The Green Mountain Mummers of Vermont basked in October sunshine on their annual Halloween outing with sword dance and play. After a year with snow and freezing temperatures and another with rain, the group was happy that the Powers gave up their efforts to stop the ritual. Seven different southeast Vermont towns witnessed the ritual murder of an innocent bystander and his subsequent resurrection by the Fool. A local newspaper ran a pictorial essay of the play during the following week increasing the group's exposure. The Mummers use the Sleights sword dance and a play which started out in life as an edited version of the Ampleforth play, but is usually "ad libbed" into an unrecognizable form.

Handsworth Sword Dancer Geoff Lester is spending a year in southern New Jersey on a university exchange program (Rider College with Sheffield University). He made contact with the Greenwich Morris Men who "were about to finish their morris practice and do sword, so they enthusiastically set about learning Handsworth with me instructing. The intention was to use part of the dance for a Christmas display [Country Dance and Song Society's Christmas Festival]. However, illness and the realisation that several of us would be away for the display prompted them to change to a 6-man dance -- Grenoside (those cads!)."

A few years ago, an informal gathering of friends in the Philadelphia area led to the working up of a mummer's play to take out at Christmas time. Lin Brodsky told the Newsletter that the group met again this Christmas season to go mumming and caroling. How many other such local traditions exist in one form or another in North America?

Many schools use mummer's plays or sword dances in Christmas programs. Two in southern Vermont are the Grammar School in Putney, guided by Charlene Morse, and Windham Elementary School with Andra Barrand. There are also a number of schools in the South, especially in Kentucky, with traditions dating back many years.

The women's sword team of Marlboro Morris and Sword has been practicing regularly to prepare for a tour of Vermont and New Hampshire schools. They perform the Handsworth Sword dance and will be adding a mummer's play and perhaps a Northumbrian clog routine to their performance.

The School for Traditional Dance and Song's Christmas Customs weekend was held on December 16-18. The weekend course tried an intensive approach to the sword dance by scheduling ten hours of long sword sessions. Two sword "teams" worked on the play and dance from Ampleforth while two others learned the Greatham
and play. A Saturday night dance party featured interludes with the Marlboro Woman’s Sword team and the Green Mountain Mummers and was followed by a flowing Wassail bowl. On Sunday afternoon the weekend sword teams performed for each other with everyone giving a very impressive showing. Participants and teachers alike crawled home exhausted that evening.

Tony Barrand and Fred Breunig shared instructional duties and John Roberts and Steve Woodruff provided the music. Participants came from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania and California.

**TEAM NEWS**

A feature of the American Morris Newsletter dependent on your letters and postcards. Names of correspondents appear at the end of each club’s news.

Berkeley Morris is dancing regularly with men’s and women’s sides. They lost a bid to dance at the Charles Dickens Fair in San Francisco which would have provided funds for a possible club excursion East in May. They hope to develop closer ties with the three other groups in the Bay Area which dance the Morris.

Each of the other groups also performs dances of other cultures mostly in stage-type situations.

Brad Foster, 1138 Francisco, Berkeley, CA 94702

Binghamton: Two different letters appeared in the mailbox with news of central New York’s morris club. The team Ale in September elected Jan Kaplan as Squire, Peter Klosky as Bagman, and retained John Dexter as Foreman. “In addition Jonathan Lawrence was recognized as the team ‘Pooch.’” Eight new men attending practices should eventually offset the loss of five old dancers (they usually conquer one out of 3 or 4. However, this lot seems unusual.”) Their year ended in November with a “tour of Ithaca with Hauntz of Oak. This was followed by a Harvest Feast at the complex at Morris Street.” The club is “seriously planning on touring England in ’78. If any charter flights leave from Boston on Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, let me know,” writes Ed Szymanski.

Ed Szymanski, 2820 Smith Drive, Endwell, NY 13760.

John Dexter, Department of Music, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY 13346.

Green Fiddle Morris has the ANN Newsletter on its mailing list. The club’s October newsletter bold reports of several September tours including one at a going-away (to Japan)—show of potter and fellow dancer, Larry Davidson. Most tours and get-togethers of the Toronto team have potluck suppers attached: “Good thing we dance as much or we’d all get fat!” Visitors are always welcome as well as mail especially “from other Canadian Morris teams — there are few enough of us and unfortunately we are rather well spaced out (physically, that is!).”

Newsletter Editor: Judy Greenhill, 141 Redpath Ave., Toronto, Ont. M4P 2K5

The Men of Houston, Morris Dancers, also have a newsletter designed to educate their audience in Texas. Articles dwell mostly on the origins and current reasons for dancing the Morris and are delivered in a humorous vein. A summary of the year: “The Men of Houston now have four dances (Hampton) and a play (Kirby Lansdale) in our repertoire. We also have nine dancers, two musicians and an impressive collection of twisted ankles, bruised shins, mosquito bites, suspected hernias and a mysterious rash. So far there are no unwelcome side effects from the dance’s fertility aspect.” The team is “definitely not ready for the public yet, but should be by Easter.”

John Vivian, 3804 Villanova, West University Place, Houston TX 77005.
Marlboro: After experiencing twelve Cotswold traditions at the Morris "Instructional" in September, every team member had a different idea of whence to proceed. Squire Barrand decided to lead the team through several Worcester-Hereford traditions which the club found quite a bit more primitive than their Cotswold cousins. After a Christmas break, the team will begin gearing up for the spring. They plan to dance a Northwest "clog" Morris processional in the July 4 Brattleboro parade. Plans for the third Marlboro Morris Ale appear elsewhere in this issue.

Tony Barrand, Box 51, Marlboro, VT 03444.

Pinewoods Morris Men activity this fall centered around the twelfth annual Fall tour of Harvard and the Christmas Revels in Cambridge, Mass. Attending the Harvard Tour were three other clubs: Westerly Morris Men, Northampton Morris (men and women) and New Towne Morris Men. Stops included usual sites (Radcliffe, Harvard Yard, Holyoke Center and the Charles River) as well as some new ones. Rain, very often a threat on the Harvard Tour, "after glowering at us all day, ... gave us a quick, but light dousing. We had just enough time to pack our gear and get out before the real drencher came down." In the Revels, PMM danced the Ampleforth Sword dance and a Hom's March, Sherborne.

J.M. (Shag) Graetz, 50 Moulton Road, Arlington, MA 02174.

Three Rivers Morris Men: A note from Al Blank said, "Happy to report that the Three Rivers Morris Men may revive. We have five lads and two lasses getting together once a week at my house. Hope to recruit more."

Al Blank, 107 Buckingham Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15215.

TWO REMINDERS

#1 Last year thirteen teams sent their calendars to the Newsletter for publication. It was an impressive survey of spring activity in North America. I invite all of those clubs and any others within "eye-shot" to make the 1978 calendar even more complete. Send all possible tour dates (if tentative, please mark as such) to the American Morris Newsletter, RFD #1 Box 9A, Putney, VT 05346. Please have the information to me no later (and preferably earlier) than March 20, 1978.

#2 A special feature of the April issue of the Newsletter is "Morris in North America," a listing of clubs and groups using morris or sword dancing in some manner. If you know of any clubs which have formed in the last year, make sure that I know to add them to the grand list.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As the first year of the American Morris Newsletter draws to a close, I want to thank you, the subscribers (now numbering over 200), for your support. Most existing teams receive one or more copies of this Newsletter and I would like to encourage them to use these pages as their own for the exchange of ideas, letters, news, articles, etc. In a low-budget operation such as this, I must rely on you readers to provide material for the Newsletter. Please make this your publication: write a controversial editorial, a scathing letter; send praise or criticism. Let me hear from you!

LATE TEAM NEWS

Roger Sunderland telephoned just under the wire with news of a Washington, D.C. morris club. Foggy Bottom Morris has been practicing since May 1977 and officially formed in early November. They have a men's team and "are working on a women's side."

Roger Sunderland, 3411 85th Avenue, Apt. #1, Lanham, MD 20801.
Marlboro Morris and Sword Club is pleased to announce that the third Marlboro Morris Ale will be held over the weekend of May 26-30, 1978, at Marlboro College, Marlboro, Vermont. The format of the Ale will be similar to that of previous years with demonstrations and mass dancing by participating teams on the Saturday followed by a pig roast, touring with a small group of teams in the towns of Windham County on Sunday and Monday, and country and contra dance parties in the evenings.

As a special event this year, we hope to have Roy Dommett lead a workshop on Monday morning incorporating films of traditional and revival teams dancing various forms of the Morris. Roy Dommett’s research in the manuscripts of various collectors of the Morris was largely responsible for the comprehensive nature of the Bacon Handbook and his collection of films of the Morris is probably unrivalled.

When we held the first Ale in 1976, it was our hope to have an annual meeting of all the Morris teams in the U.S. Last year we had twenty-one teams showing dances on Saturday which included about 260 dancers and musicians and almost as many guests and visitors. The facilities of Marlboro College were pushed to their limit, especially the toilets, water supply, and the evening dance space. Because there are a number of new teams which have formed since last May, it may be necessary for us to limit the number of participating teams attending the Ale this year. We are sending letters to all organized clubs that we know about asking them to apply to register for the Ale by February 15. If you are an organized club which would like to attend the 1978 Ale, and you have not received a letter, write to Tony Barrand, Box 51, Marlboro, Vermont 05344, or call him at 802-254-2651.

We applaud the growth of club morris in this country and we sincerely regret that it is necessary to organize the Ale around the possibility of excluding some clubs from attending this year. We hope we have chosen the fairest possible method.

—Tony Barrand

Since last issue, the Newsletter has received catalogues from several resource centers. Write to them directly for their lists of Morris and Sword related material.

Country Dance and Song Society, books, records, bells, swords
55 Christopher Street
New York, NY 10014

Andy’s Front Hall, books, records, some instruments
R.D. 1, Wormer Road
Voorheesville, NY 12186

Round-Up, records
Box 474
Somerville, MA 02144

Charles River Books, Books
59 Commercial Wharf
Boston, MA 02110

The School for Traditional Dance and Song has announced two more ritual dance weekends for the late winter months:

Northwest Morris Workshop, February 10-12, 1978, is intended mostly as a work session
for Marlboro Morris and Sword Club in the single processional "clog" morris. There will be some extra space, however, and interested dancers should contact the School for Traditional Dance and Song, Box 51, Marlboro, Vermont 05344.

Cotswold Morris Workshop, March 17-19, 1978 (no experience necessary). Participants will learn the full range of dances from each of two Cotswold traditions: Adderbury and Headington Quarry. During breaks from the dancing will be discussions of style and interpretation using manuscript and other written sources as well as video-tapes of the 1976 and 1977 Marlboro Morris Ales and of Headington Quarry Morris Men. Write to the address above for more details.

EARLHAM OLD ENGLISH MAY DAY, A MIDWEST TRADITION

When Allison Thompson was at Earlham College, she dug into the Archives to find the following material about an old Earlham tradition:

Earlham's Old English May Day was first held as an all-women affair in 1875, and again in 1878, 1880 and 1882. In 1886 it became more elaborate, with the procession moving to music. In 1902 men were invited to participate for the first time as Robin Hood and his attendants. In 1906 we had the first "real" Olde Englishe May Day, involving a fairly elaborate procession and several plays.

Professor Edwin P. Trueblood directed May Day from 1902 to 1937. It was he who added morris dancing, researched the show and made it as authentic as possible. There is a gap in programmes from 1906 to 1929 (where I found the first indication of "Morrice Dancers"). That year there were three sides of Morris Men with their Fools who danced Bean Setting and Country Gardens. Other men also performed the Revesby Sword Play which was described as an interlude for the morrice dancers.

In 1929 someone ordered Cecil Sharp's books of sword dances and the country dance books (I found the invoice), but the exact date of the initial performance of the morris dancers is lost somewhere between 1906 and 1929. There was, however, a news report from 1911 which mentioned morris dancers:

"Morrise dancers -- a quaint feature will be the revels of the Morris dancers, a folk dance said to have bee taken from the Moorish custom by the May Merrymakers of old England." (Indianapolis News, May 7, 1911).

May Day programmes since 1929 showed the following activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>3 sides plus Fools (men only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>3 sides, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2 sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>3 sides plus Fools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>3 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>2 men's sides, 2 mixed sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>2 sides</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every year the dancers performed Bean Setting and Country Gardens. In 1977 they added Constant Billy. For the last two May Days at least, and probably before, the dancers continued dancing after the official "Revels on the Greene."

NEWSLETTER SPECIFICS

The American Morris Newsletter is published four times per year (April, July, October, and January). Subscriptions are available to anyone at $1.50 per year; please make checks payable to the "American Morris Newsletter" and send to R.F.D. #1, Box 9A, Putney, Vermont 05346. Morris and sword clubs may subscribe at a lower group rate; write to the editor for details.

Copy deadline for the next Newsletter is March 20, 1978. Please send tour schedules for Spring and Summer by that date.