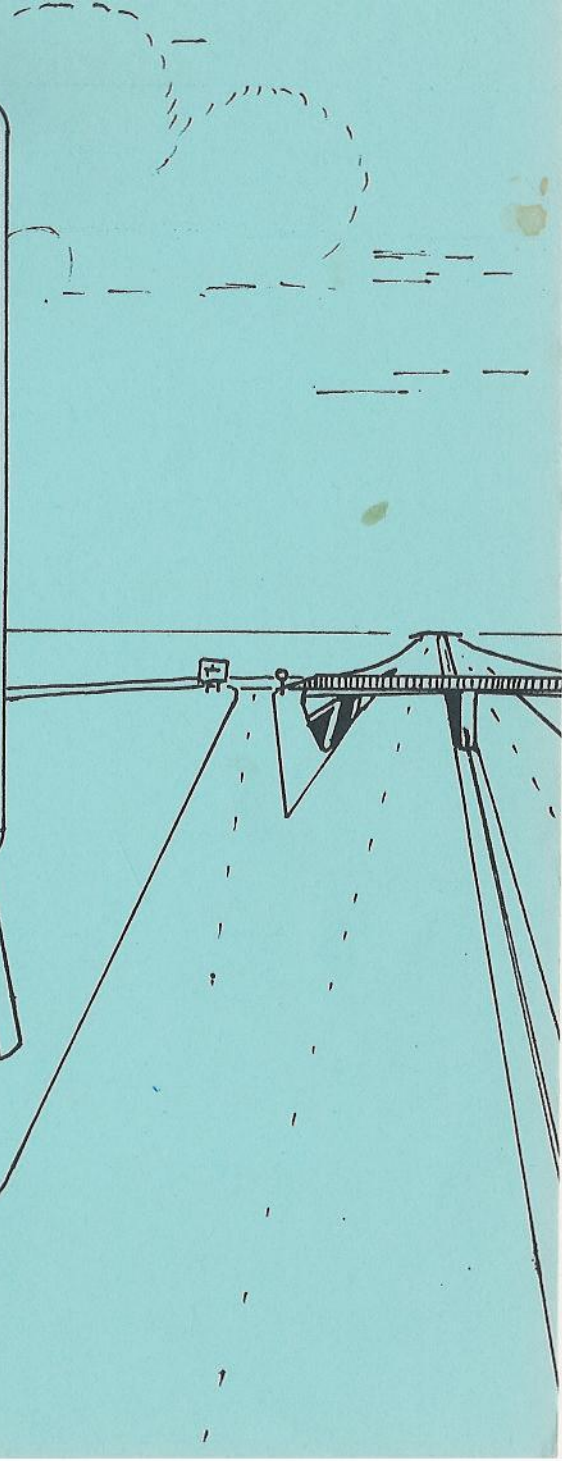


Morris  
Matters

Vol. 4.  
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1981



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## EDITORIAL

A mystifying exchange of views appeared in the Sidmouth Festival Newsletter this year. Roy Dommett had run a Morris workshop and in his usual entertaining fashion had set out to start people thinking about the nature of the source material for the bulk of morris danced today. He demonstrated how ambiguous and vague the original sources often were, talked about the "snapshot" nature of the repertoire, and spent a long time on the inventiveness that was an important part of the tradition. We had a lot of fun dancing made-up dances and came away generally uplifted. Next day in the Newsletter there appeared a complaint from some nameless correspondents ( alias "the traditionalists" ) accusing Dommett of "mutilating the tradition". Now people who talk about "the tradition" seem, like Humpty Dumpty, to use it to mean exactly what they want it to mean, and so it's difficult to know exactly what were their grounds for complaint. (Indeed, if anyone wishes

to further the argument, we'll be glad to print their views.) It seems however that there's still a body of opinion that is scandalised at the idea of changing or developing dances from the archives. It's interesting in this context to read Trevor Stone's article (page 8) in which he echos Dr. Roy Strong's appeal for us to remember that our present is history within a generation.

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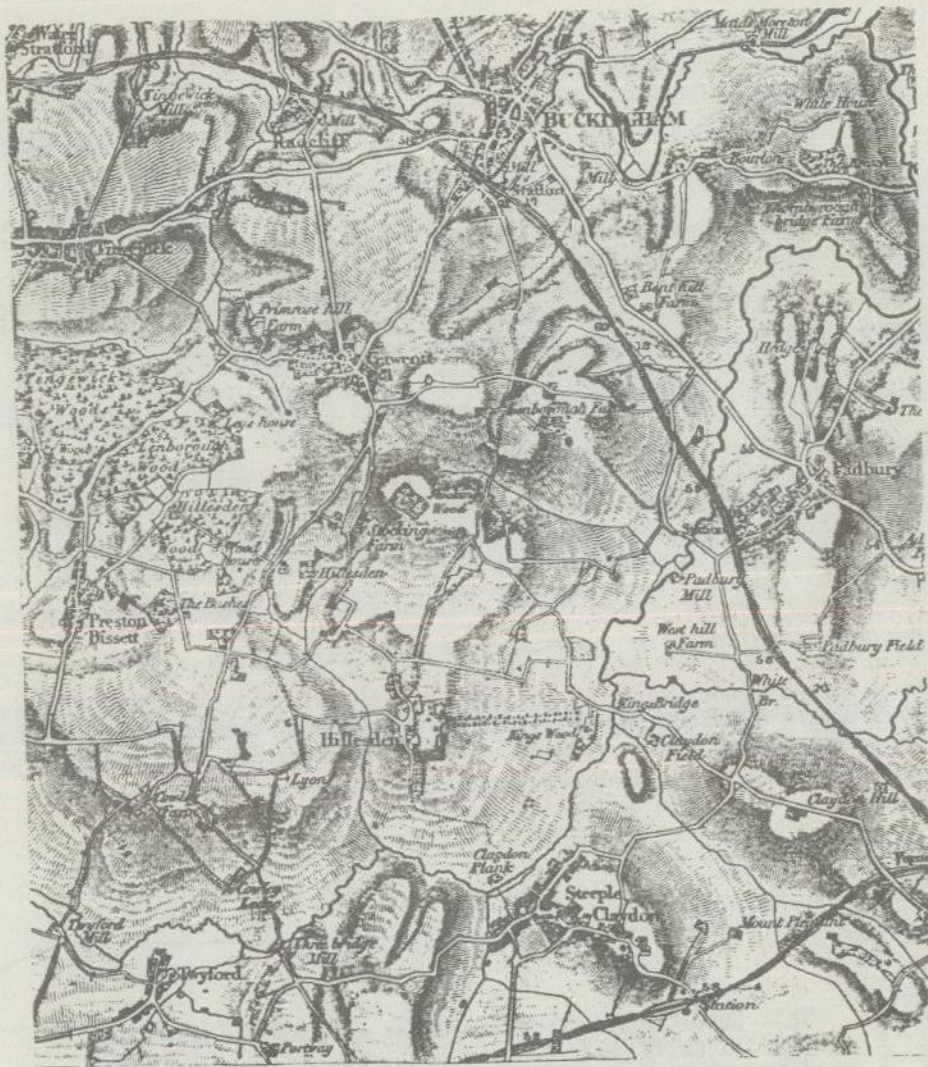
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This issue of Morris Matters was written and compiled by Jill Griffiths, Jenny Joyce, Beth Neill and Alan Whear for Windsor Morris, 24, Alexandra Rd., Windsor.



... Steeple Claydon

Most of our knowledge of the lesser morrises exists because of the industry of Cecil Sharp. Sometimes his Field Notebooks retain a vividness lost in the formal write-up. One such visit was on September 8th 1922. The formal account is found under tune 4886 and in Folk Dance IV, p.86-87.....

Sept. 8. Buckingham Union after breakfast, got 3 songs from Robert Hughes (63). Talked with other old men and learned of a morris at Dadford and Steeple Claydon, also of a fiddler Tom Stuckberry at Hillesden. Then cycled to Steeple Claydon. Found John Jennings (73) on the road. Plays piccolo both ways (traverso and à bec) all sorts of dance tunes. Used to go "mumeling" at Christmas and remembered all the words. Played for the morris and once danced with them. Told us of John Inwood, known as "Jocky-um", a morris dancer and a fiddler and son of a fiddler. Had a brother William now dead who played and danced still better.

Went and called on John Inwood (77) a nice old man. Found him digging potatoes. At once came into his cottage, a pathetically small one, and took down a fiddle (half size) which he told us belonged to his father's granfer. After much tuning played a version of Old Mother Oxford which he said was the only tune they ever played when they danced the morris, probably because they played it better than any other. Played several other tunes as he gradually found his fingers which he said were too stiff to play now as he used to. He apologised when he began by saying "I can't put it up very high". I took down the Cockade as well. He said they used to dance at the Phoenix publichouse, country dances etc. He once won a prize thereat a smoking match when he smoked in a church warden pipe two ounces of tobacco straight off, "you couldn't

tell the time of the clock for smoke". Then I tackled him on the morris. The 6 men who had bells stood up in file, went through the straight hey (called the "double") to the tune, ending up facing in pairs, 1 & 2; 3 & 4, 5 & 6. They then clapped, he couldn't tell us exactly how but apparently something like claps of Shepherd's Hey and None so Pretty. Jennings told me later on that after the second double, they faced 2 & 3, 4 & 5, 1 and 6 being neutral. Jennings also told me they sometimes used sticks. It reminded me of the Worcestershire Morris and like it was danced at Christmas. Inwood then danced the morris step with great vitality, springing very clearly and throwing out his legs further and higher than we are used to do and keeping them very nearly straight, his hip joints wonderfully loose and flexible. He told us Crass was another morris dancer now living at Brackley.

We then returned to Jennings who told us of Country Dances, one in which hands across and butterfly arch movement occurred.

The morris stopped 30 years ago.

In Sharp's mss. he said "Apparently very like the morris at Ludlow and White Ladies Aston, evidently very corrupt and more like a reel." The only such dancing we know Sharp saw was at Brimfield. Sharp also expressed the step description differently "with great agility and spring for a man of 77, throwing out his legs further and therefore higher than usual and keeping them very nearly straight, though quite flexible, hip joints wonderfully loose."

## Roy Dommett

(These extracts are reprinted by kind permission of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.)

## Two new dances in the Fieldtown Style

John Offord

These 2 dances were made up by myself 2 years ago for the Hammer-smith Morris Men. The side has a long history of made up dances (over 15 on the last count) and I thought that some of the Playford tunes would be suitable for new dances. To me the tunes suggested the dances I constructed. It is not generally known that the tunes Bonny Green, Bobby and Joan and others are in the Playford Collection so there is a link in the music as well as the dance figures.

### Half Hanniken

One large stick (right hand)  
One handkerchief (right hand)

- A - Normal Fieldtown figures. For chorus, face partner.
  - B - All dance two consecutive jumps (feet together), clashing once after each jump.  
Sidestep left (show) followed by one jump with clash.
  - C - Half Hey
- Repeat B and C.

Musical notation for Half Hanniken, consisting of two staves in 6/8 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff is labeled 'A' and contains a sequence of eighth notes. The second staff contains a sequence of eighth notes with annotations: 'SIDE STEP LEFT' under the first measure, 'JUMP' under the second measure, 'X' above the third measure, 'C' above the fourth measure, and 'HALF HEY.....' under the fifth measure. The first staff ends with a double bar line and two measures labeled 'JUMP' with 'X' above each. The second staff ends with a double bar line and two measures labeled 'JUMP' with 'X' above each.

## The Nightingale

A stick dance, one large stick.

A - Normal Fieldtown figures. For chorus, face partner.

B - Evens only...3 Fieldtown capers (swinging stick), landing feet together on third caper (which is just a small jump from one foot onto both). Clash once when landing feet together, and two more times standing still.

Odds.....Stand still, presenting sticks horizontally, in front of body (both hands)

Half Hey

Repeat all this, odds clashing the second time.

### THE NIGHTINGALE

X = clash sticks with partner

Musical notation for The Nightingale, consisting of two staves in 6/8 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff is labeled 'A' and contains a sequence of eighth notes. The second staff is labeled 'B' and contains a sequence of eighth notes with annotations: 'CAPER CAPER LAND' under the first two measures, 'X X X' above the third measure, and 'HALF HEY.....' under the fifth measure. The first staff ends with a double bar line and two measures labeled 'CAPER CAPER LAND' with 'X X X' above each. The second staff ends with a double bar line and two measures labeled 'CAPER CAPER LAND' with 'X X X' above each.

## Trevor Stone

Dr. Roy Strong, Director of the Tate Gallery, recently made a plea for families to create records of their own family history. Photo albums, with more information than the usual short caption, scrapbooks and family Bibles - all these were suggested as ways of improving awareness that we are producing tomorrow's history now.

Dr. Strong emphasised the need to photographically record our everyday environment as well as those special occasions, partly for the nostalgic pleasure when we look back but also in an attempt to create material for the archives of the future.

These suggestions are very relevant at the present time for as a society we display very conflicting attitudes.

Present trends indicate that the majority of us give support to the concepts of "disposable products" and the idea of incorporating features which will ensure a short life for many products. At the same time we display a romantic, but often superficial fascination for "tradition" and "the good old days".

There are dozens of examples of this double thinking. My favorite is the re-introduction of "traditional" mushy peas - in tins! TV advertisers use old-fashioned style commercials in muted colours to persuade us to buy fizzy beer or factory produced bread, and we fall for it as we assume that everything that is old is somehow better.

The world of Folk song and dance is particularly prone to this brand of romanticism. Many of us spend a lot of time looking for historical precedents and much effort is spent trying to piece together a picture of what was being performed 100 years ago. At the same time we ignore what went on within the past decade or two.

## North West

Cecil Sharp was unwittingly responsible for the development of this type of mental block in the field of folk dance which resulted in an unfortunate tendency to fail to recognise and record ongoing changes. Up to the time when Sharp wrote down the details village dances had not been regarded as inviolate and had been changing, usually slowly by natural development, sometimes more dramatically by changes in personnel etc. Today this evolution seems to have stopped as the "dance according to Sharp" has become an end in itself with many Cotswold morris teams. Perhaps this blinkered approach would not have taken such a hold if we had been able to consult records of the changes and developments in dances both before, and after, Sharp's work. We may then have been able to appreciate the evolutionary process and learn to accept, rather than resist the changes. However not all dance traditions suffer from this ostrich-like attitude to the same extent as Cotswold Morris. The North West Morris tradition has benefited from a healthy rivalry between dance

teams who have been driven to develop dances in an attempt to create differences between growing numbers of teams. This rivalry, coupled with a substantial amount of research into the dances performed in the 1920's and 30's has resulted in a thriving dance scene - a living and developing tradition.

In a similar way Longsword dancing did not become a "frozen" tradition and today there is an increase in the numbers of teams performing the tradition and in the confidence and dedication the teams display.

The traditional Longsword area (Yorkshire and part of Co. Durham) now boasts 21 teams including 5 junior teams, and an increasing number of teams specialise in Longsword. A preliminary survey of over 400 dance teams brought in details of 68 teams throughout the country who dance Longsword, and provided information on the range of dances performed, the source of their information and details of other interests.

## Questionnaire

In an effort to create Longsword "archives of the future" plans are in hand to send out a detailed questionnaire to gather current information. Details such as the job or profession of team members, the distance they travel to practices, the venue and frequency of practice sessions, changes brought about by new officials or an influx of new personnel etc. are useful, especially if they are checked at intervals and changes documented.

Teams who perform Longsword, even if only occasionally, who are prepared to provide details for this survey, should contact

Trevor Stone  
6 Priory Road,  
Sale,  
Cheshire M33 2BR

for a questionnaire.

If you are interested in the findings of the full survey please send a large, self-addressed envelope with a 20p stamp and Trevor will send you a copy of the full report when it is completed in about 6 months time.

In the meantime - think about Dr. Strong's suggestions. Has your team or club got a diary or scrap-book? Do you keep a personal one? If so, look out for unusual notes and photos, but be sure to carefully record details of the more mundane, everyday aspects.

Who knows - a researcher in the year 2031 (only 50 years away) may stumble across your collection in an antique shop. Even if they don't it will give you a lot of pleasure to look back on in a few years time.

---

.... GEDDIT ??

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## INFORMATION REQUIRED

Roy Dommett has pointed out various omissions in Keith Chandler's Index. We reproduce his list here in the hope that readers may be able to help.

### ASCOTT

There are photos in Tiddy Hall in the village. Local people or the OUMM may have more dancers' names, or they may, perhaps, have been reproduced in local papers at the time. We do not have any names of the girls or whether they did the morris.

### BADBY

The Ring archive has a photo of an otherwise unknown dancer. What is the source of the photo and what else do we know about him? Butterworth got tunes from two other people at Badby - were they dancers?

### BIDFORD

John Masterson may be able to give the names of local dancers in the 1955-61 revival. We need more of the facts about the relationships and teaching of the 1904 side.

### DUCKLINGTON

We met the son of a dancer in the '60's called Jervis or Jarvis (not Jerden) who said they used to have occasional jig dancing sessions in the pub. Joe Buckingham had a Ducklington tune from a Wiggins (Biggs mss.).

### EYNSHAM

It is not certain who the dancers in the 30's were.

### LEAFIELD

Who were the boys who danced before and after WWI, some of whom were met in 1962?

### HEADINGTON QUARRY

Who was in Cox's and Kimber's side c.1910?

Who taught the Headington men who went on to Oxford City before the Headington revival in 1948?

### ILMINGTON

What are the names of the people who danced for Bennett after WWI - Sam's son Sam, for example.

### KIRTLINGTON

What are the names of the revival side in the 1920's, one of whom was seen last year at Kirtlington?

It is believed that for posterity it is important to record the EFDS inspired classes in the traditional villages. What about the mixed classes such as at Sherborne?

# DUTCH ELM MORRIS

7

## DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

PETER LORD

BOG LANE PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH HALL

TONIGHT THE H.Q.  
OF DUTCH ELM  
M.M. IS HUMMING  
WITH EXCITEMENT.

BILL CONSTANT  
(THrice VOTED  
MORRIS SMART-  
ARSE OF THE YEAR)

IS ABOUT TO ADDRESS AN E.G.M.



RON VOALE IN THE CHAIR

WELL GENTLEMEN... CHAPS  
BILL HAS KINDLY OFFERED  
TO TELL US EXACTLY WHERE  
WE'RE GOING WRONG



SO WHY DON'T  
WE ASK HIM TO...  
KEN?

POINT OF ORDER!



IS BILL ENTITLED TO ADDRESS  
THE MEETINGS?... I MEAN,  
THIS IS AN E.G.M. ISN'T IT?  
I THINK YOU'LL FIND

YES, BUT I'M  
STILL NOT SURE...

IT WOULD BE  
DIFFERENT IF IT CAME  
TO A VOTE, OF  
COURSE, BUT  
STRICTLY SPEAK

NO IT'S ALL RIGHT.  
BILL WAS MADE AN  
HONORARY MEMBER  
AFTER THE PURGE IN '75



POINT OF INFORMATION  
MR. CHAIRMAN! I THINK  
YOU'LL FIND BILL WAS  
ELECTED IN MAY '78  
A GOOD THREE MONTHS

YES QUITE!  
BUT AS TIME IS  
GETTING ON...

BILL?



THANKS RON

NOW I'VE BEEN STUDYING YOUR  
DANCING, AND I'VE PREPARED A  
SEVENTY-FIVE POINT RECOVERY  
PROGRAMME. IF YOU FOLLOW IT  
CLOSELY, I HAVE HIGH HOPES THAT  
BY THIS TIME NEXT YEAR YOU MIGHT  
BE WORTH TURNING OUT TO WATCH...  
IF THE WEATHER'S NOT TOO BAD

NOW LET'S ASK SOME GENERAL  
QUESTIONS - FIRSTLY, WHAT'S  
WRONG WITH YOUR DANCING...



INES! BOLLOCKS!

THERE'S  
NOTHING WRONG  
WITH THE LINES,  
IT'S THE MUSIC



MUSIC!? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH! I'VE BEEN PLAYING FOR FOUR YEARS NOW AND THERE'S NEVER A POINT OF ORDER!

ADDRESS THE CHAIR!

AND INCIDENTALLY, THE ONLY THING WRONG IF YOU ASK ME IS THAT THE MIDDLES AREN'T GETTING THROUGH FAST ENOUGH IN THE HEY

THAT'S MY POINT EXACTLY! THE SPEED IT'S PLAYED THERE'S NO WAY I CAN BE IN POSITION

AND I NOTICE YOU ALWAYS DANCE NUMBER THREE

LISTEN, THE MUSIC'S NEVER BEEN A PROBLEM

IT'S VERY SIMPLE. IF ONE AND TWO COULD TURN DOWN FASTER.

THE ONLY REASON THE HEYS LOOK SCRAPPY, IS WE'RE TOO SPREAD OUT!

LOOK FELLOWS... IF WE COULD JUST GET BACK TO BILL'S 75 POINT PLAN

DRUM DRUM

TAKE A VOTE

AS I WAS SAYING - WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR DANCING IS... IT'S BLOODY AWFUL! SLOPPY STEPPING, BAD TIMING, NO HEIGHT.

POINT OF INFORMATION!

AT THE 1979 A.C.M. SLOPPY STEPPING, BAD TIMING AND NO HEIGHT WERE ALL ADOPTED AS CLUB POLICY

IF YOU JUST GOT INTO POSITION.

AND WHAT'S MORE, YOUR KIT IS RIDICULOUS! YOU LOOK LIKE PANTO-MIME EXTRAS!!

WELL AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED THE DETAILS OF OUR KIT ARE ENSHRINED IN THE CLUB RECORDS FOR 1976 AND THEY CAN'T BE CHANGED WITHOUT A VOTE

ALL EXCEPT THE BALDRICS. IN THE ORIGINAL KIT, THEY WERE GREEN AND BLACK

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I'VE BEEN WITH THE CLUB FOR EIGHT YEARS AND I'VE NEVER SEEN GREEN

ANYWAY, WHAT IS THE RULE ON BREECHES? I ALWAYS THOUGHT MR. CHAIRMAN, AS WE'RE TALKING ABOUT KIT, COULD I MENTION THAT I STILL HAVEN'T BEEN PAID FOR THE HANKIES SHOULD TOUCH THE GROUND.

DAMN YOU!!!

YOU BUNCH OF USELESS WET THERPS YOU CAN ROT FOR ALL I CARE! GO BACK TO YOUR FORM-LESS OLD WAYS!

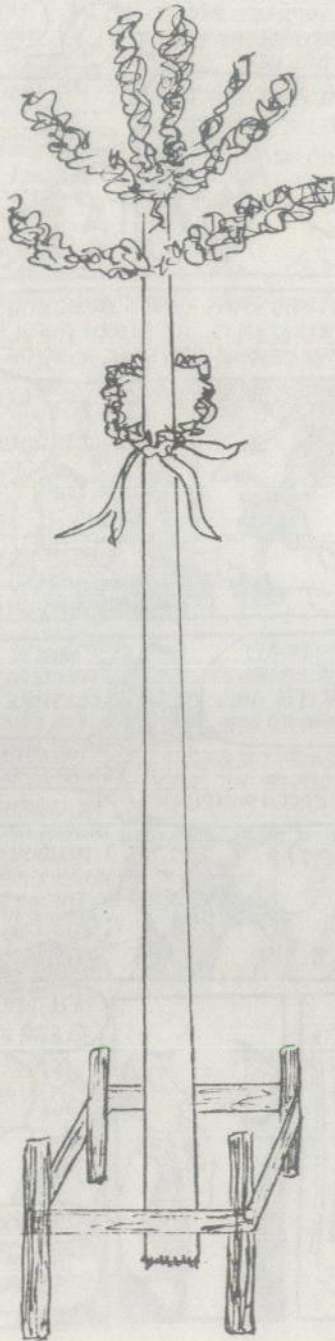
I'M OFF!!

SLAM

WELL, THAT SOUNDED CLEAR ENOUGH

I SUGGEST WE CARRY ON AS BEFORE!

GOOD IDEA ARE THEY STILL OPEN?



# May Day in Guildford

G. Frampton

On Saturday 2nd. May this year, the Pilgrim Morris Men, together with the Mayflower Ladies Morris, Yateley and Gorton Morris Men resumed their May Day revels for the sixth successive year. These activities are the brainchild of . Matthew Alexander, the Curator of Guildford Museum, whose extracurricular pursuits include membership of the Pilgrims. In fact, the custom he has revived derives from Mayday customs known to have taken place in Guildford in Tudor times, and deserves a place in the National folklore calendar alongside 'Hunting the Earl of Rone' at Combe Martin, or Dixie Fletcher's Mayday celebrations at Whitstable.

The earliest reference we have to Morris dancing in Guildford appears in the Churchwarden's Accounts of Holy Trinity Church in 1531, which states that 10d. was received of 'Fylbrett for barroweing of the morice gere'. The minute book of the Borough Court dated 8th. May 1536 gives a full and splendid account of the officers overseeing the Summer Sports now practised 450 years later. "If any young man shall from henceforth be chosen by the whole community of this town and parishioners of the same to be Summer Kings, princes and sword bearers, and if the said young men refuse to take upon them so to be for the time being, that then the king so chosen shall lose to the churches where they be parishioners 5s. of his or their own proper costs and expenses in every parish of this said town; and the prince to lose to the church which he or they be parishioners of 3s. 4d.; and the sword bearer 20d." The May sports were held under the auspices of the Mayor and Corporation, and later records suggest their continuation throughout much of the sixteenth century.

## Summer Lord

The 1555 Churchwardens' accounts indicate that 4s. 10d. was paid by 'The Summer Lord for the bread and drink left at the King game.' The role played by the Summer Lord remains unknown, but Palmer suggests he was a figure in a play depicting the visit of the Magi in 'the Three

Kings of Cologne', and acted as the 'appointed director of the parish sports'.

The Sword bearer probably carried a large ceremonial sword in procession, possibly similar to the 'Zweihander' of the Corporation plate which is used in today's Mayoral Crown Court opening ceremony.

## the pole

In 1610, the practice was in decline in keeping with the new-found puritan spirit fostered by the administration of James I. Guildford had used a summer pole as the focus of all activity, sited at St. Mary's church at Quarry Street. A letter addressed by the Earl of Nottingham to Sir George More in the Loseley Manuscripts discusses proposals to revive the summer sports and mentions that the summer pole had borne the King's arms and other arms. No custom was revived however, and in 1611 a memorandum informs that the summer pole was "by general consent of the Mayor and his bretherine taken down ... soe much of the said Somer pole as now remayneth sounde ... being ymployed for the making of ladders and towards the reparation of the said parish church of St.

Mary." The Earl of Nottingham thought that the pole's decay was not the real reason, but that Thomas Parkhurst, the mayor, was a puritan who thought the summer pole to be a pagan idol. The 1981 summer pole used was about 20 feet high, and painted white with inch broad red and blue helical stripes. Halfway up the shaft were the King's arms and the arms of the Borough of Guildford. At the very top of the erect pole was a small sprout of laurel, and suspended from the top by three red ribbons hung a large four foot circular laurel garland from which dangled red, white and blue ribbons.

After the Reformation, information

is scanty. The eighteenth century Guildford booksellers John Russell and Samuel Parvish sold morris bells 'at the sign of the Bible' among dozens of non-related items. In Guildford's locality, three morris dancers from Compton visited Loseley House at Christmas between 1769 and 1771, and Puttenham had an extant side dancing before the end of the eighteenth century, both villages being less than five miles from Guildford.

A Summer Pole was revived in Guildford in the eighteenth century. A drawing by J. Russell dated 15th. March 1791 shows a maypole outside

".... I'm still not sure ... they said something about a pre-Christian futility rite ...."



St. Thomas' Hospital at the later-styled Spital street, now the upper High Street. The water-colour shows the main shaft extending twice the height of the hospital, a shelf encircling the pole halfway up, a pennant at the top, wooden buttresses near the base, and a hint of guy ropes. The maypole stood until 1840 and was such an imposing landmark that distances to and from Guildford were measured from it.

## sweeps

Roy Judge in 'Jack in the Green' fails to mention the custom at Guildford, which had dancing sweeps in the 1830's and 40's. John Mason, who was once the Mayor, writes, "May Day was the chimney sweeps' holiday. They then dressed in suits after the manner of a harlequin, tinselled and spangled in all the colours of the rainbow, and in groups of five or six performed their peculiar dance, beating out the tune to the music of the shovel and brush, and triangle. Town houses and country mansions had to be visited, and in some of the latter were well entertained, so that the revelry occupied at least a week." No Jack in the Green is actually mentioned, although both the Surrey towns of Farnham and Dorking had them. The Chimneysweeper J. Loveland disapproved so strongly of any of his climbing boys going out in the above fashion that he had handbills printed in both 1853 and 1854 to the effect that "no boy or set of boys in his employ will parade the streets of 1st. of May next".... and... "would ask his friends as a favour not to bestow on them any money or

gift, as no party have any authority whatever for so using his name as he has entirely abandoned the custom." In 1864, the Chimney Sweeps regulation abolished climbing boys, but the custom in Guildford was long extinct. Today, a Jack in the Green accompanies the procession - without sweeps as yet.

And so the 'ritual' of Guildford May Day died, save for the motley gangs of children parading their May garlands around the grander houses, a custom which finally died out in the villages between the World Wars.

Taking the 1981 custom as typical, activities began at 10.30a.m. at the Star Inn at Quarry Street before the first procession to Holy Trinity Church up the hill to the top of the High Street at 11.00 p.m. The order of procession was as follows: Swordbearer in front; King and Queen next plus collective court, some carrying May garlands on vertical poles; the Summer Pole carried at shoulder height by four Pilgrim Morris men, and two more behind carrying the garland piece. Trailing were the four morris sides led by the resident side with their own processional dance 'Pilgrim's Progress' to the tune 'Huntsmen's Chorus'. The Jack in the Green accompanied the whole, breaking his march only to menace spectators.

## dancing

Outside Holy Trinity, the court mounted the steps to 'survey' their newly inaugurated Summer sports. Matthew Alexander addressed the Court and public with words of

welcome and explanation, then the dancing began. A cake-bearer was present in repetition of the Bampton custom.

## Green Garters

The next procession convened and proceeded down the High Street to the Castle Green via the Corn Exchange facade for the planting of the Summer Pole. A fixed groove had been dug into the lawn so that the pole could stand of its own accord without the aid of guy ropes. The Ducklington dance 'Green Garters' was performed around the pole, as once it was in that Oxfordshire village. More dancing took place during the course of the afternoon before the final procession to take down the pole at 4.30 p.m.

My own involvement with the custom was in 1979, thus in recording changes before then I rely on newspaper accounts of the day. The first year of the current revival was 1976, when the Pilgrims joined with the residents of the Guildford Star Folk club, the Ash Playmakers, the Farnborough Mummers and a morris side from Bampton. Both Rebecca Over and the Surrey Advertiser report that the accent was more on Robin Hood plays and the like in the formative years, and that someone performed a clog dance. Until 1979, the Summer pole was planted in the eyot at Millmead, the wetness of the 1979 summer perhaps prompting the new venue 'at the foot of Chapel Street' where Williamson records the old Summer Pole once stood. In 1976 at least, members of the public were invited to dance 'Sellenger's Round'

around the pole, one of the few old-English maypole dances collected. Both in 1976 and 1977, singers played their part in outdoor activities, but had disappeared by 1979 when the Mummers appeared for the last time. In 1980 and 1981 the pageantry and the Morris has taken over completely.

Perhaps too, the local 'Sealed Knot' had some influence on the costumes worn by the court. My own photographs show that in both 1979 and 1980, the Summer King was definitely of a Tudor disposition, but this year was transformed into a Lord of the Cavalier genre. In fact, one of the courtiers was wearing the regal red tunic topped with a Royalist widebrimmed hat. The Summer Queen had likewise transformed from being a red-caped royal consort with a white floral coronet, into a Stuart mistress wearing a purple and white dress and hair-do to match the period.

## 1982

The 1982 celebration will be held on Saturday May 1st, coinciding with the tenth dancing season of the Pilgrim Morris men and I understand plans are already afoot. The day will begin at 5.30 a.m. at the chapel of St. Martha near Chilworth commemorating the Good Friday dancing which once took place there in the nineteenth century.

I wish to thank Matthew Alexander for his time and generous donation of his academic references for the above, and likewise for initiating so colourful a spectacle.

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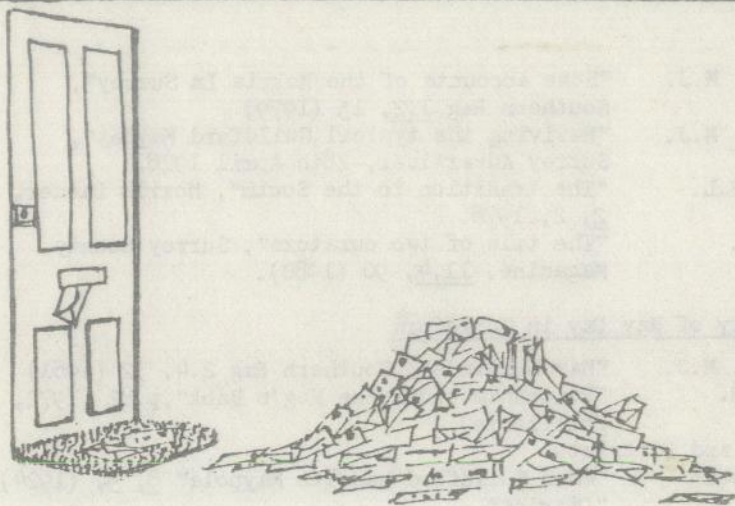
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'Nosebag' (Berkshire EFBS) Summer 1976.  
Surrey Advertiser "Oh yea, it's May Day Funtime" 7th May 1976  
"May Day treat for High Street Shoppers" 5th May '77  
"It's the Merry Month" 4th May '79.

# MAILBAG....



## Morris Posters

Dear Morris Matters,

Over the last year or so I have come to the conclusion that the morris revival is now over the hill. Many sides are having recruitment problems and many, even old established sides, are on their last legs. I cannot remember the last time that I wore kit and a member of the public did not know what I was. In fact morris has become as much a part of pub life as lukewarm Cornish pasties, and to most people, about as interesting.

This apathy is not helped by the dull, scruffy and colourless posters that the majority of sides put up to advertise their appearances. I have seen a lot of posters in my time and I can count on the fingers of one hand the number that have stimulated me enough to want to watch a display. My initial reaction to posters is often wrong, but, as a dancer myself, I will go and watch in spite of it; however I believe that most people won't.

Nevertheless, I am willing to be proved wrong, so if you have any posters that you think will do a good advertising job then send them to Morris Matters for publication (in glorious black and white, after reduction) because I for one will be interested to see them.

Richard Ashe,  
Downes Morris.

## Video

Dear Editor,

Re Chris Brady's letter in last MM:- I have some limited experience of video and the morris and I would not be so enthusiastic yet.

1)The equipment is expensive; £880 to £1000 at least for colour camera with sound, recorder, player, display and a machine for copying. Hiring equipment might be cheaper.

2)It's a lot of hours of cine before video is cheaper overall - so it needs someone who has access to the equipment bought for some other reason.

3)Video is cheap per hour of tape. Tape is not the best archive material it needs recopying every few years but it is the best medium for teaching and learning.

4)The equipment is bulky compared with cine - the operator intrudes at any function - archiving is all very well, but the process of doing it can offend, and needs some control over what is happening.

5)Nowadays crowds are so large and stand so close that good filming is impossible - what standard of record is tolerable?

6)Video makes good copy of cine film and saves wear on the originals and this should be the main way of propagation.

7)Video standards are related to local television systems, for example

the U.S. is incompatible with the U.K. and equipment to change from one standard to another is not cheap or easily available.

8)There would have to be an organisation like that for the Ring's music tapes to copy on demand and send. I am not convinced about hiring because the charge must be related to postage and usage - how often will a tape be wanted, especially of the less likely traditions and customs?

9)The problem with either medium is the effort needed to produce the raw material. It takes a number of people and a lot of commitment to go around and see teams and record them. So many groups have floundered before because of their inability to be so dedicated. If the load is spread over a lot of people we have a lot of amateur material. Who knows of professionals who would record a day of dance for £50, say?

10)Have you tried to get dances, especially stylistic things, off of film, etc? A visual record does not replace analysis, understanding and an ability to communicate it afterwards. Coaches would soon otherwise be unnecessary!

The correct argument is to reduce the morris etc to a standard recognised dance notation such as Laban. It is not much of an interlectual effort to learn, when compared to trying to do the same thing any other way, unless you think that all the things you do not know about dancing are not worth knowing about.

Roy Dommett.

## Mythology

Dear Morris Matters,

In reply to John Swift's contribution to Morris Matters Vol.4 No.2 about handouts for the morris. I would like to suggest that any performance that relies on "mythology" for its "excitement" and "audience appeal" is dead and should have been long buried. The matter becomes even more grisly when that "mythology" has to be propped up by handouts cast in the mould of the "popular press". Any performance stands or falls in the audience's gaze solely on its theatrical merits. If the morris does not make an immediate impact on the onlookers it is the dancing that is at fault. The answer is not to hire a P.R. man but to go back to the practice hall! Adderbury has decided to do without handouts this season; actually when we had them I either forgot to give them out or in doing so I felt that I was merely contributing to the national litter problem. As I think we mentioned, the handout of ours you printed was a one-off job for a set booking with a captive audience who deserved something extra for the £28 odd they had paid for their tickets. I did find it useful on those rare occasions when the press wanted to write about us but I never really considered it as suitable for general consumption - given the choice I would rather spend the money on decent headed notepaper and business cards, and striking "will be dancing here" posters.

Returning to John Swift's piece I am intrigued by the suggestion that

"it would seem probable that dance teams have always made a point of emphasising the depth of tradition behind them and the dances' magical origins." I would have thought this extremely unlikely and that traditional performers, before the leading lights of the revival told them otherwise, had very little idea as to the antiquity of their dances. I would imagine that the nearest they would get to uttering an opinion on the subject would be something along the lines of Margaret Berry's marvellous phrase, "This song is very old...and continues to be old" - old in country people's vocabulary meaning anything from 50 to 10,000 years of age. Has the authentic voice of tradition ever expressed a view on the magical origins of morris, or a view on anything else for that matter, apart perhaps for commenting on the cost of shoe leather? Someone who knows about these sorts of things ought to tell us.

Having disagreed with John I would like to do an apparent about face and disagree with something said by Keith Chandler in his article "Academic Perceptions of the Morris". Certainly the "controversial debate over origins" should never "side-track" us from the main business of dancing; however while certain factions within the morris world use arguments based on the old idea of a male fertility ritual to decry the efforts of other groups to participate in the morris then the matter ceases to be something which is only of interest to the antiquary. The issue of origins continues to be a live one as long as this myth, which seems increasingly to be a nineteenth century invention, is used to justify the prejudices of

those who can see no further than the bottom of their beer glass.

Let's look at the evidence, get the story right and perhaps somewhere along the way put one more nail in the coffin of the 'man is God's gift to morris' lobby.

'Mythology' should never come between a dancer and the audience, neither does it really need to be pushed down the public's throat as part of a tasteful typographical exercise. However, as long as the question of origins remains such a divisive one it deserves the serious attention of us all.

Stephen Wass,  
(on behalf of himself).

### Fools' Workshop 3

Dear Morris Matters,

Most fools, as I, begin fooling by accident; being pushed in at the deep end. There is little time or attempt to discuss the job. Many fools, as I, have to rely on sheer adrenalin to propel them through the first season while they struggle to work out the relationships for which the fool is responsible: with the audience, the side, the musician, individual dancers, and even stray dogs. This is no mean feat, and all done in the full (often painful) public gaze. There is no notation, no skill standards, no book of Best Fools' Gags, little research, and, worst of all, no-one else to blame if things go wrong.

Fooling is a rôle which, at its best, demands good dance knowledge, good

historical knowledge, a liking for public relations work, imagination and sometimes ESP. If one carries on fooling long enough much of this "comes with practice", but, as with set dancers, fools can settle for a low standard, and some seem content to fool around rather than fool. I suspect that this is a result of the initial push into the deep end; some sink immediately and others continue to flounder because of the lack of continuing support and encouragement.

Fools need to talk to others about their rôle. Hopefully others can turn to a thinking, caring side, and get positive ideas, but, however supportive, a set dancer cannot fully appreciate the particular problems of the fool. Discussions about the fools' job, common problems, and standards need to be held both before a fool takes on the job and after doing it for some time. Sides (well most sides) would not dream of letting a dancer appear in public before they had "found their feet", knew what they were doing and "fitted" with the set. However, that is not the end of dancing, that is the beginning, and dancers continue to grow through practice and discussion. The continued discussion does not mean that all dancers grow to be identical. Fools like set dancers are not born - they can be made, and, like dancers, can always be made better.

You have had 2 letters from two of the many fools in existence, expressing directly contradictory views. This alone demonstrates the need for, and probable benefit of, a meeting of these great minds in person.

Cherry Simmons.

