Cicely, Dorothy, and Vida. Of course, much can change in the life of any adult over a quarter of a century, and I was thrilled that the directory assistance operator did find a telephone number for Cicely, the eldest daughter, at the same Iowa town she had been at in 1963.

Cicely answered the phone, and I asked if she were the daughter of Arthur and Florence Brown, knowing how odd such a call must seem coming out of the blue. And I recall telling her I had been looking for her for a number of years. How odd that must sound. If I had had secret hopes there would be a treasure trove of information on Florrie's dancing, with multiple photo albums and a daily diary of dance events 1905-1911, this was not to be. Indeed, I soon found out that Florrie had never spoken of her life in England to her daughters at all. The only times they had seen morris was the odd occasion they went to a class their mother taught locally during the brief time they lived in California and perhaps their first years in Chicago. (It appears that her teaching in this period as a young mother was very limited to small local lessons as compared with the huge performance of the first months in America). The daughters certainly had never seen a team dance.

Any disappointment here was more than made up for by meeting this wonderful family, myself finding out more about Florrie as a person after 1911, the daughters discovering the depth and significance of their mother's involvement in dance well before their birth, and realizing how Vida's own life had so heavily been involved in dance. There have been two extraordinary moments of satisfaction for me that came from all this. The first was in May of (I think) 1991, when all three daughters and their two surviving husbands took a family vacation to Vermont to attend the Marlboro Morris Ale, the oldest and largest morris dance event in the United States. They finally saw morris performed, and could appreciate how large a part this had played in their mother's life, and that, after all, she had been the first English teacher to bring the morris to America 80 years before.

In February 2009, I accompanied the very spry 86 year old Vida Olinick to London where she was the special guest of EFDSS at the occasion of Mary Neal Day (her older sister Cicely Mary Joslyn – named for Mary Neal - was tempted, but not able to attend). All in all a wonderful event that included the story of her mother's trip to America and concluded with her first ceilidh dance as partner of Katy Spicer, EFDSS Chief Executive.

The year 2010 will mark the 100th anniversary of morris in America and I am sure Vida and Cicely are very proud of how important a role their mother had played in this.

Rhett Krause
February 2009

This article has been published with thanks to Lucy Neal, for whom Rhett originally presented this when attending the Mary Neal Day. Rhett wrote of his research into Florrie Warren and her family in Morris Matters issues 12-2 and 13-1. If you would like a back copy please get in touch with me. You can find further details of Mary Neal's life and work in the website www.maryneal.org, and an account of Lucy Neal's discoveries in 'English Dance and Song' Winter 2006.

The Mayor of Ock Street Berkshire Bedlam visit Abingdon

The “Mock Mayor” of Ock Street, Abingdon, is the longest-established mock mayoral election still held in the United Kingdom. This year (2009) Berkshire Bedlam (BB) were invited to attend the election and to join Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers (ATMD), Chipping Camden Morris Men and Saddleworth Morris Men in the day’s dancing and subsequent supper and entertainment. BB were honoured to accept as we believe we are the first members of the Morris Federation to have been invited.

ATMD are famous for their Ox Horns dated 1700, without which they will not dance. These horns are said to be the trophy from a fight – or possibly a game of ‘rough football’ similar to the Haxey Hood Game - between the Ock Street men and those of the “Vineyards”. It is also said¹ that the horns came into the possession of the team through a Mr Hemmings – and a descendant (presumably) Mr. Ewart Hemmings was the “Returning Officer” and guest of honour at the supper (of which more later).



The Horns taking a rest at lunchtime

The election for Mayor of Ock Street may have arisen more recently than 1700 (Keith Chandler has found mention from the 1860s) perhaps as a parody of the real mayoral elections of the town. Unlike other mock elections which have faded along with the curious system of English franchise they parodied, the Mayor of Ock Street is still going strong.

¹ Homer Sykes, *Once a Year, some traditional British customs*, London, The Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1977.

Abingdon is a delightful market town of some antiquity, formerly the county seat of Berkshire but occupied² since 1974 by the county of Oxfordshire. There are not so many pubs as there were, but between 10am and 9pm we still managed to visit – and dance at – the Black Swan, the Plough, the Punch Bowl, the Brewery Tap, the White Horse, and the Cross Keys. Add in dances in the shopping precinct and the market square (twice) and you may get a flavour of what part of the day is about: we danced our little socks off!

Another part of the day is the election, of course. I had thought this was purely a symbolic affair, but no! The election is open to all the residents of Ock Street and members of ATMD. A Polling Station is established at the back of the Brewery Tap and is open from 10am until 4pm. It can be a close fought affair, this year's winner (Mr. Cox) being elected only by a margin of two votes (76 to 74) with another candidate taking a respectable third place.

The newly elected Mayor is presented with his sword and cup of office and chaired through the streets shoulder high by each team in turn. In photographs, the chair is a masterpiece of floral decoration and sturdy construction. The reality – the flowers are tied in haphazard fashion to an old wooden rocking chair, itself tied to two aluminium poles - adds to both the charm of the occasion and to the sense of parody, perversely reinforced by not only the presence but the willing participation of the Mayor of Abingdon³. Indeed the ATMD are part of the town in the way that only a well-established team can be: the day's events are advertised on the Town Council website and there is even a photograph of a previous Mayor and dancers on their front page.



The rediscovered Abingdon Broom Dance

The day ended with a supper provided for all dancers and friends in the exceptional surroundings of Abingdon Abbey's "Long Room" – an early 16th Century gallery, roofed over but open to the elements along one side, sympathetically restored and a superb venue. With the supper came home-brewed entertainment: songs and music and a highly theatrical "performance" of the Prickle-Eye Bush that had us in stitches.

² We're Berkshire Bedlam; what did you expect me to say?

³ Itself a long established tradition, e.g. as reported in Alexander Howard, *Endless Cavalcade, A Diary of British Festivals and Customs*, London, Arthur Barker Ltd, 1964.

As a newcomer to the mock-mayor making, I knew I wanted to attend, but I was not quite sure why. It was “traditional”, but what did that mean? Now I know. Traditional is being part of a place or a time, being part of the fabric of a community. Traditional is being able to walk in a crowd of 50 people along a busy main road behind a man carrying a pair of horns without a single car-horn being sounded in anger or a single policeman in sight. Traditional is doing what has always been done, even if it wasn't you that did it last time. I commend the experience to everyone!



The polling station at 4pm, just about to close.

Berkshire Bedlam had a great time at the Mock-Mayor Making and would like to thank Abingdon Traditional Morris Dancers for their invitation, their courtesy and their hospitality

Jerry West
June 2009

Where The Pavement Ends – Moulton Morris Men

This CD is a reissue of a rare 1979 vinyl album, originally recorded at Woodworm Studios, and produced by Dave Pegg and Simon Nicol of Fairport fame. Following on the heels of the “Morris On ...” series, like them it contains a fair mix of morris music, tunes and songs, some played straight and some with added oomph, but all featuring 1979 Moulton Morris members and their guests. These included a number of fine musicians, many of whom are still well known figures in the morris and folk world, all under the general stewardship of Barry Care (featured dancing on one track – and also well known for the siring of Simon, of whom more later). There is also a track featuring ‘honorary member’ Father Kenneth Loveless playing some Headington tunes on William Kimber’s concertina – now you can’t get much more ‘of the tradition’ than that.

What of the tracks themselves? There are 20 altogether – 16 from the original 1979 album, and 4 bonus tracks. Of the originals, apart from the Loveless offerings there are some well known morris tunes played in a fairly traditional way, with occasional accompaniment from bells and sticks (and probably waving hankies too though these are less apparent on the record). There are also 3 more upbeat sets of tunes from Moulton’s ceilidh band Pandamonium, and several songs, mostly sung unaccompanied, all favourites of the side at the time but which may not be to everyone’s taste alongside the more upbeat material. The CD then closes with 4 bonus tracks, all recorded recently, and in which the hand of Simon Care is very apparent. 3 of them, all with a Moulton link of some kind, are from recent reincarnations of the Morris On Band, with Simon’s fine box playing prominent among the musicians, and the final one is from Simon’s band Tickled Pink, and written by him. These 4 tracks, recorded 25-30 years after the original album, have a different and fuller sound and feel (and recording quality) from the earlier ones, and therefore provide a noticeable contrast to the original 16 tunes.

Overall though, the album has stood the test of time pretty well. While perhaps not having the consistency or ambitious range of the earlier Morris On series, it nevertheless provides a good showcase for a fine morris side (and some excellent musicians) which can claim with some justification to have been up there with the best of them for almost 40 years.

Malcolm Major
June 2009

The CD TECD139 can be obtained through www.talkingelephant.com or phone them on 0208 301 2828

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Rosie Turner-Bisset (1950 – 2009)

Rosie's interest in folk music started in the early 1970's while a student at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. While singing and playing at local folk clubs she naturally socialised with various local Morris dancers. This led to her playing for Kemp's Men at the invitation of Norris Winstone (Winny) and to meeting Mike Turner, her future husband.

In 1977 they moved to Croydon where they started Downes Morris along with a number of experienced dancers and musicians (mostly ex-students) who were living in South London. Downes were men's and women's sides who practised and danced out together. They wore similar kits but danced different traditions. Rosie danced with them and played English concertina. In 1981 Downes went to Sidmouth as a busking side and were one of the first mixed teams to appear there officially.

After Mike and Rosie were married they moved back to East Anglia and joined Golden Star, Mike acting as foreman while Rosie played. In 1988 they moved to Exeter where Mike joined Great Western and Rosie joined Glory of the West as a dancer and musician. Rosie also played concertina and melodeon for Great Western and continued to do so whenever possible up until her untimely death.

Later, her work took Rosie to Watford where she joined Windsor Morris, dancing with them for some years until she broke her leg whilst out dancing. She can be seen in her plaster cast on one of the Morris Cards (of Great Western) made by Headingham Fair. After that her poor health prevented her from dancing and so she concentrated instead on being an enthusiastic musician for other sides including Rockhopper.

Rosie was an accomplished musician and outside of Morris she played in a string of Ceilidh bands – Joe'n'Arry, Off The Rails, Knit Your Own Yoghurt to name but a few. Rosie also loved sessions and was a regular fixture in the Radway at Sidmouth. In 2009 her work took her to Newcastle and she threw herself wholeheartedly into the vibrant music scene there. There is no doubt that wherever she is now she will be at the centre of a good session.

Bev & Richard Ashe

June 2009