A seemingly endless procession of almost 250 dancers began the longest Winser Procession (not this country has ever seen. A massed band of fiddlers, accordions, concertinas, drums and pipes a labor could not even be heard at the end of the line. Dancers streamed down the campus of Marlboro College in Marlboro, Vermont, and onto a soccer-turned-maypole field to start the Second Marlboro Morris Ale. Three and a half hours later, dancers, musicians and spectators had witnessed thirty-two demonstration dances by twenty-three different groups in a most spectacular show of Cotswold Morris. Nineteen teams represented all six New England states plus New York, Tennessee and Ontario, Canada.

Saturday, May 28, was a show of and by dancers for dancers. Teams had obviously worked hard in preparation for the Ale and Saturday's demonstration was the time to show it. Everyone was impressed by the general high quality of dancing. Later at dinner, both Black Joker and Muddy River rapper teams entertained and, during the evening country dance, the Marlboro Women's Sword team and the Westernly Mummers performed.

Sunday was also a dancer's day, but it was shared with Marlboro's neighbors in Windham County, Vermont. Six different tour routes covered eighteen different towns on Sunday afternoon where spectators delighted in capers and colors. Even though some crowds were small, the populace was very enthusiastic about the dancing. Dancers re-convened on the Newfane Common at the end of the day for over an hour of mass dancing including a Fool's Jig by all of the attendant characters. Sunday evening's country dance featured interludes of English clog (Marlboro) and rapper (Greenwich Guard, Greenwich, Conn.).

A completely different kind of dancing highlighted Monday's activities. After Saturday's show and Sunday's tour, a long pub stand completed the weekend's varieties of Morris dancing. Many teams had departed by that time, which was somewhat a blessing since the alley used for dancing would not have accommodated all 250 Ale participants!

Teams in attendance were Binghamton, Black Jokers, Burgundy Belles, Green Fiddle, Greenwich, Hearts of Oak, Marlboro, Muddy River, New Cambridge, New Towne, Northampton, Pheasix (and Morris Minors), Pinewood, Pokingbrook, Putnam Ring, Ring o' Bells, Strong, and Westernly. Everyone agreed that the host team, Marlboro Morris and Sword, had done a splendid job in organizing the weekend.

NO AMERICAN "RING" IN 1977

An informal meeting to discuss the desirability of an association of American Morris clubs took place on Monday, May 30, 1977, at the Marlboro Morris Ale in Marlboro, Vermont. The idea for such a gathering arose last summer at Pinwods Camp during a meeting discussing the merits of a women's morris organization. People agreed at that time that a more logical place to consider such an idea would be at a gathering of clubs such as the Marlboro Ale rather than at Pinwods. At least fourteen teams were represented (others may have escaped notice): Binghamton, Black Jokers, Green Fiddle, Greenwich, Marlboro, Muddy River, New Cambridge, Pinewood, Pokingbrook, Putnam Ring, Quaker, Ring o' Bells, Strong, and Westernly.

Tony Harrand, Marlboro Squire, opened the meeting by reading some information
of his association of men's clubs in England as organized. He then outlined the three major functions he saw for an association in this country:

1. Clearinghouse for teachers -- working with the Country Dance and Song Society to guide new morris groups to teachers and vice versa;
2. Information and communication -- disseminating information about the Morris and encouraging contact among clubs. Supporting publications such as the American Morris Newsletter;
3. Insurance -- establishing a nationwide base for an inexpensive liability policy and special medical insurance.

There were only a few reactions and responses which followed: all were unenthusiastic about establishing an association mostly because it would add a level of bureaucracy. It was pointed out that most everything that a “ring” might do was already being done and that even the assurance question was fairly unanswerable for many organizations. There being no cries to the contrary, the meeting dispersed.

Feature Article: RESPECT FOR TRADITIONAL PRACTICE

by Russell Mortley

(Originally part of an article entitled "Music and the Morris," the balance of which appeared in the last issue of the American Morris Newsletter. The complete article first appeared in Folk Review (Vol. 4, no. 4, February 1975), Austin House, Hospital Street, Nantwich, Cheshire, England. Annual subscription $6.50. Reprinted by permission.)

If more attention were paid to the nature of a public performance by Morris clubs in general, we might hear fewer justifications about the reputation of present-day Morris.

What it boils down to is respect for traditional practice. In some ways, of course, traditional practice has to be modified to meet modern conditions; moreover, we all agree that a live tradition is a changing, evolving tradition. But this does not mean chucking everything out of the window and starting afresh: it means building on what has been passed on to us. In fact, with a re-established tradition as we have it now, the evolution will look after itself without conscious effort. What we need to do at this stage, rather, is to provide a firm basis for evolution by making sure exactly what has been handed down to us about this remarkable complex and fascinating tradition -- not only in the way of steps and figures of the dances, but also in attitudes to the dancing, style of presentation and so on. For this, it is necessary to sift and evaluate all the sources of information that are available to us. The manuscripts notes of collectors are a closer approximation to traditional practice than published accounts, subject as these are to considerations arising from the kind of public to which they are addressed, practical limitations of printing, space, complexity, and cost.

There is good evidence that the Cotswold Morris continued in full vigour up to the 1830's, only 70 years before Cecil Sharp set about his remarkable work of recovery, yet by the end of the century the number of active sides in the area had shrunk from 80 or more to a bare half-dozen. Though we have to keep our eyes open for the occasional recent innovation which might not have become satisfactorily absorbed into the particular tradition, still, by and large, the traditional practice of the 19th century Morris teams was the net product of centuries of steady evolution. Thus it is by no means surprising that current experience shows in general that the version of a particular dance closest to traditional practice proves to be the most satisfactory in performance. To take an example, the well-known Field Town dance, 'The Rose,' in its published form appears devoid of galleys. The omission of this extra turn in the reel was remarked on by the old dancers when the Travelling Morris took the dance back to its home village in 1924, but
it was not until Sharp's manuscripts became accessible that it could be seen that the dance had in fact been recorded correctly, but altered (and emasculated, many would say) in publication.

Once further proviso should be borne in mind when approaching the work of collectors. Until complete confidence has been established between collector and informant (and this happy situation may in fact never be achieved in the course of a mere couple of visits), the latter usually feels some reservation about telling all he knows. These are his dances (if he happens to be the sole survivor of the team) or our dances (if a number of dancers are still around)—and you may be sure there were frequent arguments in the pub about the propriety of giving them away to a stranger from London who will no doubt make money out of them.

I have heard it said quite recently that "after all, the morris dances belong to everybody." Few traditional dancers would have agreed with that glib statement. The fact is the morris dances are the jealously guarded property of the morris dancers. It is the "luck", the name (symbolized by the cake on the sword), the experience of seeing the dances, that belongs to everybody, not the dances themselves. However tenuously, the morris still retains its power to fascinate the onlooker—any morris team worth its salt soon discovers this—but it will not continue to do so (and then it will no longer be "morris") unless the dance is taken seriously by the performers, however much this essential seriousness of purpose is overlaid by convivial enjoyment. The success of a morris team depends, perhaps as much as anything, on finding the right balance between seriousness and enjoyment. This basic ambivalence is personified in the Fool. "It takes a wise man to make a good Fool," said Jinky [William Wells of Hampton-in-the-Bow]. The Fool is, of course by no means an "extra character" (a rather unfortunate sub-heading in Sharp's Morris Book). He is the essential central figure in the Morris. We was often dubbed "Squire"; he directed the dance while he amused the onlookers and so created a bridge of communication between performers and public. How rarely do we see this happening now—but it still can and sometimes does happen—and with electrifying effect! Parallel to the Fool is the man with the sword-impaled cake and the money-box— for the exchange of gifts with the populace. Again how often neglected nowadays—"too much trouble"! Are not too many of our morris teams concerned with the takings to the exclusion of the giving? If presented properly, there is no need to lecture the onlookers on what the morris is all about: it will speak for itself—and if an element of mystery remains, so much the better.

THE OLD CUSTOMS

The following was sent by Jim Adams of St. Mark's Church in Washington, D.C., who organized classes to be taught by Barbara Harding. It is taken from the church's Spring Christian Education Catalogue:

"Evening Prayer and Morris Dancing

"Morris dancing was for centuries associated with the great festival of the church in England. People interested in learning this traditional English folk dance as a spiritual discipline as well as a form of creative expression will meet on Tuesdays between the Sunday after Easter and Pentecost. Each session will begin with Evening Prayer done with postures and chanting."

Barbara herself wrote that she has "been teaching this with great delight... The minister hopes to come up with a crack Morris team in time for next Easter Sunday! So I'm sure there will be classes again this fall and through the winter."

SUBSCRIBE TO THE AMERICAN MORRIS NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter is off to a running start with 68 individual subscribers and 63 team subscribers (from six different teams). The rates will not be able to stay low forever; so subscribe now while you can take advantage of such a bargain! Send $1.50 per year to the address on page one.
Almost immediately after last issue's deadline, additions and corrections began trickling in. This list shows new teams, new names and new addresses and should be used in conjunction with "Morris in North America" on page 4 of the last issue (copies available on request).

TEAMS OR CLUBS

Arrowic (NE) Morris; Dobby Small, Fiddlers Reach, Doubling Pt. Rd., Arrowic, ME 04530

Berkeley (CA) Morris; Brad Foster, 1138 Francisco, Berkeley, CA 94702

Boston area: New Towne Morris Men; Mark Wilke, 32 Camp St., Cambridge, MA 02140

Greenwich, Ct.: Burgundy Selleis; Martha Roberts, 33 Vineyard Ln., Greenwich, CT 06830

Greenwich Guard (repper); Whitman Kendall, 18 Roosevelt Ave., Putnam Ring (morris) Old Greenwich, CT 06870

Knoxville, Tenn.; Sourwood Morris; Susan Millet, 2218 Highland Ave., Knoxville, TN 37916

Northampton (MA) Morris; men: Rob Brown, Box 94, Petersham, MA 01366

Women: North Chor, Plumtree Ave., Northampton, MA 01077

Philadelphia, PA: St. Peter's School, Poughkeepsie, NY; Pokingbrook Morris; Ed Bosson, Bouvier Ln. EDFl, Yorktown Hts., NY 10598

Seattle, WA; Pike Place Morris; Lars Watson, 5315 11th Ct., Tacoma, WA 98407

Toronto, Ont.; Green Fiddle Morris; men: Rob Mumford, 559 Broadway Ave., Toronto, Ont.; women: Kathy Reid, 141 Redpath Ave., Toronto, Ont.

Country Dance and Song Society Centers

Lexington, KY (U. of KY Folk Dancers), Brent Combs, 925 S. Limestone #3, Lexington, KY 40504

Media (PA) G. D. Center, Mrs. Richard Montgomery, 213 S. Orange St., Media, PA 19063

Washington, D.C. (Metro-Wash. CD8), Mrs. J. Blundon, 9113 Wandering Trail, Potomac, MD 20854

Wise, VA (Clinch Valley C. D.), John McCutcheon, Clinch Valley College, Wise, VA 24293

OTHER GROUPS

Washington, D.C., Jim Adams, St. Mark's Church, 301 A St. SE, Washington, D.C. 20003

TEAM NEWS

Berkeley Morris: Two new teams are in the offing in the Bay area. Brad Foster and Ellen Jwison are fanning the spark of interest created by Jim Morrison's workshop there in early April. They have no names yet, "particularly since we will be two teams soon, but for now we are Berkeley Morris."

The Morris Men of Victoria, which formed in 1974, sent a short history of their existence. Inspired by other ethnic groups in British Columbia which were concentrating on their country's dances, David Wynn decided to do the same for England. They started from scratch with records and materials from Cecil Sharp House in London and danced locally in various public performances. In 1976 the team was selected to join the British Columbia contingent for the Arts and Culture Program of the Montreal Olympics where they performed in several locations including the "Man and His World" exhibition site. They are still dancing locally and were invited to perform at international folk dance festivals in Tacoma, Washington and Vancouver, B.C.

Pike Place Morris, also in the Seattle area, was formed this past winter by Lars Watson and Pat Shuman. Musicians are Frank Perrol and Bertrand Levy. When they wrote in April, they said, "We have an active spring planned."

Minnesota Traditional Morris, based in Minneapolis, has a new Squire in John Cavanaugh [no address at press time]. Team member David Nichols wrote with a list of notable performances of the past year: the local Renaissance faire, a ball sponsored by the Daughters of the British Empire, a "cops for kids charity" before Christmas last year (Ampleforth Sword Play and Dance). Always eager to learn new material, the team wants to know of "any teachers who might be induced to wander this way." (1057 25th Av, SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414)
The Strong Morris Team is "planning a three-day travelling morris tour with New Cambridge down the coast of Maine." Squire Bob Childs gave no other details.

Barbara Harding of Herndon, Virginia, sent news of a "double rapper sword team this year of fifth and sixth grade boys. On May 13, the boys and I appeared on WTOP television station on "Morning Break. I was interviewed about the background of sword dancing and the boys, of course, performed their rapper." She also wrote of a men's rapper team which grew out of the "Playford Dancers." Both men's and boys' teams have been performing at festivals in the Washington, D.C. area including the Northern Virginia Festival on May 15.

A team is forming in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Ann Miller (Box 496, Whitmore Lake, MI 48189) wrote asking for help in finding bells for the team as well as copies of Cecil Sharp's *Morris Book* which is no longer in print.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

CORRECTION: In last issue's announcements, I referred to "Russell Wortley's 'Bibliography of the Sword Dance'" and also to "his 'Bibliography of the Morris Dance (1975)'." Dr. Wortley wrote to set the record straight: "I was not responsible for the compilation of either of them, though I did advise on the Morris one and I provided the introduction to this. The compiling was done by successive Librarians at Cecil Sharp House and I'm not sure who has written the Sword introduction."

**HANDBOOKS AVAILABLE:** Lionel Bacon's *Handbook of Morris Dancing* has been reprinted by the Morris Ring of England. Roger Cartwright, Squire of New Cambridge Morris Men, and Chris Walker of Pinewoods Morris Men, are both in touch with the Ring and could help in acquiring copies for American teams. Teams desiring a copy of the Handbook should contact either of them directly: Roger Cartwright, c/o West Village Meeting House, West Brattleboro, VT 05301; or Chris Walker, 22 Bank's Road, Lexington, MA 02173.

**MARLBORO MORRIS INSTRUCTIONAL:** Marlboro Morris and Sword and the Country Dance and Song Society of Southeast Vermont will be co-sponsoring an intensive Cotswold Morris 'Instructional' on September 23-25, 1977, in Brattleboro, Vermont. The program will be patterned after a weekend format developed by Roy Dommett in England where participants will watch films of and dance as many Cotswold morris traditions as possible. One will not retain all the material presented, but will be able to get a "feel" for the different styles. For more information contact Tony Barrand, Box 51, Marlboro, VT 05344; or the editor.

**NEXT ISSUE**

Shag Graetz spent a year in England during 1974 and 1975 travelling around the country and attending numerous traditional festivals, Ring meetings, etc. One of these was "The Greenhill Bower and Court of Array of Men-at-Arms' at Lichfield, Staffordshire. A memoir of his experiences there will appear in the October issue.

**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 or money orders payable to the "American Morris Newsletter" and send to Fred Breunig, 40 High Street, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301. (Morris or Sword clubs may subscribe at a lower group rate: write to the editor for details). Copy deadline is the last day of the month prior to publication. Next deadline is September 30, 1977.

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