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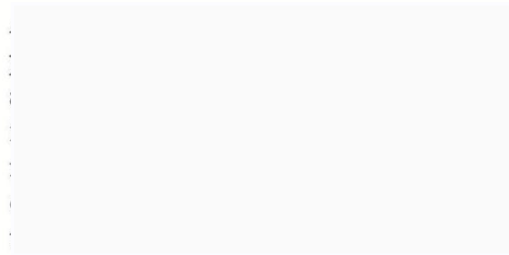
MOLLY

**Dancing into the
Twenty-first Century**
Researched by Tony Forster



A Morris Federation Publication

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1. Introduction: Purpose of the book

Ignored by Mr. Sharp (who regarded it, on the basis of what he heard, as 'corrupt'); not included by Lionel Bacon in his Black Book ... where did Molly dancing come from? What is it now and where is it perhaps going? For the mildly interested reader and for the enthusiast, this book aims to answer these questions.

One thing this book is not is a 'How to do it' manual. Molly is just emerging from the narrowness of its first expansion in a hundred years. From the decline and repression of the early twentieth century, Molly was forgotten until the 1970s started the revival. The late 80s and early 90s saw a revival of interest in Molly, from many areas and individuals.

This was 'A Good Thing'. What was perhaps less good was the resulting uniformity, arising from the inspiration for the revival. The immense achievements and creativity of Seven Champions (hereafter referred to as Champs) brought Molly to the world's attention, and also led the less experienced to a narrow (and historically totally unjustified) view of what Molly was and is. This is not the fault of the Champs, who always stress the importance of teams finding their own Molly from first principles. Some teams are just starting to do that, even if they started out as Champs' imitators. This book aims to illustrate what Molly was and is, and to give a taste of some of its variety.

The answer to 'How to do it' is to read what was, watch what is, think, and create your own, after immersing yourself in what we know of Molly in the past.

2. Molly: the tradition

Living where we did and how we did, we used to make the most of anything a bit out o' the ordinary, and we looked for'ard from one special day to the next. Looking back on it now, I'm surprised to see how many high days and holidays there were during the year that we kept, and we certainly made the most of any that children could take part in at all. ...

The Molly Dancers 'ould come round the fen from Ramsey and Walton all dressed up. One would have a fiddle and another a dulcimer or perhaps a concertina and play while the rest danced. This were really special for Christmas Eve, but o' course the dancers cou'n't be everywhere at once on one day, so they used to go about on any other special day to make up for it. They'd go from pub to pub, and when they'd finished there, they'd go to any houses or cottages where they stood a chance o' getting anything. If we ha'n't got any money to give 'em, at least they never went away without getting a hot drink.

These are the words of her mother, Kate Edwards (nee Papworth), retold by Sybil Marshall. Her mother's memory is of the 1890's and Sybil is retelling it in her book 'Fenland Chronicle' in 1967 - ten years before 'revival Molly' started.

What do we learn of Molly from this innocent source? Let's try some headings:

- Geography. The folk collectors concentrated near Cambridge. This source is closer to Peterborough - but it is clearly linked to the reclaimed land of the Cambridgeshire Fens and its neighbourhood. The last collected occasion is 1934, at Little Downham, near Ely.
- Place in the calendar. Sybil's mother talks elsewhere of 'Plough Witching' (known elsewhere as 'mumping') in connection with Plough Monday; this was a custom close in origin and philosophy to the modern Hallowe'en 'trick or treat'; involving, typically, young people dressing as hideous caricatures of old women, going round from door to door soliciting money or other reward. But Molly dancing is also clearly part of the mid-winter for Kate Edwards. Whether the Twelve Days of Christmas, or the time of the Lord of Misrule, or New Year be the focus, Molly attaches to the darkest, most dreary part of the year. Note, too, the link with 'The Straw Bear': Sybil refers to the Ramsey Straw Bear (which the 'Fenland Chronicle' describes); modern Molly is best seen at the only (so far) revived Straw Bear, in Whittlesey.
- Purpose. Unquestionably a cadging custom! The aim of the dancers is to extract money, or a (hot?) drink. The traditional time, and the expectation of generosity at this time, reinforces the legitimacy. At Balsham, the Plough Witches saw it as *necessary to keep up the day*.
- Collectable details: almost none exist here or elsewhere!! Sybil talks of instruments such as you might commonly find at such a place and such a time, (the hammer dulcimer is an East Anglian instrument; Sybil's own father played the Anglo concertina) and of the dancers being 'all dressed up'. Nothing more.

That's not a bad starting place for considering the traditional basis for Molly.

Molly was the 'ritual' dance of Cambridgeshire, 'ritual' here implying that it was performed as a public display at particular occasions or times of the year.

What we can say with any certainty is not rooted in the distant past. We can say nothing about the period before 1820: we are not even sure that there was Molly dancing (though there certainly was a variety of Morris in some sense). The Cambridgeshire Fens are a wild enough place now: before 1820, it is not surprising that no academic or media recording happened.

Let's start with Mr Sharp. The manuscript notebooks of Cecil Sharp in Clare College Library, Cambridge, contain a reference, under the date 8th September 1911, to Plough Monday dancing at Littleport.

Jonathon Clingo, aged 85, at Littleport, told me that 6 men called Morris dancers used to go round the village on Plough Monday and the neighbouring villages. One man dressed in women's clothes, led by a man with a long feather sticking straight out of his cap. Also a fiddler and a sweeper with a broom. The 6 men had white shirts with ribbons and scarves all over them and high box hats. In the evening they had a ball to which the others came, and all danced, very often to a fight to a finish between men representing two different villages. The Morris dancers didn't act a play but simply jigged about. No bells, no sticks, no handkerchiefs. ... No plough. ...

Robert Grinditon (aged 80) at Ely workhouse gave me a few details about Plough Monday which was evidently a regular thing in these parts 20 or 30 years ago. The sweeper they called Humpty. He had a hump on his back, a besom in his hand, his face blackened and a long tail of braided straw hanging down his back. There was also a fiddler and a man with a tambourine. The dancers had ribbons down their sleeves and all down their trousers. ...

At Little Downham they had 3 dancers and a man-woman who danced and caused much mirth. The man used to 'kiss her and one thing and another'. The sweeper swept children off the dancing ground, and the snow away when there was any.

Let's go further back: Josiah Chater's diary (now in Cambridge Folk Museum - he being a Cambridge resident).

12th January 1845. The first thing this morning was the morris dancers it being Plough Monday. They did kick up such a row as I never heard in all my life: all day long: men, women and boys.

Another contemporary observer: S. P. Widnall, in his privately printed history of Grantchester, recorded in 1875:

Boys go round the village in a party of 30 or 40, and at each door shout in chorus: 'Pray bestow a ha'penny on the poor plough boy - woa-ho-up', repeated many times with a loud cracking of whips.

Some of the young men go 'Ploughmondaying', but they usually go into Cambridge for the day and make the round of the village in the evening. They deck themselves in ribbons and one of their number is dressed as a woman. A fiddler accompanies them and at intervals they stop in the street and dance, one or two going round to beg of passers-by. Only men and boys take part.

The local press contains numerous (usually disapproving) references to the customs around Plough Monday:

The plough-boys of this town on Monday last persisted in the ancient custom of drawing an old plough through the streets and dressing themselves in the most ludicrous fashion, disfiguring their features by blacking the nose and mouth, with artificial humps on their backs, and rattling the indispensable box to all they came in contact with - frightening the children, drawing smiles from the lovers of fun and a few coppers from the generous...
(Cambridge Independent Press, 18th January 1862)

A quantity of wild bucolic dances was executed in the street to the enchanting accompaniment of a hurdy-gurdy and a badly tuned fiddle, whilst passers-by were attacked mercilessly for coppers...Plough Monday is a nuisance and needs one...to put it down...
(Cambridge Chronicle and University Journal, 14th January 1865)

Let's start to analyse some of this.

Appearance

Disguise, cross-dressing and a weirdness of fancy dress are typical. Like Plough Witches, Molly dancers often aimed at a grotesque look.

Fenland storyteller W. H. Barrett describes the effect of Molly in Brandon Creek:

The young men dressed up in fancy costume, some as males with belts and garters of straws, some as women with girdles of horse-chestnuts and garters strung with acorns, then to the accompaniment of 'music' made by beating sticks on pails of old tin baths, a plough was dragged round and money demanded. Should any housewife refuse to give a copper or two, then the 'females' of the party took off the long-legged drawers they wore and tied them round the ungenerous woman's neck while everyone chanted.

Describing the Whittlesey Straw Bear party, the Peterborough and Huntingdonshire Standard of 16th January 1886 says they were *dressed in all manner of fashions, some being painted to resemble Red Indians.*

The Cambridge Chronicle of 18th January 1851 describes *...Parties of five, dressed and beribboned in a most grotesque fashion to represent various beings, human or otherwise....*

At Little Downham in 1932, Fred Shelton, leader of the dancers, wore a pink coat and trousers and a pink top hat with flowers round it; another dancer wore an old black tailcoat with a kind of long white pigtail hanging down the back of it; others wore goggles.

In Milton, near Cambridge, Mrs Goodin told Russell Wortley that the Molly dancers danced on Boxing Day and wore a variety of animal heads - not masks but full heads which were kept from year to year - a pig's head, a donkey's and a cow's.

Common features in most of the accounts include disguise (sometimes faces blacked, sometimes more exotic - goggles, animal heads, bonnets); cross-dressing; 'carnival' decoration - ribbons, sashes, rosettes or 'fancy dress'. There is little evidence of a common uniform - the effect is more home-made and ad-hoc with an enthusiasm for shocking everyday expectations. Sybil Marshall's brother Gerald met masked ploughboys in Ramsey on Plough Monday, 1934 and was so startled and upset by their appearance that he fell off his

bicycle, was nearly struck by a car and fled to the nearest house, where the guard dog escaped and attacked the plough boys.

A nineteenth century Cambridge paper expresses it well:

...truculent rustics dressed in an outlandish and savage guise, who paraded in companies of six or eight and after executing a wild and somewhat terrific kind of dance, surrounded passengers and made violent incursions into shops demanding money....

The dances

Sharp (and others) ignored Molly in his published work largely because the dances he observed were in essence the social dances of the area and time, used for 'ritual' purposes. Richard Humphries felt that *dance collectors inspired by the success of Cecil Sharp and his contemporaries tended to judge any dance collecting against the general pattern set by the familiar Cotswold form of the Morris. Those who saw Molly dancing, or were given second-hand accounts by former dancers, assumed that the dance was a degenerate form of the Morris. It lacked the spectacular capers and other outstanding features of Cotswold Morris and as a result was considered relatively unworthy of study, let alone collecting.* (R. Humphries "'...for a little bit of sport': Molly dancing and Plough Monday in East Anglia" Linton: R. & K. Humphries (1986) p1).

In analysing what actually happened, a nice starting point is a comment from a nineteenth century chronicler of 'British Popular Customs', Thistleton Dyer: *he dances about as gracefully as the hippopotamus.*

William Palmer saw (and photographed) the last 'traditional' performances of Molly dancing, in Little Downham in 1932 and 1933: there was very little in the dancing, and at each place they merely *jigged about in couples turning slowly round. The steps consisted of right hop, left hop, springing to the right and left alternately. The movement resembled a country dance setting except that the men held each other and moved in the same direction.*

Cecil Sharp comments (in his unpublished notes): *the ordinary, everyday dance of the country-folk, performed not merely on festal days, but whenever opportunity offered and the spirit of merrymaking was abroad. The step and figures are simple and easily learned, so that anyone of ordinary intelligence and of average physique can without difficulty qualify as a competent performer* (Sharp 1934, 12).

Cyril Papworth, whose father danced, recorded seven 'feast dances' - ordinary social dances - used by the Comberton and Girton Molly dancers, plus one which was not a social dance - 'Special Molly'. All the Comberton and Girton dances are in longways sets, with a sequence of repeated figures after a progression. Each includes an upper arm hold, two-handed swing, and is danced to a well-known tune such as 'Keel Row', 'Brighton Camp', 'Smash the Windows'. Polkas, hornpipes and jigs are used. Interestingly, some later references are to various more modern styles of dance - waltzes or even tangos. The dances are always secondary to the occasion. There is no evidence of a mythical long-lost specialised Molly repertoire - what made everyday dances into Molly was the occasion, the appearance and the purpose.

The Comberton and Girton dances, as taught by Cyril Papworth, are included in this publication. They are all we have as a link to what Molly was. All Molly teams, in my view, need to start from the collected tradition, including the collected dances, and refer back to it and them constantly as they develop their own approach.

Purpose

Here are some initial guidelines, based upon what we have read so far:

- Molly was practical - it was about entertainment in an area and at a time which saw little to divert it. Of course, as an entertainment, it expects its reward: Wortley and Papworth report that *the cadgers, who had one or two rosettes pinned to their jackets, customarily carried a large spoon or ladle for collecting the money, which was then transferred to a box.*
- Molly is about a challenge to the 'normal' rules. Blackened faces are an excellent way for dancers to disguise themselves from their neighbours and acquaintances as they became performers and danced for money. More interestingly, men dancing in women's clothes have a long history amongst rioters, outlaws and rebels (likewise, the Victorian women who 'dressed liked men' - in trousers - scandalised their age).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, London had its "Molly houses" where homosexual men met to drink, dance (!), flirt, dress as women and have sex. Margaret Clap's Molly house in Field Lane, Holborn was raided in 1726 and more than 40 men were arrested: Clap herself was fined, imprisoned and sentenced to stand in a pillory in Smithfield Market.

- Molly dancers aren't quite sane. Molly was a midwinter dance - Boxing Day, New Year, and Plough Monday - at a time when no one sensible danced outside, true even today.
- Molly is honest: never having been tainted by the 'pagan fertility rite' nonsense, having none of the paraphernalia (bells, hankies), which marks out Morris dancers. Consequently, Molly dancers largely escape the ridicule thrown at (in particular) Morris dancers. One of my own treasured memories is of walking in kit through Ramsey, we were dancing for the switching on of the Christmas lights. A small child saw us passing and ran to its mother, crying "*Look, Mummy, it's ... um ... it's ... um ...*".
- Molly was no more complicated than it needed to be. What we know of the dances themselves suggests an admirable and typically Fenland economy of repertoire: perhaps half a dozen drawn from the all year round, high days and holidays social dance repertoire. Cyril Papworth's publication of the Comberton dances simply talks of the 'Feast Dances of Cambridgeshire'.

The occasion itself was the priority, not the complexity of the dances (or the energy or skill of the dancers, as far as we can tell). A visit from a sociable group, some colour and some theatricality, lively music - these were more than enough to make a midwinter Molly tour to an isolated Fenland village a success. The dances weren't showy, or even special (the audience danced many of the same themselves at social events) because they didn't need to be.

To summarise then: Molly traditionally was a midwinter dance for the entertainment of its audience and the reward of its performers, which relied upon occasion, seasonal generosity and annual expectation, noise and strangeness of appearance for its effect. The dance repertoire was that which was readily to hand.

Such is the inspiration to which we need to keep returning as we study Molly's modern evolution.

3. *The collected dances: Comberton and Girton*

The source is Cyril Papworth, born 1913, who collected with Russell Wortley in 1960 from 'Turk' Chapman, then 90, and supplemented the notation from his grandfather, uncle and aunt, who remembered the dances as Molly or as 'Feast' (social) dances. 'College Hornpipe' is associated with Girton (now a northern suburb of Cambridge), the others mainly with Comberton (though other villages remember the same dances as social dances).

Set pattern

A line of 'men' facing a line of 'women' - odds act as social dance 'men', evens as 'women'. Many dances require 'hands four from the top' to establish working sets of two couples (i.e 1, 2, 3, 4 dance together as do 5, 6, 7, 8). Dances are for six or eight.

Men		Women
1	Top couple	2
3		4
5		6
(7		8)

Stepping

A double step, without particular vigour or emphasis: a one-two-three-hop with an easy rhythm. For the swing, couples take hold with hands on the upper arm of their partners and arms kept straight. Move in circles with a light double step, always starting with the 'man' stepping to the side with a left foot lead and the 'woman' stepping to the same side with a corresponding right foot lead. Each couple rotates clockwise around the other, then changes to anti-clockwise.

In the promenade, take hold of partner's hand and hold hands at about shoulder height. Walk in time to the music with a slightly exaggerated swagger - head held high. Any 'about-turns' need to be done smartly.

Performance

The notation which follows largely represents the dances as performed by Old Hunts Molly, who dance Molly only for Whittlesey Straw Bear and Plough Monday in Fenstanton. A mixed Cotswold team for the rest of the year (Fenstanton Morris), they were taught Molly in 1980 by Cyril Papworth.

They dance in costume resembling nineteenth century farm workers - corduroy trousers with 'lallygags' i.e. twine tied below the knee, heavy boots, tweed-type jackets and waistcoats, bowler or cap for the men, all decorated with random ribbons; long skirts, aprons, bonnets for the women. The top couple are the 'Lord' - top hat, 'mayoral' chain - and the 'Lady' - the Molly, a (usually tall) man dressed in a clashing and comical version of a woman's dress, usually involving balloons for breasts and pantomime rouged cheeks. Men only wear smeared blacking.

CROSS HAND POLKA

Dance for eight.

Tune: Cross Hand Polka

Originally the dance was done eight times, until the top couple have worked their way back to the top. The shortened version usually danced now is described.

A1 & A2 Corners cross.

B1 Promenade.

B2 Swing.

Repeat three times

Corners cross

First time: 1&4/5&8 right hand turn and left hand turn back to place (eight steps); 2&3/6&7 right hand turn and left hand turn back to place (eight steps).

Second time: middle four (1&2, 7&8) cross; others stand out.

Third time: all cross.

Fourth time: middles only.

Promenade

First time: top couples (1&2/5&6) promenade down set and back (eight steps).

Second time: 1&2 only.

Third time: 1&2 and new top couple (original 3&4).

Fourth time: 3&4 only.

Swing

Couples polka round each other — one and a half turns - to progress:

First time: Dancers 1&2 change places with 3&4, 5&6 change places with 7&8;

Second time: middle four only (1&2, 7&8) while others swing on spot;

Third time: all swing and change in mini-sets of four;

Fourth time; middle four change while new top couple (7&8) swings alone and 1&2 swing from bottom of set, behind odds, to finish dance at top (eight steps each time).

Note: For A1, collected dance has turn of 180 degrees for each four bars - right, then left; as danced, it has normally been 360 degrees each four bars.

BIRDS-A-BUILDING

Dance for eight.

Tune: Old Hunts use 'Dorset Four Hand Reel'; Papworth gives tune unique to dance

A1 & A2 Squares.
B1 Promenade.
B2 Swing.
Repeat three times (or seven!).

Squares

First time in 'sets' of four (1&3 with 2&4 and 5&7 with 6&8), pass partner right shoulders across the length of the set (four steps) and then 3&4 and 7&8 face up, 1&2 and 5&6 face down. Pass left shoulders along the set (four steps). Continue in same style around the other two sides of the 'little squares' and back to place (eight steps). Subsequent times follow the pattern in "Cross Hand Polka".

Promenade, swing

Exactly as in "Cross Hand Polka".

SIX HAND REEL

Dance for eight.

Tune: Brighton Camp

A1 & A2 Top couple cross.
B1 Promenade.
B2 Swing.
Repeat three (seven!) times.

Top couple cross

Top couple cross at top of set passing right shoulders and cast down on opposite side to the bottom of the set (eight steps). Cross at bottom of set and return to place (eight steps).

Promenade

Top couple only promenade down set and back (eight steps).

Swing

All couples polka whilst first couple swing behind odds to bottom (eight steps).

COLLEGE HORNPIPE - Traditionally a very lively dance

Dance for six.

Tune: College Hornpipe

- A1 All take hands in a ring and slip-step sideways to left.
- A2 Repeat to the right, back to place.
- B1 Odds put arm round partner's waist; evens put hands on partner's shoulders. All face up and cast off to the left to bottom of set and back up the middle to places.
- B2 All polka to change places with tops moving to bottom and rest moving up one place.

Repeat until 1&2 are back at the head of the set.

Note: Original collected versions for the polka at B2 have only the top and middle couples changing places and the tops walking down to the bottom after their second turn!

GYPSIES IN THE WOOD

Dance for six.

Tune: Smash the Windows

- A1 Numbers 1&2&4 join hands in a ring and dance round anticlockwise twice.
- A2 Numbers 1&2&3 join hands in a ring and dance round clockwise twice.
- B1 Top couple promenade down and back again.
- B2 All polka with top couple moving to the bottom of set.

Repeat until 1&2 back at the top.

Note: Collected variations have A2 danced by 3&5&6. Also, some versions have at B2, top and middle couples changing places, which leads to later problems in progression.

DOUBLE CHANGE SIDES

Dance for six.

Tune: Speed the Plough is suggested; none was collected.

- A1 Numbers 2&4 holding hands walk forwards between 1&3 and fall back to place.
- A2 Numbers 1&3 repeat with 2&4.
- B1 Top couple promenade down and back to place.
- B2 All polka with top couple moving to bottom of set.

Repeat until 1&2 back to top.

UP THE MIDDLE AND DOWN THE SIDES

Dance for eight.

Tune: Shave the Donkey or Bob Ridley O.

(Unfortunately, the 'Special' Dance uses the same tune so the Keel Row is a possible substitute).

A1 & A2 Slip down.

B1 & B2 Lead over.

A3 & A4 Pushme-pullyou.

B3 & B4 Swing.

Repeat until all four couples have been 'top' or until Numbers 1&2 are back at the top.

Note: if "Bob Ridley O" is used, the order is AABC.

Slip down

Top couple take hands and slip-step down the set and back, facing throughout (four bars). Others stand. Repeat for second four bars.

Lead over

No 1 leads 2 down set to the bottom making an arch over the heads of 3, 5, 7, dancing, with 1 on the inside, and then back up over the heads of 8, 6, 4 to place. Others stand.

Pushme-pullyou

All take hands. Top couple moves with 2 going backwards, others move with the odds going backwards. Set moves back and forth to facilitate 'weaving' of the top couple to bottom place, moving opposite to the others. Each arm of the figure needs four definite (stamped) walking steps.

Swing

All polka in place. 1&2 are now at the bottom of the set.



Old Hunts Molly

THE 'SPECIAL' DANCE

Dance for six, linked in pairs by holding knotted pairs of handkerchiefs high overhead throughout the dance.

Tune: There is no record of the traditional tune but Cyril Papworth suggested 'Shave the Donkey'. The Cambridgeshire version of this tune (Bob Ridley O) fits very well indeed. (See 'Up the Middle and Down the Sides').

This is the one Molly dance that did not also appear as a Feast dance.

A1 & A2 Triangles.

B1 Lead down.

B2 Swing.

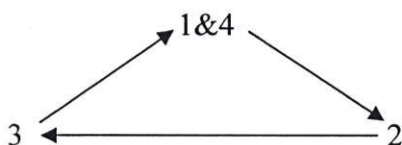
Repeat twice

Note: if Bob Ridley O is used the order is AABC

Triangles

Individuals dance in a triangle shape, facing their partner (four steps: one on spot, one diagonally left and forward, one to right, one diagonally left and backwards to place), then cross over to change place (four steps). Repeat back to place.

Position after each of the first 4 steps:



Lead down

Top couple face down, others face up. Tops dance under arches to the bottom of the set and make an arch themselves. Other couples follow suit to regain original places.

Swing

All polka. Top couple dances to the bottom of the set and others move up one place.

THE COMBERTON BROOM DANCE

This version is from Cyril Papworth, whose grandfather and uncle danced it. The dance is part of the 'pub' repertoire, rather than the Molly repertoire, though it is nowadays associated with Molly.

No special tune is recorded; the tunes associated with it are 'Keel Row' and 'Cross Hand Polka'.

- A Once to yourself - rattle head of broom on floor on last bar.
- A Dance round, clockwise. Hold broom in right hand and dance round, using the Polka step - 3 short steps and a hop or lift, raising the knee of the free leg in front and rattling broom head with music.
- B Leg-over-broom: the handle is passed to and fro under each leg in turn (under left first) while hopping on alternative feet, and rattling broom head.
- A Dance round - in last bar, lay broom on floor, bristles down.
- B Step-up-broom - kick it up on last 2 beats. With broom on floor, start at handle, facing head: move halfway up right side of handle and back, hopping on left foot and swinging right foot over to touch floor on left of handle, and then on right - 2 bars up and 2 bars back. Repeat on left side of handle with opposite feet but continue forward to broom head, turn, landing on left foot facing handle on left side of broom, then with right foot on nearest side of head lever the handle up, catching it with the right hand.
- A Rattle broom - increase tempo. The head is rattled from side to side in time with the music while the dancer keeps stepping from side to side.
- B Rattle broom - increase tempo.
- A Dance round - lively step.
- B Broom-under-legs - as in Morris Fool's Jig.
- A Rattle broom.
- B Dance round - slow tempo in last 4 bars, lay broom on floor, in last bar.
- A & B Hobby horse. With broom on floor, start at handle facing head; dance 3 bars towards head on right side of handle; in Bar 4 while still facing the same way, place left foot on nearest side of head to lever the handle up into the left hand; turn left to face handle and swing right leg over broom. Bar 5 - dance forward up handle to end, using broom as a Hobby Horse (Bars 6-8A and 1-6B); dismount by swinging left leg over handle, then rattle broom on last 2 bars.
- A Dance round.
- B Finish - shoulder broom and walk or dance slowly off.

The first part is danced at a moderate speed with only gentle rattling of the broom, but after the step up the broom comes to life and the dance becomes brisk and lively, slowing down again for the Hobby Horse figure.

4. *Seven Champions*

(Editors note: This section was revised by Jameson Wooders of Seven Champions in November 2003)

Team background

Seven Champs were formed in August 1977, out of the dissatisfaction of founder Dave Dye with the Cotswold Morris he had been dancing with Headcorn. Inspired in part by what John Kirkpatrick's Shropshire Bedlams had done with Welsh Border Morris, the dancers investigated various performing options (including a local Mummings' play called "The Seven Champions of Christendom" which eventually gave them their name) before research at Cecil Sharp House led to a decision to develop Molly.

Seven Champs were the first and most successful team to bring Molly into the performance repertoire. They have performed extensively at festivals over the years and have the reputation of having honed their performance skills to craft an entertaining and striking show for the biggest arena. Nowadays they draw their members from all over South-East England: a fair number also dance with other (often Cotswold) teams. Performance and the success their skills bring are more important than a "club" feel. The dancers are all male; musicians include a woman singer, Alison Thornley.

Performance calendar - Seven Champs dance throughout the year but less frequently now than in the past.

Philosophy

Seven Champs have their roots in the upheaval of tradition which the 1970s spawned. Folk-rock had led to a re-evaluation and reworking of the collected material. An example of this phenomenon is an LP by Ashley Hutchings called "Rattlebone and Ploughjack" which represented music and accounts of Border Morris and Molly. In Cotswold Morris circles, Old Spot were exciting audiences with traditionally based but very energetic, distinctive and highly skilled approach to a single village tradition; Shropshire Bedlams were a magnet for amazed and admiring crowds with their modern kit (jeans and white shoes) but traditionally inspired vigorous and showy Border dances.

Seven Champs took the more or less virgin world of Molly, developed from it a very distinctive style and an individual repertoire. They aimed to dance it with precision, energy, showmanship and élan. Humour, parody, musical innovation, visual and verbal conceits and professionalism combined to create a show whose entertaining presentation was built on a solid foundation of highly skilled dancers working together in well-rehearsed routines.

The performance introductions still create an obvious fantasy world (the treacle miners of Kent) but are always entertaining. At times they play with the audience - dancing with a gap in the set and talking throughout to the invisible dancer Bert; parodying the "Bacca Pipes" jig by enlisting two members of the audience to be tied together back-to-back sitting down back-to-back and dancing around them, threatening them with the landing of a hobnailed boot (belonging to a dancer who is supposedly drunk) between their legs.

Appearance

The team seeks uniformity and anonymity of appearance. Inspired by some early twentieth century accounts of Molly in Cambridgeshire, they wear white collarless shirts (sleeves rolled up), dark brown cord trousers, hobnail boots, lallygags, top hats with green, yellow and maroon ribbons and wide sashes with rosettes. Very thorough black faces complete the removal of any individual identity.

One or two Mollies (men dressed as a woman) dance in the set with 1930s style dress, bloomers, apron and mop cap over the normal kit. There is no attempt to pretend that either Molly is anything other than a man wearing a dress.

The dancers do not smile: even as the Molly announces an implausible tale, the men are grim faced and intent, distant from the audience.



Music

Seven Champs have a particular emphasis on entertaining and innovative presentation. Their use of a wide variety of always striking music is part of this.

Country dance tunes have been typically used in Molly - particularly hornpipes. Seven Champs have moved beyond this convention and use jazz and more modern popular tunes, altering them to create the rhythm and pattern (usually AABB) needed for dancing. Tunes are chosen because they give something interesting to the dance – for example, a 5/4 tune in which the dancers must dance across the beat.

They frequently dance to a single singer whose clear and powerful voice, singing slowly and with perfect pace, provides a striking counterpart to the beat of the hobnails hitting the ground. Melodeon, saxophone and taragot is regularly used, often playing jazz or popular tunes. Only one instrument is used at a time except in “Mornington Crescent” which features several dancing musicians and an equal number of dancers.

Dancing style

Seven Champs adopt a slow, crisp, standardised, energetic but controlled style, immediately recognisable (even amongst their imitators). They dance single step-hop with perfect timing using the arm opposing the lifted knee. The step (on the odd beat) has an accentuated lift of the knee. The bent arm movement is a pumping action. Some swings and some other distinctive movements are characterised by thrusting the outside arm up, stiff and spiky, with a clenched fist.

They emphasise their harmony with the music by the regular metallic stomp of their hobnailed boots. When a dancer is not actively dancing (while others are dancing or while the set is waiting for the announcer to complete the introduction) he stands perfectly still, head up, feet apart, hands grasped behind his back.

The long years of practice and the high average level of dancers' individual skills enable Champs to present a very uniform, militarily exact show. Their many imitators in the 1990s have noted with admiration their performances and their success and copied the style without always having the skills or discipline to achieve a similar result.

Derivation of dances

Seven Champs started from the collected Comberton and Girton repertoire and worked on developing their style in finding entertaining ways to present these dances. Although a version of Birds-a-Building is still danced, the majority of their dances are invented - some inspired by the collected repertoire or by other traditional dances (from the Cotswold, social dance or Border repertoire). All are presented in a distinctive style which binds them together and disguises their varying origins. New dances are worked on over a period of time by an organic process to which any member of the team may contribute.

OVER THE PEOPLE

Dance for four people

Tune: Headington "Bacca Pipes" (a version of Greensleeves).

This dance is an adaptation of a Cotswold jig which was done over a pair of crossed clay pipes. The dancer was able to demonstrate considerable control and skill by avoiding stepping on the pipes and thus breaking them. This version is done over the splayed legs of two people (members of the audience) who sit back-to-back in the centre of the dance area, arms entwined: the effect of the dance is derived from the tension of the hobnail boots hitting the ground close to the groin of the (usually male) victims.

- | | |
|----|------------------------|
| A1 | Dance around 1. |
| B1 | Step over legs 1. |
| A2 | Dance around 2. |
| B2 | Step over legs 2. |
| A3 | Dance around 3. |
| B3 | Step over legs 3. |
| A4 | Basket. |
| B4 | Step over legs 4. |
| A5 | Basket. |
| B5 | Step over legs (Last). |

Dance around 1

Molly dances clockwise around the victims (16 bars); the step is a single step with the free foot striking the ground in front of the weight-bearing foot on the hop.

Step over legs 1

Starting between the legs of one of the victims, dance the sequence: feet together, right foot across and over the right leg of the victim, feet together, left foot heel down, feet together, right foot over left leg of the victim and change weight onto the right foot in the new spot, feet together, left foot heel down. Repeat in each quadrant, starting with the feet together, threatening the crotch area of the two victims.

Dance around 2

Molly dances round as in 1, while another dancer joins (business: Molly yells to audience "He don't know this!").

Step over legs 2

Second dancer only steps as in 1.

Dance around 3

Both dancers at once.

Step over legs 3

Both dancers dance the sequence as in 1, in opposite quadrants.

Basket

Two more dancers join, moving into the empty spots. They link up, arms on shoulders, and circle left, eight bars stepping over legs, then reverse.

Step over legs 4

The two new dancers dance as in 1.

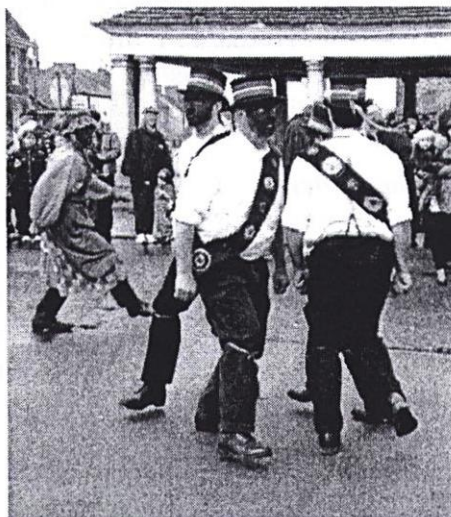
Step over legs (Last)

All four do the stepping, faster and faster.

ROUND MIDNIGHT

A dance for five people in a square set with the Molly in the middle. Danced to a step-hop. (This dance may well have evolved since it was collected.)

1 2
 Molly
3 4



Tune: Round Midnight.

- A1 Hey of top three.
- A2 Hey of bottom
 three.
- B1 Star burst hey.
- A3 Top right hey.
- A4 Bottom left hey.
- B2 Dodging hey.

Hey of top three

Molly dances a reel of three (twice through) with 1 and 2.

Hey of bottom three

Molly dances a reel of three (twice through) with 3 and 4.

Star burst hey

Molly dances clockwise quarter-way round set as the other dancers come into the middle and rotate three-quarters round the centre. (This will be repeated 3 more times at the end of which all dancers are in their original positions.) They split off to the corners while the Molly comes into the middle. Molly leaves the same way he came in and continues clockwise quarter way round the set while the other dancers come into the middle and rotate. Molly continues in the same direction of travel through the middle and out the other side to head clockwise as the others come in and rotate. Molly returns to the middle and the others return to their corners.

Top right hey

Molly heys with 1 and 2 then with 2 and 4.

Bottom left hey

Molly heys with 3 and 4 then with 1 and 3.

Dodging hey

All form a line on the 2-3 diagonal with all other dancers facing no 2 then do a dodging reel (line up alternately facing up and down, and move left and right on alternate steps (but passing right then left shoulders), the lines crossing as dancers pass one another; at the end of the line dance left — turn — left), then return to square before repeating on the 1-4 diagonal. Finish in a single line on the 1-4 diagonal, all facing towards number 1 who is back in his place.

5. *Pig Dyke Molly*

Team background

Pig Dyke is the winter sister of a Cotswold team. The team started as Yaxley Morris (Yaxley is a large village in northern Cambridgeshire) in 1987. Its membership largely overlaps with the Cotswold team, though some dance Cotswold and not Molly, and some Molly and not Cotswold. From the first (January 1988), the team danced Molly - the Comberton/Girton dances - with Old Hunts, at Whittlesey Straw Bear and on Plough Monday. It now practises in Stanground, on the southeastern edge of Peterborough; Pig Dyke (on OS maps as Pig Water) is a man-made drainage dyke, which links Yaxley and Stanground.

Performance calendar

In the days when the team danced as part of Old Hunts, it had one or, at the most, two practices before dancing out on the two occasions within a single week, then reverted to Cotswold. Since launching out as Pig Dyke, it now practises from early September until early January, less frequently as dancing in public happens from late November onwards. Normally, the final performance is in mid-January (usually Plough Monday); the latest Molly performance has been mid-February.

Philosophy

Pig Dyke regards itself as a Fenland team, and consequently, has an important emotional attachment to the dances of the Fens. Its mission is to build on what is known of the past in a way that fits the future. Its style and approach derive from a belief that Molly should be entertaining, and that its roots link it clearly to the time of 'the world turned upside down' - midwinter, the time of 'misrule'. An atmosphere of anarchy, of disturbing torpor and the consumerism of the Christmas and January Sales seasons, is aimed at - 'a wild and somewhat terrific kind of dance', as the Cambridge nineteenth century journalist already quoted said.

Part of the 'entertainment' provided is created by the introductions to the dances. All are whimsical and tell elaborate 'shaggy dog' stories which set the dances in a context of the Fens, and of a mythical past. For example, a dance called 'Don't Watch' (the name derives from the large numbers of stars in the dance, which require no wrist watches to be worn) is introduced by a tale of the effect of the invention of the wrist watch on the Fenland sun-dial makers, and the origin of the dance as a Luddite protest.

One perhaps unusual principle of the team (and its Cotswold counterpart, now named 'Fendance') is its 'equal opportunities' policy. It has always found its recruits mainly amongst those attracted to the 'good time' it tries to offer its members and its audiences, and not all of these have been well co-ordinated. If those who attend practices work hard, they dance out, regardless of standard achieved. Their repertoire may be restricted, but they are part of the performing team. (The seven or eight month gap between each Molly season is another big argument for this policy, in terms of providing a 'reward' for attendance at practice).

It has included people with learning difficulties in its performances and, at present, has two severely dyslexic dancers (with the left/right confusion and the difficulties in controlling limbs and remembering sequences that go with that).

Appearance

Inspired by the historic reference to 'an outlandish and savage guise', Pig Dyke's appearance is striking. Every dancer wears different combinations of boldly patterned black and white clothes, normally obtained from charity shops. The colour combination, and an insistence on not being boring, are the only rules. Heavy shoes or boots are worn, and hair is covered with hats or wigs (unless pure black or white!). Some cross-dressing occurs, but the bizarre costumes dilute its effect - everyone looks weird.

Pig Dyke is unhappy, in a multi-cultural society, with blacking up; instead, white face make-up is used, with the addition of individual black designs.



Music

The main Pig Dyke musician is Rob Griggs, a melodeon player with a very distinct, driving style, and an extensive repertoire of his own tunes. A tuba or sousaphone player and a drummer or other percussion have normally built a full sound. Dances were written for the tunes. Other musicians have also been used when the melodeon player is absent: these alternative tunes are mainly English country dance tunes, with one written by another member of the team.

Dancing style

The mood is fast and exciting. Stepping is double stepping, adapted slightly for the polka or surge of the different swings used. Movement typically involves a surge to cover ground as fast as possible, followed by a slowing to re-form the set. Decoration - particularly spinning on the spot or twizzles - is starting to appear when dancers would otherwise be on the spot; exuberance is aimed at and the dancers may shout (though not to order).

A deliberate decision was made to dance fast and furious. The reasons were:

- A belief in the importance of entertaining and a conviction that exuberance is one way to achieve it.
- A desire to react against the Seven Champions' inspired slow, military interpretation.
- A recognition that a team which has perhaps 13 weeks practice and which has an 'equal opportunities' policy cannot hope to achieve the degree of precision that the slow, disciplined approach demands.

Derivation of dances

Pig Dyke emerged from the Comberton/Girton repertoire and always tries to relate its development to it. In 1998-99, six dances were performed, three of which can be directly traced to the Comberton/Girton dances; in addition a two-person broom dance, inspired by the Papworth notation, is danced.

Two themes determine the structure of developed or invented dances:

- The Comberton/Girton repertoire is a country dance repertoire: most figures are, therefore, taken from or inspired by country dance movements. In addition, the pattern of dances is a country dance pattern (three or four figures, repeated three or four times) rather than a morris pattern of figure-chorus-figure-chorus.
- Audiences need reasons to watch. Most dances develop the three or four figures, so that the three or four repeats are not identical each time.

A particular challenge is the two couple swing (polka) which appears in all eight Comberton/Girton dances: Pig Dyke's six dances use double handed swings, strip the willow and (a tenuous connection with the swing) a 'follow-my-leader' as the final figure of the three or four.

Two dances are described in detail. The first is derived fairly closely from Girton's 'College Hornpipe'; the second is entirely invented, but feels to its creators like a development of a country dance.

PLUGHOLES

Dance for six people

Tune: Plugholes (Rob Griggs). 'The Man from Newry' (also known as the 'Gloucester Hornpipe') may also be used.

Origin: A development of the traditional dance 'College Hornpipe'. Introduced with an account of how normal rules are overturned in the Fens, being below sea level: in particular, water draining out of a sink goes both ways at once down the plughole.

A1	Rounds.
B1	Double cast.
C1	Swing.
A2	Plughole.
B2	Single cast.
C2	Swing.
A3	Plughole (faster than A1).
B3	Gatepost.
C3	Swing (with exuberance - arms and legs fly).

Note: The tune is an 8 bar A, an 8 bar B and twice through the 4 bar C. If "The Man from Newry" is used the order is AAB or ABB to taste.

Rounds

Circle left and right, facing the direction you are moving and moving fast, aiming to cover maximum ground. 4 steps round, turn out and return to place on 4 steps.

Double cast

Each pair meets shoulder to shoulder in the centre of the set, facing up, and then casts left, round and back to place, moving fast then cast right, round and back to place. Don't stray beyond the original length of the set.

Single handed swing

Grasp right hand of partner firmly and change sides on each double step. Hold partner close as you pass and then swoop out to the full extent of your joined arms on the end of the step, on partner's place and ensuring the set lines up. Take 8 steps: four complete revolutions.

Plughole

Numbers 1, 4 and 5 dance a large circle clockwise round the set and back to place (taking four steps). Meanwhile, numbers 2, 3 and 6 come in close to the centre of the set, left shoulders close together, and dance round anti-clockwise twice, to their original place. Change: 1, 4 and 5 in the centre of the set to circle anti-clockwise twice while 2, 3 and 6 circle clockwise once outside and all back to their original places.

Single cast

Each face up, dance to the top of the set, cast out and return to place. Repeat.

Gatepost

Numbers 1 and 2 cast single to the bottom of the set and stay there, acting as gateposts, twirling if the mood takes them. Meanwhile, 3 and 4 cast left, 5 and 6 cast right, to come up between 1 and 2. The new order is now 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 1 and 2.

YAXLEY'S LAST STAND

Dance for 6 people.

Tune: 'Lord of the Dance' (note that the tune is 16 bars straight through: for clarity of notation I have called the first eight "A" and the next "B" though the tune does not differentiate).

This dance is an original composition. Introduced with a story of how Yaxley was, in the 15th century, renowned for its hot-dog stands until Sir Walter Raleigh's introduction of the potato led to the rise of the fish and chip shop, which forced the hot dog stands out of existence - all except one.

A1 Motorbikes.
B1 MBT.
A2 & B2 Strip the willow.
Repeat all twice

Motorbikes

Face up and turn out as a line. Follow numbers 1 and 2 in two intersecting figures of eight; cross twice, each time in the 'Royal Tournament Motorbikes' style, odds and evens crossing at right angles. Tops cast out and come in to cross between original middles position, then at bottom of set turn in and lead up to own place, crossing again. Order of crossing: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

MBT [Middles-Bottoms-Tops]

First step: 3 and 4 dance on the spot, facing each other; 5 and 6 turn down and out, then line up behind 3 and 4 respectively; 1 and 2 turn up and out then line up behind 5 and 6 respectively, to form a line.

1 5 3 4 6 2
—————→ ←————

- Steps 2, 3 and 4: Dance a right shoulder back to back with the corresponding person in the other lines of 3: the lines intersecting so that 1 passes around 4, 5 around 6 and 3 around 2. Back to line formation.
- Step 5: Numbers 1, 5, 6 and 2 cast out (1 and 6 follow left shoulder, 2 and 5 follow right shoulder) to original set formation.
- Step 6: Dance on the spot.
- Step 7: Dance a big, obvious theatrical right foot stamp.
- Step 8: Stand.

Strip the willow

Numbers 1 and 2 take right arm hold and grasp partner's elbow. Turn partner once and a quarter and grab left arm of opposing middle (i.e. 1 to 4 and 2 to 3). Turn twice; return to partner with left turn for three-quarters. Turn bottom couple twice. Turn own partner until the music ends. As the top couple pass, the middle couple and then the bottom couple swing own partner's right arm. At the end of the figure, all three couples are swinging.

6. *Ouse Washes Molly Dancers*

Team background

Ouse Washes developed out of a Cotswold team - Ouse William Morris, based in Downham Market, Norfolk. Ouse William was an innovative and irreverent team whose name contains the pun that gave them a theme for their kit (William Morris prints) and who invented a Cotswold "tradition" — Ousington. They were founder members of Open Morris.

They attended the workshop which Cyril Papworth, whose grandfather danced in the early part of the twentieth century, gave in Cambridge in 1979, and danced the Comberton/Girton repertoire throughout the 80s. In the early 90s they were asked to dance Molly in the summer at a festival. The invitation coincided with a discontent with Cotswold and a feeling that Molly offered scope for development. Gordon Phillips, the leader and teacher of the team, led a process which ended in the decision to end Ouse William and turn into Ouse Washes. Some dancers left; others were recruited, many young and slightly alternative.

The team had become friendly with Seven Champs and this influenced their dancing.

Performance calendar

The decision to dance only Molly all year was the sticking point for those who left Ouse William, who danced Molly only at Straw Bear and Plough Monday. Ouse Washes dance all year, being particularly busy in the summer Festival season.

Philosophy

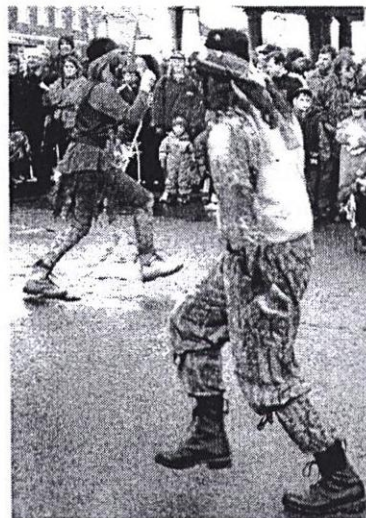
Ouse Washes are a young team which is clearly rooted in both their East Anglian origin and in an irreverent view of the myths associated with a stereotypical view of the past. This irreverence was reflected in the punning ironic name of their parent team, Ouse William Morris; other relevant influences may include the Kipper family's "cod" version of folk song and context (also trading on the Norfolk connection).

The team's dances arise from local stories. These are not just material to be mined: when the team danced at the Ship at Brandon Creek, site of one of the stories (of a murder) which is retold in *Black Sheet*, they threw flowers into the water of the Ouse to remember the victims of the story. Where the local connection is not clear, it is sought for: thus their dance *Mississippi Mud Dance* uses a tune recorded by Lonnie Donegan, Battle of New Orleans, which they claim as part of the local tradition as he once had a house in the area.

They are above all keen to entertain. They do not share Seven Champs' distant dignity from their audience, though they seek to achieve a similar solemnity in some dances. For several years they were introduced by a dancer whose job was a schools drama adviser. He used the full range of his professional skills to create a show into which the dancing was slotted, using a throat microphone and a mobile speaker even when he was himself part of the dance; since his departure the style of the announcer has changed but the emphasis on entertainment and involving the audience remains. The music is innovative and striking, drawn from rock music, French music and other non-traditional sources. Dances are introduced with an account of the story behind them that is gripping and entertaining in its own right, even when totally invented.

Appearance

Ouse Washes present an "alternative" or psychedelic appearance. Clothes are bright and boldly patterned, tie-dye, patchwork, clashing and gaudy. The dress is individual but asexual; some cross-dressing occurs. Faces are blacked, boots are heavy, hats are worn (various!). One man dresses as the Molly and is the public presenter.



Music

The team has attracted some creative musicians. Amplified fiddle, melodeon, double bass and other sounds blend to play striking and effective music drawn from a wide range — Lonnie Donegan, The Doors. The dances often feel as though they are performed across the music: the tension adds to the impact of the performance. The music is often slow and adds to the striking effect.

Dancing style

Ouse Washes' style has clear similarities with that of Seven Champs, but with a more relaxed and informal feel. The heavy-booted single step, the raised knees, the clenched fist raised in a straight-arm salute, the slow and precise patterns — all reflect the friendship between the two teams. However, Ouse Washes' laid-back friendliness is reflected in a less distant relationship with the audience and a more youthful, less rigid performance.

Ouse Washes are very well drilled and present a disciplined and smoothly polished performance. However, the show feels more impulsive, less scripted than the Champs' performance: though both will react and adapt instinctively to opportunities, the Washes' response gives the impression of being "off the cuff" in a way that Champs does not.

Origin of the dances

Ouse Washes danced the Comberton/Girton repertoire for many years before deciding to work full time on Molly. But they also danced Cotswold and their present repertoire reflects that as well. The early dances (eg Mississippi Mud Dance) tend to follow the Cotswold pattern of figure, chorus, figure, chorus rather than a country dance pattern. The figures derive loosely from country dance origins however and are invented and developed by the team. Later dances are more varied, as can be seen in "*Black Sheet*".

MISSISSIPPI MUD DANCE

Six dancers or sets of six dancers.

Tune: Battle of New Orleans.

Single step, right foot lead; bent arms with clenched fist, raised up to ear on each step (same foot as arm). Keep the arms moderate and body upright, the legs do the work. Each figure involves a surge and then pause to give power.

- A1 Batchelor's Button.
- B1 & B2 Chorus.
- A2 Stars and Stripes.
- B3 & B4 Chorus.
- A3 Reel.
- B5 & B6 Chorus.
- A4 Line reel and off.

Batchelor's button (*Editor's note: the description of this figure is by Gordon Phillips*)

Cross and turn with partner: two steps on spot, facing across then quickly across, passing right shoulders with partner. If the dance is done in a small space the cross is done in one step hop, turn to the right immediately and stay there to complete the sequence of 8 steps. Straight back to original place, passing right shoulders again and turning to the right. Close up the gap across the set on steps 7 and 8. If the dance is done in two sets, side by side: on each turn (steps 6, 7 and 12, 13) dance around the person you meet from the other set, if relevant.

Chorus

Handclapping (inspired by Lichfield dance "Ring O'Bells): face across: clap a sequence of four (ends punch straight up in air if no-one to connect with): diagonally right (with person right of partner), left with partner; right (with person diagonally left of partner), left partner. Repeat twice, then ends with diagonal right, partner left, partner right, pause. Follow with stomach swing: one step to connect (spare arm punched up in air), then on steps 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 dance a quarter turn each step; on 7, 8 drop arm and face in on partner's place, finishing feet together. Repeat whole sequence back to place.

Stars and stripes

Middles stomach swing as in chorus (eight steps) then repeat back to place, while tops and bottoms turn out (two steps) and dance round middles clockwise all the way round to own place. If the dance is done by two sets, side by side: both tops and both bottoms go round both sets of middles.

Reel

Reel is done along the sides. There is lots of time as there are sixteen steps to get back to place. It is more impressive when done in two sets, working in parallel, in which case the lines of four across the sets try to keep together as they move.

Line reel

From the stomach swing in previous chorus: on step 7 continue another turn into line: face partner on 8; pass each person you meet along the line with a jump (no hop) right or left; pass one person each step; at ends pass right, then turn as you jump left and straight back in to pass next person right. At appropriate point number one leads off then back on — everyone else follows — end dance with arms thrown up and shout "Oy!"

BLACK SHEET

Dance for ten: set of eight with initially one (number 9) at the head in the middle facing down and one (number 10) at the bottom in the middle, facing up.

Tune: King of the Fairies (slow).

		2	4	6	8	
top	9					10
		1	3	5	7	

The dance is inspired by a murder carried out at the Ship pub at Brandon Creek: the end dancers, numbers 9 and 10, wear a black sheet over their heads, to represent the murderer, Johnny O'Rourke. For the most part 9 and 10 dance when the others don't and vice-versa.

- A1 Ends circle.
- B1 Bachelor's Button.
- A2 Zig-Zag.
- B2 The end that isn't the end.
- A3 Round and yell.
- B3 Stars.
- A4 Ends hitch lift.
- B4 Dance round and end.

Ends circle

Numbers 9 and 10 dance a wide circle around the set one and a half times to come down the set from each end, meeting in the middle shoulder to shoulder.

Bachelor's Button

As in Mississippi Mud Dance (MMD): 9 and 10 dance out to original place on steps 1 and 2

Zig-Zag

Number 9 steps right and left to end at head of odd line, facing down while they face up while 10 does the same to end facing up at the end of the evens line who face down. 9/10 zig-zag down/up the line as in Line Reel in MMD above; the others in the line just step right and left on the spot as the end passes through them; turn on step 8 and return to place, facing out (each opposite way).

The End That Isn't The End

Numbers 1 to 8 in on step 1 to grab partner's belly; the set is now in a single straight line down the middle. On steps 2 and 3 turn, quarter turn each step, to face opposite way in partner's place. All release their partner's belly and grab the person to their left, this includes the ends, 9 and 10, so that all are in. Repeat turns and changes so that 9 and 10 weave along their lines to end at the other end, where they drop out. Others continue till music phrase ends while 9 and 10 return outside the set. The set now is in the order:

	5	7	8	6	
10					9
	3	1	2	4	

Round and yell

Numbers 9 and 10 dance freely round and through the set, yelling to terrify the others.

Stars

Others dance stars right and left (in to join on step 1, outside hands punch up on 2).

Ends hitch lift

Numbers 1 to 8 face partners and grab forearm (step 1), punch up spare hand on step 2, turn to partner's place on steps 3 and 4 then repeat back to place. Repeat: this time 9 and 10 join the top and bottom couple so that they become a "star" of three. Repeat: each time 9 and 10 move up one place, turning 180 degrees, until they are at the other end of the set.

Dance round and end

Numbers 9 and 10 dance round half way then come in to meet in centre of set, then turn right and out of the set, while others dance on spot. Then others charge across yelling, turn and charge back. Numbers 9 and 10 into centre, facing each other. Others surround 9 and 10 and put a noose on them. Others turn to the left, raise a left hand onto the shoulder in front on one step and a right hand on the next. Circle anti-clockwise, turn on step 8 and circle back. At end of the phrase turn and face out and shout "Oy". On the "Oy", 9 and 10 lift the rope end of their own noose. The Molly rings a bell: all others go off on first ring; 9 and 10 stay, "hanged", until dragged off.

7. *Norwich Shitwitches*

Team background

The Norwich Shitwitches was originally conceived as a winter activity for the Cotswold side, Golden Star. Although the majority of the members also dance Cotswold Morris with Golden Star, not all the Cotswold dancers wanted to dance Molly and so the Shitwitches became a separate entity, with some members from Kemp's Men of Norwich and some members who only dance the Molly.

The spur to start dancing the Molly and create a new tradition came when one of the Golden Star dancers came across the following eighteenth century reference in the Norfolk Record Office: *In Christmas time, and especially on Plough Monday, several Men dresse themselves in Women's Close and goe, from House to House a Dancing along with [music] where they beg for Money. These are called Shitwitches.* (Norwich Record Office Manuscript 555242v.)

Brief though the reference may be, here was evidence of 'Molly' style dancing in Norwich and it provided the impetus to re-create the Norwich Shitwitches. It was important for the team to have discovered the reference as it gave them a sense of belonging to their area and gave an authenticity in reviving an old Norwich custom that would be lacking from a totally invented tradition. This is, of course, exactly what it was, but it made a difference to the team's perception of it.

Performance calendar

It was decided that the side would only dance around Christmas and the New Year and especially on Plough Monday, largely in the local area. There were several reasons for this. The 'old' Molly was only danced in the winter and the historical reference made this clear. Many of the dancers were members of other Morris sides and did not want to stop dancing with them. Although everyone was enthusiastic, no one wanted to be over-committed to too many performances, or practices. No one wanted the side to become too serious or bureaucratic. The low commitment and spontaneous nature of the side was felt to be more fun and probably more in keeping with the nature of original Molly sides.

Shitwitches practise in October and November, and dance out in December and the first half of January.

Philosophy

The team wanted the dances to have a 'Molly' feel, and therefore to be relatively simple, especially as they would only be danced for a short part of the year and complex dances would get forgotten. Yet they wanted them to be original and not so simple as to be boring to watch and, more importantly, to dance. Also they did not want to perform the Needham/Wortley/Papworth dances, since, whatever the Shitwitches did, it was unlikely to have been those dances. Nor did they wish to be a Seven Champions clone.

The Shitwitches researched ceremonial dance performed in Plough Monday traditions in East Yorkshire, as presented by Paul Davenport in his booklet "The Forgotten Morris". He classifies the references into three groups, Morris Dance (Molly Type), Longsword Type and Transitional (Morris/Sword) and there are many aspects of these descriptions which bear a striking similarity to what the collectors regarded as the 'degenerate' East Anglian Molly. (P. Davenport "The Forgotten Morris: An investigation into Traditional Dance in Yorkshire", (1993)).

Could it be that the Shitwitches represent this ceremony before it degenerated? Perhaps the one dancer dressed as a Betsy or Molly was a survival of a whole side of dancers dressed as women.

However this is not enough evidence to justify an intricate East Anglian ceremonial dance akin to the Cotswold Morris and this idea may well be wishful thinking from current Morris dancers eagerly seeking a complex tradition in their own area. The team accepts that there is a fair chance that perhaps Molly dancing has always been a simple affair in which popular country dances had been used.

Richard Humphries also seems to subscribe to this view when he states *That they are simple in form should not pose a problem. Dances collected in Lancashire and Cheshire before the clog Morris 'revival' earlier this century indicate a relatively simple, yet effective form of Morris dance; Molly dancing simply never had the opportunity to develop in the way its relatives in the north and Midlands did.* (R. Humphries "'...for a little bit of sport': Molly dancing and Plough Monday in East Anglia" Linton: R. & K. Humphries (1986) p.27).

Simple country dance figures also overcome the need for a lot of practice and, unlike the Cotswold tradition, there is no evidence that any Molly dancers would get together earlier in the year to prepare for Plough Monday, which would be needed if an elaborate dance were to be performed. The Molly may well have been a more spontaneous form of expression, more akin to the Norfolk and Suffolk step dancers who would improvise steps rather than follow a set pattern. However, the fact that the Cambridgeshire Molly gangs would converge about mid-day on Cambridge Market Place and *dance against each other* as Needham and Peck were told, would indicate that there was a certain pride and competitiveness in their performances. (J. Needham & A. Peck, "Molly Dancing in East Anglia", JFDSS, 1, 2 (1933) p80-81).

Appearance

There was a little more to go on as regarded appearance, men dressed *in Women's Close*. Accordingly, Shitwitches decided to wear women's clothing over a white shirt and black trousers - each person to interpret this as they wish, to avoid uniformity and create a shambolic appearance, which seemed to the team to constitute the Molly.

As a mixed side, this involves women dressed as men dressed as women! Instead of black faces, faces are made up along the 'pantomime dame' model (e.g. outrageous lipstick, exaggerated beauty spots etc.) — with each person to interpret this as they wish. Heavy boots - latterly with steel toe-caps - to accentuate the stepping are worn.



Music

If there was little indication of how the dances were performed, there was nothing to indicate what the music was like, or what it was played on. For this recreated tradition the team decided to use original tunes, slow polkas, written by their musicians, although as the years developed the Bonzo Dog Do-Dah Band's 'Jollity Farm' seemed to slip in.

Dancing style

Before constructing their tradition, the team distilled defining aspects of Molly. The dances are for four, six or eight dancers. Only four dancers had been observed at Little Downham in 1933 (W. Palmer, "Plough Monday 1933 at Little Downham" ED&S XXXVI, 1 (1974) 24-25), although six dancers were frequently reported. Two of the Shitwitches' dances were designed for eight, but can be danced with four (or twelve or sixteen...) if necessary.

They felt that Molly involved simple, repetitive stepping. In order to give some individuality to the tradition they chose double step followed by a single step throughout (l, r, hop l; hop r, hop l; r, l, hop r; hop l, hop r; etc.). As a general rule, most of the movement was to take place on the double step, with the following single steps usually being stationary.

Next, they decided to use simple country dance figures. In workshops where they tried out various ideas, many of the figures that the team came up with were far from simple, but that is always a problem when asking experienced dancers to create figures. Although some have survived, most have, through necessity, had to be simplified, and as a result, the dance has usually improved.

Other aspects considered to be essentially Molly included an absence of bells, disguised faces, a repetitive, almost hypnotic feel and couple dancing. For the couple dancing the hold is right arms straight and placed on the partner's right shoulder, left arms holding hands and kept low; when not dancing as couples, arms would be swung loosely at the side.

Finally, it was decided important to include the use of a broom in some dances, and with the name Shitwitches, this had to be a besom. There was a historical precedent for this, since Robert Grimditch, interviewed by Cecil Sharp in an Ely workhouse, told him that he remembered a 'sweeper' on Plough Monday, who carried a besom (J. Needham & A. Peck, "Molly Dancing in East Anglia", JFDSS, 1, 2 (1933) p.83). This has led to a six-person broom dance, 'The Broom', and a three-person dance, 'The Shitwitch Jig'.

Derivation of the name

The term 'witching' was used extensively in East Anglia in connection with Plough Monday. The term 'witch' may just be descriptive, referring to the crone-like appearance of ploughboys in 'Women's Close'. Shit is an ancient word and there is no reason to doubt that it had any other meaning in the 18th century, when associated with the Norwich witches, than it has today.

Richard Humphries mentions that at Brandon Creek, Norfolk, in the early 1900s it was customary for newcomers to the plough team to be initiated as ploughmen on Plough Monday.

Part of the plough ceremonies involved the youth who was to be initiated being seized by the older men and *a horse's tail having been lifted, his nose would be rubbed against the vent.* (R. Humphries "'...for a little bit of Sport': Molly dancing and Plough Monday in East Anglia" Linton : R. & K. Humphries (1986) p.6-7). A fanciful notion of the origin of the term Shitwitches may be connected with some similar crude initiation ceremony added to the descriptive term witches.

There was a pub in Great Yarmouth that used to be known as Kittywitches (140, King Street) and this was near to Kittywitches Row, which is likely to have got its name from one Christopher Wyche who lived here in the early 18th century. However, Ken Chapman in his research into the name quotes Hazlitt's Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore (published in 1895) which says *In Norfolk, and perhaps elsewhere, a female attired in some grotesque and frightful manner is called a Kitch-witch, of which the etymology is not clear. Formerly the streets of Yarmouth were occasionally infested by troops of these creatures, who made a sort of house to house visitation and wore men's shirts over their own dresses and had their faces smeared with blood. It is supposed, probably enough, that Kittywitches Row owes its appellation to this obsolete usage.*

At present the name remains an (unforgettable) mystery; the team uses it because it is traditional and trusts that it does not cause offence.

THE WITCH

Dance for eight people.

Tune: 'The Witch' by Helen Boreham. Tune has an 8 bar A and 16 bar B.

Stepping is 1, 2, 3, hop, 1, hop, 2, hop which extends over 2 bars of 2/4 time. As a general rule the movement occurs on the first bar of the two bar phrases.

- A1 & A2 Down and Up.
- B1 Cross and Zag Chorus.
- A3 & A4 Double Diamonds.
- B2 Cross and Zag Chorus.
- A5 & A6 Squares.
- B3 Cross and Zag Chorus.
- A7 & A8 Slip and Cross.
- B4 Cross and Zag Chorus.

Cross and Zag Chorus

- Bar 1 All dance across set to partners' place (pass right)
 - Bar 2 Turn on spot (to right)
 - Bar 3 Numbers 1 and 8 dance on spot, others dance across set changing with person to left of partner (pass right)
 - Bar 4 Numbers 1 and 8 continue on the spot, others turn on the spot to the left
- Repeat but now numbers 1 and 8 join in and it is the new dancers in positions 1 and 8 who stay on the spot for bars 3 and 4. Four times through to reverse the set.

Down and Up

The whole set moves away from the music then back towards it.

- Bar 1 Dance in to meet partner in the middle of the set (right shoulder to right shoulder). Right arms around each other across front of body.
- Bar 2 Rotate 1/4 turn forward, so original evens now face up the set on the odd side.
- Bar 3 All dance away from the music.
- Bar 4 All dance on the spot.
- Bar 5 & 6 All dance backwards (4 backward rotating pairs). One whole turn.
- Bar 7 All dance away from the music.
- Bar 8 Break from partner and dance into set shape on the opposite side to original position.
- Bars 9-16 As bars 1-8 except dancers meet left sides together and dance back towards musicians and original positions.

Double Diamonds

The set splits into two groups of four dancers (i.e. the top two pairs and the bottom two pairs). All face in, numbers 1 & 3 and 2 & 4 place their innermost arms around each others shoulders and dance clockwise round a diamond shape without changing the direction in which they face; reverse and return.

- Bar 1 Move diagonally forward to left.
- Bar 2 On the spot in line with other dancers.
- Bar 3 Move diagonally forward to right to opposite side of set.
- Bar 4 On the spot facing out of set.
- Bar 5 Move diagonally backwards to right.
- Bar 6 On the spot in line with others.
- Bar 7 Diagonally backwards to left to original position.
- Bar 8 Partners break their hold and move to form new pairs with their opposites. 1 & 2 face down the set, 3 & 4 face up the set.
- Bars 9-16 As bars 1-8 but with new partner and from new positions. Return to place in set in bar 16.

Squares

The set splits into two groups of four dancers (i.e. the top two pairs and the bottom two pairs). The dancers perform an elaborate reel along the sides of the square.

- Bars 1-4 Opposite partners form the right hand grip (right hand on to partner's right shoulder and left hands as if shaking hands). Dance around each other (1 1/2 or 2 1/2) times to change places at the corners of the square.
- Bars 5-8 Partners along the side of the set change places in the same fashion but use the left hand grip and rotate in the opposite direction.
- Bars 9-12 Change across the set with the right hand grip.
- Bars 13-16 Change along the set with the left hand grip.

Slip and Cross

The set splits into two groups of four dancers (i.e. the top two pairs and the bottom two pairs).

	<i>End of set pair</i>	<i>Middle of set pair</i>
Bar 1	Dance on spot	Dance to middle, face to face and put arms on partner's shoulders.
Bar 2	Dance across set (pass right), turn along set	Dance on spot
Bar 3	Dance behind middles along set	Side step to end of set
Bar 4	Face in, dance on spot, become new middles	Break to side of set, become new ends

Repeat 3 times. (This returns dancers to their original positions.)

8. A personal note on black face make-up

Our entertainment must fit its audience. Black faced minstrels were all the rage in the 1920s; nowadays, they are offensive to many people, and, in my view, black made-up faces cannot be satisfactorily justified.

The underlying reason for black faces was disguise, weirdness, and loss of personal identity: we need to find other ways to achieve this. White, red, blue, multi-coloured, pantomime dame: all use face make-up, which achieve the aim in a reasonable way for our world.

9. Questions for new Molly teams

I offer my own personal set of questions from the tradition to form a starting point for prospective Molly teams:

- Have you good reasons for dancing at any other time than mid-winter? Can you retain the subversion associated with this time of year?
- Is your appearance fitting for a tradition arising from the topsy-turvy time of year from which came the 'Lord of Misrule'?
- Will you cross-dress? Will your appearance be sufficiently subversive?
- Will your facial disguise be make-up? If so, are you, and your likely 21st century, multi-racial audience, happy with black faces?
- Are your dances simple enough?
- Is your performance entertaining enough?
- What makes your dancing Molly rather than Cotswold, Border, Northwest or social dance?
- Have you started from the Comberton/Girton repertoire?
- Have you created a repertoire, which is your own, in dances or style?

Stick to these, honestly answered, and you will dance your own Molly and no one can tell you you're wrong.

As a matter of fact, since there are no rules, no one (including your author...) can tell you that anyway. Do your own thing, enjoy it and make your audience enjoy it. That was good enough in the past and it will do now too!

Appendix: Tunes used

The following tunes are those used for the notation included in the book. The notation is “standardised”. Anyone who uses it will need to adjust to the dances as they dance them.

I wish to record my gratitude to Pete Shaw for his hard work, patience and expertise in producing this music notation.

Editor's acknowledgements

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Rhiannon Owen, September 2002

Cross Hand Polka

Musical notation for Cross Hand Polka, featuring two staves of music in G major and 2/4 time. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Chords G, D, and G are indicated above the notes.

Birds-a-Building

noted by Joseph Needham & Arthur Peck, 1932

Musical notation for Birds-a-Building, featuring three staves of music in G major and 2/4 time. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Chords D, A7, Bm, and A are indicated above the notes. The piece includes a first and second ending.

Dorset Four Hand Reel

Musical notation for Dorset Four Hand Reel, featuring two staves of music in G major and 2/4 time. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Chords G, C, Bm, Am, D, and G are indicated above the notes.

Brighton Camp

Musical notation for Brighton Camp, featuring three staves of music in G major and 2/4 time. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Chords C, G, D, and G are indicated above the notes. The piece concludes with a 4/4 time signature.

College Hornpipe (from Little Downham)

Musical score for College Hornpipe (from Little Downham). The piece is in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody features several triplet markings. The second staff continues the melody with a repeat sign. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence in 6/8 time, indicated by a change in the time signature and a key signature change to G major.

Chords: G D G D C D Am D G D
G D C D G G G Bm C Am C D
Am D G D G D C D G G

Smash the Windows (from an old fiddler's book c.1820)

Musical score for Smash the Windows (from an old fiddler's book c.1820). The piece is in G major and 6/8 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody with a repeat sign. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence in 2/4 time, indicated by a change in the time signature and a key signature change to G major.

Chords: D D D A G D A A D D D A
D A D D D D D A A
A A D A D G D A D D

Speed the Plough

Musical score for Speed the Plough. The piece is in G major and 2/4 time. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is a continuous eighth-note pattern. The second staff continues the melody with a repeat sign and first/second endings.

Chords: G G G G C G 1. D D
2. D C C G G C G 1. D D 2. D G

Shave the Donkey (from Shipdham, Norfolk)

Musical score for Shave the Donkey (from Shipdham, Norfolk). The piece is in G major and 2/4 time. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is a continuous eighth-note pattern. The second staff continues the melody with a repeat sign and first/second endings.

Chords: G D G G G D G G D G
D G 1. D G 2. D G

Bob Ridley O

Musical score for 'Bob Ridley O' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of three staves. The first staff contains the melody with two endings. The second staff contains a bass line with a first ending. The third staff contains a bass line with a second ending. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: G, G, C, C, G, G, D, D, G, G, G, G, G, D, G, G, G, G, G, G, G, D, D, D, D, D, D, D, D, G.

Keel Row

Musical score for 'Keel Row' in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of two staves. The first staff contains the melody with chord symbols: G, C, G, D, G, C, G, D, G. The second staff contains a bass line with chord symbols: G, C, G, D, G, C, G, D, G.

Bacca Pipes/Over the People

from Saul Rose 1995

Musical score for 'Bacca Pipes/Over the People' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of two staves. The first staff contains the melody with chord symbols: Am, G, Am, Em, Am, G, Am, G. The second staff contains a bass line with chord symbols: G, G, G, D, C, G, Am, G. Both staves end with two endings marked '1.' and '2.' with Am chord symbols.

'Round Midnight

Original by Cootie Williams & Thelonius Monk

Musical score for 'Round Midnight' in Bb major, 4/4 time. The score consists of five staves. The first staff contains the melody with an 'A' section. The second staff contains a bass line with triplets and a first ending. The third staff contains a bass line with a second ending and triplets. The fourth staff contains a bass line. The fifth staff contains a bass line with triplets and a final ending. Chord symbols include A, B, and Am. The piece concludes with a key signature change to G major and a 2/4 time signature, with the instruction 'To A Last time'.

Plugholes

Rob Griggs

Musical score for 'Plugholes' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of five staves of music. The first staff contains the melody with chords Em, Em, Em, Em, A, A, B, B. The second staff contains a bass line with chords Em, Em, Em, Em, A, A, D, Em, C, D. The third staff contains a bass line with chords G, G, C, D, G, G, C, D, Em, Em. The fourth staff contains a bass line with chords C, D, D, Em, C, D, D, Em. The fifth staff contains a bass line with chords C, D, D, Em, C, D, D, Em, and includes first and second endings. The piece concludes with a 4/4 time signature.

The Man from Newry or Gloucester Hornpipe

Musical score for 'The Man from Newry or Gloucester Hornpipe' in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff contains the melody with chords G, G, C, C, G, C. The second staff contains a bass line with chords D, D, G, G, C, C, G, D, G, G. The third staff contains a bass line with chords G, Bm, C, Em, G, C. The fourth staff contains a bass line with chords D, D, G, Bm, C, Em, G, D, G, G, and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Lord of the Dance

Musical score for 'Lord of the Dance' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the melody with chords G, Em, G, G, D, D, C, D, G, Em. The second staff contains a bass line with chords G, G, D, D, G, C, G, G, Em, G, G. The third staff contains a bass line with chords G, G, D, D, G, C, G, Em, G, D, D, G, C, G. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a 2/4 time signature.

Mississippi Mud Dance (Battle of New Orleans)

Trad arr. Ouse Washes Molly after J Driftwood

Chords: G Bm C Am D D G G G Bm C Am D D G D G G Bm C G G Bm C D G Bm C G G G G D G

King of the Fairies

Chords: Em Em Em C Em A7 D Bm Em C G D Em D C D Em Em Em C Em Em Em D Bm Em Em C Am G D C D Em G D A7 D D A7 D D Em C Em C Em B7 Em Em

The Witch

Helen Boreham
Am

Chords: Em Am Em B7 Em Em B7 Em Em Em Em B7 Em Em B7 Bm Gm B7 Em