



Morris Matters,
Volume 4.,
No. 1.

CONTENTS

DOVER'S GAMES

For two hundred years, Dover's Games attracted literally thousands of people, from "Spruce lads dressed up in their Sunday clothes" to "roughs and undesirables from as far away as the Black Country". Roy Dommett quotes from contemporary accounts of the games to describe their long history.

5

THE MORRIS AT ALVESCOT

With the First World War, there came a temporary break in the long history of the Bampton Morris. However some of the dancers became involved in the formation of a new team at Alvescot for a few years. Keith Chandler describes some of his recent research.

9

LONGSWORD

Yorkshireman Trevor Stone reports on the growth of interest in this local dance tradition, and gives notice of a Longsword festival later this year.

12

DUTCH ELM MORRIS

.....by Peter Lord.

14

MUSIC WORKSHOP

News of another musicians' weekend, this time in Langley, Birmingham.

16

CURE FOR A SICKNESS

Tim Radford reflects on the joys and frustrations of running a morris side, and suggests some solutions to the problems he discovered.

18

REVIEW

"Morris in the Cotswolds in recent years", a talk by Roy Dommett at Sharp House last December.

21

MAILBAG

22

EDITORIAL

The recent package sent out by the English Folk Dance and Song Society includes a separately printed open letter from John Dowell (director of Sidmouth Folk Festival) couched in such positive and demanding terms as is very rare coming from that body. It is a call to arms (or rather pen) to all those thousands of people currently involved in folk activities to write to the Society giving their views on how it can best adapt to the very different folk scene that has evolved in recent years.

Many hundreds of dancers in morris sides up and down the country are not card-carrying members of the EFDSS in spite of the fact that they are among the most passionate 'folkies' around. It seems that leading members of the Society have been asking themselves why this is so - why has the growth of interest in English country bands, festivals women dancing the morris, and so on, not been reflected in a growth in membership?

It must be depressing to run an organisation which aspires to represent the interests of the folk movement on a national scale but whose membership amounts to an ever-dwindling minority in a vital and blossoming new scene. The NEC of the EFDSS does NOT want this to be the

future of the Society; but to change, and to change in the right way - it needs YOUR views. Try to see John Dowell's letter and reply to it, or if you can't - write anyway, saying how you feel the EFDSS works for you now and how it doesn't. More important, say how you think it might change to suit your needs better.

The address is:-

'CRISIS EFDSS'
Cecil Sharp House,
2 Regents Park Rd.,
London NW1 7AY,

and remember, you don't have to be a member to put forward your views on the subject.

Advertising rates:-

$\frac{1}{4}$ page £2
 $\frac{1}{2}$ page £3.50
1 page £6 (half A4 size)

Subscription rates:-

£1.50 per year (4 issues). Cheques payable to Morris Matters and sent to 24, Alexandra Rd., Windsor, Berks. SL4, 1HN.

This issue of Morris Matters was written and compiled by Jill Griffiths, Jenny Joyce, Beth Neill and Alan Whear for Windsor Morris, 24 Alexandra Rd., Windsor, Berks.

A Brief History

of

Dover's Games

ROY DOMMETT

Robert Dover was born 17 years after Shakespeare in 1582, son of John Dover of Great Ellingham, Norfolk. He studied at Gray's Inn 1604-5. He became the second husband of Sibella Sanford of Wold, daughter of Dr. Cole, Dean of Lincoln, in 1610. They lived at first at Saintsbury where Dover practised as an attorney. They were in Chipping Campden in 1613, and then at Childwickham where he was Steward of the Manor of Wickhamford from 1632. He died in 1652 and was buried at Barton-on-the-Heath. He became a Royalist Captain in the Civil War. He had two sons. A grandson, Dr. Thomas Dover, rescued Alexander Selkirk in 1708 and invented "Dover's Powders", a sedative still in use.

Dover and his friends of the stage and the Inns of Court, so far as they had an aim beyond that of just

enjoying themselves, sought to keep alive the still lingering spirit of rural medieval England by reviving and modernising its country sports and pastimes, which to them meant relating these sports to classical mythology and the Renaissance culture, whilst linking them with the throne and the King's Protestant Church. The Olympick Games opened about 1612. The games were a conscious protest against the Puritanism of the age. Dover probably took over the games which had been celebrated as a joint Whitsun Ale and jollification for the parishes of Weston Sub Edge and Campden whose boundaries met along the ancient White Way near the Kiftsgate stone, the moot point for the Saxon Hundred. By combining the current ideas of the Olympic festivals of ancient Greece and the Cotswold Whitsun Ales and enlarging and organising the games, Dover created a festival which was unique and which made Chipping Campden famous throughout the Shires and even at Court.

The policy of King James was confirmed in his Book of Sports in 1618 and reaffirmed by Charles I in 1633:

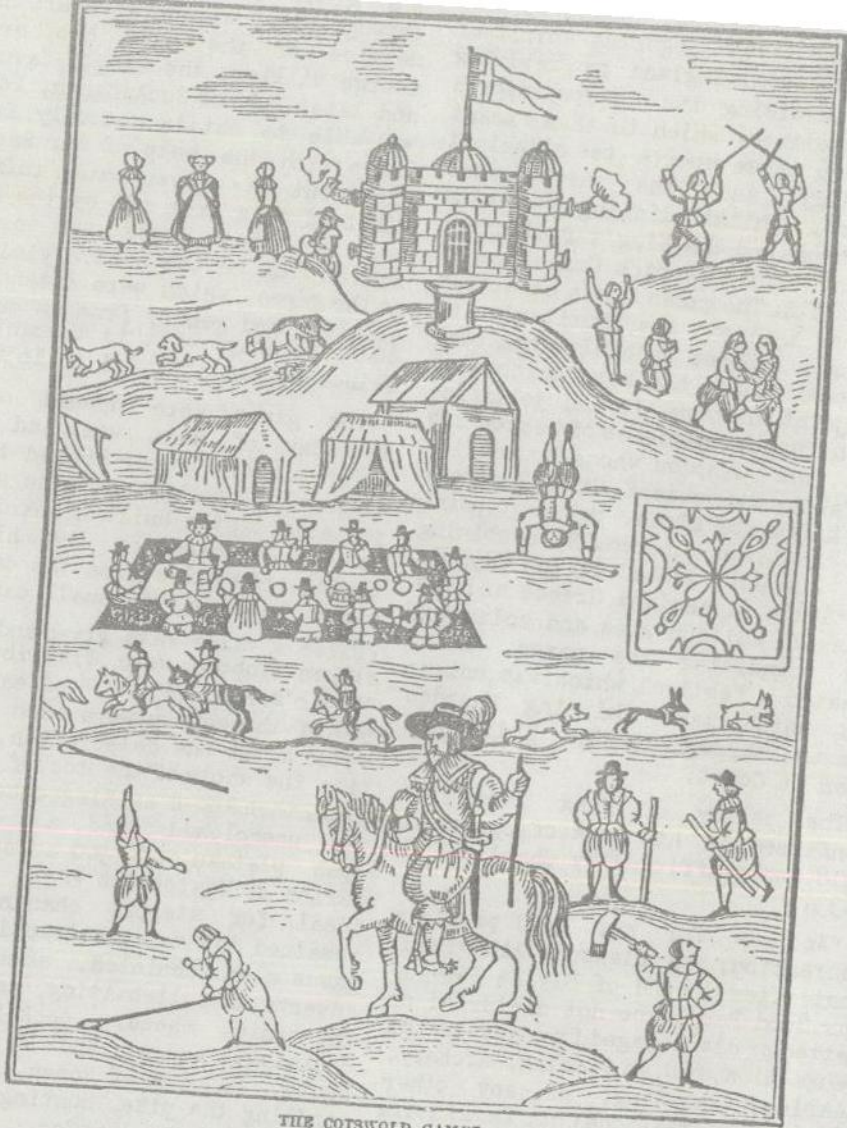
"And as for our good people's recreation; our pleasure likewise is that after the end of Divine Service Our Good People be not disturbed or letted or discouraged from any lawful recreation, such as Dancing, Archery, Leaping, Vaulting, or any other harmless recreations; nor from having May Games, Whitsun Ales, and Morris Dances; and the setting up of May-poles and other sports therewith used, so as the same shall be had in due and convenient time, without impediment or neglect of Divine Service".

Amongst Dover's friends were Ben Jonson and Endymion Porter. Porter as a great patron of the Arts played an important part in forming Charles

I's great collection of pictures. Through his position at court in the service of the half brother of George Villier, the King's favorite and later Duke of Buckingham, Porter was able to obtain not only James' leave with the help of Sir Baptist Hicks but was given hats, ruffs and other clothes cast off by the King, and in these Dover used to dress when he rode on the hill, officiating at the games, which were attended by nobility and gentry from as much as 60 miles away. It is thought that Prince Rupert attended in 1636.

The games were opened on the Thursday of Whit week and lasted three days. Dover opened them by riding up on his white horse to a portable castle built of boards that he had erected on the hill and firing off a salvo from the castle's mimic battery of small cannons.

Prizes of value were given and yellow silken ribbons were distributed as "Dover's Favours". Wood said that 500 of the gentry wore such favours a year after one celebration. At this time the whole of the top of Dover's Hill, then known as Kingcombe Plain, was unenclosed land, a great flat open plateau of 500 acres in the parish of Weston Sub Edge. It was ideal for steeple chasing which remained the major attraction. The games also consisted, according to adverts, of bull-baiting, card games in tents, chess, cock-fighting, coursing, cudgel and singlestick bouts, dancing of women, football, handling the pike, hunting the hare with hounds, leapfrog, leaping, music, pitching the bar or hammer, quoits, racing on foot, shin kicking, shovel-board, skittles, walking on hands and wrestling. The games continued till 1643 when they were stopped, probably at the instigation of Campden's puritain minister William Bartholomew. The last open battle of the civil war was fought up the slopes of Dover's Hill.



THE COTSWOLD GAMES.

The games were revived again after the Restoration, 29th May 1660, and continued with varying degrees of popularity and success till 1852 when largely by the influence of Canon Bourne, the rector of Weston Sub Edge they were finally stopped. William Somerville, a highly cultured gentleman published his poem "Hobbinol, or the Rural Games" in 1740. Its main interest is the vivid description it gives of Dover Games. In 1772, Richard Graves the younger, of Mickleton, published "The Spiritual Quixote" a satire on the Methodists of his day (reprinted OUP 1967). Graves imagines his hero setting out to convert the world and going to Dover's Games. The account of the scene gives a good idea of

the taste and flavour of an 18th century country gathering, no better and no worse than any other. Towards the end of the 18th century the games seem to have declined. Rudder in "A New History of Gloucestershire", 1779, merely said "there is still a meeting of young people upon Dover's Hill, about a mile from Chipping Campden, every Thursday in Whit week". The games were no doubt still pretty rough and disorderly, but they were part of 18th century life and an important and essential part, as also were events like the public executions at which large crowds of people of all classes gathered.

In Campden at the start of the 19th century the past was still present, symbolised by the slow revolving year and the annual event of Dover's Games with their crowds and junketings and confusions. A poster exists from 1806 showing that they were chiefly conducted on the initiative of the Campden Innkeepers.

The new world of piety, self-improvement and progress was yet to come. Hunting, coursing and shooting and the annual Dover's Games were the recreation of the gentry and some of the larger farmers although the district around Campden seems to have lost the fashionable repute it had in the 18th century for sport and social intercourse. Of the meeting of 1826 the Mirror (No. 199) wrote that it was still a great holiday for all the lads and lasses within 10 to 15 miles of the place, and is attended by numbers of gentry and people of respectability in the neighbourhood. The same writer described the morris dancers as spruce lads sprigged up in their Sunday clothes, with ribbons round their hats and arms, and bells on their legs, and they were attended by a jester called Tom Fool, who carried a long stick with a bladder tied to it, with which he buffeted

about to make room for the dancers, while one of the best looking of the men was selected to carry a large plum cake, a long sword run through the middle of it, the cake resting on the hilt. On the point of the sword is a large bunch of ribbons with streamers, and a large knife stuck in the cake, and when the young man sees a favourite lass he gives her a slice."

The coming of the railway was an event which caused much local disturbance. The intrusion of large numbers of "navigators" brought a fresh element of disorder and lawlessness into the district. The shops, public houses and bookmakers benefited but Dover's Games became more and more rowdy and were attended by larger and larger crowds. Grosart in the introduction to his edition of Annalia Dubrensis of 1877 said that during the five years (1846-52) that Mickleton Tunnel was in progress a body of navvies converted the gathering into a riotous and dangerous assembly. With the opening of the railway to Wolverhampton and Birmingham in the spring of 1853 the games became more the resort of roughs and undesirables from as far away as the Black Country. From the beginning of railways excursions were run even if there was still a long walk by today's standards at the end of it. Vyvyan in his 1878 edition of the Annalia Dubrensis said that the games became the trysting place of all the lowest scum of Birmingham and Oxford. Sometime before 1851, the Rev. G.D. Bourne, later Cannon, the wealthy and powerful Rector of Weston Sub Edge from 1846 till 1901, who was also a magistrate, saw over 30,000 at one of the gatherings and was much concerned at the drunkenness and general licence that prevailed. To stop it an enclosure act was obtained with the help of the Earl of Harrowby in 1853-4 for the parish. The hill was

divided into fields leaving no space big enough for the crowds or the steeplechases or athletic events. The last official meeting was probably in the summer of 1852.

The games had not only occupied Dover's Hill. In Campden there were cock fights, plays and balls and a wake on the Saturday with booths, stalls and roundabouts. By 1887 this had expanded to be known as Scuttlebrook Wake, a festivity that continues today on the Saturday after the Spring Bank Holiday. A part of the hill became the property of the National Trust in 1926. The old custom died hard for much later in the 19th century there were still gatherings of young people for sports and games either on what there was of open space or on the Mile Drive which was probably part of the old race course.

The advertisement for 1852 mentioned dancing for ribbons but this is unlikely to have been a morris competition. However the morris is still present in the 1850's. The was a meeting at Stow beforehand for sides to compete for the right to dance on Dover's Hill at which the winning side would be able to sell the yellow Dover's favours. This was one of the last celebrations of the team from Guiting Power competing with four other sides, Sherborn among them, as to who should have the right to stay on the Hill for the day and won the contest. The Morriston history of Mr. Horne of Chipplington Campden, written in 1898, said that the last year the meeting was held the morris dancers came from Longborough. The competition at Stow was so successful that it continued for years after its primary purpose had ceased.

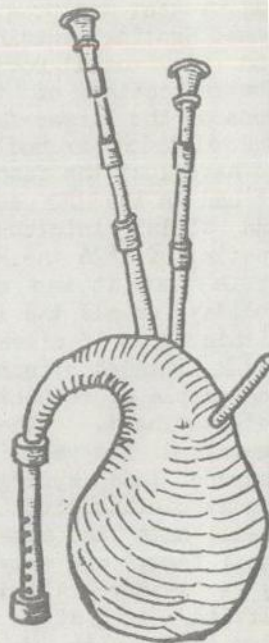
We have started an
EARLY MORRIS SIDE
in the CITY OF LONDON.

Our intention is to be dancing in appropriate costume and to appropriate music. We need some more experienced dancers and anyone else interested in playing bagpipes, pipe and tabor, or fiddle.

Please contact:-

John Offord, 01-729-4951

40, Walton House,
Rochelle Street,
London E2.



The Morris

at

Alvescot

KEITH CHANDLER

Following an appearance at Reading Regatta on August Bank Holiday Monday, 1914, the morris team at Bampton disbanded - as the dancers joined the services to fight in the war - for the first time in recorded history. Before the Armistice four years later, the pre-war dancers Jack Dewe and Robert Dixey had been killed in the fighting; Jinky Wells' uncle Harry Radband (born 1836), who had been involved with the morris as dancer and latterly as cake-bearer, had died of natural causes; Charles 'Cocky' Tanner, who had also

been a dancer but had acted as ragman for many years, had been very ill and did not dance again (he died four years later); his brother Tom 'Buscot' Tanner, who had carried on dancing at number one in the set - despite his age (he was born in 1850) - until the outbreak of war, was forced to give up dancing, although he stayed with the team as mentor and ragman until the late 1920's; and his son John, as well as Charles Tanner's two sons Jesse and Percy, do not appear to have danced again (1).

Although there was no Morris in Bampton during the war years, Jinky Wells was invited to train a team of dancers by Bob Oakley, the landlord of the Plough Inn at Alvescot, about three miles away. Oakley was a man of enterprise, who in addition to keeping the pub, regularly advertised:

Horses and carriages, covered or open, for hire. Trains met by appointment or wire. Trolley and Spring van kept for carriage purposes. Waterproof sheets to cover goods. (2).

His purpose in asking Wells to get a side together was so that it could dance in front of the pub during summer evenings, and thus attract customers. According to Jack Taylor (3), Jinky first came over at the end

of one summer to start teaching his new team. The chronology is slightly confusing, but this would appear to have been in 1916. With his son Frank Jinky used to walk over one night a week for practices (4), and he played for the dancing and taught the men the dances. Jack Taylor was the youngest of the Alvescot dancers (born January 1st, 1904), and all the others were "much older" than he. In addition to Taylor and Frank Wells, the side consisted of Bill Flux (born 1885), Charlie Lockett, Charlie Screech, and Ernest Peachey. They practiced at the rear of the Plough, "for a few weeks - not very much practice... It was never an official team, it never took on" and then danced once a week throughout the summer until the nights got



too dark to continue. The men never received anything for dancing, although Oakey provided them with food and beer (or in Jack's case, lemonade). He thought that Jinky probably got some sort of payment, although he reckoned "Jinky would have done it for nothing - he was so keen on it."

They wore the same kit, "exactly the same", as the pre-war Bampton men, and Jack thinks Jinky probably brought over the bowler hats and bells; while Billy Flux helped him get the rest of the kit together. He couldn't remember the names of the dances, other than "Shepherd's Hey". "I think they still do that one." Wells definitely taught them the double step, in keeping with the prevailing style at Bampton at the time. The Alvescot team had no fool, or did they collect money from the onlookers.

The side only danced out this one year. "I think Jinky came over the following year but it didn't go through. Not whole-hearted." This

could have to be in 1918, for the following Whit Monday the re-constituted Bampton team were performing.

After the war, Jinky Wells, Tom and Charles Tanner got a new generation of dancers together; and the two Tanners supervised the running of the side. According to Jack Taylor, he and Bobby Flux joined this team while many of the Bampton men were being de-mobbed. The members of the side dancing on Whit Monday, 1919, were Flux, Taylor, Frank Wells, Victor "Buller" Tanner (son of Tom Tanner), Fred Lay and Dick Hunt. Jinky played; and Walter "Brannan" Brooks, who became the cakebearer in the following year - a role he kept until 1938, was the fool. Jack couldn't recall exactly how much money they each got that

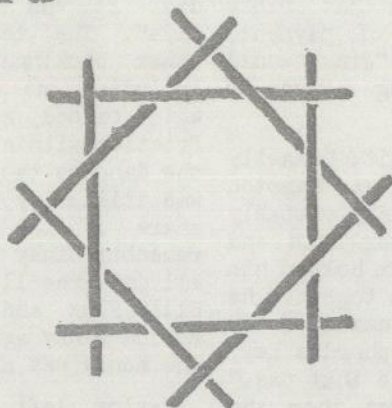
day, but "my mother was glad of it, even though she had to buy me a new pair of boots out of it. You would dance through a pair of boots in a day - it was all walking in those days". The team did a couple of other bookings during that year, including one at Lechlade Carnival which caused a certain amount of friction within the side. Some of the dancers thought that Jack, who was still a boy, should get a reduced share of the take. "I can still remember Jinky saying, 'He's danced all day so he'll get an equal share'. Billy Flux and Frank Wells stood behind Jinky against the others and the money was shared equally."

Taylor left after twelve months or so, but Flux had married Tom Tanner's daughter in 1916, and so was accepted into the side. He became the organiser soon after, arranging bookings and the times of performance at the big houses on Whit Mondays; and men in the side during the following two decades - Ted Lay, for example - remember him as the "leader".

Notes.

1. See the letter from Juliet Williams to Clive Carey, dated 28/8/1918, in the box of Carey material in Vaughan Williams Library, for information on the wartime activities of the Bampton dancers.
2. He advertised in the Witney Gazette and several of the Oxford papers every week for about 20 years.
3. Taylor is the sole surviving dancer of the Alvescot team, and my informant for this article. He still lives in Bampton and is now aged 77.
4. Jinky's other son, Bobby (born 1898), was in the services at the time.

Longsword



Trevor Stone

I must admit to prejudice. I am a dedicated supporter of local (meaning Yorkshire) traditions and customs in general and I have an obsession about Longsword in particular.

In common with a number of other enthusiasts I spend a substantial amount of time performing and researching this particular type of traditional dance which was once almost unique to Yorkshire. I am anxious to see the dance restored as a developing, lively tradition rather than it become a museum piece.

To help this revitalisation along, a special weekend of Longsword dancing was held in September 1979. The original idea was to get together three or four teams who perform dances from different parts of the county and tour the area, giving displays for the public and allowing teams the opportunity to socialise and compare dances and features of performance.

Enthusiasm for the idea spread to such an extent that the event finished up with no less than nine teams of dancers attending who gave

displays at more than 20 villages and locations in the area.

An article in the November issue of the "Dalesman" gave some background information on the dance and described the events of the weekend. This article, and the local interest aroused by the dance tour, brought a number of unexpected advantages. For example we recovered a set of swords made for Fr. Damian Webb who founded and taught a team of boys from the Ampleforth College almost 30 years ago. The set was discovered in nearby Kirkby Moorside and returned to the college who are hopeful of forming a new team from the boys at the college.

However, by far the most interesting result came in response to a letter from a "Dalesman" reader, Mrs Dolby, formerly from the York area who now lives in Eldwick, near Bradford.

Like many other people attending school in the period 1915 to 1930 Mrs Dolby had done Longsword dancing in her youth. She wrote in but she was convinced she had very little

important information to offer and was most surprised to find that her information opened up a whole new field of research in connection with this dance.

Apparently in the 1920's the York district of the Womens Institute organised regular local shows. One feature of these events was a competition for Longsword dance teams. At one time up to five teams existed from different W.I. groups in the area and the team which Mrs Dolby led from Ainsty competed very successfully with a display of their version of the Askham Richard dance. Their dance was learned from "Details in a Book" and Mrs Dobly's handwritten description tallies exactly with the information printed in Cecil Sharp's book "Sword Dances of Northern England".

The real importance of this line of research does not lie in this well recorded information but rather the information that men's teams from Kirkby Malzeard and North Skelton gave displays at these shows and were known to have spent some time coaching (and courting?) members of the ladies teams.

This information helped to put a date to the activities of these two teams at a time when their activities were poorly recorded and has opened up the possibility that some members of the ladies teams may remember other useful information. Details of the dance they taught, the costumes worn, or the style of performance of the two traditional men's teams, both of which died out many years ago, would be most valuable.

The author would love to hear from any readers who can remember snippets of information about any dance, anecdotes relating to performance etc., connected with Longsword dancing in the past, not necessarily the York area Womens Institute

teams. As Mrs Dolby discovered it is surprising how relatively minor snippets of information can be most valuable in leading to new fields of research.

If you are one of the many people who have never heard of Longsword dancing before but this article has aroused your interest, the author has produced a 40 page, fully illustrated booklet on the subject. It costs 90p including postage from Trevor Stone, 6 Priory Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 2BR.

You will soon have another opportunity to see the dance again. A second Longsword weekend is to be held in the Ryedale area on 16th and 17th May 1981. This time over twelve teams are taking part including long established and traditional teams from Loftus and Goathland in North Yorkshire, and Handsworth and Grenoside in South Yorkshire. They will perform alongside teams from Barnsley, Clekheaton, Kirkburton, Hull, Beverley and may even be joined by a team from Papa Stour in the Shetland Isles who dance the only fully recorded version of Longsword dancing from outside Yorkshire.

The Saturday tours during this weekend will include many venues in the area and provide the ideal opportunity to see this colourful and spectacular dance at the same time as you give support and encouragement to the revival of a Yorkshire tradition that was in danger of completely dying out less than 15 years ago.

(Trevor Stone is carrying out a survey to obtain details of teams who dance Longsword. If your team dances Longsword please write to him at the address above and he will include you in his survey, and send you further details of the Longsword Dance weekend.)

DUTCH ELM MORRIS

"THE MORRIS IS NOT AN EASY DANCE"

CECIL SHARP



"MORRIS DANCING? MORRIS DANCING??! WHAT THE FUCK IS MORRIS DANCING?"

CECIL B. De MILLE

SUNDAY LUNCHTIME AT THE TORN LIGAMENT FINDS RON VOALE, SQUIRE OF THE DUTCH ELM MORRIS MEN, IN MEDITATIVE MOOD.



BILL CONSTANT MORRIS MASTERMIND OF 1976



WE'RE NOT DRAWING THE CROWDS LIKE WE USED TO BILL



FRANKLY, RON, I'M NOT SURPRISED



I MEAN... JUST LOOK AT YOURSELVES



SCRUFFY KIT...



... NO ORGANISATION...



I'M NOT DANCING NUMBER TWO!

ONE MORE MAN!

WHICH WAY IS UP?

HOW DOES THIS ONE GO?

I DON'T KNOW ANY FIELD TALK

... OUT OF CONDITION...



SOD THE ROUNDS, LADS LET'S END IT HERE!

EVEN YOUR STICKS COME FROM LAST YEAR'S CHRISTMAS-TREE



SOB: IT'S ALL TRUE! BUT WHAT CAN WE DO?



YOU NEED OOMPH... YOU NEED POWER AND VIGOUR... YOU NEED TO MOVE INTO THE EIGHTIES ... LEAVE IT TO ME.



WILL BILL BE ABLE TO PLACE OUR HEROES BACK ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS?

SEE THE NEXT REVOLUTIONARY EPISODE

PETER LORD '81

Alan Whear

ACT NOW!

The 3RD Morris Matters Musicians' meeting has been fixed for the 27/28th. of March at the Zion Hall, Langley, Oldbury — just a few minutes' drive from Junction 2 on the M5 Motorway.

Accommodation will be on floors, and spare beds, as usual, and the price will be less than £5-00 (pay when you get there)

Details from :- Anne J. Kirk
15 Trident Court,
Sawoy Close,
Harborne,
B32 2JA
Tel: 021-427-7754

Delays in publication mean that there
is not much time left - so write straight
away. See you all there!

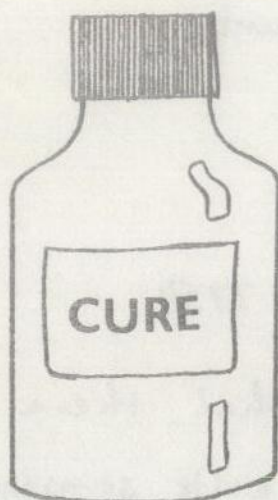
A New Research Group

The first meeting of the WMF Research Group
will be held on
April 4th, 1981.

Costume, History and other topics of Morris
interest to be covered. Those interested in
such research and wishing to join should
contact:-

Barbara Butler,
3, Stockwood Vale,
KEYNSHAM,
BS18 2AW.

(Keynsham 5212)



for a sickness

Tim Radford

I have often heard people talk about others who never seem to have time for anything but work and calling them 'Workaholics'. I am afraid that I too suffered from a similar disease caused by Morris i.e. 'Morrisholicism'. There could be two situations that brought me out in a rash; Good Morris and Bad Morris - Bad Morris because I got overheated that it existed and Good Morris because it excited me. I tried all sorts of medicine but none of the wellknown brands seemed to do any good at all. I rapidly came to the conclusion that I must mix my own to survive.

My first step was to seek a second opinion, to find someone who had no axe to grind and had maybe experienced the same symptoms as myself, someone who was not afraid of saying what he thought was true and someone who was

willing, and able, to pass on information.

After some searching I did find a guru (whose real name must be left out to protect his family and the innocent), whose ideas seemed to be related to some of my own. He not only taught well, he inspired me into thinking more about Morris. However I still seemed to lack direction. Then a lucky thing happened; I suddenly found myself, in the centre of the Morris world - the Cotswolds. I found my direction, being involved in the revival of a Morris Tradition. A great amount of sweat, labour, emotion and tears went into that. At times it was frustrating, at times exhilarating and other times downright boring. Our passion at the time was for the tradition: we didn't really examine what we were doing. We

thought we were good and we thought it felt right, but we didn't know why, or how we had achieved it.

After the first year and the first major row, the teaching fell fairly and squarely on my shoulders. As I had become solely responsible, I began to examine every aspect of what we were doing. I then found that some of the things I had learnt in the past were extremely useful; the way I had been taught and the way enthusiasm had been fired in me. It became a conscious effort on my part to develop a solid dance philosophy that I could teach, enjoy, share and most of all defend, if necessary. Not all of the things so thought out have been exercised, but they remain objectives that some day may flourish.

The main point of this article is to maybe give other people 'the pill' that will help them on their road to recovery and inspire them enough to improve their lot. I do not wish to become a guru. I would just like to give other dancers the push into thinking more about what they do. It must always be remembered that 'one man's meat is another man's poison'.

Building a Morris side to your own specification is a bit like growing a beard, or wearing pink trousers. you know you will get ribbed, criticised and others may even become abusive; but you must not be blown off course by such diversions.

Providing you know what you are trying to achieve, forget all but those who are supporting you.

The first subject I applied myself to was the dancing speed. I had already had the most important aspect thrust in my lap. Specialization i.e. only dance one style or tradition. However to return to speed. This was an important question, Fast or Slow? Fast would mean the movements would have to be quick across the ground, low in

style, flashy movements with lots of travel, the stepping being secondary to the showiness. Slow would mean more height in the dances, less travel along the ground, controlled style, the steps being of prime importance.

This had the better feel about it; the height achieved made you wish to go higher. It was exhilarating and made the dancers throw themselves into the dances. The dancing became more rhythmic and made you feel part of something much bigger than Morris.

One aspect that became apparent as soon as the slow course was taken, was how important the relationship between the teacher and the musician should be. They are the two who most influence the side. If they are able to put across the reasons, objectives behind the style, the others can more easily soak up what's on offer.

This automatically leads on to the dancers' ego. This is a further aspect that should be developed as much as possible. All dancers have a high slice of extrovert within them, and appealing to their egos brings this out, fires their enthusiasm and this can do nothing but good.

You've now got a side of high-stepping egotistical extroverts who think they own the world and you've got to control them as best you can. The best way is to channel their energy into activities that benefit the side. Get them involved in the teaching, developing the dances, criticising each others dancing and thinking about what they are doing and why.

It is also important that you stress that it's not that important i.e. Morris dancing. It's a thing to be enjoyed, a pleasant pastime, a way of involving the public, giving pleasure to others and hopefully they will settle down. Remind them that you're a team, one over-elaborate dancer stands out as much as one bad dancer.

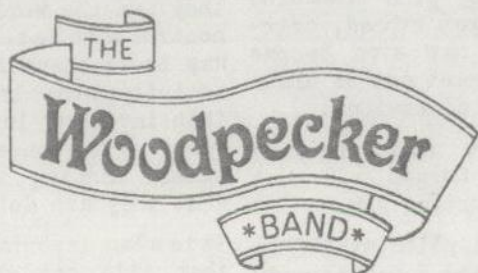
The teacher should be patient, never rush an idea or a dancer. Always accept criticism yourself and be prepared to compromise your principles or goals for the sake of achieving most of what you want. The first principle of man management (sorry girls) and that's what it is, is to get the best out of the resources available. This is where the lowering of sights may most be necessary.

I have discussed style, attitude and control but it is also important that you examine your chosen tradition or dances in a similar manner. Accentuate the prominent features and spend most time on those aspects. Set up rules the way some things are danced, i.e. always start on the same foot, keep figures in the same sequence. If you do this it is less for the dancer to think about whilst dancing, thereby giving them time to keep lines straight, to smile and enjoy themselves etc. They should also become more relaxed when they know something really well, this again helps the dancing style.

began by talking about a disease, Morrisholicism; as you can see I still suffer from a type, but it is not caused by the same things. My disease is now a commitment, it is far less painful than its former relative; I am cured of those old problems. I no longer come out in a rash at seeing Bad Morris, I simply ignore it. I'm still excited by Good Morris but then I always will be. However I've learnt that there is no point in criticising other peoples' Morris particularly if they have given it thought, time and patience. I try to influence by example, rather than being abusive destructive or rude.

I hope that some of what I have had to say may be useful to someone. I would like to think that everybody who dances Morris wishes to improve themselves. I would not guarantee success to anyone; dancers' reasons, responses etc are very personal, few that I know can even begin to explain why they do it. However, success depends on dancers' attitudes. Good Luck, but keep taking the pills.

English Folk Dancing to an Electric Band.



Please contact:
RON HAWKINS

Tel: Witney 3458 or Swindon 36251 ext. 327

Morris in the Cotswolds in recent years

by Roy Dommett

Not so much a lecture, more a talk amongst friends - that was how Roy Dommett described his talk at Sharp House last December, and indeed he turned out to be far more interested in sharing information than in converting the audience to a particular point of view.

He began by describing the recent growth of interest in the morris in the villages whence the tradition was collected - in the last decade teams have sprung up in Adderbury, Bucknell, Eynsham, Ilmington, Kirtlington and Wheatley, all of whom dance their own tradition.

Roy illustrated his talk with films of Headington, Bampton and some of these newer sides. It was fascinating to compare an early film of Bampton (1936) with more recent performances. The style was remarkably consistent, in fact the contrast between the unique 'grotesque' style of Jinky Wells and the usual 'Bampton' style of the other dancers was very marked. When you realise that it was Jinky who was asked to teach Bampton at Ring meetings, the reason for the discrepancy between 'Ring Bampton' and the 'real' Bampton becomes clear!

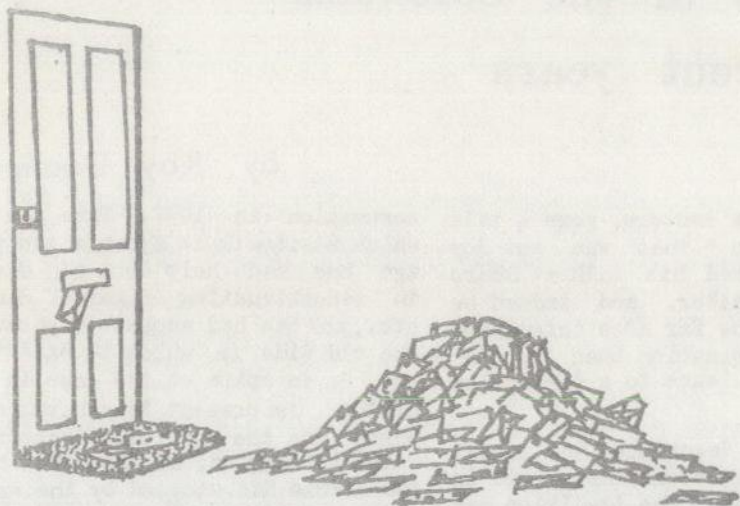
During the films of Eynsham and Kirtlington, Roy emphasised the differences in the backgrounds of the two sides. There was a team in Eynsham at the time of WWI, and although the team disbanded in the 1920's, they got together for the

coronation in 1937. Thus the side which started up at Eynsham two years ago has had help from old dancers in reconstructing figures, dancers etc., and has had access to photos of the old side on which to base their kit. So in spite of the gaps in the history, the present team have a sound basis from the surviving dancers.

At Kirtlington, on the other hand, the morris had stopped by the end of the nineteenth century. Sharp collected fragments of the tradition from one surviving dancer. Recently Paul Davenport of Green Oak MM reconstructed a 'danceable' tradition from the fragments, and with help from him and others, the Kirtlington side was formed. Although little is actually known about the tradition, the reconstruction is internally consistent and pleasing to watch - indeed the film of the Kirtlington men was amazing, a remarkably high standard of performance for what we were told was their first public tour!

The problems facing anyone wishing to revive a side are, of course, similar; the need for information, how to interpret it, how to put it into practice, and how to find a niche for the new side in the community to which it belongs. But if there was a message in this talk, it was that because of the unique circumstances of each side, each new team and foreman met these challenges in a different way.

MAILBAG....



Letters may be shortened at the editors' discretion. Letters that have been cut are marked *.

New Zealand News

* New Zealand morris man Bob Crowder developed naturally as a mixed tradition, as a result no doubt, in part, writes to keep us up to date with the morris scene there:-

....Last Easter at the Christchurch Folk Festival all the N.Z. sides gathered together and had a fine old time dancing around the city, holding workshops and discussing policy and attitudes for the future.

The most important decision was that the N.Z. morris scene was to continue the Mixed Tradition. This brings us back to the 'living bit' so dear to us because if we had not started mixed we would never have started at all. So morris in N.Z. has

also decided that we had no wish to be a part of the Australasian Morris Ring (a misnomer if ever there was one) because they are still debating whether women's morris should be accepted, let alone mixed morris.

Most morris in Australia is situated in vast urban centres such as Sydney with populations in excess of the whole of N.Z. and hence they can afford to be choosy about whom they admit to their sides. So morris in N.Z. has agreed to go it alone and to date every side in the country is mixed and the controversy existing in the U.K. and Australia just does not exist.

There are now six sides in N.Z. - Auckland, Wellington, Palmerston North (North Island), Dunedin, Christchurch - Erewhon and Christchurch - Tussock Jumpers. The last-named is my new side, based at Lincoln College and probably one of the first sides to be based on agrarian principles in the S. hemisphere - much more appropriate than the urban base of most.

Needless to say it is very difficult to get sides together for joyful associations but last Easter we all agreed that all N.Z. sides would endeavour to get together at one Folk Festival in the year. This year it is to be at the Wellington Festival in June.

South Island sides met with the Wellington side at Nelson in November and had a splendid occasion with the whole main street closed off for us on the Saturday morning for workshops and demonstrations. Nelson is the sunshine capital of N.Z. - it

gets 2500 hours of sun a year and on this occasion it proved it with a perfect day (if a trifle hot).

For this summer there will be morris dancers at the Dunedin Folk Festival for the New Year followed, we hope, by the Southern Lakes tour which takes in the Summer holiday spots of lakes; rivers; mountains; cherry, apricot and peach orchards of central Otago - a dancing tour that reads like a holiday brochure.

Meanwhile the Auckland Morris is leading a tour of the Northland paradise of warm blue seas, beaches and deep sea fishing... oranges and tangelos plus the Kiwi fruit and passion fruit, a trifle sticky for dancing, but lovely for washing off.

In January the Palmerston North morris side are holding a dance school which involves all types of dance from many countries.

So you see that there is plenty of fun for all, so should any of you be over this way remember that N.Z. has a lot to offer - not only in scenery and environment but also music and dance.

Don't forget to send your magazine along, it is appreciated by all, and certainly Morris matters to us all. With the very best wishes,

Bob Crowder,
Foreman, Tussock Jumpers.

Fools' Workshop

Dear Morris Matters,

Having recently been appointed as "fool" for Turn of the Tide I now feel a little dubious about where to start. It occurred to me that maybe others too have this problem and I was wondering whether there would be enough interest to make it worthwhile holding a "Fools' Workshop" in order to put forward suggestions and exchange ideas.

If anyone is interested in either running or attending such a workshop perhaps they could write and let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Barr,
50 Watlington Road,
South Benfleet,
Essex.

Cry from the heart

* Dear Morris Matters,

I write to you as a distraught Morris man who has just finished his first season. Nauseous from my diet of punk and ska dished up on the John Peel show, I welcomed the change when I was dragged screaming along to the local folk club where I quite liked what I heard. A friend of mine lent me the recently re-issued 'Morris On' fellows.

record, which I first treated as a joke - until it zubbed me something cruel. Immediately I locked away all my Hawkwind and Splodgenessabounds LP's, then sought after my local morris side.

Well, I thought it was all going to be hunky-dory traditional 'We're all Jolly Boys who Follow the Plough' stuff, dredged up from the bowels of the earth. Now listen here, and get this straight between the eyes, we are all living in a make-believe world with not even ONE gay ploughboy singing fol-de-rol-de-riddle-rop all the way from his one-man invasion of Maidenhead, which he lost anyway.

Episode one. There I was, atop this drafty hill in the stokebroker green belt demesne on May morning just before sunrise, alone, save for my goose-pimples and a flask of hot coffee for company. I wondered whether the more arthritic members of my side would make it in time for 5.30 a.m. up that leaf-mouldy slope - they did eventually - no wonder these old customs (sic) died out.

Pub-tours. On another occasion, we performed at a local pub. I dutifully rolled up on my push-bike, forsaking all other modes of transport. I was passed amidst the strains of the first three bars of 'Colonel Bogey' by two other members of my side riding shotgun in their 'W' registration Stradas and Alfa Romeos. I locked up my bike in the pub courtyard and met my two

They were laughing and joking about a ladies' morris side they had seen 'dance' that afternoon. Apparently it's not traditional for women to dance morris, and the extravert gestures of my compatriots seemed to indicate that the flying petticoats and that which lurked beneath were subject to great humour.

We were welcomed in the plush new-carpeted saloon bar by a smiling landlord, who was somewhat surprised to see us, apparently the bagman had forgotten to poster the place. We ordered three pints of this brand new 'Tampons' best bitter from the equally brand new pump - great, at least CamRA were good for something, but where's my mild pump?

We started dancing, only half an hour late - well, the Squire gets upset if we begin without him. After the first time we walked the rounds - then sloped off for another drink and post-mortem. "Oh yes, we start on that foot, do we?" "There's no galley in Bledingford, you pillock" A few more cussings of that ilk ensued. Ten minutes later we started our second dance. I don't know how some of our chaps manage to get off the ground, is that paunch really caused by alcohol intake? Some of them seem to suffer from labour pains during the RTB's! The red faces and wheezing after each dance seem to indicate

something, anyway? Fit to dance? Dance to keep fit? After our third dance, the ragman arrived with the sticks.

Two more dances later and I noticed that our thirty strong audience had wilted to a bare dozen by the time the hat went round. Bonny Green and off. WOW! This was it, I thought. We ignored the uterine smugness of the Axminster for the acrid fetid environs of the public bar - grass-roots! Bloody hell, I had to duck as a rather inaccurately-aimed dart whistled past my left ear, another budding Eric Bristow, with spots to match! Well, I was thinking of having my ear pierced. No other hazards prevailing, I elbowed my way through the crowded bar....

But all is not gloom. I went to Sidmouth this year. The pubs were all full of musicians and singers having a whale of a time, positively encouraged by the landlords. There were morris men as inept as my own side, I also saw women dance the morris for the first time, and a bloody sight tidier than most they were, and more precise in their dancing standards. I also saw the Gloucestershire Old Spot dancers, not one beer gut in sight, and every jump was three feet above ground level compared to the inches I saw elsewhere - even in the split capers in 'Queen's delight'. My faith restored.

MAILBAG....

All right! I'll come clean. I'm no novice, and all these incidents did not happen to one morris side let alone my own, but happen they did - in plural. Let this be a challenge to every morris side and dancer reading this that they can't see themselves reflected somewhere. I try to keep my weight down. I still haven't sussed out the relevance of making morris 'traditional', nor see that it matters. It clearly doesn't bother John Kirkpatrick and his Shropshire Bedlams to the last letter. I saw at Sidmouth both men's and women's sides who went out and endeavoured to entertain - and put up a bloody good show - all power to them. If we fail in that object and in our duty to give the public a worthwhile spectacle, I'd rather we not start at all.

Abraham Brown.

* * New Stamp Issue * *

On 6th February 1981 the Post Office issued four stamps commemorating British Folklore. They were designed by Fritz Wegner and depict St. Valentine's Day (14p), Morris Dancers (18p), Lammastide (22p) and Medieval Mummers (25p).

The Morris Dancers (see the front cover of this issue) are taken from an early 16th century window - the famous Betley Window - now at Leigh Manor in Shropshire. (For a more detailed picture of this see the frontispiece to Sharp's Morris Books.)

The three other stamps are shown opposite. The issue of the stamps represents the British Post Office's contribution to mark this year's Conference of European Post and Telecommunications.



