

MORRIS MATTERS

presents



# MORRIS 2: Folk in Films

A SEQUEL TO MORRIS: A LIFE WITH BELLS WHISKY!

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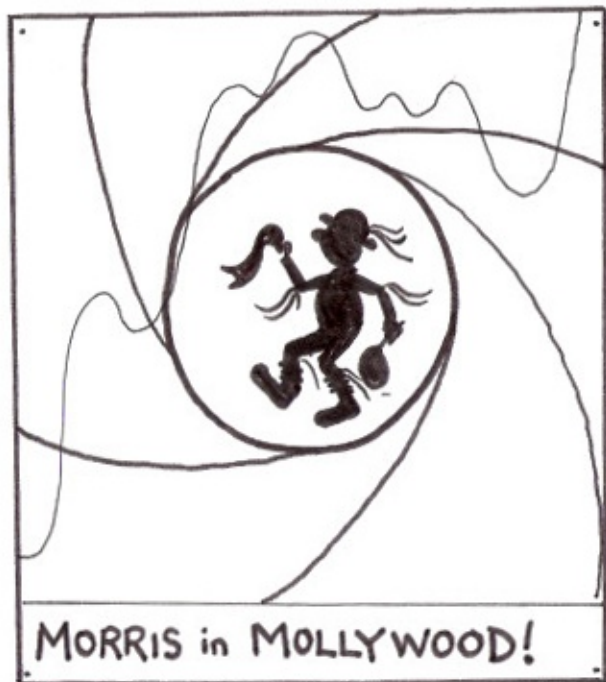
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A FOLK IN HELL PRODUCTION

MORRIS GOES MOVIE MAINSTREAM



MORRIS in MOLLYWOOD!

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**Contents of Volume 29 Number 1**

Morris: A Life with Bells On - Explaining the Parody, a Personal View by George Frampton	2
Morris: A Life with Bells On – An Insider View by Laurel Swift	5
New tunes for the Morris – The Prequel by Barry Goodman	8
The True Origins of Morris by Long Lankin	11
Pub Morris by Andy	13
Entertaining Adderbury with Sing and Stick by Roy Dommett	14
The Instep Research Team by Chris Metherell	21
Dancing in the Streets: a History of Collective Joy reviewed by Shirley Dixon	23
The New Zealand Morris Tour by Lynne Pointer	25
Natural and Wild (The Albion Band) Rockin Barn Dance (the Albion Dance Band) reviewed by Malcolm Major	28
Cecil Sharp's Diaries On-line	29

Welcome to the next decade; last year was a good one for morris with the release of the film: 'Morris: A Life with Bells on' (we have a 'punters' review and an insiders view), which generated a lot of interest - most of it positive. There were favourable reviews about morris in The Times (A. A. Gill went to Thaxted and was bemused by Bacup) and The Independent (Jonathan Brown visited Acorn Morris). Norris Winstone commented: "I don't understand why the media continue to take the mickey out of morris; what could be sillier than grown men walking miles just to knock a little ball into a hole - and sometimes they wear funny clothes....."

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## Morris: A Life with Bells On - Explaining the Parody, a Personal View

I hope there isn't one reader unaware of the film doing the rounds of selected cinemas in early Autumn. As I write, a CD of the soundtrack is available<sup>1</sup>, and I believe the DVD will be shortly, with Christmas just round the corner. Imagining that some of you come from the rising generation, I thought it interesting to ponder the areas of morris many of us hold dear which were sympathetically parodied. I'm really scratching my head to think of precedents where the morris has been portrayed in any peripheral capacity in film. There were the Westminster Men who took part in 'The Great St. Trinian's Train Robbery' in the 1960s when a bemused Frankie Howerd was trying to escape the police, and I'm sure the Royal Liberty lads were seen doing a stick dance (with scaffolding poles) in the opening sequence to a (TV?) film comedy in more recent years. It would be beyond imagination for any sane person to even dream of using the morris as theme and plot in a film targeted for general release, wouldn't it?

To quote in full the preview that appeared in a local advertiser explaining the plot to a non-folkie audience, the film is:

*'A heart-warming comedy that follows the fortunes of one of the leading Morris teams in the country and its avant garde leader, Derecq Twist who has pioneered a daring freeform brand of dancing - Extreme Morris. Frowned upon by the governing body, he is prevented from completing the Threeples Hammer Damson, his life's ambition. Moving to America to dance with the flamboyant Morris men of Orange County, he falls in love but life is rarely as simple as it is in the movies and he has to make some choices. Can he face a life without Morris dancing? Or will the lack of real cider in the States finally push him over the edge?'*

Having seen the film, the synopsis is wildly inaccurate in parts, but does give a taster to the content expected. The presentation is a documentary in the manner of 'This is Spinal Tap' and 'A Mighty Wind'. It opens with a lone dancer performing a solo jig in front of absolutely no audience above the head of the Cerne Giant hillside chalk figure in Dorset - ironic in its own way, as this is the site where the Wessex Morris Men begin their own dance season at dawn on May Day. The dancer, we learn, is the aforementioned Derecq Twist who, 'is at the peak of his dancing career' according to the 'commentator', and the son and descendant of a long line of morris dancers. We are brought back into the 'real' world as we learn that Derecq's full-time occupation is that of a tractor mechanic and his obsession with the dance is shared with the Millsham Morris dancers - an all-male affair with a female physio - of whom he is foreman and squire at various times in the film.

The team is subject to the standards of the Morris Circle, whose office is based in the City near the so-called Gherkin in St. Mary Axe. They sanction any dances performed, and any team or dancer transgressing its codes is liable to be 'rusticated' and prevented from future performance with an actual surrender of sticks and bells to a Circle officer. Derecq's dream is to become a Morris Councillor (or counsellor?), and is selected to perform the Threeples Hammer Damson 'at a time and place of his choosing' to qualify. To cut a long story short, after being inspired by some of the 'new' Morris coming over from the States, a retired Millsham dancer complains and the team are formally rusticated whilst about to perform at a country fair in West Dorset. After persuasion, the commentator brokers Derecq to join the new wave Orange County boys in California as they push back boundaries with their 'Extreme Morris.' The dance performed beggars belief, incorporating disco dance, hip-hop and lord-knows-what, winning almost hysterical approval! Derecq falls in love with the PR

lady, but is forced to retire to the Mid-West when she takes up a high power job in government. A despondent Derecq is later pictured doing the 'devil's dance' - line dancing! Of course, a happy ever after theme is obligatory, an amicable separation is agreed and Derecq returns to Blighty. Attitudes have now changed in the Morris Circle, "it was the seeing Derecq doing the devil's dance that did it", the Millsham Morris reform, and our hero finally performs the Hammer Threeples Damson. Film ends.

The closing credits revealed that Laurel Swift of Shooting Roots collaborated to enable an informed choreography. I suspect that her parents John and Sue were able to chip in to enhance the intrigue. It wasn't until I went through some websites that I realised that the Millsham kit with red knee breeches, white shirts and black waistcoats was almost the same as that of Farnborough Morris<sup>2</sup> (minus the straw hats) - a team formed by Roy Dommatt in the 1950s which were still going in the mid-seventies. The Millsham squire wore a top hat and badge of office, which jogged my memory that the Cup Hill Morris squire did exactly the same whilst the rest of us wore tricornered hats. Only the musician was allowed to dress differently - usually in a smock. Conversely, I cannot recall seeing any Millsham musician; in fact, at practice, a ghetto blaster was used, something I recall only being used for Morris Ring cassettes when a new tradition was being learnt in 1970s Godalming.

Many in my generation became interested as a result of Ashley Hutchings's 'Morris On' album in 1972 and, when finally joining a team, never questioned the authenticity or provenance of the dances. By that time all-women teams had started up, in many cases bringing in dance traditions from Lionel Bacon's handbook seldom explored by more conservative male teams. (At this juncture, I could harp on about what I perceived as the shared repertoire of Morris Ring teams at this time, but no parallel situation was featured in the film, so another day perhaps?)

The narrative in the parallel universe infers that the Morris was well-respected publicly and intellectually. We are introduced to a Cambridge (lady) Professor Chamberlayne who speaks of the genuine and literary antiquity of the morris claiming that it goes back '2000 years' - something that we in the Morris Federation Research Group never knew! (Was this us being parodied?)

Comments could be made on how/if club membership 'runs in families' in The Revival in real life - or even multiculturalism for that matter. The familial theme has already been touched on as we hear of Derecq's descendency, but I can only think of a few instances where the same thing occurs outside. Analogously, the Millsham team have an expatriot Geordie whose brogue was deliberately impermeable to enhance the comedy; and a former French fisherman who was washed ashore and rescued, finally becoming the village publican.

Exercising for the Morris? Millsham had a physio, oxygen cylinders and masks to hand when needed, and full regime of stretching and the like. I recall Mr. Jorrocks, who adopted the high-stepping style that (Gloucestershire) Old Spot and Hammersmith developed (with high incidence of knee injuries and shin splints) for their own Oddington-based repertoire, doing wall press-ups before performance, otherwise I suspect that pre-practice and performance warm up exercises are still an exception rather than rule.

American influence? Opinions will differ on this relative to readers' experiences. I can only recall two all-women teams of rapper dancers visiting Kent in the early 1990s who were as good as, if not better than, any team in this country at that time, and certainly pre-dated DERT (Dancing England Rapper Tournament) as a stimulus for excellence. Having met Tony Barrand twice and the fact there was plenty known as to

transatlantic activity at the time, I can only say they were more influenced by us rather than vice versa. Derecq's first meeting with the Orange County Morris in the film seems to reflect this.

Choreography. The film had nothing of note to imitate, apart from an amazing creative final figure (all in) with sticks in opening sequences. No full dance is shown, despite odd figures in practice sessions. Who knows what out-takes may show? Only one 'guest' dancer appeared in any dance set, viz. the closing sequence taken at Wimborne, when Morris Circle representative Endeavour Hungerford-Welsh of the Moss Side morris men made an appearance with Millsham.

In defining 'new' morris, I'll start with the analogy in the film 'Strictly Ballroom' where the mantra was decreed by one central character that 'there are no new dances' when justifying the existence of the organisation he headed. On joining the Cup Hill men in 1977, the Bacon book was taken as gospel and an accurate hand-to-foot manual for the dance (I can quote the foreman at the time on that). Of course, this certainly wasn't the case, and 'one-tradition' revival teams had already been in existence long before then. I think again of the Farnborough Morris men from Hampshire who performed, in the style of Bledington, old chestnuts such as 'Jockey to the Fair' and 'Queen's Delight' in the same unified manner, rather than Brackley and Bucknell respectively. I have the impression that it was shortly before my own interest that any 'new' morris along similar lines became prevalent which excited me more than 'doing the same as everyone else'.

The derivation of 'Extreme Morris' seems more in tone with the so-called 'extreme sports' depicted in television comedy, e.g. ironing clothes on mountains. The Seven Champions at Sidmouth in 1983 performed a disco routine in leotards to Rod Stewart's 'Do You Think I'm Sexy', and Great Western did something similar to 'Fame'. Nothing serious, and certainly no portent for the future. (Now please tell me I haven't got that wrong out there? Oh yes, the Fabulous Fezheads - well, nearly!)

A crowded house sat down to watch the film at the Kino in Hawkhurst. There were (somehow) eleven former dancers and associates of the Seven Champions - some of whom came straight from the Tenterden Folk Festival earlier in the day. I suspect that little of the irony and intrigue was wasted on any of us, with any guffawing heard beyond the comprehension of anyone else present. I suppose 'Morris: A Life With Bells On' will mainly appeal to a minority and its cult status be reinforced, but I'm glad that filmmaker-actor Charles Thomas Oldham who played the leading role, and Lucy Ackhurst who directed and played a supporting role had the vision to at least make it happen.

**George Frampton**  
**November 2009**

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<sup>1</sup> The soundtrack to "Morris: A Life With Bells On" is available from record shops, for download and direct from [www.dreamboatrecords.co.uk/morris](http://www.dreamboatrecords.co.uk/morris), with 32 tracks of original folk, orchestral and morris music written by Richard Lumsden (who also stars in the film) and featuring John Dipper, Saul Rose and Laurel Swift.

Ed: Here is a video link to Martin Carthy, Eliza Carthy, Ashley Hutchings, Jim Moray and Kate Nash talking about the film and soundtrack:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZNewPqXpI&feature=player\\_profilepage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZNewPqXpI&feature=player_profilepage)

<sup>2</sup> (from Laurel Swift) the reason Millsham's kit was virtually identical to Farnborough's, is because the script writer spent a number of years living with the Campbells, and Don Campbell (to whom the film is dedicated) was a Farnborough dancer.

## Morris: A Life with Bells On – An Insider View

Beth Neill emailed me recently saying, "Good to see your name up in credits for Morris Movie – but it would have been so good to have seen real live music when they danced." This sentiment has been echoed throughout the morris world, so I thought I'd put fingers to keyboard and explain a little about my role in the making of 'Morris: A Life With Bells On'.

John Dipper, among others, was approached to record some music for a film about morris and enlisted Saul Rose and me to join him for the session. We spent a day recording at the home of the film's composer, Richard Lumsden, during which we met the film's creators, Chaz Oldham and Lucy Akhurst. Despite my persistent questioning, they refused to give details about who was performing, or indeed teaching, the dancing that would be featured.

Needless to say, I got a call a few months later to ask whether I taught morris. The script came through just before Hastings Jack-in-the-Green, and I spent a fair few hours of the festival reading it. I'm not sure what it says about the script; me; or morris dancing, but despite reading the entire script, I never once realised that the thing was supposed to be a comedy. Hmm... Anyway Chaz, Lucy and I met up: they were lovely, we watched some film of Morris Offspring, and talked about Chaz's adopted morris family. Lucy and Chaz waved aside my attempted corrections of the 'inaccuracies' that I had spotted in the script: they were creating their own world of morris dance, and wanted to do it their way. They assured me that the film was a gentle, affectionate take on Morris, and we agreed I would choreograph the dances that were needed for the film. The early parts of the script constantly refer to the graceful athleticism and breathtaking movement of the Millsham Morris and I turned my attention to trying to figure out how this would be achieved with complete beginners and about 3 sessions.

Actors are unbelievably quick at copying and remembering movement, and then almost instantly taking it one stage further and being someone else simultaneously. Hats off all round! Nevertheless a few of the guys were nervous about dancing, so before the full rehearsals, we had a sneak preview of a few basics; double steps, back steps and jumps. I didn't think I'd worked them particularly hard and they had made very good progress. Rehearsals started in earnest a few days later, at which Chaz confessed, "I'm beginning to resent that line I wrote in the script". "Which line?" I asked him. "The one about, this isn't just keep fit you know, this is extreme physical exercise." I told him that I thought it was a really nice thing to put in; not many people realise how physically demanding morris is and it's great to see someone putting the truth out there. "Yes," said Chaz "but I wrote it ironically, and five days later, when it still feels like someone is pushing glass through my calves, I'm being to see that there's rather a lot of truth in it". What is ironic is that I still didn't cotton on that this film was intended to be a comedy!

Anyway, rehearsals started, and the "Orange County Morris" (OCM), the "American" team were first up. Two of the group were trained dancers and one had danced morris

as a boy at the Royal Ballet School. I had a very clear brief for the American part of the film; and whereas I had understood that Millsham was a serious, sophisticated high quality dance company, it was clear from the outset that the 'OCM's were going to be a complete scream. Richard had already finished the soundtrack for their 'stadium' dance and Chaz was very specific about what he wanted the dance to look like. He envisaged it would contain various sections: morris, taiko drumming, and the OCM's idea of street dance: tongue in cheek, camped up mincing. That piece was relatively simple to assemble under a combination of Chaz's initial outline, my morris derived sections and then a combination of a choreographic structure from me and a good deal of artistic licence from the guys. We had fun! Filming that was even more fun; the extras that turned up to be the stadium crowd were fantastic. We filmed them cheering the team arrive on stage to music before we filmed any dancing. However, third time round, we omitted to tell them that the dance was going to start. The screams and cheering quickly became completely genuine – I have never seen an audience so bowled over!

I finally met the whole of what was to become Millsham Morris a week or so after that. No offence to a great group of people, but they weren't exactly the agile, trim, silver-footed athletes that the script described! And I still didn't cotton on... Needless to say they threw themselves into the dancing with passion, working extremely hard, and with great attention to detail. Some had gone to the trouble of travelling to watch real teams in advance. All the actors and crew were extremely respectful, intrigued and interested in the morris itself and they were a pleasure to work with. It is very difficult to learn convincing morris in a handful of 2 hour sessions. Nevertheless the film is about a guy who is a morris dancer, not about morris itself and we had limited time to focus on giving an illusion of great morris.

Lucy was very precise about filming only what was needed so we were working on a dozen 5-20 second clips, if that, and no more! We didn't learn anything longer than 2 figures. I accepted that Chaz's created morris world was different from mine, and did my best to ensure that I followed his requests as much as possible whilst trying to be true to ordinary morris dance as I know it. Some of Richard's music, while working extremely well as a soundtrack, was quite hard to dance to, but that was simply another part of the challenge of the choreography. I decided the togetherness of the team was of paramount importance over any individual mastering the steps and am pleased to notice in the film that the lines are impeccable; the hands often exact and the symmetry... well... symmetrical!

The final day of filming the dancing was the day after Glastonbury, and we were called for 7am, so that we'd get the right kind of light. As it turned out, the weather was more of the downpour that had engulfed Glastonbury and we did little filming that day. We did however, get in some more rehearsing, and the penny finally dropped. "We've altered the ending of this dance," said Chaz, "it wasn't funny enough." "Fine," I said, "looks great, really energetic, but I didn't know you wanted Millsham to be funny." Someone kindly let me in on the reality at last...

All went quiet until 2009, when the film was finally released. It was fun to hear audiences containing both morris and non-morris people laughing at completely different parts of the film. It was great that most morris teams chose to embrace the

film, and among other things, massively boost attendance. The film was always aimed at the general public as a feel good, non-violent, happy family film, and like it or not, I'm sure it will form the basis of many people's 'facts' about morris for years to come!

So to answer Beth's initial question: this is film and ultimately the producer has control. Very few forms of dance are privileged enough to have kept their live musicians, and fewer still have that unique symbiosis between musician and dancer that we have in morris – so you can see why someone would fail to realise how fundamental live music is to us. I questioned the lack of live music and musician a number of times, alongside various bits of terminology; the reality of a 3 hour solo dance; and the difference between morris, sword, country dancing, etc., but this was the way they wanted it. This was a film about a fictional chap who happened to be a maverick morris dancer, not an accurate portrayal of morris dance (although they came beautifully close on the passion, emotion and politics it arouses!) Chaz and Lucy did do lots of research and I guess live music was one thing they didn't feel they needed in Derecq's morris world. Perhaps the music was one of the things prescribed (on tape) by the Morris Circle!

Another comment I have heard repeatedly was, "Why are the names of the dances so ridiculous?" This makes me laugh! They are silly and intentionally so, but come on!, a lot of morris dances do have silly names. We just forget they're silly because they're familiar. And don't even get me started on kit! In the real world, some morris dancing is impressive, sexy, mindblowing stuff, some of it is elegant and harmless, and, quite frankly, most of the rest of it looks and sounds ridiculous – especially in some cases where the team isn't thinking about the bigger picture and what they look and sound like to the outside world. That's not necessarily a reason not to do it, but it strikes me that if you go out looking silly, you should be able to laugh at yourself!

It was a complete pleasure to work on *Morris: A Life with Bells On*. All the crew and the actors were lovely and a lot of fun. They were extremely respectful of morris, and impressed by the physical commitment required to dance it well. I think that the dancing shown in the trailer, in particular, sums up a lot of what is good and impressive about morris dancing. I look forward to seeing what happens next!

***Laurel Swift***  
***January 2010***

## New tunes for the Morris – The Prequel

At the English Country Music Weekend held at Amptill in June 2009, I gave a talk based on a series of articles entitled 'New Tunes for the Morris' that had appeared in the last three editions of Morris Matters. To give the talk a historical context, I added an introduction tracing some of the sources for the study of music in the Morris, giving an overview and drawing some conclusions about the music, instrumentation, musicians and tunes used in the Morris from the mid-seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century.

Subsequently, I was invited by the editor of Morris Matters to submit this introduction for publication as a fourth article in the series, so here is the fourth (more properly first) part of the series, 'New Tunes for the Morris'.

The first collected country dance morris – Stanes Morris – first appeared in 1651 and was included in the first three editions of Playford's 'The Dancing Master'. The tune itself is found in two manuscript lute books of the late Elizabethan era (circa 1595 – 1600) and continues to be published until 1713 (in Daniel Wright's 'An Extraordinary Collection of Pleasant and Merry Humours, Never Before Published') at which point it leaves the popular tradition until the Morris revivals of the late nineteenth century. However, a tune with 'morris' in its title, while quite probably used at one time for the rustic morris, would quite likely have been reused in a completely different context, including vocal versions and dances quite removed from the original rural morris.<sup>1</sup>

Cecil Sharp and Hugh Macilwaine, in the introduction to the first volume of 'The Morris Book', state that, of the nearly three hundred Morris tunes they had noted down at that time, a few "are well-known Country Dance airs; some have clearly been derived from song-tunes, mostly traditional; but a large number cannot be traced to either of these sources".<sup>2</sup> They suggest that the tunes *Shepherd's Hey*, *Trunkles*, *Bean-setting* and *Laudnum Bunches*, for example, are more likely to be specific to the Morris, while those such as *Rigs o'Marlow*, *Country Gardens*, *Constant Billy* and *Blue-Eyed Stranger* are song or dance tunes (or, in the case of *Constant Billy*, both). The original version of *Rigs o'Marlow*, according to Sharp, is an Irish song called 'Sandy Lent the Man his Mull', the first verse of which is:

Beauing, belling, dancing, drinking,  
 Breaking windows, damning, sinking,  
 Ever raking, never thinking,  
 Live the Rakes of Mallow

which, when compared to William Kimber's reminiscence of the Headington song:

When I go to Marlow Fair  
 With the ribbons in my hair  
 All the boys and girls declare  
 'Here comes the rigs of Marlow'

is decidedly more robust and fitting to the image of the Morris Dancer!

The choice of tunes for the Morris has been affected to no small extent by the choice of accompanying instrument. The pipe and tabor were the primary instruments for the Morris right into the first half of the nineteenth century. The combination of shrill pipe and loud, rhythmic drumming was ideal for the Morris. Keith Chandler remarks that. "In a very real sense the accuracy of the melody produced by the pipe was

subservient, even superfluous, to the rhythm produced by the drum".<sup>3</sup> And Joseph Trafford of Headington Quarry is quoted as commenting on how the drum had been played so that it "kept pretty well all the steps".<sup>4</sup> The range of the pipe is quite small, even with overblowing, and this will have restricted the repertoire of tunes – "the ordinary work-a-day scale of the taborer's pipe corresponds to the 12 or 13 uppermost notes of a 7 octave piano, or to the upper notes of a piccolo", according to Sir Francis Darwin in his address to a Society of Morris Dancers in 1914.

George Butterworth observed in 1912 that the pipe and tabor was musically "very interesting and picturesque, but requires good playing to be intelligible",<sup>5</sup> while William 'Jingy' Wells of Bampton wrote that in his opinion, "there were a lot could play the wit and dub a bit but there were only a few good players".<sup>6</sup> The 'really good players' included the likes of John Boughton of Stonesfield, Nelson of Steeple Aston (who was described by Butterworth as 'a magnificent player'), John Potter of Stanton Harcourt and Thomas Hedon of Fawler.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the pipe and tabor had become unfashionable as an accompaniment to country dancing for the gentry. The fiddle became the instrument of choice, not only because it was more widely accepted in society, but because its range and flexibility offered far more employment opportunities to its players. Gradually the fiddle began to replace the pipe and tabor in the accompaniment of morris dancing as fewer musicians took it up and pipe-and-taborers became harder to find. The decline of the pipe and tabor, and the introduction of the fiddle were not popular amongst the dancers. Sharp says that "Many old Morris men have told us that they gave up dancing when the pipe and tabor were superseded by the fiddle, because they found it impossible to dance to the latter instrument".<sup>7</sup>

By the 1840s, the fiddle began to be heard more and more with the Morris, and the pipe and tabor less. At first, attempts were made to replicate the rhythmic qualities of the tabor with a tambourine or a drum being played alongside the fiddle, but this, of course, required another musician, since the fiddler was unable to play both instruments at once as the pipe and taborer had done. Musicians were usually hired separately, so the overall earnings of the dancers would have been reduced by employing an extra musician, leading the fiddle-players to begin to develop a new style that would provide the necessary rhythm as well as the melody.

Keith Chandler suggests that, "Players such as Wells at Bampton, Bennett at Ilmington, John Robbins at Bidford, and Stephen Baldwin at Clifford's Mesne conformed to a widespread rural style in which rhythm was accentuated, often at the expense of tonal purity".<sup>8</sup> The 'new' sound was often described in contemporary accounts as 'squeaking fiddle', and an account from Abingdon in 1870 notes that the set danced "to the strains of the fiddle, from which, by the way, emanated very little music".<sup>9</sup> It's also worth pointing out that the use of free-reed instruments, such as concertina and melodeon, was quite rare; even though they were more accessible from about 1870 onwards, the only recorded examples are at Wheatley and Headington Quarry - both teams having concertina, Winchcombe - where concertina and melodeon were used, and Abingdon - where the melodeon was in use around the turn of the twentieth century.

Musicians were becoming scarce, and the practice of sharing musicians began to be seen towards the end of the nineteenth century. Joseph Woods played for both the Adderbury and Brackley sides, as well as North Aston and Dun's Tew, among many others. Other musicians who accompanied two or more sides were Stephen Dore of Finstock, Thomas Hall of Islip and John Potter of Stanton Harcourt. Although these

men played for a large number of sides between them, they tended to stick to a specific locality, and seldom intruded on each other's 'catchment area'.

Peripatetic musicians were welcomed by Morris sides, as they often brought new tunes with them, together with the dance steps that were dictated by the tune. In this way, not only tunes, but dances were spread around the Morris-dancing sets of the Cotswolds, leading to the duplication of dance- and tune-titles that are so familiar to Morris dancers today.

One example of this duplication is the tune, *Young Collins*. Lionel Bacon includes six versions in his 'Handbook of Morris Dances', of which three are from the area where Charles Benfield operated as a Morris musician: Bledington, Oddington and Longborough. Two of the others are from villages within easy reach of that area (Fieldtown [Leafield and Finstock], and Sherborne), and the last from Bidford.

Other obvious examples are *Princess Royal*, *The Black Joke*, *Shepherd's Hey*, *Old Woman Tossed Up*, *Maid of the Mill*, *Jockey to the Fair*, *Nutting Girl*, *Highland Mary*, *Constant Billy* and *The Blue-Eyed Stranger*. Many of these are song tunes, and would have been employed for dancing because of their popularity, and they would almost certainly have been spread around the villages where there were Morris-dancing sets by itinerant musicians such as Benfield, Woods, Dore, Potter, Hall, Joseph Woods of Deddington, Tomas Humphries of Hailey and Francis Cummins of Marston.

We owe a great deal to these musicians who provided the musical drive to the teams for whom they played, helped to create a common repertoire of dances (albeit with the variations of style peculiar to each team) and gave us the wealth of tunes in the Cotswold traditions that have been a source of inspiration to modern tune-makers in the Morris, such as those whose music appears in the preceding instalments of the 'New Tunes for the Morris' series.<sup>10</sup>

**Barry Goodman**  
**December 2009**

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<sup>1</sup> Forrest, J 'The History of Morris Dancing 1458-1750' pp307-308 (James Clark & Co. Cambridge, 1999)

<sup>2</sup> Sharpe, C & Macilwaine, H: 'The Morris Book' p36 (The Morris Ring, 1991)

<sup>3</sup> Chandler, K 'Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900' p174 (Folklore Society, 1993)

<sup>4</sup> Manning MSS, quoted in Chandler, K *ibid* p174

<sup>5</sup> Chandler, K *ibid* p174

<sup>6</sup> Wells MSS, quoted in Chandler, K *ibid* p174

<sup>7</sup> Sharpe, C & Macilwaine, H: *ibid* p34

<sup>8</sup> Chandler, K *ibid* pp179-180

<sup>9</sup> Abingdon Herald, 25 June 1870 quoted in Chandler, K *ibid* p179

<sup>10</sup> Morris Matters Vol. 27 No. 2; Vol.28 Nos. 1 & 2

## The True Origins of Morris

(as revealed by Long Lankin)

There are rumours that, having dealt with the Catholic Church and Freemasons, Dan Brown's next book will be an exposé of the Morris. So I thought I would get in first and publish my own research even though there are still some gaps. I do this despite the obvious risks to myself - The film 'Morris: A Life with Bells On' only hints at the dark truth that lies below the beer and beards image.

Current tradition is correct in thinking that Morris originated in Spain at the time of 'La Reconquista' and the expulsion of the Moors but it is much deeper than any of us previously thought. It was a holiday in Spain some years back and a chance meeting with some local dancers at an isolated chapel in the Cantabrian Mountains that started it.

Firstly the term 'Morris' does not come from the Spanish word 'Morisco' (meaning Moorish) but from 'morirse' - to die. It refers to a heretical Christian sect that protected an ancient secret (referred to as 'the tradition') and who were willing to die rather than reveal it to the Inquisition. The few survivors disguised themselves as itinerant dance groups and ultimately fled to England under the protection of the Templars. They settled in various places held by the Templars including Baldock and Sompting - both of which have Morris sides associated with them today. It also fits with the dates of the first references to Morris dancing in England.

Incidentally, it was because the Templars helped the *Morirse*, as they were called, to take their secret to England rather than France that the French King subsequently had the order suppressed. Yet even today this sacrifice is commemorated in the Morris and many sides have adopted white costumes in memory of the white surcoats of the Templars.

The *Morirse* brought with them to England their secret texts bound in leather made from the hide of a fighting bull - hence the 'Black Book' - which is still revered to this day. The location of the original book itself is uncertain but my researches pointed to a secret chamber beneath Cecil Sharp House, the crypt of Thaxted Church or the cellar of the Fox Inn, Oddington (which lies in the centre of the triangle linking Badby, Bampton and Upton-on Severn).

The sect was (and still is) organised into a strict hierarchy which is reflected in the names and true functions of the three Morris organisations. The *Ring* of elders is the innermost circle of the sect: a highly committed group of the *Morirse* who understand all the secrets of 'the tradition', only they are allowed to attend the darkest rituals. The next circle out are the *Federatii*, a larger group who - though not invited to the meetings of the *Ring* - nevertheless have access to some of the secrets. Their ancient role was to be the foot soldiers defending the elders and thus literally being willing to die. Finally there is the outermost circle through which people are recruited and which is generally known as the *Open Morirse*.

This much I discovered through observation, infiltration and the subtle bribing and questioning of some drunken Morris dancers during May Day celebrations in Hastings.

The breakthrough came with the discovery of an old top hat in a Cotswold inn. I long suspected the place because of the number of Morris events associated with it but, in order to protect others, I cannot divulge how the hat came into my possession. It was early in 2009 and suffice to say that there was a struggle and a number of the

elders were unfortunately killed, or died later of their injuries, in the ensuing fire and roof collapse. They could not keep it fully out of the papers and it was this that led the Morris Ring to put out the press release about its members dying off – the best lies contain a grain of truth. Of course the Ring will deny this event ever happened but then so they would.

Anyway, in the lining of the hat I found a copy of an ancient scroll that led me to the real secrets that lie within the Black Book. This is the secret of the tradition that the *Morirse* are sworn to protect - the dances themselves are a code known only to the true members of the sect but the purpose is clear – to venerate the Holy Grate in which the fire burned to keep the room warm at the Last Supper.

The stick dances are a reference to the wood that is collected and used as fuel while the hankie waving is a representation of the smoke rising from the fire itself. The names of the dances, *Old Woman Tossed Up*, *Balance the Straw*, *Shave the Donkey* are references to some of the sect's more arcane rituals which reach a peak through May starting with May Day itself and ending with the gathering at Thaxted.

However the real significance of these things finally fell into place when, at a gathering of the *Morirse*, there was a great debate about which way was "Up" meaning which way the dancers should be aligned. I realised that this could only be important if the dances had to be orientated in a particular direction to face some specific thing or place. I then understood that the figures of the dances themselves, like a bee's dance, contain directions to the last resting place of the Holy Grate itself.

If this is the case then the figure '8' as marked out by the Hey figure, which appears in many dances, seems to have a special significance. What that is I do not yet know but in Numerology it is associated, amongst other things, with Power, Wealth and Dictatorships. More worrying is that the three circles of the *Morirse* have recently started holding joint gatherings rather than separate ones. Does this mean that the time is getting close when the Holy Grate will be relit? What will happen when it is?

This is as far as I have got – The Black Book contains directions to the last resting place of the Holy Grate. Is it the original book or the Grate itself that is buried beneath Thaxted Church, the Fox Inn or Cecil Sharp House? I do not know and I cannot reveal anymore until I have completed the translation. The scroll is in a safe place and instructions have been left so that if anything happens to me the whole story will be published in the local newspaper.

What I do know is that the *Morirse Federatii* has been sent out to find me . . .

I have to break off now . . . I can hear the sound of distant Morris bells . . . they are coming . . .

**Long Lankin**  
**January 2010**

*(Ed: At this point Long Lankin's e-mail message broke off. I have been unable to contact him since)*

## Pub Morris



## Entertaining Adderbury with Sing and Stick

### Background

The Adderbury Morris sang both old songs and other popular town songs of the day, often executing some of their stick movements whilst they sang the choruses. They did this to keep the crowd quiet while they were resting themselves. Only sometimes they danced as they sang, but mostly it was stationary - hence the use of longer sticks than was customary for show. In the South Midlands sticks were to show precision, not strength, which then would have been unquestioned. Like those of many modern teams, performances were extended by any individual skills available, as they were performance-conscious. There had been three sides at one time.

Janet Blunt (1859-1950) lived in Adderbury from 1892. She, with the occasional help of friends Mrs Elliot Hobbs, Miss Kennedy and Miss D C Daking, collected songs and country dances from 1907-1919, the morris only over the 1916-18 period. Several copies of her manuscript were made at different times to pass to other people (such as to Cecil Sharp, who appears to have ignored it) that differ in details, so all have to be consulted. The Blunt collection was used by Michael Pickering for a thesis and a book 'Village Song and Culture: A study based on the Blunt Collection of Song from Adderbury, North Oxfordshire' published in 1982 by Croom Helm, London. This puts the material fairly into its context of period and locality. Keith Chandler considers the people involved in his books.<sup>1</sup>

The major informant on the morris was William 'Binx' Walton (1837-1919), at least a third generation morris dancer and last survivor, and a well-known local singer with his brother. The village orchestra was disbanded in his boyhood, but he sang treble in the church choir. He had a difficult teenage period as his father was convicted of two counts of theft in 1844 and died in 1848 soon afterwards, so William was in the workhouse until apprenticed to a bricklayer and builder. However he became a lifelong bell ringer from the age of 15. He married a girl from Coventry in his early 20s, when he was probably already a morris dancer, and he claimed that he was its leader from about 1860 to its end just before 1880. He had four brothers who were also morris dancers. In the 1881 census he was a builder and shopkeeper, in the later 1880s and 1890s he kept The Wheatsheaf public house with an attached shop in East Adderbury until 1899.

When Blunt first met Walton he was a vigorous and upright man full of dance, as can be seen in the Blunt photographs in the Vaughan Williams Library. He met Sharp and Karpeles in Hampstead, London on the mornings of 25 and 19 March 1919 through Janet Blunt arranging for him to visit a married daughter living in London. He died in that September aged 83. Sharp said he was "hale and hearty, rather blind although he can hear well, walk with a firm step and sing with a strong baritone voice". At first it was difficult for Cecil Sharp to get Walton's memory back and it was only by degrees that he was able to recall the different evolutions with their many technical details, despite Blunt's success over the previous three years. Blunt failed to distinguish between Foot-up, Foot-down and the Processionals.

In the 1950s and 60s the Sharp and Blunt manuscript material was rationalised for circulation to be consistent with the existing Sharp publications. From the 1970s the various slightly different copies of the Blunt manuscript were treated as independent descriptions, widening the interpretation possibilities. Unfortunately 1919 was in the period that Sharp appears to have pressurised informants (as at Abingdon, Brackley

and Wheatley) and his interpretations cannot be completely relied upon if there is alternative evidence.

## Style

Modern sides do not match the manuscript descriptions.

The handkerchiefs, half a yard (46 cm) a side, had two opposite corners tied and held between thumb and forefinger. The hand movements were not very stereotyped but varied considerably, although always within certain limits. The arms were held in front of the body, the elbows curved and held well away from the sides. The movements were "counter-twists" in rather large vertical circles or ellipses. On the first beat of a bar the movement was outwards going down and then up. Sharp elucidated that there could be a slight upward pull using mainly the wrists when the hands met dropping in front on the third beat. Modern sides say "apple and stalk" and less polite descriptions.

The sticks were held vertically in the middle with the hand at shoulder level and a little in front of the body. The tapping in choruses is normally "doubles".

o = odds strike evens, e = evens strike odds, x = clash tips.

*Hands Round* : clasp hands at waist level.

*Whole Hey* : the top two pairs pass right shoulders, turning the easy way into it.

*Shooting* : the dancers stood upright, as if firing a shotgun, which they would know all about, and never crouching, which would be dangerous to the person.

## Dances and songs

The following are based on transcriptions of the Cecil Sharp and Janet Blunt manuscripts and not on previous publications such as Lionel Bacon's book.<sup>2</sup> The choice and order of figures was somewhat variable.

At least one verse of each is given to supplement the fragments shown in Bacon, which were obtained from William Walton via Sharp and Blunt.

### **BLUE BELL OF SCOTLAND**

Doubles stick hold

o o e e / o o e e / o e o e / **x** - x - // repeated.

Pattern: (1) and (4) partners; (2) and (5) middles up; (3) and (6) middles down.

If they are to be done twice, it needs at least 6 figures.

*Written in 1800 and made famous by Mrs Dora Jordon*

Oh where and oh where is your Highland Laddie gone?

(Oh! where, tell me where, is your Highland Laddie gone?)

Oh where and oh where is your Highland Laddie gone?

He's gone to fight the French(foe) for King George upon the throne,

(He's gane to fight for George our King, and left me a' alane)

(He's gone with streaming banners where noble deeds are done)

And it's oh! in my heart I wish him safe at Home.

Oh where and oh where did(does) your Highland Laddie dwell?  
 (Oh! where, tell me where, did your Highland Laddie dwell?)  
 Oh where and oh where did your Highland Laddie dwell?  
 He dwelt in merry Scotland, at the sign of the Blue Bell,  
 (He dwelt in bonnie Scotland, where blooms the sweet bluebell)  
 (He dwells in merry Scotland, where the bluebells sweetly smell)  
 And it's oh! in my heart I love my Laddie well.

### ***BRIGHTON CAMP (the Girl I left behind me)***

Doubles stick hold

o e o e / o e o e / o e o e / o - x - // repeated.

*Tune dated to circa 1758*

I'm lonesome since I cross'd the hills, and o'er the moors that's sedgy,  
 Such heavy thoughts my mind doth fill, since parting from my Betsy.  
 Searching for one that's fine and gay, and several to remind me,  
 Blest be the hours I passed away with the girl I left behind me

The hour I remember well and constancy shall prove me,  
 For what I felt there's none can tell, when first she own'd she loved me.  
 But now I'm bound to Brighton Camp, kind heaven then pray mind me,  
 And send me home, safe back again to the girl I left behind me.

### ***(COME LANDLORD FILL THE) FLOWING BOWL***

Doubles stick hold; normally they sang the figures without dancing

o e o e / o e x - / o e o e / o e x - / o e o e / o e x - / o / e o e o / x - x - //

Pattern: can use the different striking patterns inspired eg by *Blue Bell of Scotland*.

*Words based on Beaumont and Fletcher's drinking song in "Bloody Brother"*

Come, landlord fill the flowing bowl, until it does(doth) run over,  
 Come, landlord fill the flowing bowl, until it does(doth) run over,  
 For tonight we'll merry (merry) be, for tonight we'll merry (merry) be,  
 For tonight we'll merry (merry) be, (and) tomorrow we'll (give over) be sober.

*(parody – source Adderbury Womens Institute & possibly Janet Blunt)*

Come, ladies! Fill the flowing urn, until it does boil over.  
 Come fill our social cups in turn, and hand the cakes moreover.  
 For today we'll merry be, cheerfully we'll drink our tea,  
 Hand the buns and cakes, that we may find ourselves in clover.

**HAPPY MAN**

Four Part Song - doubles stick hold; normally sang and tapped sticks without dancing. Would clash across 'to close' at end of lines.

(Blunt) o e o e o e ..... x

(Bath) o o e e / o e e / o e o / e x - / e o o / e o o / e o e / x - - // repeated, as less boring.

Step: in 3/4 time - 1 2 hop, run with heavy step on first beats; pause on 4th step (etc) with weight on both feet (like "Jenny Jones"). End dance with a repeat chorus performed faster.

*Second line adjusted to fit the given tune. Song always associated with Solomon Lynes of Adderbury, although he died a century before it was collected from William Walton by Janet Blunt in 1917. It was also collected by Alfred Williams so could not have been written by Solomon Lynes.*

How happy's that man, that's free from all care,

That loves to make merry, that loves to make merry, o'er a drop of good beer.

With his pipe and his friends puffing hours away,

Singing song after song, till he hails the new day.

He can laugh, dance and sing, and smoke without fear,

Be as happy as a king, till he hails the New Year.

How happy is the man that's free from all strife,

He envies no other, he envies no other, but travels through life.

Our seamen of old, they fear not their foes,

They throw away discord, they throw away discord, & to mirth they're inclined.

**LADS A BUNCHUM**

In the 'High' hold the sticks in both hands, stand pointing left shoulders to each other, evens facing up, odds facing down, and raise sticks well above heads horizontally and parallel to the files. When striking, the dancer makes an overhead movement pivoting right hand over left, so as to strike down with his tip on to his partner's butt.

*As collected by Fred Hamer from William Walton's grandchildren.*

Oh dear mother what a fool I be, here are 6 young fellows come a courting me,

Three are blind and the others can't see, Oh dear mother what a fool I be.

**POSTMAN'S KNOCK**

Two Part Song - doubles stick hold

Adderbury tapped only; the Wootton Morris danced foot-up and half-gyp, foot-up with singing, stand facing and tapped without singing, ad lib.

e o e o / e o x - // four times through. Note start with an "e".

Because of the tune stretching in the last bar of the sticking to make the B music nine bars long, it is often stretched further by adding two more strong beats for a tenth bar and doing two extra taps. End dance with a repeat chorus performed faster.

*Words by L Thornton , tune by W Wrighton*

What a wonderful man the Postman is! as he hastens from door to door.

What a medley of news his hands contain, for high, low, rich and poor.

In many a face, he joy doth(can) trace, in as many a grief he can see,

As(when) the door is opened to his loud rantan(raptap), and his quick delivery.

Ev'ry morn as true as the clock, somebody hears the Postman's knock.

Ev'ry morn as true as the clock, somebody hears the Post - man's knock.

### **ROAST BEEF OF OLD ENGLAND**

Doubles stick hold; they only sang and tapped before the club dinner; when outside they might dance. This was a typical formal song before army mess dinners.

o e o e / x - x - / o e o e / x - x - // repeated.

Collected with tapping through the A musics as well.

*Words by H Fielding , tune by R Leveridge*

When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food,

It ennobled our hearts and enrich'd our blood,

Our soldiers were brave, and our courtiers good,

Oh! the roast beef of old England, and oh! for old England's roast beef.

Oh! the roast beef of old England, and oh! for old England's roast beef.

Our fathers of old were robust, stout, and strong,

And kept open house, with good cheer all day long,

Which made their plump tenants rejoice in this song,

### **(SWEET) JENNY JONES**

Alternately doubles and singles stick hold

Figure order as *Washing Day*. Sung on the last foot-up in the last chorus.

Collected both in 3/4 and apparently in 6/8 time.

in 3/4 o e o / e o e / o e o / e x - // twice

in 6/8 o e o e / o e o e / o e o e / o e x - //

Step : in 3/4 time pause on 4th step (etc) with weight on both feet.

*From Moffat's "Minstrelsy of Wales", and variants from Cliff and Sylvia Hayes' "Looking back at ...Llangollen" and "The Music and Musical Instruments of Wales and its Bards and Minstrels with song of "Jenny Jones"...". Words attributed to comedian-actor Charles James Mathews (1776-1835) to a harp tune known as "Cader Idris" composed by John Parry (1776-1856) in 1804.*

My name's(is) Edward(Ned) Morgan, I live at Llangollen,  
 The vale of St. Tafyd(David), the flow'r of North Wales;  
 My father and mother, too, live at Llangollen!  
 Good truth! I was born in that(the) sweetest of vales!  
 Yes indeed! and all countries so(and) foreign and beautiful,  
 That little valley I prize far above;  
 For indeed in my heart I do love that Llangollen,  
 And sweet Jenny Jones, too, in truth I do love.

### **WASHING DAY**

Alternately doubles and singles stick hold; danced for as many as available.  
 Figure order: foot-up; half-gip; sticks across diagonals in fours; foot-down.  
 o / e o e o / e o e o / e o e o / e - x // repeated.

*Tune: There's nae Luck about the House*

*From Palmer's Touch on the Times : words in a broadside printed by Pitts.*

The sky with clouds was overcast, the rain began to fall,  
 My wife she beat the children and raised a pretty squall.  
 She bade me with a frowning look to get out of the way;  
 The devil a bit of comfort's there upon a washing day.

For it's thump, thump, scold, scold, thump, thump away;

The devil a bit of comfort's there upon a washing day.

### **(WITH) JOCKEY TO THE FAIR**

*sung by Bessie Aris to Janet Blunt 1907.*

Twass on the morn of sweet May Day, when nature painted all things gay,  
 Taught birds to sing, and lambs to play, and Jenny had promised away she'd run,  
 With Jockey to the Fair, with Jockey to the Fair.

He rose up early in the morn and merrily tripped it o'er the lawn,  
 His Sunday coat the youth put on, for Jenny had said, away she'd run,  
 With Jockey to the Fair, with Jockey to the Fair.

He tapped the window "Haste my dear!" and Jenny impatient cried "Who's there?"  
 'Tis I, my love, there's no one near, so haste, my dear, and away you'll run,  
 With Jockey to the Fair, with Jockey to the Fair.

Probably only to B music of morris tune. 'Jockey' is equivalent to a ploughboy.

**BEAUX OF LONDON CITY:**

*sung by Bessie Aris to Janet Blunt 1 1907*

My father's a hedger and ditcher, my mother does nothing but spin,  
And I am a neat little stitcher and the money comes slowly in.

Oh! Dear! What shall become of me? Oh! Dear! What shall I do?

There's nobody comes to marry me and nobody comes to woo.

Last night the dogs did bark, I went to the gate to see,  
Every lass has her spark, but there's never one for me.

**Roy Dommatt**  
**August 2009**

*Ed: These updated notes were originally part of a manuscript given out by Roy at a Sidmouth workshop on the influence of musical instruments on the morris. He went through the collectors' papers to find that what they actually wrote down about the dances was never as simple as assumed, was not always right and was often modified it to the 'standard' form when publishing. Some of the points are as shown in Bacon's 'Black Book' but are not always followed. Sources included Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Janet Blunt and Cecil Sharp manuscript sources, song books in local libraries and private collections, particularly Tony Munday's. There are many variants in the published words, indicated by the brackets above. Freestanding words are possible extra words. Ones without a space separation are alternative words. A bracketed and inset line is an alternative to the line immediately above, but repeats are assumed to be obvious. There are other unrelated sets of words to these tunes, for example, there are 4 families of words to The Girl I Left Behind Me.*

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<sup>1</sup> See for example 'Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles, The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660-1900' by Keith Chandler (Folklore Society, 1993)

<sup>2</sup> 'A Handbook of Morris Dances' by Lionel Bacon (published by the Morris Ring, 1974) – aka 'The Black Book'

## The Instep Research Team

The Instep Research Team (IRT) was formed in 1981 by members of the Newcastle Cloggies (a clog and step dance team from Newcastle upon Tyne, with a view to conducting research into clog dancing in the North East of England. The 6 founding members of the IRT had been surprised to discover that little was known of clog dancing in this area, and, as they were all living on Tyneside at the time, resolved to find out more.

Twenty-nine years later the IRT is still going strong, and although the original membership has somewhat changed, two founder members are still working with the team. We now have over 10 researchers, spread all over the UK and even one from the University of Limerick in Ireland. Our areas of interest have expanded to cover step and clog dancing throughout the UK and abroad wherever UK clog and step dancing has migrated. Thus individual researchers have interests as varied as Cape Breton stepping and the clog dances of New Zealand.

Many hundreds of steps have been recovered from Devon in the South West to Northumberland in the North and the Hebrides in the North West. And surprisingly material just goes on becoming available. A recently as 2007, 2 members of the Team, working with a local researcher, Penny Smith, recorded the steps of Dot Murphie, a traditional clog dancer from Liverpool whose material had never been formally notated. Since then Dot has become something of a celebrity, appearing more than once on BBC radio talking about her dancing experiences.

The Team originally concentrated on collecting from living traditional dancers, many of whom were caught by the Team just in time to ensure that their steps were not lost. By this process individual members have built up their expertise to such an extent that the IRT undoubtedly represents probably the largest group undertaking fieldwork in traditional dance in the UK.

In addition to its fieldwork activities, the Team have also undertaken research into various manuscript collections and much material has been made available which had hitherto not seen the light of day. In 2006 for example, one member worked with the late Barry Callaghan on a definitive history of the Sherry family, which was eventually issued on DVD by the EFDSS.<sup>1</sup>

Of course the first difficulty faced by the Team was that there existed no accurate way of recording steps in the field. No video camera in 1981! Working together the Team devised and published Newcastle Notation, a standardised notation system, which is still used not only by the team but by other dancers and researchers. From the outset the IRT realised that a medium was required to disseminate the steps and material collected and so the Newcastle Series was founded to publish the fruits of the Team's researches. To date almost 40 titles have been published and several more are in preparation.

Since the advent of video, the Team has also taped traditional performers and has through Garland Films ([www.garlandfilms.co.uk](http://www.garlandfilms.co.uk)), produced several films, most recently an archival DVD of the Liverpool dancer and entertainer Bert Bowden, utilising video tapes shot back in the 1980s by Madeleine Smith. And of course more are in preparation.

The original aim of the Team was to conduct research of the very highest standard and to make the results of that research easily available to the dancing world. In 2010 for the first time the Team will set up its own website which will not only feature the Team's publications, but also allow the presentation of material, both written and on film, which is not - in itself - suitable for publication. We thus hope to make available for the first time a selection of field notes and recordings of clog and step dancers.

This year, again for the first time, the team will host a clog and step symposium in Gateshead. The brainchild of current Chairman Ed Wilson (one of our founder members), the aim of the event is to provide a platform for the traditional dance world, and a wider academic audience, to develop research methods and techniques and share skills and experiences.

We shall also use the meeting as an opportunity to plan for the future. One area of continued interest for the team is the history and steps of the Ellwood family from Stanley, Co. Durham. Individual members of the team have collected material both from the family and their pupils since before the inception of the IRT itself, however the sheer volume of steps (several hundred) and the complexity of their story, spanning well over 125 years, was such that the research remains unfinished. We hope, commencing in 2010, to run a major project, involving all dozen or so members of the Team, working co-operatively to produce the definitive history of this family and their steps.

The team is always interested in any clog and step material from any source, and effectively acts, with the help of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, as a clearing house for information. We should thus be very pleased to hear from anyone with any information. And of course if you're interested in research.....!

**Chris Metherell**  
**January 2010**

[chris@metherell.org.uk](mailto:chris@metherell.org.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> B. Callaghan & C. Metherell, Sam Sherry. A Memorial Compilation, London: EFDSS (2007), DVD and DVD-ROM.

## Dancing in the Streets: a History of Collective Joy

Barbara Ehrenreich, American journalist and activist, followed her 1997 study of humanity's tendency to aggression<sup>1</sup> with this masterly sweep through the history of the opposite tendencies, and it is a *tour de force*. She traces the universal desire to 'lose' oneself in what she terms 'ecstatic dance' – moving with others to a rhythm, disguising and decorating one's form and face – from pre-historic times (evidence from cave-paintings, and from pre-literate societies before their destruction by European invaders), through the attempts at control throughout almost all recorded history, to the 'rock rebellion' of the 1960s and modern outbreaks at sports events, and on the way takes in – and takes on – politics, religion, military technology and medicine.

She analyses evidence from all over the world: travellers' tales of the communities 'discovered' by European explorers, and reports of anthropologists studying such communities in the twentieth century; writings of the ancients and of the early Christians; the verbal and physical battles between Puritans and revellers in Europe and, two centuries later, in Arabia; reports of enslaved peoples in the New World; nineteenth-century intellectuals' disdain for their countrymen's excesses at Carnival. Her conclusions confirm what we Morris dancers have discovered for ourselves: that dance – and the sense of community that the Morris brings with it – gives to one's life a solid bedrock of content which most people in Western society seem to be missing.

We learn that some form of communal dancing appears to have been found in ancient communities wherever records are found, and that the rise of complex, hierarchical societies led in every case to attempts to suppress the riotous aspects of these 'rites'. The earliest examples quoted of such repression are among the Hebrews as they choose the god Yahweh above their former idols, and in the Greek states, where 'the old ecstatic rituals' went underground as 'mystery cults' as early as the sixth century BC. Ehrenreich is necessarily Euro-centric at this point, since such early written records do not survive from the Americas, and are much harder to access from central and eastern Asia, but she does mention China in the first century BC 'replacing its charismatic and festive indigenous religion with the cool rationality of Confucianism'.

She quotes and analyses the arguments of historians and sociologists which tend to agree that such changes were due to pressures upon states to organise to defend themselves from outside attack. It seems quite significant that the Romans, the conquerors of almost all their known world, were blind to the joys of dancing. Ehrenreich quotes Cornelius Nepos, writing in the first century BC '...by Roman convention, music is unbecoming to a person of prominence, and dancing is thought to be positively vicious', and this became the attitude of ruling classes everywhere as dancing was driven from churches and temples, and then from churchyards and from the village green.

Things only became worse as the development of the crossbow in China and the gun in Europe led to a need for trained, well-drilled soldiers, and the rise of capitalism and industrialisation to a requirement that workers develop habits of punctuality and sobriety. The frequent, long-drawn-out festivities of peasant society were no longer appropriate, and a person's time was no longer his or her own to enjoy at will. Ehrenreich reports on the 'epidemic of melancholy' or depression that was reported in 'the European world' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, pointing the finger of blame squarely at the prohibition of dancing and festivity and the general attitude that enjoying oneself is sinful. And she looks at the attempts by those in charge to

provide a substitute, from church parades and Fascist rallies to the replacement of village football with spectator sports. The problem with all such events, of course, is that the majority of 'participants' are in fact merely spectators, so that now 'we live in a culture almost devoid of opportunities to 'lose ourselves' in communal festivities or to distinguish ourselves in any arena outside of work'.

Just a few cities now celebrate Carnival with all the gusto of traditional festivity. Immigrant communities have brought their celebrations to European cities – the Notting Hill Carnival springs to mind – and there are survivals of communal festivities such as the Padstow May Day, but what a pity it is that most Westerners view these as something quite alien to themselves. Ehrenreich's thesis is that the screaming pop fans of the 1960s were breaking away from the conformist culture of their upbringing, and the excesses of crowd-surfing and stage-storming at modern concerts indicate that she is quite correct – the crowd wants to be part of it.

This book is replete with insights into every aspect of this fascinating subject, but I was disappointed that the author sets her endnotes out in scientific style, simply quoting the page number of the work which she is quoting. Often, the words she quotes are themselves quoted in the work she cites – I wanted to know where they came from originally, but it seems I'll have to read through the works themselves to find out.

It probably came as no surprise to you recently to read reports about the 'discovery' of the benefits, mental and physical, of singing together – and Ehrenreich quotes Richard Browne reporting just the same discovery in 1729, in his 'Medicina Musica', and recommending regular doses of dancing, preferably 'an Hour or more at a convenient time after every Meal'. Robert Burton in his 'Anatomy of Melancholy', first published in 1621, went further and recommended 'Let them freely feast, sing and dance, have their Puppet-plays, Hobby-horses, Tabers, Crowds, Bag-pipes...'. Right on! Hobby-horses through the National Health Service!

Apparently Nietzsche considered the ecstatic dance of the ancient Greeks to be the releasing of the human soul from the 'horror of existence' into the 'mystical Oneness' of rhythmic unity. Less dramatically, the reminiscences of historian William H. McNeill's of the effects of 'the prolonged movement in unison' of military drill seem to me to sum up a lot of the joys of Morris dancing: 'A sense of pervasive well-being...; more specifically, a strange sense of personal enlargement, a sort of swelling out, becoming bigger than life...'. Dance is a wonderful thing, as Ehrenreich has triumphantly demonstrated.

**Shirley Dixon**  
**January 2010**

*'Dancing in the Streets' by Barbara Ehrenreich is published in paperback by Granta (2008 : ISBN 978 1 89708 008 0)*

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<sup>1</sup> 'Blood Rites: origins and history of the passions of war' (Virago, 1998 paperback: ISBN 1 86049 569 9)

## The New Zealand Morris Tour

Need a bit of fun in your life? Then you can't do better than take a trip to New Zealand (NZ) and join the annual Morris Tour. Despite the recession many folk still have plans to visit "God's own paradise" to sample the beautiful and varied scenery, get close to wildlife and enjoy a variety of outdoor activities.

Lasting about a week over the New Year period, the Morris tour gives you an opportunity to do all of these and lots of dancing and socialising too. The tour takes place in a different part of the country each year, and is hosted by the nearest Morris side or a specially formed committee. Invitations are warmly extended to the wider Morris family, so you will find the odd Brit there and many an Aussie. Some come as individuals, some as complete sides, some with families, some to escape them.

The origins of the tour lie back 30 years when a group of young ex-pats with families decided to get together for a cheap holiday fun time and to do some dancing. They booked accommodation in motor camps, (a great idea that I wish was more available in the UK). These camp sites have cabins with bunks for 4 to 8 people, separate shower and kitchen blocks and a dining and recreation Hall. I have happy memories of one near Picton at the north of the South Island where the cabins were all old, converted railway carriages. Other venues have been boarding schools (having a small population and terrain that is often difficult to travel, there are many boarding schools in NZ), or Marae, which are Maori meeting and accommodation sites. As well as sports fields and gardens there is often a swimming pool on site, though at one place in the Northland the pool was officially closed to us. Having danced our socks off with an informal evening ceilidh, and it still being very hot near midnight, we decided a refreshing swim was needed. The tide was way out so we stealthily climbed the fencing around the pool and slid into the cooling water. When the caretaker came along on his rounds he was surprised to see by his torchlight, a group of people silently swimming up and down the pool in formation....

That Tour included dancing in the tourist towns of the area, a boat cruise around the Bay of Islands with lunch and a Lichfield tradition workshop on a beach, visits to the oldest European buildings in the country and the historic site of Waitangi where the treaty between the Maori and Europeans was signed in the 1880s and the modern state of NZ began to take shape.

Another Tour in the Wairarapa included a visit to Stonehenge Aotearoa. This is lifesize, cast in concrete, but aligned for the southern hemisphere constellations and mountains. It has amazing acoustics. Although much of it is of course open air, stand just inside the ring and you can hear a whisper from the middle. Move a couple of feet outside and you can't hear a thing. You can't do that beside the A330! Nor can you dance inside it as we did. Being a special group, we also had a wonderful illustrated talk from its founder about the original, the orientation of the Southern hemisphere one and an explanation of why, even if you believe in "Your Stars" in the newspapers, they are all out of synch with your actual birthdate. Also on that tour we visited the National Kiwi Sanctuary at Mount Bruce, a mushroom farm, a cheesery, (their word not mine) a brewery and several wineries; the Wairarapa being a notable wine producing area. Dancing and free samples at each.

Each tour has a theme and that one was 'A Night at the Opera, A Day at the Races', so on one baking hot day we went along to a local Race Day. Deep in the country it was a chance to see how locals enjoy themselves on a day off from farming. Lots of

picnics, meeting up with family and friends, watching and maybe winning a dollar or two on the trotting races, finding a needle (well a prize) in a haystack and for us a performance of mass dances in front of a packed grandstand to great applause. We



**Massed dance inside Stonehenge Aotearoa in the region north of Wellington called the Wairarapa (photo: Lynne Pointer)**

made the front page of the local paper next day. You won't find that sort of experience on NZ tours advertised in the glossy pages nor if, like so many, you spend your time in your own little hired camper van. You may see the scenery but will you actually talk to a wide variety of locals?

The format for the week is usually gather on the first night and catch up over a meal and a drink. For the next 5 days it is out and about visiting attractions and dancing. Everywhere people will stop to look and ask about what is going on; Asian visitors are usually convinced they are watching something from Hungary. Pub or picnic lunch then more of the same in the afternoon. The timetable is laid back so there is always time for morning coffee or afternoon tea or a swim or..... The evening meal together back at base is provided by outside catering and then informal workshops in the evening, video of the day or previous tours, lots more drinking etc etc. Musicians never grumble and are always ready to play for one or more evening workshops. If they don't know the tune then a suitable alternative is found. Be prepared to give a workshop on your UK side's dances if you like.

Two of the nights are special ones with the (usually) New Year's Eve being themed fancy dress. The Night at the Opera/Day at the Races produced everything from dodgy racetrack spivs to Ball Gowns. The Theme of 'The Devil Made me do it' had one couple in strategically placed fig leaves and big smiles, he being tempted by an apple, while elsewhere a bishop was consorting with a Folies Bergere dancer and a complete family of Tasmanian tigers danced.

For a visitor the fancy dress is no problem as there are many charity shops everywhere. I found an 'evening dress' for couple of dollars that turned out to be a one-off from one of NZ's more esoteric designers, and I then sold on at a profit. This is also the night for the special skits/turns. It may be that the host side has chosen an obscure or barely notated dance from Lionel Bacon's Black Book and every side presents their interpretation of it for judging. Prizes are awarded for almost anything but technical merit.

Another night will be the Ale, with sides in kit, giving demonstration dances and showing the results of the workshops. At this night Official Presents are given to the

hosts. Think Tolkien's 'mathoms' here, Terry Wogan's 'example of the Taiwanese clock maker's art', or the dustiest corners of that old junk shop. If flying out with Emirates then the souvenir shop in Dubai airport should provide you with plenty of choice. The more inappropriate the better.

"But what about the dancing?" I hear you cry. Well each side has their own repertoire of tradition(s), but a common set of Tour Dances is decided on in advance. Everyone is encouraged to join in, so mixed sets will occur. Take your own kit or get a white shirt, white skirt/trousers/black knee lengths from a charity shop and a loan of the silver and black baldricks specially made for the tour. The dances are publicised in advance in Sphere, the NZ/Oz morris magazine (email [www.rodmack@clear.net.nz](mailto:www.rodmack@clear.net.nz) for details). Usually included are some Bampton, a Border dance, a garland dance and a



**Glyn Church (asleep) from New Plymouth), Mark and Jude Hutton from Wellington. Picture taken in the museum at Featherstone. (photo: Lynne Pointer)**

new one each year. These are taught on the first evening of the tour. These folk get together because they love to dance, they take it seriously with the aim of giving pleasure to onlookers but also to the dancers. Throughout people will come up to you and ask "Are you getting enough dancing?" or "Come around the back of the café and we'll go through it so you can join in next time". You will be warmly welcomed as, I am glad to say, was a kiwi friend who visiting the UK went along to Mr Wilkin's Shilling near Bath. An East Anglian side in contrast would not even let her join in a practice, although she knew a lot of their dances.

## Practicalities

The cost for a week of fun is very reasonable; usually including accommodation, all breakfasts, evening meals and maybe a lunch or two, entrance to attractions. Take your own booze. You need to book in advance and this can be done via Sphere. A seat in a car is also needed to get around. You can easily Rent-a-Wreck for your visit or advertise for a lift in Sphere or on the NZ morris dancing website. Go on, do it. Not only will you have great fun but you will meet some of the friendliest people ever.

For the 30<sup>th</sup> Tour we all went to Tasmania at the invitation of Longford Morris and had a wonderful time in that beautiful part of the world. It included vintage steam trains, breweries, wineries, wallabies, wombats and Tasmanian devils, sea horses, old colonial houses and estates, venomous snakes, ice creameries, painted cows, wasabi cheese, platypus, echidna, gold mines, a town of murals.....

**Lynne Pointer**  
**January 2010**

*For 2013 there is a plan to bring the Tour to England from late July to early August to take in Warwick and Sidmouth Festivals, and Cotswold villages. It would be great if we could give them the warm welcome they give to us when we are over there. Any one with suggestions for suitable accommodation venues please get in touch with the author, Lynne Pointer via [lzanskar@aol.com](mailto:lzanskar@aol.com)*

## **Natural and Wild (The Albion Band)**

### **Rockin Barn Dance (The Albion Dance Band)**

Released together, these 2 CDs feature Ashley Hutchings with a couple of his many Albion Band incarnations, these 2 dating from the late 1980s.

'Natural and Wild' is a live recording from 1987 of music commissioned by urban wildlife campaigner Chris Baines to accompany his BBC TV series 'The Wild Side of Town'. All the music featured in this live recording also appeared on the accompanying album released at the time 'The Wild Side of Town', and apart from Ashley there is a fine musical line-up including Phil Beer, and Cathy Lesurf on vocals. Here though I must make a confession – I bought this album myself at the time on the strength of the Albion Band name, but although appreciating some of the musicianship on it, rather quickly found it all just a little bit too serious and eco-friendly, and in places somewhat twee. I haven't seen my original copy for 20 years (gone into the same black hole as several sets of morris hankies) but listening to the music again some 20 years later I find my opinion hasn't changed. However if you care about the environment, enjoy the Albion Band, and don't have the original 'Wild Side of Town' you may like this.

The second CD of the pair is 'Rockin Barn Dance', another live recording from 1988 from the Albion Dance Band. For this, Ashley had assembled another great line up of musicians, including amongst others Phil Beer, Simon Care, Pete Zorn and Polly Bolton on some of the vocals. The album consists of material the Albion Dance Band was playing at the time, much of which has appeared already on studio CDs and includes some lively dance tunes interspersed with some songs. A much more cheerful and lively listen than Natural and Wild, but would-be purchasers should be warned that most tracks feature Ashley calling the accompanying dance over the top of the music for the first couple of times through for the dancing audience present - this might grate for some people after a while. One track also features Sid Kipper as guest caller telling a meandering story and then calling a meandering dance – much as I like Sid Kipper, this is just about OK the first time but it's reach for the skip button after that. Despite these niggles though, this is a very listenable album featuring a fine Albion line-up.

**Malcolm Major**  
**January 2010**

*Natural and Wild (TECO155) and Rockin Barn Dance (TECO154) are released on Talking Elephant on January 25 2010 ([www.talkingelephant.com](http://www.talkingelephant.com) or phone them on 0208 301 2828).*

## Cecil Sharp's Diaries On-line

Cecil James Sharp (1859 - 1924) was England's most prolific folk music and dance collector. November 22 2009 marked his birth date and 150th Anniversary. In celebration of his achievements and the impact he continues to have on folk music to this day, EFDSS have announced the launch of his only surviving personal diaries. The first of the series of diaries was launched online on November 22 - it is planned to add a full, annotated transcription in time for Sharp's next birthday in 2010. Written between 1915 and 1918 they include descriptions of his collecting experiences in the Appalachian Mountains of North America. From the time of his first serious collecting experience in a vicarage garden in August 1903, until his death on Midsummer Eve 1924, he amassed a total of 4977 tunes in England and North America, many of which were published in various forms in order to promote and revive what was perceived to be a fading part of traditional culture. He was not alone by any means, following as he did the likes of Lucy Broadwood, Frank Kidson and Sabine Baring-Gould to name a few. However, his mission to revive the music placed him very much at the forefront of a movement which has attracted a great deal of attention over the past thirty years, but for which many primary sources have been difficult to access.

How on earth did this asthmatic, 56 year-old vegetarian survive in the heat and altitudes of North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee and West Virginia, along with his young assistant, Maud Karpeles? How did he feel when he heard the news of the death of many of the young men of his English Folk Dance Society demonstration team in the trenches of the Great War? And what did it mean to collect 1600 tunes from people he considered direct descendants and carriers of British cultural traditions? Thanks to Cecil Sharp's grandchildren, Briony Jose and Richard Sharp, for allowing EFDSS to host the diaries online; to the managers of his estate, Bird & Bird, for helping us find them; to Chris Roche and The Shanty Crew for sponsoring this project.

### **Mary Neal Inaugural Lecture**

Friday 5 February 2010, 7pm. Free, booking essential

The English Folk Dance and Song Society is proud to present the annual Mary Neal Lecture to celebrate the work of Mary Neal CBE (1860-1944) and the continuing inspiration of her legacy for the participatory arts today.

In this inaugural lecture Neal's great-great niece, Lucy Neal OBE, draws on Mary Neal's work as a social reformer, suffragette and instigating spirit behind the English Folk Song and Dance Revival, to explore how traditions of song and dance are re-invented, and how we create our culture through participating in it. Mary Neal's pioneering work with the Somerstown sewing girls and children of the Espérance Club is widely recognised as a precedent of radical participatory arts practice. For the young people involved, social and cultural change went hand in hand. What do we learn from the past about the transformative power of the creative experience? Mary Neal's spirituality and connection to the natural world provide inspiration for looking at the value of collaboration and the future role of the participatory arts in an ecological age. For more information call 020 7485 2206 [info@efdss.org](mailto:info@efdss.org)