

# Morris Matters

Volume 39 Number 1

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Welcome to 2020 – perfect vision for morris dancing? We're continuing on a roll with great historical profiles, featuring - among other items - the extensive work done by Duncan Broomhead on that long-neglected topic of carnival morris. From our serious researchers to the fun element of Morris Matters - I hope some of you are enjoying Andy's inside back cover activities (although it might involve you cutting up your copy...).

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Reviews or other contributions are always welcome – to [morrismatters@outlook.com](mailto:morrismatters@outlook.com)

## Goostrey Morris Dancers – A Journey to the Carnival

Growing up in South Manchester and Cheshire, I knew what morris dancing was; I could see it during the summer at every local Rose Queen festival and town carnival. It was danced by girls who carried pom poms, who danced in the procession and then in the competitions, but I never gave any thought to its origins.

I was 20 before I saw, or even knew about any other styles of morris; it took several more years before I started dancing myself in a revival morris side. When out dancing I would occasionally meet old men or women who had danced in their youth and we would stop for a chat. I also knew that my local morris sides, Manchester Morris Men and Poynton Jemmers had done a lot of collecting of the old local dances.

When I became Keeper of the Morris Ring Photographic Archive, I decided to include as many historic photographs of female morris dancers as I could. This in turn started me researching my local Cheshire dances, information about which was held in several different collections.

In 2017, I accompanied Lucy Wright<sup>1</sup> on some of her field trips and we made several visits to Goostrey where we met and interviewed Elsie Maddock, ex-dancer and leader of the Goostrey Morris Dancers, her daughter Gillian Hough and daughter-in-law Evelyn Maddock. Goostrey is a rural village in Cheshire, about 14 miles north of Crewe and 12 miles west of Macclesfield.

There are records of four distinct morris troupes<sup>2</sup> based in Goostrey. Newspaper reports mention morris dancing between 1898 to 1900 but only the troupe reported in 1889 can be positively identified as being from Goostrey; the dancers are named and were local girls aged between 7 and 11 years.<sup>3</sup> The second troupe were the Goostrey Morris Dancers, who danced between 1907<sup>4</sup> to 1969; they are the troupe I will be concentrating on.

The third troupe were the female Goostrey Rose Day Garland dancers of 1908, who again were local girls, aged this time aged between 13 and 18 years,<sup>5</sup> and the fourth are the Cheshire Royals, a women's north-west clog morris side formed in 1980.<sup>6</sup>

I will show the changes that the Goostrey Morris Dancers went through and demonstrate how the dance tradition developed from what some might consider to have been a traditional north-west Morris side into a fully-fledged Carnival morris troupe.



1908 Garland dancers, detail from larger photo courtesy of Mrs M. Kettle

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Wright <https://www.artistic-researcher.co.uk/5580128>

<sup>2</sup> Troupe is the correct local terminology.

<sup>3</sup> Merrie May-Festival at Goostrey, *Alderley & Wilmslow Advertiser*, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1899.

<sup>4</sup> I have seen dates for the formation range from 1905 to 1908 and I have settled on 1907 as the most likely.

<sup>5</sup> *Northwich Guardian*, Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June 1908, p 6.

<sup>6</sup> Sheila Gregory collection

## The Formation of the Goostrey Morris Dancers

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century it was not uncommon for a local worthy to invite an ex-morris dancer<sup>7</sup> or a dance teacher to form a new morris troupe; some of these troupes lasted for many years, others were formed for a single special event.

In 1907 Mr Marlor, a local businessman invited Aaron Shuttleworth to start a troupe in Goostrey. Shuttleworth had recently moved to the neighbouring village of Lower Withington and had previously been a member of the Alderley Edge Coronation Morris Dancers who, in 1902, at the instigation of a local councillor, were formed to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII,<sup>8</sup> and who reformed again in 1911 to celebrate the coronation of George V.

The Alderley Edge troupe were taught by David Billington from Crewe; he had taught the Crewe Royal Morris Dancers 1901,<sup>9</sup> having previously been a morris dancer in Preston.

Although Alderley were a short-lived troupe, we know that they entered at least one competition in Crewe<sup>10</sup> in 1902; there were 16 troupes both male and female competing, some wore clogs, others used paper pom poms, some did "fancy work" such as cartwheels.<sup>11</sup> This could have been an early example of another northern troupe dancing tradition, now referred to as Entertainers.



1907, reproduced with permission of the Maddock family.  
Aaron Shuttleworth far left.

Initially the Goostrey Morris Dancers wore a white shirt, a dark overshirt, bow tie, skull cap, white breeches, white socks and black shoes. Half the troupe had a light-coloured sash over their left shoulder, the other half had a dark coloured sash over their right. In their hands they carried short sticks decorated with ribbons and bells at either end.

Initially Aaron Shuttleworth was the trainer and leader and appears in the photograph to be wearing his Alderley Edge kit, of white

shirt, purple breeches and pink socks, a broad sash over his left shoulder and a waist sash.<sup>12</sup> He has added a narrow sash over his right shoulder covered in bells; this is of the type worn by the neighbouring Holmes Chapel Morris Dancers<sup>13</sup> who he also taught.<sup>14</sup> In each hand he is carrying a short stick painted with hoops and decorated at the end with short looped bunches of ribbon. The custom of the leader wearing the sash with bells continued at Goostrey until the outbreak of the Second World War.

<sup>7</sup> I have no hard evidence, but I suspect that they were paid

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Howison collection, Manchester Morris Men's Archive

<sup>9</sup> Edwards, Lesley and Chart, Janet, "Aspects of Morris Dancing in Cheshire 1880-1914", *English Dance and Song*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1981) pp 5-10. Also, Buckland, Theresa and Howison, Daniel, "Morris Dancers in Crewe Before the First World War", *English Dance and Song*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (1980) pp 10-13.

<sup>10</sup> *Crewe Chronicle*, 22 August 1902

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Howison collection

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Howison collection

<sup>13</sup> Sheila Gregory collection

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Howison collection

1907 was also the year of the first Goostrey Rose Day Festival, similar to a May Queen Festival, was started by two enterprising schoolgirls, Miss E. M. Cumberbirch and Miss Ward who, in order to meet the costs collected subscriptions from around the village. The day was a great success and a committee was formed to organise future Rose Day Festivals. The 1908 event was a much bigger affair<sup>15</sup> and the Goostrey Morris Dancers danced in the procession, captained by Mr Aaron Shuttleworth.<sup>16</sup>

Tom Hurstfield took over the role of leader and according to an interview with his widow in 1962<sup>17</sup> wore the same coloured kit that Aaron Shuttleworth had worn; it is tempting to think that it was Aaron's old kit.

In 1908 at the invitation of the vicar, Tom Hurstfield travelled to nearby Over Peover to start a men's morris troupe; this troupe continued dancing after the outbreak of the Second World War at local fetes and competitions becoming the Over Peover Prize Morris Dancers. They were probably the last of the all-male morris troupes in the competitions.



Circa 1909, reproduced with permission of the Maddock family

The Goostrey troupe continued to dance at the Rose Day Festivals and travelled to local May Queen and Rose Queen festivals including those at Knutsford, Lower Withington, Holmes Chapel and Crewe.

In 1909 they changed their kit to a straight tie and blue velvet breeches and added large bunches of paper to the ends of their sticks. Walter Hurstfield remembered that he accidentally set his pom poms on fire when he was lighting a cigarette.<sup>18</sup> They danced in the Crewe Hospital Pageant in 1910 and won second prize, in 1911 they came third.<sup>19</sup>

Training of new troupes local to Goostrey continued; in 1911 Tom Hurstfield and his brother Walter were invited to teach morris dancers in Over Alderley and Birtles.<sup>20</sup> Tom taught the female troupe and Walter the men's; they danced together at Birtles Hall in June 1911 as part of the local celebrations for the coronation of King George V.

The Goostrey troupe continued to dance both locally and in competitions until the outbreak of the First World War. Two of the men, George Smallwood and Frederick Johnson, dancers in the original 1907 troupe were killed; it is not recorded if other men who had joined the troupe after 1907 were also killed.

<sup>15</sup> Goostrey Parish Archives

<sup>16</sup> *Northwich Guardian*, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1908

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Howison collection

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Howison collection

<sup>19</sup> Lesley Edwards collection, Cheshire County Record Office, Chester.

<sup>20</sup> Over Alderley & Birtles is one location.

**The Inter War Years**

1919 saw the revival of the Goostrey Morris Dancers but this time as a mixed troupe of male and female dancers, Tom Hurstfield continuing as leader. They were soon back entering competitions, and at Holmes Chapel they came second to the Winsford American Carnival Dancers, and Peover Morris Dancers came third.<sup>21</sup>

The inter war years were a period of great expansion in the morris world with new morris troupes springing up across the north of England and north Wales; it also saw the development of carnival organisations who would arrange events and supply trained judges.



1920 at Kingsley, Cheshire, courtesy of Geoff Bibby

The Goostrey men now wore a dark red sash, blue velvet breeches with a gold stripe up the side, white shoes and stockings. The women wore their own home-made white dresses, the style and length of which changed with the fashions.<sup>22</sup>

During the mid-1930s Harold Maddock (back row 2<sup>nd</sup> left) and Elsie Capper (middle row 2<sup>nd</sup> left) joined the troupe; they were later to get married and play a massive part in the future of the troupe.



In the late 1930s the Goostrey Rose Day Festival started hosting their own morris competitions attracting troupes from Cheshire and North Wales. Dancing was a big feature of the local May Queen and Rose Queen festivals; alongside morris dancing there would be children's demonstration dances such as the Hornpipe, Maypole dancing, the Welsh Dance, Irish Jig, the Pony Dance, Dutch Dance and various country dances.

Mid 1930s, reproduced with permission of the Maddock family

<sup>21</sup> Poynton Jemmers' Archive

<sup>22</sup> Lesley Edwards collection

## Post War Revival

After a break due to the war and at the request of the Rose Day Festival Committee,<sup>23</sup> the Goostrey Morris Dancers were reformed in 1948 with Harold Maddock as leader and Elsie Maddock their trainer.



1948 reproduced with permission of Goostrey Rose Day Archive

Due to post war austerity and rationing their kit changed dramatically and was basically everyday wear with the addition of a sash. The boys wore a white shirt, a sash over their right shoulder, a tie, grey trousers and white pumps, and the girls wore a white blouse, a sash over their left shoulder, a grey skirt, white blouse and white pumps.<sup>24</sup>

When dancing they formed up in two lines, girls on the right and boys on the left graded by height with the smallest at the front rising to the tallest at the back. Sticks were held vertically when processing and horizontally in the figures. The leader danced at the top of the set and signalled the figures by holding his sticks in different positions.

The troupe began entering many competitions, including the Staffordshire Pageant where they won first prize in the class for a "Troupe of bona-fide Morris Dancers".<sup>25</sup>

The following year Elsie and Mabel Lester borrowed £8 from the Rose Day Festival Committee to buy new kit: they bought blue and white striped material for the girls' skirts and headbands, the boys' waist sashes and ties for both.<sup>26</sup> She borrowed white trousers for the boys but they were very baggy, so they used cross strapping below the knee, a style that had been common in Cheshire.<sup>27</sup> White crepe paper for the pom poms was bought at a special price from the village paper shop.



Early 1950's, reproduced with permission of the Maddock family.

*Note the arms are fully extended, a common feature in many of the old Cheshire dances.*

<sup>23</sup> Elsie Maddock interviewed by Theresa J. Buckland, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1977, copy held in the Lesley Edwards collection

<sup>24</sup> Elsie Maddock interviews by Lucy Wright and Duncan Broomhead, 2017

<sup>25</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 2 September 1950

<sup>26</sup> Smallwood, Jean, *Goostrey Remembered*, 2000

<sup>27</sup> Duncan Broomhead collection



Mid 1950's, reproduced with permission of the Maddock family.  
Gillian Maddock front row centre Elsie Maddock far right.

In 1950 the morris competitions started again at the Rose Day Festival with twelve troupes drawn from Cheshire and North Wales competing under the Chester and North Wales Carnival Association rules.<sup>28</sup>

In the mid 1950's Harold Maddock retired as leader, a vote was held, and the troupe chose Harold and Elsie's daughter Gillian to be their new leader.<sup>29</sup>

Other troupes were starting to dance in a single line for competition but retained two lines for 'Road Work',<sup>30</sup> but Goostrey kept to the older two-line formation for all their dances. During the 1950s, they were three times winners of the National Carnival Association All England Championship and Gillian, their leader, won 65 medals<sup>31</sup> which she wore on her waistcoat.



Late 1950s, reproduced with permission of the Maddock family

In 1956 Broomedge Morris Dancers from Lymm, Cheshire became an all-female troupe<sup>32</sup> leaving Goostrey and nearby Lower Withington as the last remaining mixed morris troupes.

<sup>28</sup> Goostrey Parish Archive

<sup>29</sup> Gillian Hough & Evelyn Maddock interviews, Lucy Wright and Duncan Broomhead, 2017

<sup>30</sup> *TroupesAndBands* Facebook Group discussion, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2019  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1562983470608105/?ref=bookmarks>

<sup>31</sup> Undated newspaper cutting in Elsie Maddock's scrapbook

<sup>32</sup> Bibby, Geoff, *A History of Morris Dancing in and around Lymm and Statham*  
[http://www.thewallmorris.org.uk/lymm\\_book/teams/broomedge/broomedge\\_morris.htm](http://www.thewallmorris.org.uk/lymm_book/teams/broomedge/broomedge_morris.htm)

During this period new figures were added to make the dance more spectacular for competition.<sup>33</sup> Interest grew in the village and in 1952 and 1953 two junior troupes, the Goostrey Rosettes and Goostrey Juniors, danced at the Rose Day Festival.

In about 1959, tragically, and within a few months of each other, three of the male dancers: John Bell, Frank Sutcliffe and Philip Armstrong were killed in separate motorcycle accidents.<sup>34</sup> This coupled with the difficulty of recruiting new male dancers due to National Service meant that they could not continue as a mixed troupe.<sup>35</sup>

Music for competition was originally live, played by a brass band and the Goostrey dancers provided them with their own musical score. I have seen the handwritten scores for Cock O' the North that they used, and they show evidence of having been soaked by the rain. The live music was eventually replaced with recorded music played over loudspeakers. When it was a troupe's turn to dance, they would line up in the arena while the speed of the music was adjusted to the leader's satisfaction.

Troupes were marked on their whole performance, from the leader's signal to start to their signal to stop. Marks were out of 100, typically Entry 10 points, Costume 20 points, Timing & Rhythm 20 points, Formation & Dancing 20 points, Deportment 20 points, Exit 10 points. In addition, the leaders were judged separately, marked out of 20 points and competed for a leader's medal.<sup>36</sup>



Early 1960s, courtesy of Edna Brandreth.



c1963 Goostrey Junior Morris Dancers,  
courtesy of Marilyn Howard

They subsequently changed the stepping from the old single 'Cheshire' high skipping step to the more commonly found step they refer to as 'pas de', and which folk dancers call polka or rant. It was suggested to me that the boys would not have been able to learn the new step, which is why they didn't try to introduce it earlier.<sup>37</sup>

In 1969 Goostrey could boast both junior and senior troupes and over 30 dancers. Sadly, after some internal disagreements Elsie Maddock decided to retire from training the morris troupe and the Goostrey Morris Dancers, three times All England Champions were disbanded, and something that had been part of village life for over 60 years ended. Their last dance out was at the

<sup>33</sup> Goostrey Parish Archive

<sup>34</sup> Mrs M. Kettle

<sup>35</sup> Elsie Maddock, Interviews by Lucy Wright and Duncan Broomhead, 2017

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Howison

<sup>37</sup> Edna Brandreth and Christine Hollinshead interviewed, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019, Duncan Broomhead

neighbouring village of Lower Withington,<sup>38</sup> which by coincidence is where Aaron Shuttleworth, who brought the dance to Goostrey had once lived.

### Notations of the Goostrey Morris dance

In the 1930s, Maud Karpeles visited Cheshire in search of morris dances. Unfortunately, some of the notes she made are now missing from her collection in the Vaughan William Memorial Library (VWML). Roy Dommett appears to have seen the notes before they disappeared, but there is some confusion around his notation for the Goostrey Dance.<sup>39</sup> He wrote: "*Source: Maud Karpeles mss. col c, 1930 at Holmes Chapel nearby. Set: 24 men*"<sup>40</sup>

I do not know if Goostrey ever danced with a 24-man set. The notation for Goostrey given by Dommett matches the notation for the Holmes Chapel dance<sup>41</sup> in the Fred Hamer collection, in which he gives additional background information pertaining to Holmes Chapel and not Goostrey.

Dommett's Morris Notes<sup>42</sup> also contain the notation for a Holmes Chapel dance, which is different to the one above, he wrote:

*"Holmes Chapel – for 16 – collected Hamer and Karpeles 1938"*

Once again, this notation is not amongst the existing papers in the Karpeles collection. I haven't found it in the Hamer collection either, but a copy of a matching notation can be found in the Manchester Morris Men's Archive under Holmes Chapel Morris and with the following heading:

*"Extract from F.D. Hamer's notes per Rollo Woods (Aug. 1950)"*

Renewed interest in the dance from outside the village came in the 1960s and 70s. The differences in the notations below may be explained by the changes in the dance over time.

### Four collected versions of the Goostrey Dance.

Dommett ex Maud Karpeles as Goostrey but Holmes Chapel in Fred Hamer collection	Daniel Howison collected from Fred Egerton 30/03/62	Theresa J Buckland collected from Elsie Maddock 11/04/77	Anne Cohen of Poynton Jemmers collected from Elsie Maddock 22/10/77
Small Fours	Unnamed figure	Outside & Arches	Outsides
Outsides	Outsides	Fours	The Bran Mash
Turns	Right Hand Star	Figure of Eight	Insides
Insides	Insides	Circular hey	Stars
Corners	Grand Chain	Twos	Circular hey
Long Chain		Outsides	Figure of Eight
			Inward cast off

<sup>38</sup> *The Chronicle*, undated cuttings in Elsie Maddock's scrapbook.

<sup>39</sup> Roy Dommett's Morris Notes, Vol. 2, Northwest Morris, Country Dance & Song Society <https://www.cdss.org/dommett>

<sup>40</sup> *Maud Karpeles Manuscript Collection, Catalogue*, compiled by David Atkinson, 1997 VWML

<sup>41</sup> Fred Hamer collection, p 66 (not catalogued), VWML

<sup>42</sup> Dommett's Morris Notes

## Morris Postscript

Elsie Maddock later became involved in judging and judged for the Manchester and North East Cheshire Carnival Organisation at many important events including 11 times at the World Championships in the Isle of Man.<sup>43</sup> She also trained other judges, some of whom are still involved today.

In 1977-78 Elsie Maddock and Lilly Broom taught the dance to Poynton Jemmers, a women's north-west clog morris side. The Jemmers danced it at the 1978 Goostrey Rose Day Festival, this being the first time that it had been performed publicly in clogs.<sup>44</sup> After that other local morris revival sides were invited to dance at the Rose Day Festival.

Carnival morris competitions continued to be part of the Rose Queen Festival until 1988, when 12 Carnival Morris Troupes competed, including Platt Bridge Seniors, who many of you will know from Dancing England.<sup>45</sup> Also in the procession were my own Cotswold style side, Adlington Morris Men.



Elsie Maddock in 2017  
(photo:Duncan Broomhead)

The Rose Day Festival committee had decided to stop the morris competitions, a move that caused a lot of upset within in the village, especially with the ex-dancers, a petition was raised but the committee did not reverse their decision.<sup>46</sup>

Elsie died in February 2019 aged 98. I attended her funeral and her coffin was brought into church to a recording of 100 Pipers and then Cock O' the North, the music that the Goostrey troupe used to dance to. The church was full, and you could spot the ex-dancers immediately because they started moving and swaying in time to the music, the old and familiar tunes of their youth.

## ***Duncan Broomhead*** ***November 2019***

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Cheshire Record Office, Christine Hollinshead, Daniel Howson Collection, Derek Schofield, Edna Brandreth, Elsie Maddock, Evelyn Slater, Geoff Bibby, Gillian Hough, Goostrey Parish Archive, Goostrey Rose Day Archive, Hilda McCartney, Lesley Edwards Collection, Lucy Wright, Manchester Morris Men's Archive, Margaret Kettle, Marilyn Howard, Poynton Jemmers Archive, Roger Bennett, Roger Burgess, Roy Dommatt Morris Notes, Richard Nelson, Sheila Gregory, Theresa J. Buckland, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

<sup>43</sup> Undated newspaper cutting in Elsie Maddock's scrapbook

<sup>44</sup> Poynton Jemmers' Archive

<sup>45</sup> Goostrey Parish Archives

<sup>46</sup> Sheila Gregory collection

## How Border Morris Developed – a Leicester Perspective

### Preamble

This study was initiated through a conversation with Derek Schofield in 2016 during which I related how Border morris had been taken up by Leicester Morrismen. Derek suggested that someone should write this down and I took up the challenge. The next two sections give some context to the development in Leicester.

### History before “Border morris”

- Cecil Sharp was aware of and saw morris dances from the Welsh border counties, most famously the Brimfield dancers on Boxing Day in 1909, but gave the view in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the Morris Book that it “*still survives albeit in a state of decadence*”. Maud Karpeles recorded after seeing the Upton-on-Severn dancers in 1925 that the “*dancing was rough and uncertain*” and Christopher Cawte in his 1963 paper refers to a performance of the Much Wenlock dance in private at a Ring meeting in 1953 (by the Jockey Men) as “*taken to be a joke by some of the audience*”.
- Joseph Needham, in his 1936 paper<sup>1</sup> on the geographical distribution of English ceremonial dances, gave various categories of the morris dance but classed the dances from the Welsh border counties as “Cotswold”.
- This misconception was corrected in 1960 with the publication of a new geographical index of ceremonial dance by Cawte, Alex Helm and others<sup>2</sup>. This index defined for the first time a separate category for Border morris dances.
- Three years later, in 1963, we had Cawte’s hugely significant paper<sup>3</sup> on Border morris. In reviewing the features of the morris from the Welsh border counties Cawte concluded that, “*These features distinguish the morris dance near the Welsh border from other types such as those listed in [Needham’s 1936 paper] and it is proposed that it should be known as the “Welsh Border Morris”*”.

### The Development after 1963

Cawte was at the time a member of Leicester Morrismen and their Squire from 1969 to 1971, so the assumption might be drawn that his own interest in Border morris was academic rather than as dance material.

It was the enthusiasm of Roy Dommett that was the main driver in getting the Border morris dances into performance. Roy first taught Border dances at Halsway Manor in the mid to late 1960’s<sup>4</sup>. This did not result in any immediate take-up of the dances but in January 1972 he was invited to teach a workshop for West Midland teams in Ledbury Town Hall. This workshop led to the formation of what came to be called the Original Welsh Border Morris Men, who first danced out in December 1973 and have continued a tour on the last Saturday before Christmas ever since.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Needham, The Geographical Distribution of English Ceremonial Dance Traditions, *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1936) pp 1-45

<sup>2</sup> E. C. Cawte, Alex Helm, R. J. Marriott and N. Peacock, A Geographical Index of the Ceremonial Dance in Great Britain: Part One, *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1960) pp 1-41

<sup>3</sup> E. Christopher Cawte, ‘The Morris Dance in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire’, *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1963) pp 197-212

<sup>4</sup> This information is in a paper given at a conference hosted by the Morris Federation called “Roots of Border Morris” held in February 1992. The paper can be accessed directly through the link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B94GzSWSEeV7aXdVZUczQ0VaSlk/view>

Events were starting to unfold and there were two strands to the development.

One was:

- Also in 1973 John Kirkpatrick moved from London to Shropshire and two years later started Shropshire Bedlams. His account of the team's formation is as vibrant now as it was when published 40 years ago<sup>5</sup>.
- In 1976 at the Sidmouth Folk Festival, Magic Lantern led by Taffy Thomas performed the Brimfield dance round all the festival venues and pubs in a single evening. Taffy had based the costumes on the photograph taken in 1909 and my own recollection is that the somewhat exaggerated nature of the sticking made the dance particularly memorable.
- In 1977 Shropshire Bedlams and their companion women's team, Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish made their first appearance at Sidmouth. Derek Schofield<sup>6</sup> records the sensational impact the teams had and how this was an inspiration for many to turn to Border morris and continue the innovations which had been started.

And the other:

- Silurian Morris<sup>7</sup> had been formed by Dave Jones in 1969 as a Cotswold team but started to dance Border morris on Boxing Day tours and by 1979 Dave felt there was enough material for the team to perform Border morris dances exclusively. The team first danced out at the Bromyard festival that year and reportedly caused quite a stir amongst the Cotswold morris teams present.
- This strand of development focussed very much on the material which had been collected from original sources and which Dave Jones, initially spurred on by Roy Dommett's early instructionals, had researched.
- In October 1979 Silurian Morris ran an instructional weekend for the Morris Ring and my thanks go to Annie Jones for finding the date of the workshop and to Charlie Corcoran, Keeper of the Morris Ring Logbooks for the detailed account. The dances taught over the course of the weekend were Brimfield, Bromsberrow Heath, Dilwyn, Pershore, White Ladies Aston and Upton-on-Severn Stick and Handkerchief dances. Representative from 16 Morris Ring clubs attended.

Either directly influenced by these two strands of development or independently, teams across the country were dancing Border morris. This account now focusses on Leicester.

### **Leicester Morrismen's Story**

Leicester Morrismen had two representatives at the Ring instructional who brought the dances back to Leicester and the team's scrapbooks<sup>8</sup> record their first public performance of Border morris in December 1981 in Great Glen, south of Leicester (see 1).

Performances continued essentially as a winter diversion in subsequent years. I joined the team in the summer of 1984 and can recall participating in some rather casual performances around New Year in 1984/5 and 1985/6 when we danced a limited Border repertoire including the Chingford version of the Upton-on-Severn Stick dance and augmented by some Lichfield dances. The performances in the winter of 1985/6 were however given a new focus because the then Squire, Dick Allsop, had, through a chance meeting with Brian Kell, been instrumental in obtaining an invitation to the Whittlesea Straw Bear festival. Brian was not interested in

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<sup>5</sup> John Kirkpatrick, *Bordering on the Insane, English Dance & Song*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1979) pp 12-14

<sup>6</sup> Derek Schofield, *The First Week in August, Fifty Years of the Sidmouth Festival*, Sidmouth International Festival Ltd (2004) pp 99-100

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.silurianmorris.org.uk/history>

<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Pete Johnson, Keeper of the Leicester scrapbooks and again Charlie Corcoran for all the material they unearthed

inviting another Cotswold morris team but Border morris was a different matter and Leicester have been honoured to receive an invitation to Whittlesea every year since then.



1 - Border Morris at Great Glen – December 1981

The challenge was to focus on a consistent kit and a reasonable standard of dance. A specific point of discussion was what face colouring to use. When the team had started dancing Border morris, the kit seems to have been very much a given with rag coats and bowlers or top hats with feathers but the use of black face colouring was an early concern for some members, especially given the multicultural nature of the city of Leicester. Sadly there are no written records but photographs from the time show the team dancing with a mix of black and red faces. The general recollection of those who were present is that there was agreement this looked awful and before the first visit to Whittlesea a decision was made to use red. This was quickly followed by the realisation that we could take the name "Red Leicester" and this became a key defining characteristic for the team. The decision made in Leicester on face colouring considerably predates what became a high profile topic<sup>9</sup>.

Written records of Red Leicester's Border morris repertoire became available from the winter of 1988/9 and can be summarised up to 1997 as follows:

- In that season the team danced Brimfield, Bromsberrow Heath, Dilwyn, White Ladies Aston, the Upton-on-Severn Stick and Handkerchief dances and introduced the Pepleton stick dance.
- The Evesham stick dance and Pershore stick and handkerchief dances were introduced in 1990.
- The Pepleton handkerchief dance was introduced in 1992 and the nine-man version of the Upton Snodsbury dance, as learnt from Belchamp Morris Men, in 1994.

A major challenge was to achieve an adequate differentiation in style from the Cotswold morris dances performed during the rest of the year and indeed on Boxing Day until after 1999.

<sup>9</sup> See in particular articles by Chloe Metcalfe (now Middleton-Metcalfe): To black up or not to black up?, *The Morris Federation Newsletter*, Winter 2013, pp 6-9, and by Katy Spicer: Facing up to a dancing debate, *English Dance and Song*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (2016) pp 14-15

Suffice to say that the team did receive invitations to events outside the county, most notably to the festivals at Sidmouth and Towersey.

Roy Thody and I taught White Ladies Aston at a workshop in Sidmouth in 1992, and two years later we taught two more workshops, accompanied by a complete Red Leicester team. The following year, 1995, the team was invited as a "town team", principally to anchor one of the week-long series of workshops. Sue Swift and Sally Wearing were the morris advisers for Sidmouth Festival and the series was planned to allow the significant number of Border morris dancers emerging at that time to explore all aspects of the tradition, hone their skills and participate in a performance at the end of the week. The success of the concept might be judged from this extract from a letter the team subsequently received from Sue and Sally:

*"We realised afterwards that those attending the workshop series were less experienced as dancers and performers than was expected and our overall plans were much too ambitious"*

Despite a difficult week, there was a very creditable public performance on the last evening of the festival by the ten dancers who had survived the whole week. Some of the performers took the name "Herbaceous Border" and that name continues to this day for a "fringe" Border team which dances on the Esplanade each evening at the Sidmouth Festival under the leadership of Kurt Sauter.

Leicester's next invitation was to the Towersey Festival in 1997, where in addition to performing in the various venues (See 2) we ran a workshop teaching the Peopleton stick dance. A dance involving both single and double stepping was probably not in retrospect the best choice for dancers mainly interested in stick clashing and making lots of noise!



2. Red Leicester in the Ceilidh Tent at Towersey – August 1997

This account ends at this point but Red Leicester still flourishes, continuing its programme of winter events and has added new dances to its repertoire.

**Where are we now (I)?**

The following table gives the proportions of teams in the various morris dance associations that include Border morris in their repertoire, as accurately as these can be established, for 2019.

	Total Number of Teams	Teams Dancing only Border Morris	Teams Dancing Border Morris with Other Styles of Morris	Total Proportion of Teams with Border Morris in their Repertoire
Morris Federation	515	14%	14%	28%
Morris Ring	190	3%	18%	21%
Open Morris	137	26%	15%	41%

Interestingly only six teams who are members of the Morris Ring dance exclusively Border morris, whilst overall the proportion of teams in the Morris Ring that include some Border morris in their repertoire is not so different from that in the Morris Federation.

**Where are we now (II)?**

I would have liked to have added a view on the quality of Border morris following on from Red Leicester's experiences in workshops in the 1990's and extending up to the present day. This is however a tricky and subjective topic. Teams form and dance for a wide variety of reasons, and indifferent dancing is by no means confined to Border morris. Further consideration is beyond the scope of this short paper although the topic undoubtedly merits further study.

In conclusion, this article had the aim of providing some clarification on developments since the term Border morris was first used in the early 1960's and also providing a case study of how one particular team approached the topic. It is hoped that it will lead others to raise questions and to pursue further investigations.

**John Swift**  
**October 2019**

## Hey in Hay – Why and how?

Like many others in the Morris community, I was familiar with the imagery of the Morris team that were in a painting from Dixton in the early eighteenth century<sup>1</sup>. During one of the Cheltenham Folk Festivals, I saw the real thing: a formidable piece of work that was full of life, but the Morris was a small part of it. The real action was about making hay. I have a talk about it in 2003 at one of the last Wantage weekend workshops (after the era of Roy Dommett and Tony Forster), which was whimsical and drew on a wide variety of sources that were familiar to me, but not based on detailed historical analysis.

It seemed to me that the owners of Dixton Manor would have left a trail of evidence in history with written records and indeed the extant manor house and paintings of it and the hay making. Of the lives of the multitudes of men, women and children working at provisioning, mowing, turning, tedding, rick making, loading and driving carts, we know little. I felt that there must be many stories of their lives that were worth telling, from the mundane and adverse to the passionate and joyous. I made a small effort to interest professionals in the folk world about Dixton, but without a real plan and it fell by the wayside with the rest of life taking over.

A few years back, I felt that a stage work would do tribute to the labourers who gathered in the hay harvest, which was about as important as the cereal harvest. Hay fed horses and cattle and without it, the transport system and draught power on farms suffered badly and had poor consequences for the economy and, of course, the poor. Elements were clear to me: the start and end - but the middle needed to be filled. After discussions with Malcolm Major and hiccups, the challenge was there: a Sidmouth show in the Manor Pavilion.

Filling the gaps involved diving into academic and amateur historical analysis of hay harvesting and associated traditions, the role of Morris dancers in hay making (along with other harvesting), music and songs of the era, landscape and rural art. Some was a challenge for a research scientist with a demanding day job! Understanding much more about the general history was a great help, e.g. finding out that field names were known and unchanged from the 1700s, but still impersonal.

Talking to Steve Rowley was a great help with identifying a few more historic sources and suggesting ways of presenting things. A wonderful resource came from him: the Thurston Manuscript Book from about 1730. This was discovered in a junk shop by a musical instrument maker called Chris Challen, who published a facsimile version it (also now here: <http://glostrad.com/thurston-manuscript/>). It appeared to be a wedding present given to the newly married Thurstons, who lived near Thornbury in Gloucestershire, by friends and family who each wrote out a tune or song. Some are well known today, but others seem to have languished for an age, however all were known around the time of the Dixton painting and the set included some cracking dance tunes. Mary Jo Searle and John Kirkpatrick agreed on a selection of the tunes that were used, including *A Jigg*, *Pipers Round*, *Molly's Hoop*, *Country Gardens* and *Roger's Courtship*. Other tunes were, we believe, of the era and still used today, e.g. *William and Nancy*, *Fortune My Foe*. John also "lent" some of his agricultural songs to the show and gave some great advice, including the conclusion with *Sellenger's Round* (to the tune of *Roger's Courtship*).

The dance parts were easy to resolve, given the clues in the painting and the history of harvest celebrations. There were brilliantly realised by the young dancers assembled by Edd Gabriel, including the double jig of Molly Pipe (playing Anne Twitchen, b 1699) and Alun Pinder (Edward Parker, b 1691) that jumped out from the "courtship scene" in a section of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ed- If you can't recall this picture see <https://www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk/collection/the-dixton-manor-paintings/>

painting. This also provided inspiration for some of the narrative. A running theme was the often-questioning dialogue of two characters played by Barry Goodman (Humphrey Parker, b 1660) and Jameson Wooders (Thomas Creak, b 1667), along with another character (Ted Rutter, b 1676) played by Dave Brassington. How to get questions asked and answered about the locality, hay making methods and people was resolved once the penny dropped: make one character an itinerant labourer who followed the harvests around. The same ruse allowed Molly's character to ask questions.

All this helped me get text and scenes together in my mind, but the virtual cast still lacked identification. This came from Jameson who applied his academic history background to online resources and he identified a set of named people who were baptised in the local parish of Alderton (or the two from outside the area) and would have lived there at the time. Given the pressure to harvest successfully, almost all were dragooned into harvests and indeed, it was the law in earlier times. With names, at least some of those anonymous farmworkers in the painting were named for the first time in nearly 300 years! That was a really satisfying step forward for me. I could not know what the exact people were like, but the nature of the hard slog and meagre rewards of their lives could be realised through the performance. It was my tribute to them.

I have made hay, back in the mechanised days of the early 1970s. One of my fellow farmworkers (Ron, a lifelong professional in contrast to my transient student summer job) reinforced the nature of it. Worst job on the farm: always hot and often humid, heavy bales and working long hours against the elements. Twenty-odd years before, my partner's grandfather and uncles were photographed haymaking in east Gloucestershire (near Moreton-in-Marsh): their tools for turning and stocking were unchanged from those seen in the Dixton painting: wooden forks. They must have been the last generation to see out the manual methods in haymaking, a process that has since been marginalised by silage making.



The Townsend menfolk in Chastleton, Gloucestershire in 1940's (photo: maternal family of Julia North-Lewis)

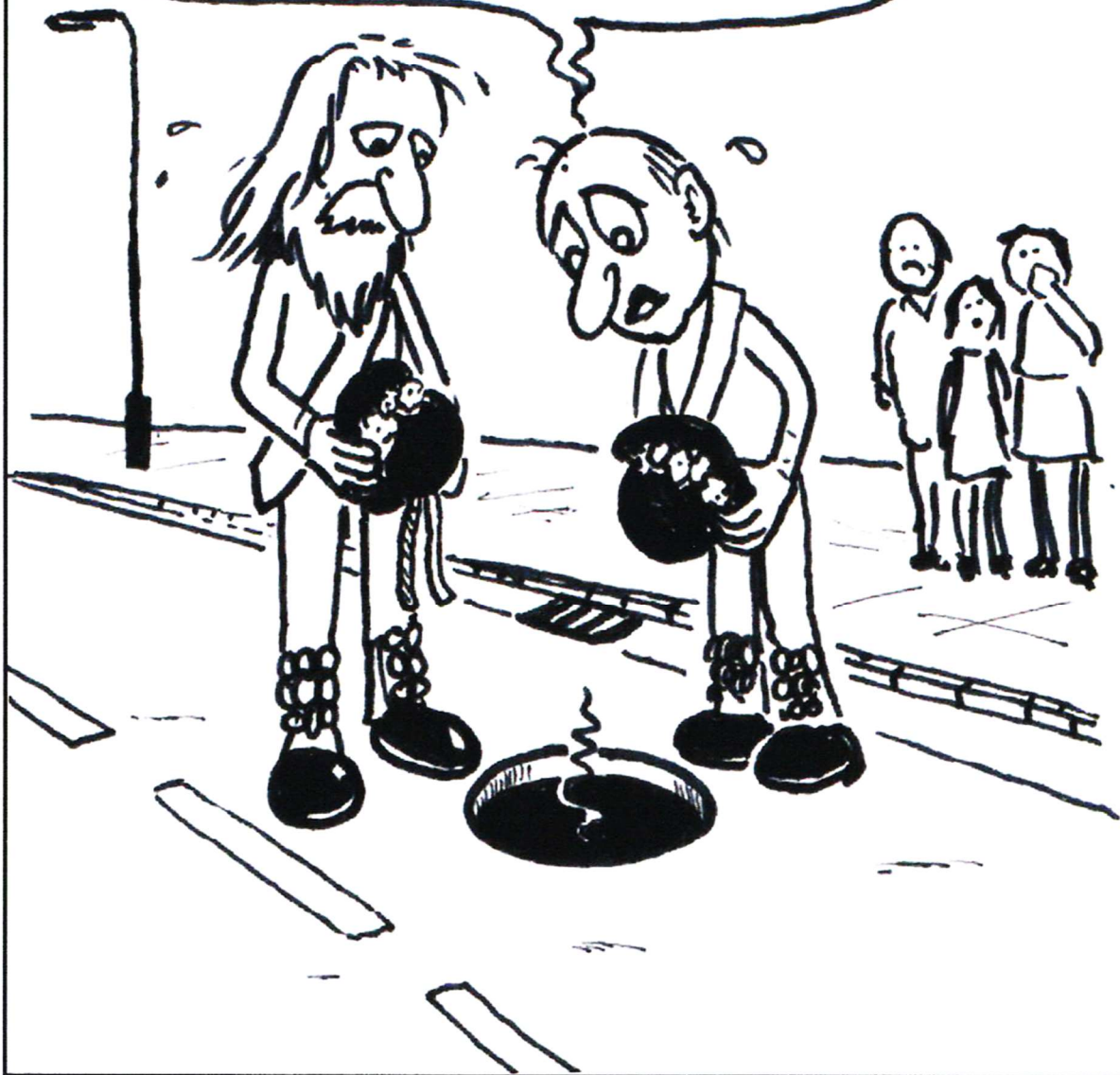
Did it work? Well, the audience enjoyed it (in spite of, or because of, the queuing in the dreadful rain) and Alan Bearman noted it as a highlight in his end of festival address. Individuals voluntarily gave me very positive feedback (so much better than trying to drag it out of students after lectures!). Malcolm Major was happily relieved: my usual approach of *just in time delivery* is slightly at odds with festival production. What next? A lot depends on my day job and the dreaded work-life balance. The logistics of getting the entire cast and musicians together again are not without challenge, but those haymakers do deserve more recognition.

Finally, I heartily thank all the dancers, musicians, singers and performers in the show. They made it happen and were resourceful, e.g. Carmel Gabriel's sourcing diverse props at short notice.

**Adrian Williams**  
**January 2020**

# THE MORRIS SIGHED!

Poor Syd! The dangers of dancing on the road. A loose manhole cover!



## Seven Sisters Molly Dancers

For a number of years, I have been thinking about starting a sister team to the Seven Champions so that the girls associated with the Seven Champions can join in the fun that Champs have been having for over 40 years. Being fat and unfit this might seem like a strange thing for me to do! In August 2018 I had a lightbulb moment when Paddington Pandemonic



Paddington Pandemonic Express in early 1980s  
Photo: Quentin Fletcher

Express dances popped into my head. I was very excited as I had always loved Paddingtons and their style of Molly Dancing. As Champs had been around at their inception it seemed absolutely the right thing to do to revive their tradition and start with their dances.

I contacted Kerry Fletcher who talked to others who had been in Paddingtons and they were happy for us to go ahead provided no blacking was involved. I talked it through with the Champs, got their support and in November 2018 we ran a workshop open to anyone who was interested. Kerry, Su.ET (Sue Evans-Turner), Dee

Goodwin and Dan Quinn from Paddingtons came to teach us. We had their notes of dances, minutes of their last meeting so that we knew their views on the use of their dances and their music. George Frampton gave us his notes as well. Wendy Wood and Jo Taylor have taken the music forward as we evolve. Our name Seven Sisters links us to Champs and carries on Paddingtons' train station theme.

With very little video footage of Paddingtons dancing we are relying on the notes and Kerry, Su.ET and Dee's memories! We haven't tackled Euston Square yet – the notes say : *Chorus: Doubles: Inexplicable in a few words, Figure: Singles: Insides, Chorus: Doubles: Still Inexplicable, Figure: Singles: Outsides, Chorus: Doubles: If you don't know it now it's too late, Figure: Singles: R & L Through on a mega scale, Chorus: Doubles: Hopefully you've got it by now.* As you can see there is a lot of room for interpretation! We do know that this dance has 8 dancers and is danced with both double and single step: as to the rest, who knows? We contacted Nigel Carter to ask what Nigel's Twizzles were (in Notting Hill Gate 'other notation'); he couldn't remember so we have interpreted as best we can. We currently have five dances that we can dance out.



Seven Sisters 2019 Photo: Garry Pethurst

We started practising once a month in Mereworth with some travelling from afar. All were experienced dancers so could pick up dances quickly but the local dancers wanted more so we added practising on Thursdays in Faversham to the third Sunday of the month in Mereworth. We accepted an invitation to Boughton Monchelsea's fortieth

Birthday event in July 2019 to be our first appearance – no quiet start.

We wanted to have a kit that reflected our connection to Champs which it does. Wendy, our non-dancing musician, is also a Champs' musician so is wearing Champs musician kit. The next few months were spent practising and kit making. On our first dance-out we realised that we needed to get some noise into our feet. We were wearing heavy black boots but not hobnails. I talked to teams who use taps and we now have Blakeys and heel plates on our boots which give a great sound. We now tuck our shirts in as well. We wanted top hats and have adapted some of the dances where doing things like the figure (W)ring out the Dishrag doesn't work in top hats – they fall off.

Working out what to put on our faces had to be sensitively addressed. We tried masks but after much discussion and trying different colours we settled on classic green face paint. We are half-face and the first time I ended up with a green shimmer for a few days after until I learnt to put barrier cream on first.

Our first dance out went well despite a car needing to come through our set just as we were about to start! Lots of local teams were present and we were well received. For me it has been great bringing to life again dances I used to love watching. We follow Champs' ethos and although not dancing I am leading, teaching and introducing. We are expanding our repertoire and taking the dances forward. We are having a great time, new dancers are welcome; look at our Facebook page for details or contact me on [traceyrose7@btinternet.com](mailto:traceyrose7@btinternet.com).

**Tracey Rose (Squire aka Big Sister/Squirrel)**  
**January 2020**

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## 'Kemp's Jig', Friday 4 October 2019, at BT Studio, Oxford Playhouse

"Let those who play your clowns speak no more than is set down" are allegedly the words of William Shakespeare. These may have been aimed at the actor upstaging his sixteenth century Lord Chamberlain's Men. Egos were bruised, and the comedian walked away: one Will Kemp. ("... and that's Kemp with a 'p'!")

In 1985, Chris Harris performed 'Kemp's Jig' at Ewshot Village Hall in Hampshire, with Roy and Marguerite Dommett chortling away in the front row, with Flirby and myself some way back. The plot centres on Kemp's nine-day dance from London to Norwich, but it was evident that research into *ye morrice* was minimal. I recall the actor complaining about his aching feet, but little else apart from enjoying the occasion. No reviews appeared in the folk press of the day – not even this magazine! Harris died in 2014, but the play was salvaged and revitalised by Steve Taylor of the Blue Fire theatre company after being purchased by director Lottie Walker. Learning that Chris Harris's play was doing the rounds again after a 34-year gap, we found ourselves in Oxford.

Kemp's quarrel with the playwright was that it left no room for improvisation or ad-libbing – his stock in trade, such as Taylor's portrayal of a red-nosed constable Dogberry with funny hat in 'Much Ado



Steve Taylor as Will Kemp in 'Kemp's Jig'  
 Photo: Blue Fire Theatre Company

About Nothing', mumbling his words and playing the buffoon. Another play had him interacting with a mop-headed dog on wheels. In life, Chris Harris the actor was best-known in repertory for playing Bristol's pantomime dame, and the portrayal of Kemp bemoaned that he never played the nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet' – which he duly did, hilariously, for the Oxford audience. At every turn, Taylor's Kemp mimicked Shakespeare – or Shakes-rags as he dubbed him – with whinging voice, forever stroking his beard. Kemp explained where the bard had gone wrong, simulating the clash of conscience using devil and angel puppets in a scene from 'The Merchant of Venice', and elsewhere an argument between a pair of shoes, one with a holey sole depicting a wife and husband. (Boo! Hiss!)

But, as this is a review for a Morris-based journal, I return to Kemp's 115-miles sojourn to Norwich. The reasons cited were threefold: to rid himself of this troublesome playwright, to escape the plague which ravaged London at that time, and to win many a wager along the route. In his entrance, Taylor gambolled down the studio steps to a recording of Bert Cleaver's pipe and tabor, divulged himself of his baldricks covering his smock, stripped off his shoes and very white socks, and donned a pair of sandals before beginning his monologue. His one prop was a large chest, which he opened to reveal the tools of his trade and indicate the passing days of his journey. In fact, the nine days took place over 27 days in Winter 1599-1600. Upon his entrance into Chelmsford, he was engaged by a woman who insisted on dancing with him as his Maid Marian to the tune 'The Twin Sisters' now associated with the Upton-upon-Severn Stick Dance thanks to Mr. Hutchings's associates and Chingford Morris Men.

I understand Taylor's performance was truncated to 45 minutes at the Edinburgh Fringe festival in August, but this performance was spread over two acts, with recorded music popular over 40 years ago, such as Gryphon's version of 'Kemp's Jig', being played during the interval – the 'jig' being an entr'acte in vernacular theatre, not dance tune in 6/8 rhythm. Continuing, Taylor went on to relate the journey, with asides such as Kemp's past performances as clown in the jig 'Simple Simpkin'. The script also related Kemp and Shakespeare witnessing a public execution at Tyburn, bull-baiting en route at Stratford Langton, and various incidents on his way through Essex and Suffolk. How he was taunted by two youths along waterlogged roads, with Kemp capering into one puddle up to his knees, and the two teenagers finding themselves up to their waists in another. How a portly butcher insisted on accompanying him, barely lasting two miles. And finally, how his entrance into Norwich was forestalled while the Lord Mayor was amassing crowds of spectators, forcing Kemp to make a diversion doing a tumbling act outside St Giles' Gate in front of what today is the Maddermarket Theatre – you may see a plaque now commemorating this fact!

And finally Taylor capered off, wearing yellow patterned breeches and jacket to the sound of pipe and tabor. No hankies were waved nor sticks clashed throughout. The play was highly entertaining and amusing, and now belatedly reviewed, although not the original version by its author. When Chris Harris performed in 1985, he sold a well-researched biography of Will Kemp, along with reprints of the 'Nine Daies Wonder'. Although never stressed, we learn from the text that Kemp reached his performing peak in his 30s, was 15 years older than Shakespeare, and in his fiftieth year when accomplishing his epic journey. Ergo, he was extremely fit for his age, but quick to put down the up-and-coming bard today – today lampooned by David Mitchell in 'Upstart Crow'. I understand the play will be staged again in the new year. Catch it while you can!

**George Frampton**  
**October 2019**

## Children in the Morris

On 14 June 1657, in Warwickshire, a young gentleman aged around 16 years was given money by his uncle to pay the visiting morris dancers. The account book of Sir Francis, 2nd Baronet Throckmorton, records that 6 shillings were 'Given to the Maurice dancers there the w<sup>ch</sup> I repaid to M<sup>r</sup> Throckm<sup>r</sup>ton he giving it'.<sup>1</sup> Despite his years, the account book further shows that young Sir Francis patronized a wide variety of other local customary performers, including musicians, mummers and bell ringers.

Some years later, in 1724, another young gentleman paid the sum of 2 shillings 6 pence 'to 7 morris Dancers' when they visited the Davenport family seat at Worfield in Shropshire.<sup>2</sup> The payment is recorded in 'Harry's' account. Around the same time, another payment of 6 shillings was given to Harry Davenport 'to give the ringers'.<sup>3</sup> 'Harry', or rather Henry Davenport had been born in September 1717, and so would have been only six or seven years of age when he paid the ringers and morris dancers. Harry died in October 1724.<sup>4</sup>

Young Harry was not the only member of the Davenport household to patronize the local morris dancers. His mother Barbara gave 5 shillings to 'Morris dancers & harp' on 27 May 1722 and another payment of 2 shillings 6 pence to the morris dancers in 1724.<sup>5</sup> Also around 1724, perhaps shortly after Harry's early death, Barbara gave 2 shillings 'to Shell to give ye Morris boys'.<sup>6</sup> 'Shell' Davenport was Harry's older brother, actually named Sharington Davenport, who had been born in 1709.<sup>7</sup> On this particular occasion it would appear that both patron and performers were children.

The role of children in patronizing and performing customary activities has perhaps been overlooked, but performances of the morris by children are certainly not unknown, even though they are relatively rare compared to those known to have been undertaken by adults. On 17 May 1785, the accounts of the Dutton family of Sherborne in Gloucestershire record that 2 shillings 6 pence were paid 'To a set of Morris Dancers Little Boys'.<sup>8</sup>

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> E.A.B. Barnard, *A Seventeenth Century Country Gentleman (Sir Francis Throckmorton, 1640-80)* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1944); Warwick, Warwickshire Record Office, CR 1998/LCB/39: Account book inscribed 'James Smith', containing accounts of James Smith for money received from Thomas Sheldon and disbursed in personal expenses for Sir Francis Throckmorton, his master, part of the time at Cambridge.

<sup>2</sup> Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 2664/3/2D/2/59: Talbot family of Lacock: Bills for Henry Davenport and Mrs Davenport (of Worfield, Shropshire) - 10. Account for Harry Davenport for play things, Morris dancers and a whip, 1724.

<sup>3</sup> Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 2664/3/2D/2/58: Talbot family of Lacock: Bills for Henry Davenport and Mrs Davenport (of Worfield, Shropshire) - 20. Harry Davenport's bill for material.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Robert Davenport, *The Davenport Descendants of William Davenport of Worfield in Shropshire (baptised 1585) - to 10 generations* (2012), [http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewiEs4j1qtrgAhXWSxUIHbxrCCcQFjACegQICBAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fhomepages.rootsweb.com%2F~nvjack%2Fdavnport%2Fdescendants\\_of\\_william\\_davenport\\_of\\_worfield.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3q1qVeGpzmUWGemGv44bqw](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewiEs4j1qtrgAhXWSxUIHbxrCCcQFjACegQICBAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fhomepages.rootsweb.com%2F~nvjack%2Fdavnport%2Fdescendants_of_william_davenport_of_worfield.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3q1qVeGpzmUWGemGv44bqw), p.12, accessed 26 February 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 2664/3/2D/2/51: Barbara Davenport's accounts listing money received and paid out over the period with one account missing (number 5 out of 6), and a page of notes, 1722-1724; 2664/3/2D/2/58/15: Bills for Mrs Davenport and other members of the family: Barbara Davenport's own account of money paid out.

<sup>6</sup> Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 2664/2/4B/47/28: Talbot family of Lacock: Household bills for the Davenports, mostly Barbara Davenport, for Worfield - 28. Account by Barbara Davenport of money received and staff paid, 1725-36.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Robert Davenport (see ref 4)

<sup>8</sup> Gloucester: Gloucestershire Archives, D/678/FAM/96D: Dutton Family Papers, Account book labelled 'Book of what I laid out for James Dutton Esq begun the 23 Octbr 1775'.

The previous day 5 shillings had been paid 'To a set of Morris Dancers from Barrington'; presumably an adult set were worthy of being paid more than a set of children. In December 1767, the Wyndham family of Ashcombe House in Cranbourne Chase on the Wiltshire-Dorset border gave Christmas gifts to morris dancers and mummers:<sup>9</sup>

To Christmas Box<sup>s</sup> Ashcomb

26 De <sup>br</sup> 1767	To some Lettell Moris Dancers <sup>Tollard</sup>	1 – 0
28 De <sup>br</sup> 1767	To momers – Girls & Boys <sup>Tollard</sup>	1 – 0
	To momers & c Dunhead	1 – 0
29 De <sup>br</sup> 1767	To a Set of momers	1 – 0

Given that the morris dancers from Tollard Royal were described as 'Lettell', we might assume that they too, like the mummers from the same place, were children. As such, another payment recorded in the same document bundle of 1 shilling 'To boys from Tollard' might also relate to morris dancers, although this has to remain speculative in the absence of a more explicit reference: perhaps they too were mummers rather than morris dancers.

Further uncertainty about the precise role of children in the morris might be found in the accounts of the Barrington family of Hatfield Broad Oak in Essex, even though it is clear that the children here were definitely involved in some kind of customary performance.

On 30 December 1662, 1 shilling was 'd[elivere]d to give ye Boyes y<sup>t</sup> danced in their disguise'.<sup>10</sup> Disguise possibly suggests mumming, but the fact that they danced suggests morris. Other references from Christmas and New Year throughout the later 1640s and 1650s are also vague about what the boys actually performed, though again a men's team visiting in 1656 was considered worthy of an increased sum of money when they too 'danced in their disguise':<sup>11</sup>

2 January 1649	Delived to my M <sup>r</sup> to give ye boyes y <sup>t</sup> played in ye palour	9d
7 January 1650	Delived to my M <sup>r</sup> to give boys y <sup>t</sup> played	1s
5 January 1656	dd to give ye boyes y <sup>t</sup> danced in ye parlour	1s
6 January 1656	dd my M <sup>r</sup> to give ye men y <sup>t</sup> danced in their Disguise & to the fidler, at ye making an end of Christmas	4s 6d

<sup>9</sup> Chippenham: Wiltshire and Swindon Archives 2667/23/6: Arundell of Wardour Castle; List of Christmas gifts to the poor and to servants by the Wyndham then Arundell family at Tollard Royal and Berwick St. John, 1756-1785. With lists of servants at Ashcombe in Berwick St. John and Salisbury, 1782-1785.

<sup>10</sup> Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, D/DBa A59/1: 'Of personal allowance and expenditure of Lady Dorothy Barrington'.

<sup>11</sup> Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, D/DBa A3: 'Disbusments for weekly expenses att London beging the 30th of Jan 1645'; D/DBa A5: 'Booke of Expences for my Mr Sr John Barrington & his children beginninge ye 19th August 1654'.

Children were not just for Christmas: they also performed at May. The Throckmorton family accounts from their other seat at Weston Underwood in Buckinghamshire contain a number of references to Mayers and boys with May bushes:<sup>12</sup>

Imp May 1699	To the Mayers	2s 6d
29 April 1702	To the Mayers	2s 6d
Imprimis May 1705	To the Mayers	2s 6d
May 1706	To ye Mayers by my Mastrs order	1s
May 1707	To the boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
Impris May 1708	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
Impris May 1710	To the Mayers	2s 6d
2 May 1711	To the May Bush boys	2s 6d
May 1712	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
May 1713	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
May 1714	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
May 1715	To ye Boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
May 1716	To ye boys for a May Bush	2s 6d
18 April 1721	Gave the bwayes on mayee for thare boosh	2s 6d
24 April 1732	Gave for the maiboosh	2s 6d

The Throckmorton accounts also contain some references to 'morris dancers' at Christmas so we cannot be certain that dancing was actually performed by the Mayers and boys as well. However, in 1789 the Honourable John Byng, later Fifth Viscount Torrington, visited Silsoe in neighbouring Bedfordshire, and was told that 'in May, there are Mayers (alias Morrice Dancers) who go about with a Fool, a Man in Woman's Cloaths (the Maid Marian), and Musick'.<sup>13</sup>

The terms 'morris dancers' and 'Mayers' may thus have been used synonymously, at least on some occasions. Just because the records say one thing, we cannot be certain that other related activities did not occur at the same time. Morris dancers may have been termed 'morris dancers' in the accounts, but that is not to say that they could not perform mumming plays and wassailing at Christmas or maying on May Day as well. 'Boys' accompanied the 'Waselers' when they visited the Throckmortons at Weston Underwood in Buckinghamshire at Christmas 1702.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Reading: Berkshire Record Office, D/EWe A1 and A2: Manorial documents and papers of Buckland and other estates of the Throckmorton family, including bailiffs' or stewards' accounts for the Throckmorton family estates in Weston Underwood, Buckinghamshire, 1698-1748.

<sup>13</sup> C. Bruyn Andrews, ed., *The Torrington Diaries: A selection from the tours of the Hon. John Byng (later Fifth Viscount Torrington) between the years 1781 and 1794* (London: Eyres & Spottiswoode, 1953), p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> Reading: Berkshire Record Office (see ref 12)

Children were also involved in other customary activities. At Revesby in Lincolnshire, the Banks family paid 1 shilling 'to Boys for Bonefire' on 5 November 1723 and a further 6 pence were paid the following year.<sup>15</sup> At Shugborough in Staffordshire, the Anson family also paid 1 shilling to the 'Bonfire Boys'.<sup>16</sup> However, at Hatfield Broad Oak in 1656, the Barrington family had 6 pence 'd[elivere]d to give ye boyes instead of faggotts for their burne fire'.<sup>17</sup> It is most likely that in some instances, the boys' visits constituted little more than begging.

Nonetheless, children are also recorded as musicians, singers and bell ringers. At Wrest Park in Bedfordshire, the account book of Anthony Grey, 11th Earl of Kent, records 'Given to ye Singing boys a half guiny' on 30 December 1671,<sup>18</sup> whilst at Revesby in Lincolnshire 1 shilling 6 pence were 'Given to the Singing Boys' on 26 December 1724.<sup>19</sup> In May 1660, the Barrington family had 1 shilling 'd[elivere]d to give a Boy that played on a Welsh Harpe' when they were staying in London at the Restoration of Charles II,<sup>20</sup> whilst at Salisbury in Wiltshire, Ann Wyndham paid 1 shilling 'To a Boy for Playing on the Fiddle'.<sup>21</sup> The Anson family at Shugborough in Staffordshire, paid 5 shillings to the '[Lichfield] Boys Bell Ringers' in December 1789.<sup>22</sup>

Whether maying, mumming or morris dancing, children were clearly involved in a variety of customary activities throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both as performers and, in some instances, as patrons. This leads to some interesting questions, not least in relation to concepts of status and masculinity in early modern England. With widening separation between polite and plebeian cultures, did some 'gentlemen' increasingly consider it beneath their dignity to deal directly with customary performers from the lower sorts, leaving it to their children, who might perhaps be prepared for later household management by practising on such trivialities? And what about the performers? How would an adult team of dancers feel about being given payment by a child? The money would no doubt have been useful, but perhaps they felt increasingly 'patronized' in both senses of the word. Might this have led to some performances being undertaken by children in turn or, in some instances, ceasing altogether? Such questions are worthy of further investigation.

**Jameson Wooders**  
**March 2019**

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<sup>15</sup> Maidstone: Kent History and Library Centre, U1590/A49/1: Revesby: Joseph Banks Esq, Household Accounts 1723-5 (Inventory at other end).

<sup>16</sup> Stafford: Staffordshire Record Office, D615/EF/3: K008 - Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield, Ledger of payments for estate household and personal expenses, 1784-1794.

<sup>17</sup> Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, D/DBa A5, 'Booke of Expences for my Mr Sr John Barrington & his children beginninge ye 19th August 1654'.

<sup>18</sup> Bedford: Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service, L31/121: Account book of Anthony Grey, 11th Earl of Kent, 1670-77.

<sup>19</sup> Maidstone: Kent History and Library Centre (see ref 15)

<sup>20</sup> Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, D/DBa A7: 1660 'Booke of Disbursmts London, during the continuance of my Mr and Lady there'.

<sup>21</sup> Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 2667/12/17: Personal account book of Ann Wyndham (later the wife of JE Arundell).

<sup>22</sup> Stafford: Staffordshire Record Office (see ref 16)

