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Editor’s Disclaimer: The editors of the American Morris Newsletter wish to encourage the use of this publication as a forum for the free exchange of ideas. Therefore, the opinions published herein may not be our own.
Hot Air from
(One of) the Editors

Allen Dodson

It's already been a spring and summer filled with dancing for the AMN crew, first with the California Ale, then the Hammersmith MM visiting Mayfield (I think the Smiffs returned home impressed with American morris, and perhaps more amazingly, American beer) and finally the Marlboro Ale. Wonderful weather, great dancing, and top-notch song sessions in the Pub, not to mention the mass Island Mary that segued right into a limbo contest. . . what an ale! All credit to the organizing Marlbooreaux committee.

This issue has a theme—"Inventing Dance Traditions." We have four contributions dealing with specific invented traditions, how they've fared, and thoughts about them from those involved in their creation, as well as two articles looking at more general issues—should we invent new morris traditions at all, and if so, how to respect the old while creating the new?

Given the length of this issue already, we've decided to postpone Part II of the Ricky Conant interview, begun last time, to the winter issue. That issue will also feature a report from intrepid AMN Correspondent Steve Coraniin (ask to see his press badge!) on the recent International Sword Dance Spectacular in Yorkshire, and much more.

Finally, a special thanks to those of you who have renewed your AMN subscription; please encourage others to subscribe! As always we welcome your letters, comments, and team news for next time.

Cheers,

Allen

AMN 19 No 2 ☣ 1 ☣ Summer 1996
An Experience in Morris Invention

Tim Radford

I have been morris dancing seriously since 1970, having learnt a little earlier in my life as a nine-year-old at school. At that time I preferred country dancing because I could hold hands with the girls! In the early 70's, the dancing repertoire generally available to dancers was limited to that collected and published by Cecil Sharp in his morris books or from E.F.D.S. publications. Even these meagre written resources were like gold dust and nearly impossible to obtain, so in this climate any new dancers or teachers had to rely on the memories of established teachers unless they carried out additional research themselves on manuscripts unknown to even the majority of experienced dancers.

It was not until 1974, after Lionel Bacon was persuaded by the Morris Ring to expand, with Roy Dommett's help, his own "Aide Memoire," that a full and more varied array of dances became accessible to the regular Morris Ring team dancer. In these times most of us danced with Ring teams, although there was change in the air. I choose my words very carefully because it must be remembered that for a number of years Bacon's Black Book was "only" available via the Morris Ring. If your team was not a member, it was not that easy to obtain a copy. However, with this book's publication, coupled with Dommett workshops, there was a flowering of dances hitherto not commonly performed. This in turn gave rise to a greater interest in and knowledge of the traditions, as it opened them up from a few dances in a style to a complete range. For instance, Adderbury was thought by most to be 5 dances at best, then suddenly there were 18 that could be performed!

In 1973, just before Bacon's book became available, I moved to Oxfordshire and came to live at the heart of the country from which the corpus came. During those early days in Oxfordshire I danced with Oxford City, a team with a long Ring-oriented history, and I learnt much. However, as time went on, I became increasingly dissatisfied with my dancing existence, particularly with the vast number of dance styles we were being required to perform. This fact, coupled with a journey of over 20 miles from Banbury (where I then lived) to

AMN 19 No 2 ✦ 1 ✦ Summer 1996
Oxford on dark and sometimes foggy winter nights, started me thinking of being on a team closer to home. At that time, with the exception of Brackley (who were then a school-based team), there was no team between Oxford and Stratford upon Avon. Although I only lived three miles from Adderbury and would have loved to get a team going there, I did not have the nerve to try this, so I started to teach a class in Banbury, using my contacts in the local folk club as dancers. My vision to improve a team's dancing, and motivate me, included the idea of limiting the repertoire to only one village's dances, but I had not made up my mind which. For reasons of simplicity, I decided to use Headington as a starting point. After only three weeks of this class, we were approached by Adderbury-born Bryan Sheppard, who was then living in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire and dancing with Moulton Morris; he was keen to revive a team in Adderbury. For me, this was a godsend; here I was, being part of a single tradition morris team that had its own dances!

The history of this team over the last 22 years is detailed elsewhere, but for a period of six years I did nothing else but dance, teach and develop the Adderbury Morris. This defined my belief that the best morris is performed when all the dancers gain a sense of identity from total involvement with their own dances and only have a limited knowledge of the rest of the morris world. When I was given the opportunity, in 1979, to assist with the Kirtlington revival by teaching the basics and helping to interpret and develop the collected dances, I seized this with glee, hoping to instill in this new team their own feeling of identity through the Kirtlington dances. After a year of dedicated practice, the team performed at Kirtlington Lamb Ale and another revival was begun. This second involvement with a single tradition team reinforced my already deeply defined beliefs in identity within the morris.

At about this time, most of the teams and dancers I associated with outside my immediate sphere were beginning to discover the same convictions about single tradition dancing as me. I refer to teams like Windsor, Holden's Goldens, Old Spot, Stroud, and the new teams within the local villages at Bucknell, Byngham, Ducklington, Wheatley, Illmington, and Sherborne. I was not yet actually dancing with Kirtlington (I went back in 1968), but continued dancing with Adderbury, which seemed to content itself with only a few performances a year, and I was generally happy with this. I had many friends in the morris and spent time talking and writing about the
subject and involving myself in other morris, mainly at Sidmouth, by attending Roy Dommett’s inspiring workshops. I always came away from Roy’s workshops fired with new ideas and enthusiasm, but I could not see the same in many other dancers—and I started to question why this seemed to be the case. It was then that I hit on the idea of running a workshop at Sidmouth 1986 on “Creating a Morris Tradition,” and I managed to persuade the festival to accept this.

The principal idea behind the series of workshops was to get the dancers to think more about their morris, to instill the feelings of identity so important to me, thus to inspire them and thereby improve their dancing. I did not intend to actually invent a new tradition, just provide a stylistic vehicle that the dancers felt part of and helped create. This would then stir different emotions within them because of their personal involvement. As it turned out, most of the workshop attendees happened to be squires or teachers of their respective teams, and they threw themselves wholeheartedly into the idea and the new tradition: “Duns Tew,” based on the styles from Adderbury, Bucknell, and Kirtlington, which I had taught in the first three sessions. I chose Duns Tew because it is situated geographically in the void between the three referenced villages.

The dancers became so involved and enthusiastic that the performance at the end of the week was not enough. In the following year, it was arranged that they would all come to Oxfordshire to dance in and around Duns Tew. This weekend continued for four Duns Tew once to yourself. Dead Ringers, San Francisco, 1995.
years, with new dances being added as required, before cracks in the team began to appear. These cracks were not related to dissatisfaction with the idea or with the dances, but with new dancers who eagerly wished to join the team. So it was that the Duns Tew Morris as a team briefly flowered and then just as suddenly ceased to exist; but the dances live on, with at least two teams dancing them regularly in England today—and one occasional team in America performing them at least once a year.

The year after the Sidmouth Duns Tew experiment, I ran another workshop there aimed specifically at stick dances and exploring the unusual characteristics found in those dances from the fringe of the Cotswold morris area. There is information available, although it is not very detailed, to suggest that a form of stick dance called Bedlam morris, which was performed in the winter months, existed in addition to the predominantly handkerchief springtime Cotswold Whitsun Ale morris. This Bedlam should not be confused with border and particularly the Shropshire Bedlam model, although it could be argued that border morris is a version of this form.

The workshop, although enjoyable, was not as immediately successful as the previous year. However, I had come into contact with a relatively new mixed Cotswold team from just north of Banbury called Long Itchington Morris. They only danced the Adderbury and Wheatley dances and were looking for something different to perform at another time of the year, i.e., during the winter months. They became interested in the ideas I had about Bedlam morris, so over a number of weeks in 1988, I went through with them the unusual stick dances I had taught at Sidmouth. I then challenged them to create a new dance form that followed certain defined patterns and rules. In an effort to increase the dancers’ feeling of ownership, each member had to invent a figure that would be named after them.

Long Itchington Bedlam made their debut in January 1989, and now perform annually, only in Long Itchington, at Candlemas (in February). The team practices the dances for a number of weeks before the day, and this is the only performance in the year. They are continuing to develop the dances, introducing changes as they see fit to keep it fresh and alive. This team is a very close-knit social group, with workmates and families being very involved, and this closeness has helped create an extremely vital and worthwhile tradition that is danced very well.
My latest escapade into invention came when I decided to start up a local women’s team for my daughter to dance with. After several unsuccessful attempts at teaching Duns Tew dances in local classes, we were finally successful, in 1992, in keeping together a group in Adderbury’s neighbouring village of Bloxham. I started here by teaching basics, i.e., steps and figures, based on the Ascot-under-Wychwood tradition, and soon found that I was not totally satisfied with what it gave me as a style for women who had never danced before. I came to realise that I was creating a new ‘Bloxham’ style as the team learnt and developed. This new style, although still based roughly on Ascot plus one invented figure, was more flowing and the steps were more related to North Oxfordshire. I will attempt to clarify what I mean by this.

In my opinion, many people who know of Cotswold morris and its individual traditions still think of it generally as a single entity, particularly as it only survived in such a relatively small area of England. However, when you live and dance here and become involved in the styles of dance that exist, you very quickly realise that there are very distinct regional stylistic similarities and differences. To me, it feels wrong to implant a figure or step from another area into your dance. For instance, I would never put a slow caper into Adderbury dances. I thought the cross-back step from Ascot too jerky and believed it would look out of place in North Oxfordshire, so I took it out and simplified the back step; this made the style flow more. The galley is a beautiful movement when performed well, but there is no foundation in North Oxfordshire for it, so that went as well.

Given the way the style was being developed, along with the teaching of the basics, it seemed foolish to teach any collected dances, so the musician and I hit on a tune we liked (and he could play). I thought of ways it could be danced to and developed new charactres as necessary, even discarding some earlier ideas. This process is relatively easy: you create a side step & half hey dance, then a corner dance, then a column dance, and so on, until a group of new dances exists, not based on anything collected, but all rooted in your own area style and its general characteristics. Nothing outlandish needs to be included, and the dancers need to know no more than is necessary to dance their own style well.

By now you may, I hope, be able to understand what motivates me to create new dances and even traditions. A kind of identity and ownership of the dances by the dancers is of paramount importance.
where the dancers are in control of the dance rather than the dance controlling the dancers. Respect for the past and a close association to other traditions of your area is also key. The need for individuality and uniqueness is also important, but this only comes as a result of the process; it is not the reason for the process. Being part of a single dance style and all that this entails, rather than being a multi-tradition team, also affects the way the team operates. It is the emphasis on a team's relationship with a particular place and with each other that enhances the team identity. With this fact comes recognition and a small modicum of fame, if only local, and this can only (in my view) improve the dancing.

Experience in the morris has, however, shown me some negative aspects with invention. It is not always clear to me why some teams invent. The most important factor on occasion seems to be the desire to be different and clever. There is often not enough respect for the past or a recognition of the basic characteristics and parameters of morris. Some dances are too complex and fussy; and they use too much a mixture of different dances and styles. Although I like humour, some dances are only created to enact a private joke, which in my view belittles the morris rather than celebrates it. Much of this is lost on the watching public.

In the UK today, there is an enormous growth in border morris and molly dancing. This can be attributed to the fact that the dance steps are easier and more suited to mixed teams and to the success of
two particular teams, the Shropshire Bedlams and the Seven Champions. Both of these teams are wonderful examples of thoughtful and well-researched dance. This, coupled with a very judicious use of invention and humour, has made the teams many friends, and they are deservedly popular at many morris weekends and folk festivals. Their dancing contains only a few collected dances, not all from the same place. I believe that in the case of border morris, the traditional list of dances is less than 12, and in molly dance the repertoire is smaller. Therefore, invention has played a major role in their dancing, and, in general, this has created some very good ideas that are excellently performed.

However, many other less able dancers have seen these two teams and are copying some of what they are seeing. Unfortunately I only refer to the ragged costumes, the anonymous painted faces, the riotous behaviour, the shrieking while dancing and particularly the studied arrogance; and not the careful researching of the dances, the lightness of humour, the attention to detail, the quality of dance, the good posture, the excellent timing, and the simplicity of the ideas. Similarly, the "show dance" has become a common phenomenon. Every team seems to want to show its best new creations in these situations. But in my view this has produced a monster that is fast running out of control. There is a wonderful song, a parody of an Ian Robb song, words by John Mayberry and Jamie Beaton of Toronto Morris, that I believe describes this perfectly, and I think it should be required hearing for all dancers. I fear that dancers will lose all contact with the past in the new dances they create—and I see many parallels in the folk song world that are bad omens.

In the UK nowadays, the old folk club circuit, with its floor singers as well as booked guests, has given way to large concerts. The opportunities for floor singers only occur in pub sessions, and it is almost impossible to sing a ballad or a more serious song. Some sessions are now the province of musicians, with unaccompanied singers only briefly tolerated. Unless you have something new, or funny, or extraordinary to perform, there is no platform for you. This to me is not folk music, and I fear that some morris events are getting the same. Quality of performance no longer seems a priority; "fun" and "cleverness" replace all and old dances are classed as ordinary.

My plea to you all is this: let's rediscover our past and by all means bring it up to date, but believe in your morris and work hard at it. When you find it necessary to invent, please do not blindly copy
someone else; be individual. It is imperative that you consider your audience and never assume they have a knowledge of morris or any aspect of what you perform. The work carried out by Keith Chandler in his two wonderful books on who danced where, show that in the five counties of the English South Midlands, hitherto called the Cotswolds, there were over 150 villages that had documented morris teams. Of these there is danceable information for only around 25; that leaves a lot of gaps that can be filled. There are still opportunities, by synthesis of the neighbouring traditions, to recreate a tradition now defunct.

Some people may say that it is not appropriate for dancers from North America to treat morris in such a way and invent to fill these gaps. I argue that, no matter where you are, if you have decided to dance morris above anything else, in any of its forms, you have already made enough of a commitment to English dance to give you some rights. One only has to mention the two examples of Marlboro and Thames Valley to see that developing a tradition of one’s own, in North America, can be achieved, and that it can be done tastefully and respectfully.

I began by reminding you all, and myself, of how comparatively small the dancing repertoire was 25 years ago, and that many changes have occurred in the intervening time. Much new “old” morris has been rediscovered and much new “new” morris has been created. However, it is also true that plenty of the old “old” morris has been either forgotten or ignored. Please don’t neglect the collected dances for the sake of invention. The lists that Tony Barrand has of dances performed at the Marlboro Ale since 1975 make very interesting reading; many traditions do not seem to have been performed in North America for years! I know I paint an extreme picture, but please, before you invent, examine your reasons and take care of your morris. The development of morris is an ongoing process that should not be taken lightly. Respect our forbears and your contemporaries at all times; they probably felt and feel as strongly about morris as you.

The future of morris is more important to me than the past, but the past should never be forgotten and it is considered by me every time I contemplate introducing change; it shapes my thoughts. However, we must build for the future, as it is there we must all operate. Thank you all for allowing me to vent my views and I wish you all the very best for your morris and for the future.

AMN 19 No 2 ¶ 9 ¶ Summer 1996
You Bastard

(a parody of "The Old Rose and Crown")
by John Mayberry and Jamie Beaton

Editors' Note: John and Jamie asked us to mention that they wrote this song first of all to entertain, and secondly in order to parody a gifted parodist, Ian Robb. The point of view of the song ended up being perhaps that of neither author, since they both compose dances and have children, for instance...

Good friends gather round and I'll sadly relate
The misfortunes that morris has suffered of late
For these gimmicks and dances in styles newly grown
Have diminished a dance that once stood on its own

Ch: Oh, what have they done to the simple half-rounds
The foot-up, the whole-hey that old Cecil wrote down
For bells, sticks, and hankies, and a pint of good beer
Were once reckoned enough to bring pleasure and cheer

Oh, where are the dances we all used to know
When a team would do Trunkles to start off a show
Then the Rose, and crown it with Idbury Hill
Not the Ox Dance. Mr. Softee, and Jamaica Farewell

We'll soon see the day when they'll dance to the tune
Of jumping jack Flash played on bones and bassoon
Six cowboys on tricycles roaring around
Numbers two, four, and six being whirled upside-down

But the worst of it all's what they've done to the ales
Where the flash made-up show dance is the rule that prevails
And the drinking and singing, carousing all night
Gives way to concern that the baby's all right

So come all you good people and fill up your glass
Let us hope that these bold innovations will pass
Here's a health to the morris of all dances the best
Those who find it too hard can sink to Northwest.

AMN 19 No 2  φ  10  φ  Summer 1996
"Elm City" is a style of Cotswold morris dancing developed in 1988 in New Haven, Connecticut and is still danced today by New Haven Morris and Sword. New Haven was nicknamed the "Elm City" in the days before Dutch elm disease swept across North America; perhaps fittingly, Elm City is a long-stick tradition, with seven dances in the repertoire.

TEAM BACKGROUND

In the fall of 1988, I was co-foreman of New Haven Morris and Sword, a ten-year-old mixed team with 22 dancers and a reputation for strong dancing. For at least five years, the team's main traditions had been Field Town and Sherborne, and many dancers were interested in learning something new. The team felt strongly against giving up either of our main traditions, but I felt strongly that adding an entire new tradition would be too much unless something was let go. (We also fielded one or two rapper sides, and often a longsword side in the winter.)

With Field Town and Sherborne as main traditions, our repertoire leaned strongly toward handkerchief dances. For variety in performances, we danced one Adderbury stick and two Bledington dances, as well as two from Field Town. These stick dances held a crucial place in our repertoire, but we seldom had time to practice them and our style suffered for it.

The compromise we settled on was to satisfy the desire for newness by learning a new stick tradition, but to make room by letting go of our existing stick dances. But what Cotswold traditions have a rich repertoire of stick dances? Adderbury, but we wanted something with more motion. Lichfield, but nobody knew it well and we didn't need yet more hankie dances. Headington, same issues.

Besides, I was excited by the opportunity to create something new! Dancers and audience both like stick dances, and stick dance possibilities haven't been as thoroughly mined as have hankie dances.

AMN 19 No 2  ♦  11 ♦  Summer 1996
I had strong feelings about the characteristics of a "new tradition" (quite the oxymoron when you think about it). The dances must be fun to do and interesting to watch, but they shouldn't look obviously made up or frilly. There must be enough variation to keep the dancers interested but enough regularity that the dancers can remember how the heck they go.

I think that one of the biggest challenges in creating new morris dances is resisting the urge to over-innovate. Some of the best morris dances are very simple, and the things that are joyful about morris aren't complicated: bursts of speed, crisp, simple figures, dancers moving together, dancers shining individually. For me, overly fancy patterns can detract from a dance. I also shy away from dances that are complicated to explain; nobody likes standing around in practice listening to explanations, and we need to be able to train new dancers before they die of old age. One new idea can make a great dance; it's often better to put two ideas into two dances rather than cram them into one.

Having ranted on my soap box, I'd better now get specific about what in Elm City was drawn from tradition and what was innovated. This is not the right forum to describe the entire tradition, but a few specifics are in order.

**Tradition and Innovation**

The steps are standard Cotswold double, single, and side steps, plus one novel step in the basic sequence. Naming this new step was a horrible challenge; the best I could come up was the stilted-sounding "high step." That didn't last even one practice as everybody just called it the "up-a-down-down," after a night of hearing "DOU-ble step and DOU-ble step and UUUP a down down, foot together jump." No dignity at all, but what can you do. Malcolm Sanders recently suggested "the neutron step" (neutrons are composed of one up quark and two down quarks) but it may be too late.

This basic double-step phrase is fairly traditional, with the enhancement that the arm motions are more choreographed than in most stick dances. In traditional dances, arm motions tend to be rich with hankies but simple with sticks; there seemed no reason why richer arm motions couldn't enhance a stick tradition as well. In addition, I chose to keep the clash in its standard Cotswold position.
at the end of the musical phrase rather than borrowing the gonzo beat-one clash from border morris.

The Elm City figures (foot up, crossing, facing, cross rounds, hey) have much the same form and sequence as standard Cotswold figures, with enough differences to distinguish them from other traditions. Some are big with bursts of speed; some are quieter for contrast. The "up-a-down-down" provides an alignment point in every figure; horizontal motion stops as everyone leaps vertically and displays the stick.

To give the dancers a prayer of remembering how the dances go, I feel strongly that variation between dances should be restricted to the chorus rather than the figures. In the New Haven Field Town repertoire, the figures varied quite a bit between dances, leading to endless memorizing and reminding in practices and in the quick huddle before a performance. As a result, all Elm City dances use the same figures.

**Creating New Stick Dances**

However, this "vary the chorus not the figures" philosophy presents a problem for a stick tradition. There are precious few examples of Cotswold stick dances in which the chorus is something other than sticking plus half-hey. The first two Elm City dances used the "sticking plus half-hey" structure, but then we were on our own.

The chorus of a successful stick dance must contain three things: some sticking, some moving, and some resting. If there's no sticking, you've lost the main reason for a stick dance; if there's no moving, the chorus becomes too static; and if there's no resting, the dancers complain bitterly and never want to do the dance.

"Sticking plus half-hey" dances supply all three features nicely. Finding other workable chorus structures wasn't so easy, but here are five that found their way into dances:

1. Sticking plus circular weaving with clashes (The Q Bridge)
2. Sticking alternates with sidestep crossing (The Club)
3. Corners cross then everybody sticks (Oxford Crossing)
4. Sticking plus half-rounds (Three Musketeers)
5. Sticking while moving (Minstrel Boy)
Creating non-half-hey choruses raised a completely unexpected problem: the need for tunes of non-standard length. Elm City dances end "all up" in a line of six across coming out of a hey. If there's no hey in the chorus, then the dance must end with a whole hey as a figure. When a dance has five figures instead of four, it can start to seem a bit long for both the dancers and the audience; one good solution is for the chorus to be shorter than the standard 16 bars.

But practically all of those old square 19th-century songs that make such great morris dance tunes are just that: "square," nice straight eight-bar phrases with comforting solid cadences at the end. Eight bars is too short for a chorus, but scouring through Bacon provided "Princess Royal" (a 12-bar chorus) and the Longborough tune "Kewbridge Gardens" (a ten-bar chorus). There aren't many others though, so I wrote The Club for a dance with a 12-bar chorus. It was quite challenging to write a tune of that length that still sounded "morrissy."

All told, we composed two tunes, swiped three morris tunes, and used two songs ("Candlemas Eve" and "The Peacock", a.k.a. "The Parting Glass"). The dances and tunes were derived together, as opposed to making up a dance and then finding a tune to fit it.

Another interesting restriction on finding tunes for Elm City was introduced by the presence of the "up-a-down-down" step in the basic stepping sequence. The rhythm of that step fits very well with 4/4 tunes ("dotted quarter, eighth, quarter, quarter"—you know, like the end of the Jeopardy theme) but not at all well with 6/8 tunes. All of the Elm City tunes are in 4/4 time, altered when necessary to have a dotted quarter in the right place.

How It Happened

Most of the ideas for Elm City came quickly. I was excited about the chance to create a new tradition, so it was often on my mind. One day I found a long stick on the ground and made a complete fool of myself hopping and prancing around trying out different ideas as I walked home.

In hindsight, the look of the dances really grew from the goal of a stick tradition with more highly choreographed arm motions. "Okay, the stick can swing quietly with the first two double-steps, but then what? Well, it feels good to snap it to a vertical position at the end of the second double-step. What then? This vertical stick seems to cry..."
out for a high leap with the stick thrust upwards. Yes, that feels great!
Then it can come down (though staying vertical, like holding onto a fireman's pole) and there should be two steps before a jump and clash."

Once the basic stepping sequence was decided, the figures came easily, with the "up-a-down-down" step providing an obvious alignment point. The "crossing" figure was the only one with a distinct influence, seeking to duplicate the joy of making arcs across to a wide set in the Chingford Stick Dance (a.k.a. the Upton on Severn Stick Dance). I worked out most of the ideas in my private enthusiasm before bringing them to the team, whereupon Paul McGuire contributed a much-improved and simplified idea for the hey, with all as dancers forming a horizontal line in mid-hey for the "up-a-down-down."

On the whole, the team reacted very positively to the new style. Initial mourning for our old stick dances gave way to excitement as we fleshed out the tradition. Feedback from audiences was also good ("It moves!") but of course one never knows what castigating thoughts go politely unexpressed.

**EVOLUTION**

Seven years later, New Haven is still dancing Elm City, so perhaps it may now be unequivocally called a "tradition." I moved away in 1991, but the styling has stayed fairly consistent under Paul's leadership.

Paul created a seventh dance, Minstrel Boy, borrowing a complex sticking pattern from a Portuguese stick dance collected by Tony Barrand. (Paul also wrote our second dance, The Peacock.)

Elm City has spread a little; I taught it in a day-long exchange of "made-up traditions" with members of Midnight Capers (Vermont) and Fiddler's Reach (Maine). David Sacco and Amy Brewer (formerly of New Haven) taught it to the Seattle Morris, who continue to dance it as a second tradition to Sherborne.

The AMN editors asked how I might feel about the tradition evolving. In fact, I feel honored that it is being done as all, and very interested to see how it might evolve. Ken Smith (Seattle's fireman) told me of one change they have made, raising just the stick hand on the "up-a-down-down" rather than both hands. I think it's a first-rate idea, but maybe not because I made the same change myself in a recent workshop for the Commonwealth Morris Men. Just my luck that if I'm remembered at all by morris historians it will be as the creator of "up-a-down-down."

AMN 19 No 2 • 15 • Summer 1996
Revisiting the Minneapolis-on-Mississippi Dance Tradition

James C. Brickwedde, creator

Last November (1995), the Bells of the North Morris dancers asked me to return for an evening to teach their more recent members the dance Bedmaking, the only remaining Minneapolis-on-Mississippi dance in their repertoire. The evening was thoroughly enjoyable on several levels, one of which was a solid-paced evening of quality dancing. Another was to work directly again, after a long absence, with a dance tradition I had nurtured into creation. This revisit to an old creation raised many questions visible only with time and distance, and provided the opportunity for reflection. Then came the issue of the American Morris Newsletter (Vol 18, No 3) with Richard Gregson’s article “On the ‘Remembrance’ of the New Morris and Development of a Sense of Place.” Richard is an old friend I haven’t had a chance to visit since 1989. His article helped to focus ideas that had been floating in the back of my brain since November. In that article Richard wrote, “It often seems that new morris dances are abandoned or forgotten, not because they are not good dances, but because somehow they don’t ‘matter’ as much as the old ones.” He also talks about how “a fundamental part of the process of entertaining is to grasp the imagination of the audience ... to tell them a story.” The problem many newly made dances suffer, Gregson postulates, is that the dances lack a place and a story, sustainable over a period of time, that the dancers can convey to their audiences, thus the dances fade into oblivion. These ideas triggered a chord. They were ideas that were partially behind the creation of the Minneapolis-on-Mississippi dances 17 years ago, and they make a context in which to regard the longevity of the Minneapolis tradition.

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

The details that outline the creation process of the Minneapolis-on-Mississippi dances were described in two articles in the AMN, Vol 6, No 2, July 1982 and Vol 6 No 3, October 1982, including four dance descriptions and details of distinctive figures. For those of you who...
do not have such longevity with the newsletter, let me provide a quick synopsis of the tradition's origins.

The Minneapolis-on-Mississippi dance tradition was created for the Bells of the North Morris dancers during the period from 1980 to 1982. It was an effort to create not just single new dances, but a distinctive "village" dance style as well. In the period of the late '70s and early '80s, all the new American morris dances were single entities, performed within the style of existing English "village traditions" such as Kingessing's Mister Softee done as a Bledington dance, or Ring O' Bells' Oh Susannah, performed as a Brackley dance. I am aware of three other attempts at creating a "traditional" dance style and a full repertoire of dances during the 1980s and early '90s: Midnight Capers' Kingsbury Branch, created by Larry Becker in Vermont (early '80s), Elm City, created by Nick Mohr for New Haven Morris & Sword in Connecticut (mid- to late '80s), and Uptown-on-Calhoun, created by Dave Siebert for the team of the same name in Minnesota (early '90s).

The interest in creating a distinctive repertoire with a "traditional" local style was buoyed by the fact that Minnesota in 1980 was remote in terms of the morris community. Being creative outside the at-large morris community was actually an incentive, as we had no one looking over our shoulders and "tsk tsking" as was wont in those more formative days of American morris; one did not stray too far from Bacon's book and there was a greater concern for what was "right."

Readers need to remember that Minnesota has one of the oldest continuing morris sides in North America. Minnesota Traditional Morris formed in 1974. MTM was itself an outgrowth of the Chicago Morris Dancers formed in 1969. It had developed in isolation from much of the American morris scene. Its style was idiosyncratic. With MTM's arrival at the Marlboro Morris Ale in 1979, we discovered how idiosyncratic we were, yet a distinctive pride grew as a result and we realized that it was okay to keep the unique, at the same time recognizing the need to improve technique. For instance, the side had, through the work of its foreman Ed Stern, continued the development and performance of a processional named Soldier Oh and reconstructed the Abram Circle Dance as a Cotswold dance. MTM's, and subsequently all other local sides'. interpretation of "Whole Gyp" used in the Bledington style remains a threat to any outsider who enters the set without prior knowledge.

AMN 19 No 2 ♦ 17 ♦ Summer 1996
MTM at that time consisted of a dynamic collection of individuals very much interested in issues of tradition and community. The meaning of morris as a living tradition was debated. If our style was so far afield from what was in “The Book,” should we change to conform, or should we hold on to that which was working and local in flavor, and fine-tune the dance technique that needed to be improved? Our two trips to Marlboro in ’79 and ’80 did not make this debate an easy one. But in the long run, being creative within the confines of what makes good morris dancing won out with the core dancers.

This is a long story, but necessary to provide the background for one of the prime inspirations for creating a new “tradition.” The Minnesota Traditional Morris men had nicknamed a mistake that tended to occur with some frequency in a dance. When going into a hey, more than occasionally one dancer in the middle position went up while the other went down. We jokingly referred to it as a “Minnesota Hey.” I became intrigued with the idea of actually using this “mistake” and developing it into a full-fledged dance figure. The result is a hey that rotates the set 90 degrees halfway through the figure and inverts the set upon completion of the second half of the hey. Slowly, other aspects emerged, including 360-degree turns the dancers make when completing the foot-up-and-down and back-to-back. The overall look is one of rotating sets and turning dancers and handkerchiefs. It’s a flowing style with a lot of energy.

During the period of time when the dance style was being developed, Laurie Levin and I met and helped bring into existence the Bells of the North Morris. As the Bells worked to create their own identity independent of the men’s groups, I decided to develop the Minneapolis tradition for them. The whole project was to develop a style in which many dances could be created. Not just a new dance here and a new dance there, but a body of dances that could be distinctive for the Bells. So, from 1980 to 1982, the tradition was finalized, and seven dances were developed and performed. One unique presentation of two of the dances involved the use of phosphorescent glow sticks inside clear acrylic tubes. The two dances had been commissioned as part of the unveiling of a green neon sculpture in downtown Minneapolis. The nighttime performance provided an opportunity to work with dance movements that accentuated the after-images left by swift moving sticks.

AMN 19 No. 2 18 Summer 1996
The Bells actively danced the Minneapolis dances through to the mid-1980s. I left as foreman in 1982 when I moved to London, England, for a year. The tradition was also picked up by Oak Apple Morris in Madison, Wisconsin. I made clear to both groups that if the tradition was to survive, they would need to take on the dances as their own, modify them, and extend them; they should not worry about what I thought. The Bells did create one additional dance called The Muffin Man, which was performed a few times but didn't survive. Oak Apple changed The Nutting Girl to include eight dancers. This change was in turn picked up by the Bells. I began to develop two additional dances and tried them out at a workshop during a Midwest Morris HQ, but those dances still remain in note form buried in some notebook in my archives.

In the late 1980s, the Bells went through a transformation and took on other morris dance styles. (They currently do Ducklington and Sherborne.) Oak Apple went through transformations as well and their Minneapolis dances also fell away. The Bells, however, have always maintained one or two Minneapolis dances in their repertoire due to the dances' personal historical specialness.

The Commonwealth Morris Men, based in Cambridge, MA, decided to take up the Minneapolis tradition upon their formation three years ago. The connection to the dances was through Rick Mohr, foreman of Commonwealth, but formerly of Minnesota Traditional Morris during the period of time when the Minneapolis dances were being created. In the last AMN, in the "Team News" section, Peter Houlihan noted that the Minneapolis-on-Mississippi tradition "has been extended by Commonwealth... with both modifications to the style and the addition of several new dances" (AMN Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 34).

I seem to recollect that there was another attempt to use the Minneapolis dances by a Boston side, though I can't remember which side. An individual by the name of Alec, whose last name I can't remember, and a former Oak Apple Morris dancer taught the dances. I am not aware of how that effort fully developed.

(Editors' Note: Alec Leon was hired to teach a Minneapolis-on-Mississippi workshop for the Boston Ritual Series. Nothing came out of the workshop in terms of forming a team.)

AMN 19 No 3 * 19 * Summer 1996
This brings me back to Richard Gregson’s points noted at the beginning of this article regarding the survivability of locally developed dances; the issues of “what matters,” place and story. Of the original seven dances created for the Bells, a few deserve to go to their resting place in the archives-in-the-sky. They weren’t that good. There does seem to be some consistency in the dances that have survived, particularly *The Bedmaking* and *The Nutting Girl*, which attests that the dances are inherently good ones. But Gregson talks about something more specific than whether or not dances are of quality. He talks about “do they matter” compared to the “older,” English dances. Ducklington has become one of the “in” traditions in North America. It has an appeal of place, story and physical dynamic that a local tradition has a harder time establishing for itself. The idea of a side sticking to the same dance tradition for many, many years only emerged as “okay” in the late ‘80s in North America. Changing every few years and keeping up with the latest is still an existing tug on sides who feel the need to be always moving on. I discovered the pleasure and benefits of doing a selective repertoire and one dance style over a sustained period of time when living in England. Even then, it took me four years after my return to convince a core of dancers to form a side based upon those concepts. In such an atmosphere of regular turnovers, local dances and traditions are easily turned aside. They easily go out of style.

I find it intriguing and encouraging that the Minneapolis dances have found a life far afield from their original source. Does the fact that Minnesota is so far away from Boston mean that it has that exotic sense of place that Gregson proposes dances need to survive the test of time? I did purposely name the tradition Minneapolis-on-Mississippi to capture that same “quaintness” and sense of time/place that Bampton-in-the-Bush or Hinton-in-the-Hedges holds for Anglophiles. Such a name aids in the public relations department/entertainment/storytelling that morris must convey to its audience.

If Gregson is right, the Minneapolis dances may not have a future other than a cursory one in Minnesota. Maybe their survival depends upon the Madisons and Bostons to pick up the story and carry it on to make it their own. That is the folk process.

*AMN* 19 No 2  \*20 \* Summer 1996
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The Rise and Fall(?) of Hillside Quarry

by Robb Spivey
Foreman of Fiddler's Reach Morris & Sword

Fiddler's Reach Morris & Sword, hailing from in and around Brunswick, Maine, was founded in 1976. We are therefore happily celebrating twenty years of dancing. In our early days, we experimented with several traditions, concluding that Bledington fitted us best. We maintained a repertoire of dances from several other traditions, partly for variety and partly so we could better mix with other sides at gatherings. We continued to experiment for our own curiosity, but retained Bledington as "our" tradition for well over a decade.

Somewhere around 1988, in a moment of weakness, I allowed the position of foreman to be thrust upon me. We were experiencing a turnover in members, and by 1989 some tension was building. Our dancers generally fell into one of three categories: old-timers who
had been with the side for a long time and were looking for a new challenge, feeling they had “done” Bledington and becoming impatient with new dancers just learning; immigrants from other sides who came with experience in various other traditions and the conviction that they knew exactly how those traditions should be danced, even though we had developed and were comfortable with our own interpretations; and novices, who were frustrated in their attempts to catch up with the others. I just wanted to dance. What was a mother to do?

After deep collective soul-searching, someone came up with the idea of developing our own tradition. This would provide a new challenge for the old-timers, avoid disagreements with immigrants about the “right” way to dance, and put the novices on an even footing with the others—we would all be learning something new. Beyond that, it would give us something that was entirely our own. (It’s difficult to criticize someone’s style or interpretation if you don’t know what you’re watching.) An interesting suggestion, I thought, until it became clear that I was the one expected to make it happen. I was instructed to come up with the goods over our winter break.

To begin the process I set some goals. The end result wanted to be something clearly different, while still being recognizable as a Cotswold-style tradition. It needed to be something suitable for our side in terms of its feel, the level of complexity, and its athletic requirements. I also figured a little underlying humor never hurts. By February of 1990, the basics were in place. I presented it to the side, and the consensus was that it was worth working on. The new tradition was branded Hillside Quarry (I live on Quarry Road not far from an old granite quarry in the settlement of Hillside). We then spent the next year altering, testing, refining, and developing dances to fit. It was truly a team effort.

One of the unique features of Hillside Quarry is its asymmetry. Everything is oriented to the left—whether as a perverse manifestation of my politics or a reflection of injuries I was suffering at the time, I am not sure. All figures start on the left and move or turn left. There are no right turns. Instead of a foot up there is a foot left. When teaching the tradition, we try not to speak of the right foot—when on occasion it is necessary to mention it, it is referred to as the “other” foot. The second half of each figure is a repeat of the first, rather than a mirror image. Corner positions are defined as 1 & 4, 3 & 6, and 5 & 2.

AMN 19 No 2 • 23 • Summer 1996
Another peculiarity is what we call "hang time." There is a foot together jump in the second measure of each phrase. A slight pause in the music at this point allows the dancers time to jump higher. It also drives our orderly musician nuts.

We wanted a signature hey that would be easily distinguished from any other tradition. We developed one in which everyone starts by turning left, the tops and bottoms swap ends, the middles swap sides, and midway through the move all six are lined up across the set facing in alternate directions.

Seven dances were eventually developed, five handkerchief and two stick, ranging from a typical sidestep/half hey chorus (Old Woman Tossed Up) to a rather complex corner challenge/cross/wing/hey composition in which each dancer progresses to a new position at the end of each chorus, passing through all of the positions by the end of the dance (The Shell Game).

Some of the tunes are variants on standard morris music, e.g. "Old Woman Tossed Up" and "Saturday Night." One was taken from an English country dance. We used the round "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John" for The Shell Game. The tune and the inspiration for the moves to The Shell Game came from watching the animated version of The Wind in the Willows with my daughter ("While Toad's away the weasels play, we'll read his diary every day, and every night we'll telephone long distance").

We developed, we pondered, we tweaked, we practiced hard, we danced Hillside Quarry for two years. It killed us. Although the tradition does not require the same level of sheer physical strength as some, it does involve sharp twisting of the body and joint-jolting jumps—a youngster's tradition. Surprisingly, we found we had aged over the years. Several of our members had uninsurable pre-existing medical conditions—old back and knee injuries, weak ankles. Hillside Quarry as written aggravated these until we got to a point where we did not have enough bodies to fill out a set. Being our own tradition, we could have re-engineered it. After all the work we had put in, though, the rest of the team agreed they liked what we had, and felt it shouldn't be changed just because we couldn't handle it at this time. The result was mothballing the tradition and moving on to something else we geriatrics could better manage.

Did I reach my goals? It's hard to say. Yes, it's different. Strict traditionalists will claim what we came up with is not morris at all. More lenient interpreters might say we strayed too far from basic

AMN No 3 ♫ 24 ♫ Summer 1996
morris tenets in our attempts to be unique. On the other hand, when
I first demonstrated the basics of the new tradition, our previous
foreman's reaction was, "Oh, you stole this part from Longborough,
and that part from Ascot-under-Wychwood." Because of our physi-
cal limitations, it was not as suitable for our side as I had hoped.

Was it worth the effort? Definitely. It pulled the team together
and gave us pride in our dancing. From comments we received at
morris gatherings, the results showed. It also provided material for
a class I taught at Pinewoods one summer. A high point for me was
a workshop on homegrown traditions, conceived and hosted by
Midnight Capers, to which Fiddler's Reach and New Haven were
invited. Each team was allotted approximately two hours in which to
demonstrate and teach its tradition. It was fascinating to see both
similarities and differences in how others had approached the task
of invention, as well as the results. Although developed completely
independently of each other, I was startled to discover that New Haven's
Elm City tradition incorporated hang time, and that Midnight
Capers' Kingsbury Branch had a hey in which all the dancers momen-
tarily lined up across the set. So much for my attempts at originality.

Although currently in storage, Hillside Quarry could rise again if
we were to have an infusion of younger blood. I have prepared a set
of notes in the style of Lionel Bacon's book which includes descrip-
tions of the dances and the tunes we use; these are available to the
curious. I would have no objection to another team adopting the
tradition as written, nor to anyone making modifications and
improvements to it. We are all part of the folk process.
Kingsbury Branch
by Lisa Ginette and Larry Becker

LISA'S INTRODUCTION
Midnight Capers has been dancing and writing Kingsbury Branch for years, and it has, since its inception, been our primary tradition. We have also danced Headington, Bampton, Stanton Harcourt, (Kingsbury comes in here), Field Town, Sherborne and (currently) Oddington as our secondary tradition. We always work the secondary at practice and sometimes teach a bit of any of the others so that most of us can dance most massed dances. Other than that, we are a Kingsbury Team.

LARRY'S RECOLLECTION
"Come out, come out wherever you are" is both the method and inspiration for devising our tradition. Our musician, Dick Eno, experimenting with tunes that have a morris "feel," pulled this one out from his inner Kansas. In fact, the Wizard of Oz tune that fell from a star guided the development of the tradition in its early stages.

Having written several Field Town dances, I found myself on laundry day with the tune in my head and with misconceptions about how some morris traditions worked. Never having danced Sherborne, I always liked how it kind of "held up" for a moment as the dancers leaped into the phrase. I know now it is a leap, but at the time I had no idea how it was done.

Luckily, as the clothes were turning, the Kansas-flat grassy spot behind some hedges and next to the laundromat was available. The misconception came out as two single steps in place that held up the dancers. Movement came to the phrase with a hop into a double step, finishing with two single steps at a new location, snap, jump together. Why and where the snap? Probably seen at a morris ale, and later identified as Ducklington.

The first figure, foot up, I have since figured out is a steal from a Marlboro dance, 1-91. Having moved north to Central Vermont, I missed dancing it with Marlboro; but once seen, the notion of having all dancers line up facing forward stuck in my subconscious. The sec-
The back to back adds to the standard sequence a 180-degree turn in a line with a curlicue back to place. Rounds to finish have a 360-degree turn half on the way towards a caper sequence, snap, jump together.

I brought the dance to the group with an attempt at the standard side step and hey chorus. To my great good fortune, the group had the desire to pursue a new adventure of discovery that still fit in with the overall morris structure. The hey evolved, with input from the group, as something akin to the movement in a nine-person Muddy River creation. The middles travel out away from the set, the bottoms and tops move through the central portion to opposite places on their side, while the middles move back to their original spot.

Other details were added as the concept of a new tradition for Midnight Capers evolved. Lisa Ginette sprouted with the idea, making up the hey additions and producing many wonderful dances that now make up the bulk of our repertoire.

Lisa's Recollection

Larry first showed the team the work he had done creating this tradition at a tour one summer evening at the Shelburn Museum. I'm thinking it was 1986. We were on a break, and somehow the new "tradition" was mentioned. I don't remember that anyone, with the possible exception of our musician, who had originally suggested the Dare of creating our own tradition, knew that Larry was working on it. Our attention was immediately riveted by the event. We all got up and started to mark it out.

We began to work on this at practice right away. When Larry brought this to the team, it had most of the standard sequences evolved. The stepping is as he originally conceived it. The figures, with only one small revision, are also as Larry wrote them. We learned Larry's first dance, which consisted of the new figures and a chorus of side steps, swagger steps and a long hey. After that, I picked it up and created the other elements that I knew we needed to complete the tradition. I was so obsessed with this. Living in a rural area, my only available surface for dancing was the reasonably flat grade of
the dirt road outside my house. It was warm out, and the traffic min-
imal. I was determined to create a hook of some sort and all of the
necessary capers, and to get something that fit into what I perceived
as the quirks that made this a tradition in its own right.

It seems to me, though I can't be certain, that this began my che-
roteographic career in the morris. I came up with a hook, two upright
capers, and ending capers that satisfied both me and the team. I vis-
ited with Janet Van Fleet and we worked on stuff in her driveway. We
came up with a shortened version of our hey incorporating the hook.
We also slightly revised the back to back figure. Except for these
modifications, the tradition is exactly as Larry wrote it to begin with.
I am still inspired by awe when I consider him starting from scratch
and creating a complete tradition that is so wonderful to dance, does
not appear even slightly contrived, seems to be accepted by the mor-
ris community as a bona fide tradition, has withstood the test of time
(we still love to dance it after ten years), and is (how clever of him)
easy for us as an older team to dance well.

SO, I made up a lot of dances. Sometimes I try to work to a tune,
and most usually I have a foundational pattern in mind. Some of my
dances are danced for awhile and then canned, by which I mean that
we don't tend to dance them and so they work out of the repertoire. I
have reworked many of these abandoned dances into favorites. When
I began to write dances, I tried to stay in certain accepted morris
parameters: typical tradition stepping, regular music, and a pattern
that, no matter how bizarre, ends up with everyone in the place
where they began the chorus. That, to me, is what a morris dance
chorus is about. But the thing has to flow; when you call the dance
you have to have an enthusiastic response, first from your dancers
and then from the audience, or the dance doesn't stay in. What I
found is that the constraint of the normal—something, half hey,
repeat—just didn't cut it. The hey cut my ability to do something
cool with the chorus pattern into only a quarter of the potential
(think about it). Many of my abandoned dances were turned into
beloved dances by dropping that hey and using all B music to pattern
and flow.

I'm not the only person to write dances. The team is talented
that way—not only in Larry Becker, but in several other members
who have written or rewritten stuff that is wonderful and readily
danced. For instance, Janet took my Kingsbury jig (which was all
right as is) and, by a clever pattern, turned it into something really

AMN 19 No 2  ° 28  ° Summer 1996
nice. Stu wrote a dance originally as a two-person jig that turned into a set dance for as many as we have. It looks fabulous when we can muster eight or ten on a tour. Sometimes someone will suggest to me a tune for use, or else the remote bones of a pattern that will stir me to a brand-new dance. The current repertoire contains 11 set dances (four with sticks) and one jig. We like them all and love some of them.

I was asked to comment on the idea of another team dancing our tradition. Frankly, I'd love to see it. We had a workshop several years back, hosting New Haven Morris & Sword and Fiddler's Reach. Both of these teams have their own traditions. Each team had two hours to teach the other two their own tradition (we were younger then). It was great fun. These other traditions are really nice and it was a kick to see everyone dancing Kingsbury. To me, it would be wonderful to see another team take up the tradition. I certainly realize that it would then evolve. That would be really interesting to see. Also, I'd like to think that for as long as there are morris dancers, someone might be dancing Kingsbury Branch!
In Favor of Tradition

Brian Smith

It seems fitting to reflect on the merits of traditional morris in the '90s just after May Day—the beginning of the morris year. This year, our two Los Angeles sides, Sunset and Pennyroyal, once again gathered at the Griffith Observatory. How things have changed! In England in the mid-'70s, ladies' morris was a new and revolutionary idea, and mixed sides were frowned upon by almost all. Yet here we were, two mixed sets ready to greet the rising sun with all the energy and gusto that seasoned limbs could provide. So much for men-only morris!

I'm happy to see that taboo broken and have enjoyed watching Windsor, Mayfield, and Pennyroyal prove to the chauvinistic world that it can be done. I have also led a mixed side on three very successful tours of New Zealand. I still consider myself a traditional morris man at heart. What does that mean, you may ask. An addiction to the atmosphere or "feel" of the morris, an affinity to village, or peasant, morrisy preference to dance in a male side, and a solemn respect for those turn-of-the-century collectors of Cotswold morris who wrote it all down for posterity.

If you believe that morris is of the earth, that it comes from the ground itself, and that the 19th-century collections are remnants of much older dances (reference the 18th-century date on the Abingdon horns, the 16th-century accounts of Kemp's jig, and the carbon dating of the Abbot's Bromley antlers), you can appreciate the need for its preservation. At a primitive level, Cotswold and border morris are simply expressions of evil spirit expulsion, crop planting, crop growth, and the fertile, lustful energy of springtime.

The best way I know of achieving preservation of the tradition is by faithful performance of the as-collected material, where possible. This means more than reproducing the hand- and foot-work. After all, a lot of this has been "reconstructed" from notes anyway. Also, does anybody really believe that local farm workers were in step when they came out on their handful of feast days per year? (Reference the Ring archive video of an Eynsham performance.) Faithful performance means trying to preserve the passion and the fire of the dance in addition to the uniqueness of its tradition.
Morris dancing is a paradox. While wanting to excel as an individual, to show off one's energy and prowess, to get as much air as possible under one, it must be remembered that the goal is to be, as Cecil Sharp once said, "...vigorous, yet restrained, a strong man rejoicing in his strength, yet graceful, controlled..." While I think restraint is a little Victorian, I like to interpret this as controlled chaos: forging a link to the unfettered past while maintaining enough control to produce that rarity—a team performance. Hasn't anyone ever felt that tickle at the back of the neck and the joy that flows when occasionally all these things come together and the goal is achieved?

In the 1990s it is difficult to focus on these concepts as a beginner, or even after a few years' experience, while dancing in a concrete mall or some part of suburbia surrounded by onlookers who have no idea who you are, what you're doing, or where you came from. "Isn't this Greek, or Scottish?" they ask. When you reply "It's English," it becomes in everyone's mind just another dance form. I really object to the philosophy that you can do ballet on Thursdays, Scandinavian on Tuesdays, and morris on Mondays. They're all dance forms, but now you're so diluted, the mystique and primal magic of the morris will be lost. It is important to return to traditional sources to be reminded of the roots of morris. For example, dance on a village green in New England, or better yet, go on a dance tour of rural England, and include stops at some of the more ancient sites. I cannot begin to describe the mystical pleasure derived from dancing in the Avebury Stone Circle or next to the Uffington White Horse.

People who are good at dance forms like to express themselves by creating new dance forms. It's like putting a part of yourself onto the posterity roster. It adds variety to the repertoire and, after all, it continues the "living tradition." But, wait a minute, does the new dance bear any relation to the roots of morris, does it generate the same passion as a traditional morris dance, does it conform to an existing village style or is it simply from New Dancington? As part of the morris community, we must recognize that we trace our origins to the Morris Ring, set up in 1932 to preserve existing dances and collect others from the memories of aging local villagers. It was not set up to reinvent morris dancing. In 22 years of morris, I still do not know every dance mentioned in Bacon, and I marvel at the variety contained within this book of traditions. Every time I learn a new one, I get tremendous satisfaction. How many
sides are dancing Bothed (besides Berkeley, that is), or Steeple Claydon, or Stanton Harcourt? That's variety.

The notion of invented dances being part of a living tradition falls down when there is no regard to the primitive roots and village environment of morris. As far as I'm concerned, living traditions occur only in Bampton, Chipping Camden, Abbot's Bromley and, arguably, Abingdon. They have the right to change their style, add dances or use new tunes—and who could say they're wrong? To put an American flavor to my logic, you could argue that Renaissance Faire morris, performed for over 25 years in its own unique environment, is a living tradition—but a living tradition of our own time. It can be argued that today's morris is already spawned of the concrete and suburbia of modern life and that, therefore, new dances should be written to reflect this lifestyle. However, as a traditionalist, I am concerned that by doing so we lose the thread to the past that I particularly am interested in preserving.

If you visit Bampton at Whitsuntide and watch the dancing, does it immediately spring to mind that what they need is a stick dance? They seem happy enough without and still have a thriving repertoire. Yet Bampton and Ducklington (another stickless tradition) stick dances are now performed by many of today's sides.

Before I am accused of hypocrisy, let me say that my side—Sunset—has a repertoire which includes several mid-20th-century dances (including Ducklington stick dances, brought in by team decision). For example, Black Joke, Bledington, a popular "traditional" dance, is less than 50 years old, and Three Musketeers is even younger. However, we try to ensure that every new dance is performed wholeheartedly within the style of an existing tradition, and we try to engender the spirit of that tradition in the new dance.

Morris is more than a dance form; it is a dance philosophy, tied to ritual, emotional and mystical roots. Writers of new dances need to bear this in mind.

Having discussed the earthy nature of morris, the air needed under your feet and the fire in your belly, it remains only to discuss the ale with which you are watered. At ales, traditional morris comes alive: a perfect place to learn traditions and to dance with other sides. By subscribing to the philosophy of traditional morris, it is easier for members of one side to mix with members of other sides since many of the traditional dances are then commonly known. In this way everyone can feel a part of the morris community. I am reminded of

AMN 19 No 3 Summer 1996
the time when Sunset went to England and was invited to dance with Hartley Morris on a ferry boat to Dunkirk, France. Jockey to the Fair, Brackley, was called and those of each side got up to form a set. The set danced perfectly together, first time. Tradition!!
One of the most interesting aspects of the Morris Dance Discussion List (MDDL) is its internationalness. This occasionally leads to misunderstandings—the confusion over various nations' interpretations of the terms "vest" and "knickers" comes up from time to time, for example—but most often it's just a lot of fun, and at no time of the year is this more true than May Day. Someone from every time zone where there's morris dancing seems to produce a report on how things went at dawn on May 1 within hours after the event, and reading these stories is, in the words of Angie McGowan (Jolley Hatters Morris, Tasmania), like watching "a giant wave of white hankies sweeping round the world."

With that image (or one much like it) in mind, the denizens of the MDDL entered into a lively pre-May 1 inquiry as to which teams had the dubious distinction of being the first and the last on the wave. First was fairly easy: the consensus seems to be that the first team to welcome in May Day this year was the Britannic Bedlam Morris Gentlemen of Wellington, New Zealand, who danced atop Mt. Eden near Auckland, accompanied (but followed) by the City of Auckland Morris Dancers and Green Man Morris. The other end was a bit more controversial: since there are (as far as anyone knows) no morris teams in Hawaii, and since dawn in Alaska comes at something like 3:00 A.M. this time of year, it seems clear that a West Coast team would come in last, but since the West Coast teams are spread out more or less longitudinally, it became a bit unclear who would be the last to see the sun rise. The winner appears to be either Berkeley, Seabright (Santa Cruz), Sunset/Pennyroyal (Los Angeles), or Moreton Bay Fig (San Diego), who have theoretical sunrise times within minutes of each other; but astronomy whiz Steve Allen thoroughly debunked any attempts to choose between them with a flurry of technical explanations that I don't pretend to understand. An attempt to claim the honor of being the last to dance on May Day by a herein-unnamed individual, who pointed out that his team traditionally celebrates May Day on the first Saturday following May 1, or May 4 this year, was disallowed by acclamation.

AMN 19 No 2 * 34 * Summer 1996
Other teams reporting in included:

Eynsham Morris, UK (Mike Heaney)—accompanied Headington Quarry Morris to an "alternative location" in Oxford, the standard location having become overrun with rude rock 'n' rollers.

Devil's Dyke Morris Men, East Anglia, UK (Nigel Strudwick)—danced at a prehistoric earthwork and three local primary schools, accompanied by Standon Morris, whose hobby dragon terrified the children at one of the schools and probably warped them psychologically for life. "It was raining, but we didn't notice (and it wasn't just the house)."

Jack in the Green Morris Men/Harrisville Morris Women, New Hampshire (Craig Brandon)—braved temperatures in the 40s. Actually, Mr. Brandon's wording would seem to suggest that he considers temperatures in the 40s to be warm, but he can't have really meant that. Can he?

Ring O' Bell/Greenwich Morris Men, New York City (Elaine Bradtke)—danced the sun down at Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. "This is the city that never sleeps (except maybe at dawn)."

Thornden Morris/Bobbinsteel Rapper/Leaf Bassett Street Hounds, Syracuse, NY (Rich Holmes)—A varied show for 110 spectators and a passel of media photographers, including Cotswold, border, rapper, mumming, and a Maypole. The rapper sword that broke at the handle in the middle of a dance got everyone's adrenaline flowing enough to counteract the effect of the wind chill.

Westerly Morris Men/Mystic Garland Dancers, Connecticut (Scott Patton)—danced outside various dormitories at Connecticut College beginning at 5:45 a.m. "I believe the reason we kept moving to different buildings was to prevent the students from getting a good bead on us."

Squash Beetle Morris, Kentucky (Andy Klapper)—jubilant over the fact that the audience (eight) outnumbered the dancers (seven) at the University of Kentucky Arboretum.

Bells of the North, Minneapolis (Kay Schoenwetter)—sunny and reasonably warm weather for the 50-75 dancers and equal number of spectators who showed up by the banks of the Mississippi for morris dancing and a Christmas-tree bonfire.

Seattle Morris (Tamara Thomas)—it rained. Surprise.
Vancouver Morris Men/ Tiddly Cove Morris Women, Vancouver, BC (Norman Stanfield)—200 spectators at the brow of a hill overlooking English Bay, Northwest morris, Maypole dancing, and a May Queen chosen from, unaccountably, the women’s team.

Seabright Morris, Santa Cruz, CA (Ruth Temple)—lovely weather, several dance premieres, and jig jousting, whatever that is. Maybe I don’t really want to know.

Berkeley Morris—gorgeous, perfect weather, 150 in the audience, and front-page-above-the-fold coverage in the San Francisco Chronicle: what more could anyone ask for? (A triple latte, perhaps?)

Other hot subjects this month included chimney sweep, English geography, cadging, rapper sword origins, budgie bells, and approximately 1,200 other things. Any morris dancer (or ex- or wannabe) with access to e-mail is invited to join in the fun. For instructions on how to do that, see the previous AMN, or see <http://web.syr.edu/~htkeays/mddl.html>, or, if you’re really desperate, ask me by e-mail: <jonb@value.net>.
1997 New Zealand Morris Tour

**Dates:** Arrive: Sunday, 29th December, 1996
Depart: Sunday, 5th January, 1997

**Location:** Hastings, New Zealand (East Coast of North Island—excellent wine region, superb climate)

**Cost ($NZ):** $160 adult; $130 secondary; $go primary
(These are maximum costs and may be reduced)

**Accommodation:** Lindisfarne College, Hastings. Everything supplied except bedding. Good catering facilities, dormitories, swimming pool

**Organisers:** Rosewood Morris (Palmerston North) assisted by Heart of the Sun (Hastings)

**Tour name:** Sunrose National Morris Tour (otherwise known as Hoserots Fusspot Tour)

**Ale theme:** Masquerade Morris

**Approximate itinerary:** Hastings (shopping mall, rest homes, Fantasyland, Cat and Fiddle pub); Napier (Harbour, Aquarium); Te Mata Peak (sunrise, paragliding); Cape Kidnappers; Havelock North; Waimarama Beach; Irish pub; Taradale; Omahle Lodge; Sacred Hill and McDonald Winery; Keiranga Park; Cidery

**Tour Dances:** Upton-upon-Severn stick and hankie dances

Contact: e-mail: <barnesd@ibm.net> (Dave Barnes in Wellington)

**Attendees:** Well, Britannic Bedlam Morris Gentlemen will certainly be there! (That's supposed to be a plus point in case you were wondering!) + all other sides in NZ

Individuals from England, Australia, maybe Fiji and Indonesia?, possibly a side of the much-loved Hankies Gone Away from the US of A?

**Other events worth tying in:** Auckland Folk Festival at end of January (I think 24th-27th) Kumeu Showgrounds (20 km northwest of Auckland). Camping—overseas guests—excellent festival

**Hope to see lots of visitors** Cheers, Dave Barnes

AMN 19 No 2 $37 Summer 1996
BINGHAMTON MORRIS MEN

Binghamton Morris Men (Binghamton, NY) are shambling thru our 23rd year of dance. We continue to be pot-bellied, bald, middle-aged (and older) curmudgeons who don't practice near enough, but manage to field a side for 15 or so tours per annum, with the grudgingly performed mummery at nth Nighttide. This April, we enjoyed our 20th Annual Gilbertsville Tour, in company with the ever-jovial Toronto Gentz and the very energetic Commonwealth MM. We eagerly await the 21st American Travelling Morrice, this August, on the coast of Maine. When not undergoing knee- or Achilles' tendon-surgery, the men enjoy sitting in the pub, drinking to excess and discussing the relative merits of fecal softeners.

Contact:
Peter Klosky, squire & foreman
991/2 Oak Street, Binghamton, NY 13905
(607) 723-1660 <KLOSKY@aol.com>

BF HARRIDANS

BF Harridans are a women's Cotswold side in the Binghamton, NY area. Dancing primarily the Bedlington tradition and occasional pieces from Upton-upon-Severn and Lichfield, the Harridans maintain an active local touring schedule throughout the spring, summer and fall. This May, the women travelled to Philadelphia for the annual Mother's Day tour, and to the 21st Marlboro Ale.

Contact:
Roberta Wackett, foreman
8 Zane Road, Binghamton, NY 13903
(607) 722-1192 <Fplunk@aol.com>

MIANUS RIVER MORRIS

We're slightly above fighting strength on a regular basis, though we miss our glory days of 16 or so ready, willing, and able dancers. Everyone enjoyed the Ale and wonder where it will be next. Ex-squire.

AMN 19 No 2  •  38  •  Summer 1996
Amy Brewer has been “sighted” having sent postcards from some far off exotic land, where she and her husband are working for the Peace Corps. We had a recent Peace Corps volunteer return from her stint in Africa a little while ago so it must be the thing to do these days. I am the only Greenwich resident on the team these days, Judith Schmidt having moved up to Maine. We occasionally hear from ex-team member Andy Speno who has started a team in Cincinnati (!).

John Lippincott <Lipwak@aol.com> (not speaking as an official of Mianus River Morris, just one who wanted to send in some news.)

BRIDGETOWN MORRIS MEN

Bridgetown Morris Men start their fourth year healthy and growing. We were conspicuous in the first-ever Winter Revels here in Portland, opening the show with a version of Duddingston Jackey to the Fair and also appearing in the Abbott's Bromley horn dance and a Kirkby-Malzeard longsword dance.

We danced the sun up at the highest point in Portland and toured six elementary schools on May Day. By the time you read this, we will have been the guests of Seattle Morris for a tour of Bainbridge Island in the Puget Sound with other Pacific Northwest teams. July brings our second annual trip and dance on the Hood River Railroad, an historic steam train up the Columbia River gorge, as well as our usual visits to the Salem Arts Fair and the Northwest Brewers Festival, where we host the other Pacific Northwest teams-including, perhaps, the new Apex Mountain Morris from Corvallis, Oregon.

We now sport five musicians: three fiddles and two squeeze boxes. The future looks bright.

P.S. I received a letter in early May from former fellow Black Joker Curt Hayashi, whom many of the veteran New England dancers will recall. He's been in Eastern Europe for a number of years-first Czechoslovakia, now Lithuania. He's threatening to move to the Pacific NW and says he's looking for morris action.

David Lofius
Bridgetown Morris Men
Portland, Oregon, USA

SALT SPRINGS MORRIS

Syracuse, New York has a new morris team—yes, another one! Salt Springs Morris, named after the local geologic feature that first put Syracuse on the map, is a mixed side doing a single Cotswold tradition.
tion: Wheatley. To the best of our knowledge, ever since the reported
demise of the Wheatley Morris Men a couple months after we got
started (we hope this was a coincidence), we're the only Wheatley-
only team on the planet. So we'd better learn to do it well, hadn't we?
We began practicing in January 1996. Two of our dancers are
morris novices; the others are present or former members of
Thorniden Morris, the Bassett Street Hounds, and/or Ribbonsteel
Rapper (there's one deranged dancer who's on all four teams!). Our
musician, who commutes up from Ithaca every week, used to play
for the late, lamented Hearts of Oak. Our aim is to have as much fun
as we can by being the best team we can be, and we must be doing all
right—our fore, Heather Holmes, is about ready to let us dance out
in a couple of weeks. Our squire is Karin Howe. (315) 435-6943.

Rich Holmes
Salt Springs Morris
<http://web.syr.edu/~rholmes/morris/sal.htm>

Seattle Morris
Seattle Morris has undergone some changes since last year. In the fall,
our reigning foreman, David Sacco, departed for Sri Lanka, where he
is serving as a UN Volunteer. In December, Amy Brewer, David's
wife/life partner, member of Seattle Morris, and foreperson for Misty
City Morris, left Seattle on her way to joining him there. Word does
periodically reach us from them that they are doing well, though they
seem to miss baseball, and David in particular is having trouble
grappling cricket. (By the way, if anyone would like their addresses in
Sri Lanka, they can contact Ken Smith: <a-kenns@microsoft.com>,
or (206) 781-1530.)

David's place as foreman has been taken by Ken Smith, formerly
the squire and one of the founders of the side. Frances Herszig is the
new, and very capable, squire. We made the trek down to Los Angeles
for the Duck and Cover Ale, and danced at the Seattle Folklife Festi-
val on Memorial Day weekend (which is what morris teams in the
Pacific Northwest do instead of traveling to the Midwest Ale, or
Marlboro, or other Memorial Day weekend ales—for those of you
who didn't know and always wondered). Various summer events
await us, including a trip across the border to dance with Tiddly
Cove in Vancouver, B.C. We are dancing Sherborne, and a couple-
three dances from Elm City, the creation of Rick Mohr.

AMN 19 No 2 40 Summer 1996