

AMERICAN MORRIS NEWSLETTER



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Comments

AMN continues its efforts to document the history of morris by presenting an article by editor James Brickwedde outlining the introduction of morris into North America.

David Stryker sends a pointed essay on the way morris dancers present themselves to the public. It is worthy of note by both novice and experienced dancers.

Northwest Morris is this issue's "Other Than Cotswold" tradition. A few years ago when I began collecting articles for this series, I asked an English researcher, Chas Marshall, to compile a basic history of Northwest Morris. He wrote back to say the article had already been written in 1960 for the Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. So with the permission of the authors and EFSSS we reprint a shortened version for your edification.

A memorial to Jody Evans, founding member of Ring o' Bells Morris who died this summer, is presented. Jody was one of the more influential female teachers of morris dancing in the 70's and 80's. Her former ROB sidemates retell her story.

A summary of some recent articles and publications concerning the morris as well as team news wraps up this issue.

Next Issue

IT'S DIRECTORY UPDATE TIME. A true sign of spring. Please be prompt with your response. A survey will be included with the update request. Please take time to complete it carefully. The Spring issue will also highlight life north of the border with an all Canadian issue. Included will be an article on mummung in Newfoundland, the 1929 EFSSS Demonstration Team tour of Canada and detailed team histories of a few of the current active sides. And the Summer issue...we are working on that.

EDITORIAL
Changes on the Wing

The two stalwart institutions representing country dancing, ritual and song in America and Britain are currently undergoing drastic revisions in order to become more responsive to current membership needs. Each organization has slain their most sacred of cows: CDSS of America is moving their offices about of New York City; EPDSS in England has closed down Cecil Sharp House with the intent to redevelop the property. Both EPDSS (founded in 1911) and CDSS (founded in 1915) have, and still do, play key background roles in supporting the morris in all of its forms through research, instruction, supplying bells and publications. CDSS is also about to establish a group insurance plan for member organizations--a service only a national organization can obtain.

American Morris Newsletter urges all of you to remain in touch with CDSS and EPDSS and be supportive of the directions each of these organizations has mapped out for themselves. If you have disagreements, write and express your ideas. I, as one of the editors of this newsletter, can attest to the difficulty of obtaining feedback from readership, particularly negative criticism. Don't vote by your absence, vote your opinion by being an active and interested member. Become supporting members.

...and stay tuned for further information regarding group insurance opportunities.

General News

CDSS should soon, if not already, be the U.S. outlet for purchasing copies of Sir Lionel Bacon's A Handbook of Morris Dances. The note from Ivor Alsop, archivist for The Morris Ring, that contained this development, also notes the availability of two new publications:

- 1) Fieldtown Dances and Jigs, by Bert Cleaver
- 2) Sherborne Dances and Jigs, by Bert Cleaver

The dance notations, complete with music, are written specifically to describe how Greensleeves Morris Men interpret the traditions. The books are well laid out and presented. They are available for \$3.00 each or \$5.00 for the set post free by writing: Ivor Alsop, The Morris Ring Archives, 36 Green Spring Ave., Birdwell, Nr. Barnsley, Yorkshire S70 5RY England.

An Introductory Bibliography on Morris Dancing by Mike Heaney; Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Leaflet no. 19.--an excellent pamphlet listing available sources of information regarding the morris. Do not be misled by thinking its usefulness is limited only to those who can travel to England. Many of the sources are available at most quality libraries in metropolitan areas and universities this side of the Atlantic. The booklet costs L1.75 plus postage. Order from: The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, London NW1 7AY, England.

JODY EVANS

by Jane Finlay
with assistance from
Beverly Francis and Ruth Evans McKinney

On July 3rd, at the age of thirty-five, Jody Evans died after a long struggle with cancer. She was one of the key leaders in the American morris community. A few weeks before her death Jody told a friend that she would like to be remembered for founding Ring o' Bells, the first women's morris team in the United States. As well as starting the Ring o' Bells in New York City, Jody was one of the people responsible for the widespread surge of interest in morris dancing in the 1970's. When Jody discovered an interest, she became a committed, knowledgeable and intense worker, and her route to discovering English traditional dance was an interesting one.

As a theater major at Allegheny College in western Pennsylvania, Jody wanted to choreograph "Jesus Christ Superstar" for her senior thesis. In the summer of 1971, before her senior year, she decided she needed more dance background before taking on the project. She looked for summer dance programs near her Massachusetts home, and she happened on a brochure about Pinewoods Camp. Chamber Music Week caught her attention, and instead of dancing she decided to pursue her musical interest in recorder and dulcimer playing. Once at Pinewoods Jody was introduced to English country dances at the evenings on the C# dance floor. She fell in love with country dancing and soon became interested in English traditional dance and drama. Her interest grew, and she changed her senior thesis from J.C. Superstar to a mummer's play--all in one summer. Jody's Pinewoods experience changed her life. She returned to Pinewoods as a camper or staff member every summer until 1985.

After college Jody lived in Boston and danced, danced, danced. Through her dancing friends she met her long-time companion, Karl Rodgers, a dance caller and member of the original New York Village Morris Men. In the summer of 1974 Jody accompanied Karl and the Village Morris Men on a trip to England. She was hooked, and soon after Jody moved to New York in the late summer of 1974 she decided to start a women's team. She gathered "those women who would" and began teaching Headington. Jody had a keen mind and a continuously growing knowledge of morris dancing. On her return trips to Pinewoods she would gather all the information she could about any tradition. Her Sharp Morris Dance Books and her Bacon Handbook were well worn. In her endeavor to begin a women's team Jody had the support and encouragement of members of the Pinewoods Morris Men and of Karl. Amidst some concern about a performing women's morris team, especially one not wearing dresses, the Ring o' Bells, in knee britches, took to the New York City streets on Thanksgiving, 1974. Women's morris was born!

Under Jody's leadership the Ring o' Bells soon commanded the respect of other teams and of morris aficionados. The team took up Ascot Under Wychwood, and Jody's fluidity and quiet energy when dancing soon became a trademark of the team. Her control and ease in the Ascot quick galley was quite remarkable. When I first started dancing with the team, I often thought I'd really be a morris dancer when I could do a quick galley like Jody's.

CDSS now has available Roy Dommett's Notes on Morris Dancing edited by Dr. Anthony G. Barrand. The notes, which are compiled in five volumes, cost \$65.00 and are available at the CDSS office which, until further notice, is at 505 8th Ave., New York, NY 10018.

Announcements

The Christmas Country Dance School in Berea, KY begins with supper on December 26, 1986 and ends with breakfast on New Year's Day. Classes in Longsword, Cotswold and Northwest Morris will be held along with many other sessions in music and dance. For further details regarding this 49th annual event write: Dr. John M. Ramsay, Director of Recreation Extension, Berea College, Box 287, Berea, KY 40404.

The Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop will present its 1987 Winter workshops in Elkins, West Virginia, January 4 through 17. Of interest to morris dancers, Jim Morrison will be on staff to teach Welsh Border Morris. The other classes include British and American music and social dance. For information contact, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241.

The Berkeley Morris will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary with an Ale, August 7th, 8th, and 9th, 1987. Home base will be the camping grounds of Tilden Regional Park. Tours will go to San Francisco and Berkeley/Oakland. They can arrange accommodations for people wishing to stay in the area after, if given some notice.

Please, if you think you and/or your team might be coming, let them know (it will help in our planning). Call or write:

Jocelyn Reynolds, 3437 Birdsall Avenue, Oakland, CA 94619 (415)536-4081
or Sheila Fitzgerald, 1115 Central Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501 (415)521-8625



In the summer of 1979 Ring o' Bells was the first American women's team to go to England and had a very successful tour. Apparently some members of men's teams were dubious about this women's group from the Big Apple, but warmed up once they saw the quality of the dancing.

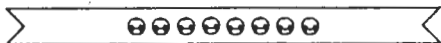
In the fall of 1981 Jody moved to Boston, and shortly afterward found out she had breast cancer. She went through a course of treatment, and even with her limitations, she still worked, sang in a church choir and danced. She chose to be on the Muddy River Rapper Team and danced with that wonderful group for several years. After her first bout with cancer, Jody was in remission for about three years, and she continued her busy schedule. In her work life she was an interpreter for the deaf, and she approached this aspect of her life with the same intensity and commitment as her dancing. Her final position was as the main interpreter for students at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, and in her experiences as school interpreter she covered everything from car mechanics to advanced chemistry. All of that required some vocabulary! During the winter of 1984 Jody joined the Commonwealth Vintage Dancers. She loved this type of dancing too, and she composed a waltz tune which the group used in their performances.

When her cancer returned, Jody bravely went through an experimental operation in the summer of 1985. She went back to work and planned a European trip for the following summer. She had been to England, but never to the Continent and was excited about planning this trip. In May, she and a friend went on an extended vacation; the trip was cut short by two weeks, and she returned home and died shortly afterwards.

Many people have commemorated Jody--her family, the dance community, her church community, and, her interpreting and deaf community. Jody touched many people's lives in different ways.

As part of the dance community I know that many people feel grateful to Jody for her contributions in transmitting many forms of English traditional dancing. She played an important role in a history that keeps evolving for all of us. She will be missed by all whose lives she touched.

Ring o' Bells sponsors a scholarship for a ritual dancer to attend Pine-woods, and the team has renamed this fund in honor of Jody. The Boston Centre of the Country Dance and Song Society has also started a scholarship fund in Jody's name.



THE HISTORY OF MORRIS IN AMERICA

NORTH

A BRIEF ACCOUNT THE INTRODUCTION OF MORRIS INTO NORTH AMERICA

by James C. Brickwedde

At the turn of the Twentieth Century, several developments in the area of dance and physical education were occurring that represented substantial breaks from past practices and helped shape how folk dancing was conveyed to the public. There was the Swedish Physical Training Program, a system of bodily exercises and gymnastics that was adopted and adapted by several European countries. The Swedish efforts replaced the military drill program that existed prior to it. In 1904 in England, the Board of Education adapted the Swedish system into its syllabus for elementary schools with alterations allowing for more enjoyment by the children. "...Hence, it has been thought well not only to modify some of the usual Swedish combinations in order to make the work less exacting, but to introduce games and dancing steps into many of the lessons."(1) By 1909, morris dancing was being used as an example of such preferred dance movement.

There also was the work of Jacques Delcroze, who developed a combined system of rhythmic movements, ear-training and sight-singing known as Eurythmics. This, in many ways, represents the beginnings of the modern dance/creative dance movement - a break from the more regimented forms of classical ballet. Albeit not a part of the Delcroze movement, the flamboyant Isadora Duncan exemplified the radical ideals of movement which were being explored at the time.

A rise in nationalism also was occurring. This aroused interest in the folk heritage of individual countries and ethnic groups. The folk dance movements in both England and America developed in association with other movement and artistic concepts. The influences of the Swedish physical education program on the one hand and Delcroze eurythmics on the other set the parameters for the "artistic" debate between Cecil Sharp and Mary Neal, among others, particularly as applied in the schools. The folk revival was very much a part of a larger artistic movement.

The ingredients that combined to create an interest in folk dancing in America were similar to those in England. Large increases in urban populations created a recognized need for providing organized leisure/social activities for young adults and children. The juncture of this latter social movement, along with the interest in ethnic heritage and the physical education movement, created an atmosphere in England to establish the Esperance Club for Working Girls in 1895 and, in America, the Playground Association in New York City in 1905. The year 1905 is significant for both organizations as it marks the launching of the folk dance revival movement in each country. The American effort, particularly as it relates to the morris dance, was led by Elizabeth Burchenal.

Elizabeth Burchenal was an instructor of physical education at Teachers College, Columbia University. While there from 1903-05 she actively introduced folk dancing into the curriculum. The source of much of her material was the ethnic settlements in New York City. In 1905 she was convinced to become Executive Secretary to the Girls Branch of the New York City Public Athletic League. This allowed her to introduce folk dancing in schools throughout the city, and with the founding of the Playground Association in the same year, her work became a resource for social service agencies and settlement houses across the country. An organized folk dance program had been born.

Also in 1905, Burchenal published a collection of folk dances from a variety of European countries, Folk Dances and Singing Games. Included were "Bluff King Hal," "Laudnum Bunches," "May-Pole Dance" and "Morris Dance." "Laudnum Bunches" appears again in 1909 in a collection compiled by C. Ward Crampton, M.D. in New York titled The Folk Dances for Elementary Schools, Classrooms, Playgrounds and Gymnasiums. Burchenal published a second volume of dances in 1913 (Dances of the People) in which she included "Bobbing Joe" and "Ribbon Dance."⁽²⁾

The source of Miss Burchenal's English material, particularly in 1905, is unknown to the author at this writing. The question is important, however, as Mary Neal in England only began having William Kimber from Headington come to London to teach the Esperance girls morris dancing beginning in 1905. Cecil Sharp did not publish the first volume of The Morris Book until 1907. This is a topic for further research.

A key player in nurturing an interest in English dance was George Baker, Professor of Drama, at that time, at Harvard University. An English expatriot, Baker was instrumental in encouraging the use of traditional folk material on stage. His contacts with the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-on-Avon brought him into contact, along with fellow Bostonian Helen Storrow, with the Stratford Summer School at which, in the early days, both Mary Neal and Cecil Sharp were dominant.

Helen Storrow, a wealthy Bostonian, was influential in the Girl Scout movement as well as having a strong interest in English theatre. Her contacts with Cecil Sharp and others would prove vital in the successful introduction of the country dance and morris into North America. For those unaware, the land upon which Pinewoods Camp stands was originally provided by the Storrow family and a substantial contribution was also made toward the construction of the Cecil Sharp House in London.

Next to come in are the English cast of characters. By 1911, Mary Neal and Cecil Sharp had completely severed their working relationship. Miss Neal continued her dance collecting and organized teaching of morris dancing through the Esperance Morris Guild. Cecil Sharp had established himself at the South-Western Polytechnic Institute at Chelsea. To describe adequately and accurately the debate between these two individuals would take more pages than I wish to occupy at the moment. A succinct description of the debate is given by Russell Wortley:

Both Cecil Sharp and Mary Neal relied on the authority of the traditional dancer. The difference between them apparently lay in the relative values they attached to the different traditional authorities. Reading the published accounts (Fox Strangways, 1933, pp. 74-85; Neal, 1915, pp. 165-173) it is difficult not to conclude that Sharp was (in the early years) inclined to accept (William) Kimber as the standard authority on such matters as the character of the Morris step, whereas Miss Neal, seeing notable variation in this matter not only as between Headington and Abingdon but even between different members of the Headington side, permitted a corresponding latitude in her teaching of the dances. In general terms Sharp found himself charged with pedantry while he charged Mary Neal with lack of discrimination. Ironically enough, Sharp (as we have seen) had himself sinned in this respect in regard to the Bidford dances which he expunged from the second edition of the Morris Book on account of their dubious authenticity.(3)

The point at hand, however, is that the effects of that debate spilled over the shores of the Atlantic and into the United States. The influences for establishing an interest in folk dance were much the same in both countries.

At some point prior to 1911, regular enough contact between Americans and Mary Neal and Cecil Sharp was fully established for two things to have occurred. The first was the 1911 tour of the USA by Mary Neal and her primary teacher of the morris, Florence Warren. The second was the intervention of a friend of Sharp's in America causing the cancelation of many of Neal's engagements.(4)

Reconstructing Mary Neal and Florrie Warren's activities in America has been difficult as little source material has been identified. It is known that they worked at least in New York and Boston and that Florrie Warren remained in the USA to be married to a Mr. Arthur Brown in 1912. There did, however, appear to have been a significant increase in the number of Americans attending the Summer School in Stratford in 1912 and 1913. Cecil Sharp makes numerous references to meeting Americans who had attended Stratford during this time period in his travel diaries and correspondence covering his visits to the USA between 1914-1918: "...Miss Hall and Miss Lauman, women who do the Dalcroze stuff at the Francis Parker School. They were at Statford in 1912."(5)

A large party of Americans, including George Baker, Helen Storrow and Mary Wood Hinman (Chicago) attended Stratford in 1913. There they met A. Claude Wright, a member of Cecil Sharp's Chelsea Morris demonstration side. Wright was a trained gymnast, a very dynamic morris dancer and a dashing young man. A friendship developed between Wright and Baker leading to an invitation for Wright to work in Boston, New Hampshire and Maine in the summers of 1913 and 1914. He taught morris, sword and the country dance.

The invitation to Wright came without the prior permission of Cecil Sharp.(6) Wright's strong athleticism in his dancing style plus his apparent dominant personality did not blend well with that of Sharp and other members of the demonstration side and teaching staff, particularly the two

Karpeles sisters, Maud and Helen. Correspondence between Sharp and Helen Storrow, with Maud Karpeles and between Wright and George Baker clearly depict the political maneuvering that helped shape the fledgling English Folk Dance Society. Upon Sharp's arrival in the USA in December 1914, Sharp clearly moved to change Wright's groundwork. In a letter to Maud Karpeles Sharp writes:

I lectured last night at the Lincoln Village Hall and coached some dancers, two men and two women, in the afternoon some country dances....The trail of Wright and his physical culture methods was (evident in) it all. But I impressed them very much I think with the alternative I made and the new ideal I set before them....Mrs. Storrow particularly whom I think I shall be able to improve and alter a good deal. Her point of view I think has been all money but she is a nice woman, a really nice one, and quite capable of understanding the right thing when it is properly put before her.(7)

Wright was extremely interested in continuing his work with Baker in America in 1915, especially since the topic of a permanent teacher for the new USA branch of EFDS had been raised. But by this time Sharp was in America and actively worked to prevent it (8). World War I had intervened and Sharp used this issue to the fullest as a convenient excuse to waylay Wright's plan. Again in a letter to Maud Karpeles on the topic of a permanent teacher Sharp wrote, "...There will of course be great opportunities - especially from Baker - at anyone coming out but Wright, but I have said flatly that I would not come out with him because I think he ought to be at the war."(9) Sharp won the day and a young woman from Yorkshire came instead of Wright to become the first permanent teacher. Her name was Lily Roberts. She soon married and became Lily Conant.

Claude Wright did indeed join the war by entering the RAF to serve a distinguished career. He retired with the rank of Air Commodore and died in 1977. Communication with his widow is under way to gain permission to quote directly from his letters, held in the Harvard University archives.

Cecil Sharp was a tireless man despite a history of uncertain physical health. In his favor he had the ability to persevere in his goal to control the aesthetic of the morris and the country dance. He had the ability to organize people and to establish institutions by which to channel the energies of those people. Sharp's disciples fiercely guarded his reputation while he was alive and even more so after his death in 1924. This ability to energize and organize made him the success he was. His age and his health allowed him to come to dominate the English folk dance movement. World War I drew his opponents away. He was too old and in too poor health to have any practical place in the war effort. He was left alone in his field to pursue his cause.

Sharp spent most of those war years in America. He originally thought that most of his public effort would be to lecture and teach folk music. But the work of Burchenal, Neal/Warren and Wright had generated a strong enthusiasm for dancing. Quickly Sharp realized this: "The fact is there is no interest here in folk-song but a great deal in folk-dance."(10)

Sharp's letters and diaries describe his zeal for a particular artistic aesthetic in the dancing. On one hand he objected to the "physical culture" ideals from the physical education/gymnastic field.

I think you exaggerate the need of previous physical development. So far I have found it far easier to make dancers out of those who have not been so trained and who have done little or no athletics. Nearly all physically trained people and athletics suffer from stiff or inflexible joints and muscles that have been developed beyond their power of control. What faults Wright has, may all be traced to his early physical training. I should, therefore, not restrict your future teachers to the physically trained....(11)

On the other side he objected to the strictly recreational attitude he found among the schools and settlement houses:

I have accepted an engagement offered me by Miss Ward (sic) Hinman to spend the week April 7-14 at Chicago and take 3 classes a day...I have good reason to believe that she has been altering the dances very considerably that we taught her at Stratford - making them easier for children is I believe her excuse....(12)

...there I gave a little talk, summing up (the Amherst) Summer School and called upon them to teach accurately and uphold the accurate (demonstration) of the dances wh(ich) is after all the main purpose of the EFDS. (13)

Sharp kept up a remarkable pace over the four years in America. He traveled and taught extensively in places such as Boston, New York, Pittsfield, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Kalamazoo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Champaign Urbana, St. Louis and Toronto, among others. This is all in addition to his work in the Appalachian Mountains. With the primary assistance of Maud Karpeles and further help from Lily Conant and Charles Rabold, the country, morris and sword dances were firmly introduced onto this continent.

One of the more memorable occasions of morris dancing during this period was a tour by a side of men from Pittsburgh following the Elliot, Maine Summer Camp in 1915. Photos exist of this group performing Flamborough:

About twelve young men from the School of Drama, Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh were there. Mrs. Dawson Gallery financed this group. The Pittsburgh boys organized and set off on tour after the school, raised money to pay their expenses and were successful.(14)

Another was Cecil Sharp's first formal performance of a morris dance in public:

At the demonstration in the morning I danced Trunkles - the first time I have danced a corner Morris in public and acquitted myself if not exactly to my own satisfaction fairly well. I am much stronger than I was and with practice I believe I might do the Morris in a quiet staid sort of way!(15)

...C. Sharp danced Trunkles - his first appearance in morris in public. He did it jolly well.(16)

I have been doing a lot of Morris dancing and my appearances in Trunkles, Bean Setting and Bobbing Joe were greatly admired! I have not yet done a jig in public but it is merely a question of time - in a few years more I shall be young enough to tackle one! - and then you and Maud who by then will have grown old will have to look to your laurels! Maud and Rabold are so stiff they can hardly walk or sit down but my efforts have had no such effect and I walk and sit without any discomfort and with my usual ease and grace!(17)

Cecil Sharp left America in December 1918 following the end of World War I. He was never to return. His effect on American folk dance and folk song, however, has been monumental. In terms of introducing morris dancing, he left behind the structure of the USA Branch of EFDS which would foster morris under the wing of the country dance movement until the late sixties when morris sides began forming independently of CDSS chapters. He left behind a summer camp legacy which survives at Pinewoods to this day. He left behind trained teachers who would carry on his work for decades to come.

There are others such as Maud Karpeles, Charles Rabold and Lily Conant who I would wish to further spotlight. This would be in addition to the further details involving those already mentioned. Other chapters will certainly need to be written.

Footnotes

[1] Board of Education, The Syllabus of Physical Exercises for Public Elementary Schools, 'Prefatory Memorandum' p.VI, no. 7, 1909.

[2] Burchenal, Elizabeth, Folk Dances And Singing Games, G. Schirmer, New York, 1905.

Crampton M.D., C. Ward, The Folk Dances for Elementary Schools, Classrooms, Playgrounds and Gymnasiums, New York, 1909.

Burchenal, Dances of the People, G. Schirmer, New York, 1913.

[3] Wortley, Russell, Russell Wortley, 'The Cotswold Morris--Hey Day, Decline and Revival', p. 16, ed. The Cambridge Morris Men, 1980, reprinted 1983.

[4] MS unpublished research notes, Private Collection, 1957.

[5] MS Diary of Cecil Sharp, February, Friday 15, 1918; Cecil Sharp Collection, Box 7, Misc.: Appalachian Diaries 1915-1918, R. Vaughan Williams Library, London, England, herein referred to as Sharp Collection.

[6] In a personal letter dated June 19, 1983, Douglas Kennedy wrote "His outstanding ability to leap high caught the eye of a rich American woman who attended one of Cecil Sharp's lecture demonstrations. She, without consulting Sharp, invited Wright to visit America and...teach some of the newly discovered morris and sword dances." In a subsequent letter, Douglas

Kennedy remembered the American to be Mary Wood (Ward) Hinman of Chicago who had indeed been in England that summer. However, during further questioning in a personal interview on July 13, 1984, Kennedy revised his comments to support the information that George Baker had done the inviting. Claude Wright's correspondence with Baker subsequently supported this notion. What remains consistent is the fact that the invitation to teach in the USA came without Sharp's permission. Kennedy's memory has been extremely accurate on most details so I do not totally discount yet some role of Miss Hinman in the equation.

[7] MS Letter Sharp to Karpeles, Lincoln, Mass., Sunday Feb. 21, 1915, p. 5, Maud Karpeles Bequest, Box 3, Letters from C. Sharp to M.K., R. Vaughan Williams Library, London, England, herein referred to as Karpeles Bequest.

[8] "What I said to you about Wright's appt. I still adhere to, viz. that if you insisted on having him as your Branch Teacher, I should not veto the appt. although for reasons which I gave to you I did not think you would be altogether wise in choosing him. The other question was an entirely separate one and was ruled by consideration over which I had no control. I may be mistaken as to the attitude which my teachers would take - but I do not think so." MS Letter Sharp to George Baker dated "31-iii/15, Dawson Callery, 4875 Ellsworth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA", George P. Baker Collection, Theatre Collection, Harvard University.

[9] MS Letter Sharp to Karpeles dated 'Hotel Algonquin, New York, 23,iii,15', Karpeles Bequest.

[10] MS Letter Sharp to Karpeles dated '25-1-15', p.7, Karpeles Bequest.

[11] MS Letter Sharp to Helen Storrow dated '15 October 1913' Box 3, Storrow file no. 2. Sharp Collection.

[12] MS Letter Sharp to Karpeles dated '15 March 1915', p. 2 Karpeles Bequest.

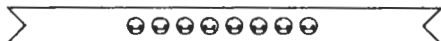
[13] MS Diary of Sharp, July 20, Fri., 1915, Sharp Collection.

[14] MS Roberts, Lily, 'Lily Roberts in America: a collection from two notebooks, Conant Family Collection, private holding.

[15] MS Diary of Sharp, July 3, Wed. 1918, Sharp Collection.

[16] MS Diary of Karpeles, July 3. 1918, Karpeles Bequest.

[17] MS Letter Sharp to Lily Roberts (Conant) dated 'July 7, 1918, Hotel Algonquin, New York', Conant Family Collection.



OTHER THAN COTSWOLD MORRIS

THE NORTHWEST MORRIS A GENERAL SURVEY

by Daniel Howison and Bernard Bentley

(A shortened version, reprinted with permission by the authors and "Folk Music Journal"; the article first appeared in the "Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society"--1960. Thanks to Chas. Marshall for recommending the article.)

The term "Morris Dancing" has, in many people's minds, come to be associated particularly with the Cotswold tradition--indeed, to many the terms are synonymous. This, however, is misleading, and is the result of a historical accident--the fact that it was the Cotswold dances that Cecil Sharp collected and published, and made the basis of the revival of Morris dancing. There existed, however, other forms of the Morris, which, although less varied, were as widespread and as alive as the Cotswold tradition. Foremost among these is the North-West Morris of the area around Manchester, which was still being danced by over thirty teams during the first decade of this century. Most of these teams broke up on the outbreak of the First World War, and although several of them made sporadic appearances after the war, changed conditions, coupled with the loss of dancers killed in France (in some cases amounting to half the team), prevented most of them from surviving more than a few years. Nevertheless, there remains in the area a vivid memory of Morris dancing, and even today there are many former dancers still alive. It will be seen, therefore, that if the North-West Morris is less widely known than the Cotswold tradition, this is not because it died out long ago, but because it was not subjected to the detailed and systematic attention that Sharp devoted to the Cotswold dances.

Indeed, in Lancashire and Cheshire the Cotswold tradition is unknown, and the term "Morris Dancing", which is still in regular use, refers to the girls' Carnival Morris, or occasionally, among older people, to the now nearly extinct tradition of men's Morris, both of which are quite different from the dances of the Midlands.

That this North-West tradition was scarcely touched by Sharp is regrettable, for the only person to do any collecting in the area before 1914, John Graham, was a much less thorough and reliable worker, who has left little of real value (see bibliography). Fortunately, however, others have in more recent years gone a long way to fill the gap in our knowledge of the North-Western dances, but since little of their work has been published it is not surprising that the tradition is not better known.

In writing this paper, the authors have drawn freely on such unpublished material, and would like to acknowledge their debt to those who have generously made their notes available, especially Mr. F. B. Hamer, Mr. Alex Helm, Mr. Julian Pilling and Miss Maud Karpeles, who has probably done more in this field than any other individual.

The following account of the North-West Morris is based principally on such unpublished material, and on information given to the authors by former dancers. It is intended to be descriptive rather than analytical, and it is hoped that it will form a framework into which more detailed studies may be fitted, and provide that overall picture of the tradition which has hitherto been lacking.

THE NORTH-WEST MORRIS TRADITION

The hey-day of the Morris in the North-West seems to have been the first half of the nineteenth century. At this time, the Morris dancers regularly accompanied the rushcart to the church at the annual Wakes holiday in the late summer. Whether the processional nature of the dance developed as a result of its association with the rushcart procession, or whether it was in any case a processional, is a matter of doubt; what is certain is that for a long time the North-West Morris has been a processional dance, performed while moving along the street. The dancers might occasionally stop and perform part of their dance on the spot, but this was the exception rather than the rule. It is worth noting that in Lancashire the procession was, until the advent of motor traffic, a favourite form of celebration. In Didsbury, for example, parades were organized to celebrate such events as the appointment of a new Sheriff of Lancashire or the passing of the Ship Canal Act, while lifeboat parades and later cycle parades were common events throughout the area. Even today, the Whit Walks and annual Carnival parades of Lancashire towns echo this fondness for processions. It is not therefore surprising that the Morris should fit in with this general pattern.

As will be seen later, the North-West Morris follows the same general pattern over most of the area in which it is found. The versions performed by different teams, however, vary considerably, both in the steps and arm-movements used, and in the choice of figures, so that although it is true to say that all these teams are performing a version of the North-West processional, this does not imply a dull uniformity; indeed, considering the simple nature of the dance, the differences in detail between one team and another are quite striking. It is, in fact, because of this variety that we have found it necessary to limit our account of the dance to the broadest outlines, for to attempt to convey fully the individual character of each version would have meant entering into a sea of detail quite beyond the scope of this paper.

It is usual to refer to these versions by the name of the place where they were collected, or where they were last traditionally performed, and to speak, for example, of the "Mossley version", or the "Glossop version". This is inevitable, but it must be borne in mind that any given version belonged not so much to the place--where there might indeed be two or more quite distinct themes operating at the same time, each with its own version of the dance(1)--as to the individual team, and particularly to its leader.

The leader, or conductor, is very important in the North-West Morris. Not only does he train the dancers, but he dances at their head in procession, giving signals by whistle or by waves of the hand (some leaders are very proud that they never used spoken commands). It was as much with a leader that a version of the dance was connected as with a place; and when a leader moved, he would take the dance with him. The version usually referred to as "Royton", for example, was brought to Royton from Hollinwood by Mick Coleman in about 1890; he then taught his brother Jimmy, who continued to run a team in Royton, while Mick went off to train a troupe of boys in Failsworth.(2) To add to the confusion, the "Royton" team of the nineteen-twenties contained a number of dancers from a team whose version had been brought independently from Oldham. It will be seen, therefore, that when one refers to a version by the name of the place where it was danced, this does not necessarily imply any permanent or exclusive connection with that place.

We have said that the hey-day of the North-West Morris was probably the first half of the nineteenth century. This is little more than a guess, for very little work has been done on the history of the Morris in this area, and until a systematic survey is made of the material in local newspaper files and libraries, one can do no more than try to suggest the general outlines of the picture.

Whatever the details of its earlier history, it is quite clear that during the second half of the nineteenth century the Morris in the North-West suffered a progressive decline. The reasons for this are complex, and are bound up with the whole social history of the area.

As we have seen, the Morris had for some time been particularly associated with the annual Wakes festival, and with the rushcart procession that took place at that time. Well before the middle of the century, most churches had been floored over, so that the bringing in of large quantities of rushes no longer served a useful purpose, and the practice of building rushcarts became less common and during the course of the century gradually died out. The Morris, of course, continued to enjoy an independent existence in many places where rushcarts were no longer built, but it is reasonable to suppose that the gradual disappearance of the rushcart played a part in the weakening of the Morris tradition.

More important, however, was the decline in importance of the Wakes as a local festival, and the spread of the habit of going away for holidays--a habit stimulated by the arrival of the railways. A hundred years ago, the dancers would still have found in the Wakes Week crowds an appreciative audience in a festive and generous frame of mind; during Wakes Week today, the towns are empty, their inhabitants having gone off to Blackpool or the Isle of Man. Some teams tried to meet this situation by following the crowds to the seaside(3), but the difficulties of organizing and financing such a trip must have been too great for it to become a general practice.

Moreover, the Morris dancers had to contend not only with these unfavourable circumstances, but with positive and growing opposition to the drunkenness and fighting that often used to accompany the rushcart. Samuel Bamford, writing of Oldham Wakes in the early part of the century, says:

Monday was the day for hard drinking, and for settling such disputes, and determining of such battles, as had not come off on Saturday. Tuesday was again a drinking day, with occasional race-running, and more battles at night. Wednesday would be spent in a similar manner. On Thursday the dregs of the wakes-keepers only would be seen staggering about. On Friday a few of the dregs of the dregs might be met with; Saturday was woeful, and on Sunday all would be over, and sobered people going to church or chapel again, would make good resolutions against a repetition of their week's folly. And thus would have passed away the great feast of "The Wakes". (BamD).(4)

This licence was strongly opposed. In 1858, for example, Blackley Mechanics' Institution formed a committee, which appealed to members "to restrain at the ensuing Wakes, if not entirely to prevent, drunkenness, gambling, quarreling and fighting" (BamG), while a later writer, in a tract written in Rochdale about 1870, says:

no young woman, fit to be a wife, would ever think for a moment about having for a husband any young man that would degrade himself by putting on a fool's dress, and go shouting, singing, grawling, swearing, drinking, and often fighting, through the public streets. (AshD).

It should not be supposed from this that all Morris dancers were necessarily drunken brawlers, but they were undoubtedly, and with reason, regarded as one of the more riotous elements of the Wakes festivities, and those whose concern it was to keep the peace were certainly not sorry to see the last of them.

The combined effect of these various factors so weakened the tradition of Morris dancing in the North-West that by 1900 many teams had died out, and of those that remained, few were able to withstand the shock of the Great War and the changes that it brought with it.

THE CARNIVAL MORRIS

After the war, very few of the men's teams met regularly. They would get up a team for a special occasion, but it became increasingly difficult to recruit dancers.

In the absence of sufficient men, new troupes arose, consisting of young boys, girls, or a mixture of boys and girls. These troupes were often taught by men who had danced before the war, and often by the former leader. At Hayfield, for example, teams of boys were trained by former dancers in the early twenties and again in 1928, while at Clitheroe, Mr. Chris Winkley, leader of the pre-war men's team, trained a troupe of girls in 1920 and appeared with them as late as 1935.

Not all the new teams were, however, so firmly rooted in the older tradition. At Knutsford there was formed in about 1918 a girls' troupe--later mixed--which based its dance on what it remembered from seeing the Peover men dance at Knutsford May festival before the war. The girls who trained this team added figures of their own, and in the years following taught the resultant dance to many other newly formed troupes(5), who no doubt

passed it on again to others. Indeed, it is probable that most of the troupes now dancing are in some way descended from this so-called "Cranford" team.

These teams which were formed after the war were not the first girls' troupes in the area--there was, for example, a flourishing one at Middleton Junction in 1911--but it was at this time, about 1920-1930, that girls' troupes became preponderant in the North-West and began to evolve their own form of the dance. Unfortunately the judges appointed by the carnival organizations have for a long time favoured the style adopted by the "Cranford" team and its descendants, so that those troupes which continued to dance as they had been taught by the men were penalized in competitions. As a result, they have had either to conform or to disband, and the Carnival Morris has thus almost entirely lost touch with its traditional roots.

The Carnival Morris of today is a form of highly competitive display performed over a wide area stretching from Lancashire down into Staffordshire and across into North Wales. The performers are almost always girls, and dance in white gym-shoes. Some teams wear an elaborate military-type uniform, but the more usual costume is a white blouse worn with a coloured skirt or pinafore dress, with perhaps a coloured sash. In each hand, instead of the traditional "sling" or "molly", they hold a "shaker" or "shillelagh". This is a bundle of narrow strips of crepe paper bound together in the middle to form a hand grip, and spreading out in a fuff at each end, the whole being about 18 in. long. The dancers advance in two files, headed by their leader. Using either a skipping or 4/3 step, in which the body is kept rigid, the knees raised high, and the free foot pointed stiffly towards the ground, they execute various figures. In the early days, these figures were clearly recognizable as having been taken from the dance formerly performed by men, but the tendency nowadays is to discard the traditional figures, which are considered too simple, and to replace them by more grandiose evolutions. The result is a dance in which the individual performer has a minimum of skills to master and can therefore devote her whole attention to keeping exactly in the position allotted her by the troupe's trainer. This produces a display which can be quite spectacular, but is stilted and very slow, and shows little trace of the older Morris.

COSTUME

The North-West Morris is probably the most colourful of English dances. The dance itself is simple, but the elaborate costumes, together with the large number of dancers that take part, provide a show well able to hold its own among large crowds in noisy streets.

The typical costume consisted(6) of a white shirt with diagonal sashes, breeches, and clogs. The breeches were usually of plush, either black or blue (though occasionally red or purple), and were often decorated with zig-zag patterns of braid down the seam, and with ribbons and bells at the knee. At Ashton, Failsworth, Mossley, Oldham and Royton, the breeches did not clasp the leg below the knee, but were loose, the edge being decorated with a fringe of lace or crochet work. Occasionally, as at Glossop, Hayfield, Middleton and Stalybridge, trousers were worn, but this must have been a fairly late development. Where the costume did include trousers,

they were always dark, and usually decorated round the bottom with braid. Stockings were usually white, though occasionally coloured.

The shirt was invariably white, and over it were worn one or two diagonal sashes, red and blue being favourite colours, though occasionally tartan sashes were worn, notably at Middleton, which was a centre of tartan silk weaving. At Ashton, Mossley, Oldham, Royton and possibly Stalybridge, the shirt front was decorated in addition with strings of beads hung round the neck, and fastened across the chest with safety-pins or brooches, while further decoration was often provided by rosettes, ribbons and medals.

On the head was worn a straw hat--sometimes a bowler--profusely bedecked with artificial flowers, which might completely hide the hat itself. Graham (GraM), for example, reproduces a photograph of the Middleton dancers wearing hats fully a foot high. The much-quoted practice of giving a prize for the best decorated hat seems to have been fairly common. Another form of hat that is found in the area is the velvet cap, which is much like a school cap decorated with ribbons and a tassel. This must have been a late development, and it is not mentioned in early accounts. The Mossley dancers, for example, changed from flowered hats to caps some time between 1880 and 1903.

Clogs were almost always worn.(7) They were narrow-toed clogs of the type usually worn on Sundays, and were decorated with "crimping" (incised patterns), brass nails and eyelets, and sometimes pearl buttons. Bells were often attached to the laces, which were sometimes coloured.

There is reason to believe that at one time handkerchiefs were waved by the dancers, as in the Cotswold Morris, for several older accounts mention them (e.g. KemG, ChaM), but in living memory they have been used only at Abram, where the dance was in any case not typical.(8) The objects more recently used are of two types, both of them very characteristic of the North-West Morris. Around Oldham, and at Middleton, flexible "slings" were used.(9) These are pieces of cotton warp about 12 in. long tied in one or two places with ribbon, and are swung at head or shoulder height in time to the music. Elsewhere, a more rigid version--variously known as mollies, tassels, tiddlers, throw-ups or tittle-eras--were used. These comprise a central core about 10 in. long made of rope, wood (sometimes cotton spindles), or, at Hayfield, corks, which is covered with spiral or plaited ribbons; at one end is a loop for the wearer's wrist, while at the other about 8 in. of ribbon is left hanging free. The molly is held at one end and waved above the head.(10)

It may well be that both the flexible slings and the more rigid mollies developed from the earlier handkerchief, which might either be bound with ribbon or embellished with one or more bows. This suggestion is supported by the fact that a photograph of an Oldham team taken in 1907 (HowC) shows some dancers with slings, and another holding what appears to be a handkerchief spirally bound with ribbon - an object midway between the flexible sling and the spirally bound stick. The Transition from handkerchief to sling is suggested by the nineteenth-century account of the dancers from Hurst, near Ashton, who carried "two large white cotton handkerchiefs, or cloths, tightly rooled up and tied round at intervals with ribbons".(11)

MUSIC

The music to which the North-West Morris was danced was on the same lavish scale as the costume and the number of performers. Where possible, the music was always provided by a band, consisting of two to four concertinas, one or two drums, and sometimes a flute. In big processions a full brass band would often be used. Indeed, in 1907 the dancers of Hayfield even took the band on tours round neighbouring villages until the bandsmen decided that the effort was too much for them and refused to continue.

We do not propose to discuss here in any detail the tunes used, and would refer those interested to GilJ. To complete the picture, however, it should be mentioned that only two tunes are universal and specifically connected with the dance: "Long Morris" and "Cross Morris" (both of which are given in full by GilJ, GraM and KarB).

"Long Morris", which is a variant of the tune to which the processional dances of Helston, Tideswell, Winster, etc., are performed, is used for the body of the dance, together with a large number of popular tunes such as "The Girl I Left Behind Me", "Ninety-Five", "The British Grenadiers", "Cock o' the North", etc.

"Cross Morris", which has a different, slower rhythm, is used exclusively for the final figure where there is one (see details of figures).

CHARACTERS

In living memory, the only places where additional characters have accompanied the dancers(12) are Abram (two Fools, King and Queen), Lymm ("Female", who was also leader), Holmes Chapel ("Female") and Stalybridge ("Female"). Earlier references to a Fool or "Female" are frequent, and occur throughout the nineteenth century. Of the two, the "Female" is the more common; indeed, some writers use the term "Fool" to describe this character.

The "Female" (known locally as Besom Bet, Dirty Bet or Dirty Molly) was a man grotesquely dressed as a woman, with shabby clothes and soot-smearred face. He often wore or jingled horse bells, and carried a broom or mop, or sometimes a wooden ladle. Some accounts of early nineteenth-century Morris mentions a Maid Marion or a shepherdess under a green bower, but by the end of the century there is no trace of any but the grotesque Besom Bet.

While the hobby-horse is common in some parts of the area, particularly in Cheshire, there is no evidence that it has ever been connected with the Morris.

THE DANCE

We will discuss first the typical North-West Morris, and then go on to consider those dances that do not follow the standard pattern.

The analysis which follows is based only on those versions, twenty-one in number, of which we have a complete, or nearly complete, notation. Fortunately, however, these come from places distributed over most of the area

in which the North-West Morris is known to have flourished, so they may be assumed to give a fairly accurate picture of the tradition as a whole.

The versions, a list of which is given below, all follow the same general pattern, and vary principally in the choice of figures and in the details of steps and arm movements. It must be stressed that there is nothing immutable about the choice of figures, or the order in which they are danced. The leader decides what figures he wants to perform, and signals his intention to the team. He is limited only by his repertoire of figures.

The dance is, as we have seen, a processional, normally performed while moving down the street in two files with the leader at the head. For mainly of the figures the dancers work in groups of four, so that while there is no limit to the number of dancers in a team, it must be a multiple of four; in practice, eight to twenty-four is the usual range. As the dancers move along, the slings or mollies are swung in time to the music, usually both together, but singly if one arm is otherwise occupied. The details of these movements vary greatly from place to place and need not concern us here.

The figures used in the typical North-West Morris are limited in number, and are all quite simple. They vary in detail from one team to another, but the general pattern is fairly uniform. The most commonly used figures are the following:

1. Step Up. This forms the basis of forward movement. It consists generally of four forward steps done in a lilting walk, with a spring on the third, the free foot being swung up forwards. If no forward progress is required, the step is repeated as a kind of refrain between other figures.

Sometimes the backward movement comes first, in which case the figure is known as "Fall Back".

2. Step & Turn. In this, the dancers face their partners, do some stepping on the spot (generally some kind of sidestep or polka) and turn single; this is usually repeated. The figure is general performed in conjunction with the Step Up as a refrain.

The mollies are often crossed and uncrossed in front of the body during the stepping, and the figure is sometimes known as "Sticks and Turn".

3. Cross Partners or Cross Mollies. The two files advance towards each other and cross over. When this is done on the move, the dancers face up the street; when dancing on the spot they face partners.

4. Corners. Performed in groups of four. The corners cross, and usually cross back again. Sometimes one pair of corners crosses first, sometimes all four dancers move together.

5. Centre Partners. A "swing partners" movement, save that strictly speaking there is no swing: the dancers simply put one hand to the centre, molly pointing upwards, and dance round, waving the other hand in the air. Usually back with the other hand.

6. Centre or Fours. As the previous figure, but in fours (i.e., hands across without holding hands).

7. Outsides. Top dancers cast out and dance down the outside of the set and up the middle, followed by their file.

8. Insides. As outsides, but in reverse: top dancers turn inwards, dance down the middle and up the outside, followed by their file.

9. Cross the Morris. A finale movement. It stands out from the rest of the dance in being done more slowly, nearly always to the tune of "Cross Morris". It is the only part of the dance that is specifically connected with a particular tune. The dancers cross slowly with their partners and face, cross back, then perhaps do a Step & Turn, and all face up.

Other simple figures were occasionally used by individual teams, but do not warrant a place in a general description of the dance.

Except where otherwise indicated, the above figures are usually danced with either a polka step (in which the free leg is generally crossed over), a lilting walk, or a smooth skipping step in which the feet scarcely leave the ground. In some versions the same step is used throughout, while in others different steps may be used in different parts of the dance.

Footnotes

[1] At Ashton there were at least three, and in Oldham five or more.

[2] Information from Jimmy Coleman.

[3] E.g., Teams from Mossley and Ashton both visited Blackpool.

[4] For explanation of these symbols see list of sources below.

[5] Between 1924 and 1930, three members of the Cranford team alone trained new troupes at Alderley Edge, Altrincham, Aughton (near Ormskirk, Lancs.), Morley (near Wilmslow) and Mobberley. (HowC)

[6] The following notes on costume, as also most of the dance notations discussed later, relate to the period c. 1880-1914.

[7] Colne, Godley Hill, Hayfield, Leyland and Stalybridge are exceptions.

[8] At Lymm and Outrington the dancers carried strips of fustian about a yard long.

[9] Probably also at Hurst, near Ashton, c. 1832? (BowA), and perhaps at St. Helens (HamC).

[10] A few teams used double-ended mollies which were held in the middle.

[11] Aaron Miller of Hurst, probably writing c. 1830-50 (BowA).

[12] Although strictly speaking the dancers should perhaps be said to accompany the characters, there is no doubt that during the period covered by this survey the characters played a subsidiary role.

Details of Sources Referred To

- AshD--John Ashworth: Jimmy the Rushcart Drawer (Rochdale, n.d.)
- BamD--Samuel Bamford: Early Days (1848-9), p. 155.
- BamG--Samuel Bamford: article in Manchester Guardian, 9.8.1858.
- BenC--Bernard Bentley: MS collection.
- BowA--Winifred Bowman: 5,000 Acres of Old Ashton (1948), p. 29.
- ChaM--S. Chadwick: Reminiscences of Mottram, Ashton-under-Lyne, n.d. (c. 1900?).
- DouD--Leta M. Douglas: Three More Dances of the Yorkshire Dales, (Giggleswick, 1934).
- GarC--G. B. Gardiner: MS collection (Vaughan Williams Library).
- GilJ--A. G. Gilchrist: "The Lancashire Rushcart & Morriss Dance" (JEPDS, 1927).
- GraM--John Graham: Lancashire and Cheshire Morris Dances (London, 1911).
- HamC--F. B. Hamer: MS collection.
- HawE--Leslie Haworth: "Notes on Some Recent Morris Dance History" (ED&S, xx, 5, May 1956, 158-9).
- HelJ--A. Helm and M. Karpeles: "The Lymm (Cheshire) Morris Dance" (JEPDSS, 1951).
- HowC--Daniel Howison: MS collection.
- KarB--Maud Karpeles: The Lancashire Morris Dance (London, 1930).
- KarC--Maud Karpeles: MS Collection
- KarJ--Maud Karpeles: "The Abram Morris Dance" (JEPDSS, 1932)
- KemG--F. A. Kemble: Record of a Girlhood (1878), ii, p. 185.
- PilC--Julian Pilling: MS collection (also in HowC).
- PotM--Louisa Potter: Lancashire Memories (1879), p. 53.



MORRIS: WHERE TO NEXT?
an essay by David Stryker

A lot of people ask me where the morris comes from. I'd like to ask where it is going. Morris dancing has undergone a huge revival in this country, England, Canada, and Australia. Most of the morris teams in this country were started in the last ten years. After lying dormant for years in folk clubs it was finally brought out into the open by a few individuals with foresight and vision. Little did they expect to see such a huge resurgence of the tradition. Today we have morris teams all over the place. In New England and on the east coast, you can hardly go anywhere without tripping over a club or individuals who have danced the morris. In the past few years, I have traveled to a number of different places and seen the types of morris performed elsewhere. When I see the way the dances and spirit of the morris are presented, I get very scared. I ask myself "is this where it's all going?"

I think what I'd like to talk about is the actual presentation of the morris to an audience. I don't want to talk about the "right way" but would like to present some thoughts about performance. Our goal is to better understand the morris and ultimately to present it in a way that can help us keep the heritage and traditions of the past while at the same time recognizing that part of us which makes the American morris what it is.

The morris to me is a ritual celebration of life. It is not mere folk dances, but a way of conveying through the dance the realities of the physical world around us, the changing seasons, life, death and rebirth. As morris dancers are the ones who are conveying this to the public at large, the public's understanding of these rituals is made possible by the way we present them. When we are uninformed, confused, or satisfied with mediocrity, the audience is confused and will not know what to make of all these people jumping about with bells on. It is our responsibility to acquaint ourselves with just what it is we are doing and the feeling we want to convey. We are in the eye of the public every time we perform. It behooves us to present the morris in the best way we can so that the audience can understand and feel good about what it is we are doing (not to mention feeling good about dropping green leafy pictures of presidents into the upturned hat.

Picture, if you will, a small grassy area, well traveled. A morris group walks up and starts dancing. A crowd gathers. The dancers dance. The dancers not dancing hang around in a group laughing and playing. After 5 or 6 dances, someone presents a mumbled speech for money and the dancers leave to do the same thing elsewhere. What's wrong with this picture?

First, there is no interaction with the audience. It presents rather a scene of "us" vs. "them". It really helps the audience to feel like they are part of us and we are folks just like they are. As interpreters of the tradition we should stroll around not with hat in hand but just to stand next to people in the audience so that they might ask questions or examine our kits a little more closely. I've met some great old people that used to dance in school as children. If I didn't walk around and talk with them they would never have gotten the chance to tell me about their old memor-

ies. To borrow a phrase from Powdermilk Biscuits, the morris should help shy people get up and do the things that need to be done. It's tough dancing in public and it's even harder to make speeches or talk among the crowd because you lose your anonymity. It takes practice but it is necessary. Handing out flyers is great but you should also talk with the audience.

Think of the worst dance your team has ever performed in public. What was wrong? Nine times out of ten it was because the people dancing had not practiced enough or were too inexperienced. It takes lots of time to develop grace and style individually and in a group. It is the Foreman's responsibility not merely to teach the dances but to instill a sense of meaning. With this sense, an individual may discover within his own heart the feeling that should be conveyed and so put 100% energy into the dances. This is what makes the magic of the morris.

"When he is dancing the true Morris Man os serious of countenance yet gay of heart, vigorous yet restrained; a strong man rejoicing in his strength, yet graceful, controlled and perfectly dignified withal."

Cecil Sharp

Where do you perform the morris? Should it be danced on small village greens, parks and busy tourist spots, OR, deserted ballparks, shopping malls and parking lots? Morris should be danced where people are more inclined to WATCH you. At shopping malls, people are there to shop, not to watch dancing. Crowds such as this turn over every 2 or 3 minutes. A captive audience in a busy tourist spot, at a village fair, etc. will stay and throw money. The more beautiful your surroundings, the better you look to your audience.

Have you ever seen any of those teams that wear really battered hats, grungy whites, ribbons and stuff that were so faded and ratty they had to be about 5 or 6 years old, and odd shapes and styles of basketball sneakers? It's really great to look the part. Sometimes people will ask you about your kit: "Hey do the whites really stand for the purity of the dance?" Some kind of crisp, neat uniformity in kits makes you feel better when you're out there. It is a strange feeling to be embarrassed about the way you look in public and the public will see that. The public acceptance of you is based on your appearance. If you look like shit, they won't take you seriously. Do you know they make black sneakers now? My preference is for simplicity in kits. One team I know has a million and a half ribbons plastered all over themselves and I find this less attractive. A simple crisp neatness can do a lot for your image.

Have you ever been on a tour where someone insisted on playing a really out-of-the ordinary instrument? It drives me up the wall. I have a hard enough time dancing to and trying to hear fiddle and concertina. Recently I've experienced soprano sax, 12 string guitar, electric mandolin and really bad or too many drums. Morris music wasn't made to be played on these instruments or else it would sound better. I feel that morris tunes sound best played on simple country instruments, those found where the dances originated.

Not all the new instruments are bad but they have to be played in a way that is danceable. I came across one team that used flute and harmonica with banjo accompaniment and this worked fine. The music is as much a part of the dance as the dancers and conveys the feeling of morris. Well played music is a joy and helps you dance better. Encourage your musicians as much as you would a dancer who needs improvement.

These are a few of the insights that I've had on the morris over the years. I share these not to insult but to point out ways that all of us around the continent can improve our presentation of the morris. The American morris has its roots in the English tradition of morris dancing. In order to survive we need to set up traditions of our own. All over the continent I hear that recruiting new members is difficult if not impossible. By making ourselves better we also make ourselves more attractive to those who might consider joining our teams.

In closing, I cannot stress enough the fact that although we dance the morris for ourselves and derive much energy from it, it is our duty to convey this magical energy to the public at large. Without them we are only folk dance clubs.

PERUSING THE PERIODICALS

As previously noted in the General News section, there have been recently some new publications of interest to morris dancers. Again, these include the very useful Introductory Bibliography on Morris Dancing by Mike Heaney, Roy Dommett's value laden Morris Notes and Bert Cleaver's Fieldtown and Sherburne dance interpretations. In addition to those mentioned above, there has been a series of articles that have appeared in the last 18 months which deserve attention by U.S. and Canadian readers.

Part of being a full member of the English Folk Dance and Song Society is the benefit of receiving the "Folk Music Journal" in addition to "English Dance and Song". Both the 1985 (Volume 5, No. 1) and 1986 (Volume 5, No. 2) have contained excellent articles relating to the Morris. The 1985 edition carries Philip Heath-Coleman's "Forrest and Matachin: An assessment of John Forrest's 'Morris and Matachin' ". This article is the most comprehensive review of John Forrest's controversial treatise on the origin of Cotswold Morris.

John Forrest's basic premise is that current Cotswold morris is a direct descendant of the Spanish Matachin--a dance popular throughout Europe in the latter half of the sixteenth century. This analysis is accomplished by a choreometric model noting commonalities of "setting, dance group structure and composition, musicians, music, costume, individual body movements, group movements and social function." Heath-Coleman's disappointment with Forrest's work is not necessarily with the methodology used in the thesis, but rather with the narrowness of both its application and conclusions:

If, it seems that Forrest has used his model to prove a theory (morris dancing has its origins in matachin) rather than to solve a problem (what are the origins of morris dancing?), he himself provides the confirmation. In the last sentence of his introductory "History of Scholarship", he declares that the purpose of his study is to demonstrate "that the Cotswold morris is neither indigenous to England nor the remnant of an ancient fertility ritual, but that it is the direct descendant of the matachin, a European courtly dance" (p. 13).

To use his model in this way is to destroy its real value of course. It would have been sounder method for the author to apply his model indiscriminately to all forms of dance which were in a position to bear on Cotswold morris dancing, casting backwards and sideways for correspondences suggesting a genetic relationship (my emphasis--J.C.B.) (pp. 84-85).

This article is thorough in its review of Forrest's work and offers quite specific recommendations as to how the model could be developed to further investigate the full genetic code of the morris dance.

Dave Bathe's "Oddfellows and Morris Dancing in a Peak District Village" (1985, Volume 5., No. 1) is a detailed history and description of the Toddington Morris dance. The article sheds light in general, on the Derbyshire morris traditions of Toddington, Tideswell, Castleton and Winster with a detailed picture of the Toddington dance.

Performed on Whit Tuesday, the Oddfellows lodge of Toddington provided the dancers for the processional from the 19th century to the 1930's when it last appeared. The article outlines the history of the dance, how the information was collected and how the dance was reconstructed. The music and basic instruction is included.

Another lesser known dance tradition is presented in the 1986 issue of "Folk Music Journal". Theresa Buckland's "The Tunstead Mill Nutters of Rossendale, Lancashire" is an historical account of the Rossendale tradition of the Britannia Coco-Nut Dancers, one of the most unusual of all seasonal morris traditions.

Performed at Easter, the dance is comprised of eight black-faced men, dressed in clogs, white socks, black velvet breeches and a black long-sleeved sweater over which is worn a white "kilt" highlighted by red horizontal stripes. Their dances fall into two categories: garland dances and a coconut dance "in which they tap out a rhythm with circular pieces of wood attached to the hands, knees and waist.

The current Britannia Coco-Nut Dancers from Bacup acquired their knowledge of the tradition from the Tunstead Mill Nutters in the early 1920's. It is this latter, original group of dancers that Ms. Buckland describes. Theresa Buckland has written several articles recently about morris traditions in the northwestern region of England. The article is well worth obtaining.

TEAM NEWS

The Albemarle Morris Men danced out for "Morris Aid" (see AMN Vol.10, no.2 p.) on Sunday, September 7th. Dave Anderson wrote to say "we danced after church to the delight of the congregation and a 75 year old woman celebrating her birthday. We raised \$80 on the spot...and managed to make it a total of \$120 by the end of the day."

A letter was received from John Vivian after not hearing from him in a couple of years. John wrote to say "Contrary to rumour, The Men of Houston are alive and well". AMN welcomes the side back into the known world. If any reader of this newsletter knows of any other lost morris side, do please let us know especially since the annual directory is being updated during the next trimester.

The news from Toronto came via John Mayberry. He recounted the origins of the recently formed Toronto Morris Men. The side is the composite of "...some of the Green Fiddle Morris Men (still extant as a mixed side) and some men from Hogtown Men (now defunct)." Longborough, Brackley and Hogtown are the group's performing traditions.

AMN will be starting a "Morris Column" in the CDSS News. The purpose of the column is to broaden the information concerning morris activities to a wider audience. If any side has an event, team news, message, etc. to the country dance community at-large, please mail the editors information by December 1 (for January publication), April 1 (for May publication), and August 1 (for September publication). Should more material warrant an expansion, the column will grow to include all of CDSS's six issues.

BLUEMONT MORRIS, NORTHERN VIRGINIA

I thought I'd bring you up-to-date with the continued history of Bluemont Morris, which I can do without fear of contradiction, holding no current position of authority in that august organization. Bluemont Morris is composed of a men's side dancing homegrown dances in the style of Sherborne and Longborough, a women's side dancing Sherborne and Ilmington, and a raggletaggle, which I think might be the correct collective noun for our mummer and sword crew. Bluemont is wrapping up its tenth year of dancing, held the seventh annual Bluemont Ale the first weekend in October, and is slouching toward the birth of a sixth year of mummery. So much for the raw stats. Despite periodic depressions, morale is high and we are enjoying a men's side of largely experienced dancers and a women's side scant but sufficient (Tony Barrand may say what he will about the non-relationship of morris and fertility but our women have been decimated by pregnancy).

The exciting issues for us, as we enter some sort of Morris middle age, have been the question of dancing mixed or separate, how to deal with recruitment and varying needs for quality, kit change, and an ongoing groping to understand our role in a far-flung rural community. Current resolutions include: dancing in separate sides to better accomodate our large men and smaller women, but socializing as one; trying to walk the thin line of teaching enough to new dancers to avoid becoming desperate while limiting who can represent Bluemont Morris dancing out to our best ...this is still a sticky point, with some feeling that our purpose is primarily to have fun and others feeling that they have fun only when we

dance well; kit change is recognized as a can of worms far easier to open than to get a lid back on but we are now happy again in our sharp new duds; at this point, not one of us lives in the town of Bluemont, and we are cast far and wide through the Northern Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania quadrant...we identify with the communities around Bluemont, though, and we are viewed as THE Morris Dancers when we appear. Some community functions would not be complete without us; others probably would but we are invited or show up anyway, and then there are the commercial gigs necessary to keep ourselves in the exorbitant style to which we wish to become accustomed...

We have a new squire, John Friant, P.O. Box 81, Berryville, Va. 22061 (and a new women's squire: Barbara Bearman), but the same foremen for men's and women's sides: Howard Bass and Leah Robinson. I 'organize' and write the play for the Christmas mummerations. We are fortunate to have John Friant on fiddle, Howard Bass on button box, and me on pipe and drum along with a few other more occasional musicians; what we now need is a team medic.

This year has been hard on ankles, knees, and digestive tracts, but we look forward to our future even though it be festooned with scaffolding and prosthetic devices.

D. Bearman, RD 4 Box 2000, Lebanon, PA 17042

PORTLAND MORRIS, PORTLAND, OREGON

Our side is now officially known as the Portland Morris, though we still sometimes answer to the name Rainy Capers, a trial that we've since discarded. The side was begun in 1981 by Dick Lewis and Sue Issacs, formed out of a group that were regularly attending their weekly English Country dance classes. We began with the Bampton tradition, and had the opportunity in those early days to host weekend workshops with the likes of Fred Breunig and Jim Morrison. Our practises at that time were in Shattuck Hall on the Portland State University campus.

Thought memory fails as to our first public performance, one of the early performances was before the general dance community at a Second Saturday contra dance, where we made a surprise appearance as the crowds were milling about. This show garnered us some new volunteers, and started the rumors of a mythical morris team in Portland. That first summer we continued to practise and occasionally danced at Saturday Market, a local weekly craft fair.

Late in the spring of '83, Dick and Sue bid us adieu when they went to Minneapolis for a year. Dick danced with the Minnesota Traditional Morris while Jan Chappell took over the reins of our Portland side, now meeting at the Metropolitan Learning Center. That fall saw Jan leave for Boston while I bumbled through the teaching chores for the side. To my relief, Edith Farrar began conducting the classes soon after. It was about this time that we began working on the Bidford tradition. Our standard season began to fill, including the Park Blocks Revels before Christmas, the Strawberry Hill May Festival on Bainbridge Island (as guests of the Seattle sides), and the Northwest Folklife Festival, also in Seattle.

Dick Lewis returned from Minnesota in time to attend the first Bainbridge Island Killer Ale, sponsored by the Mossy Backs of Seattle, but not in time for our first Half-Pint Ale, made memorable by a wild champagne debacle in Laurelhurst Park (including a champagne powered Drunk's March warming the crowds for Shakespeare in the Parks, and the first annual cross-Columbia swim). Soon after the Killer Ale, we began to add Adderbury to our repertoire.

As we became more devoted to our dancing, team members began showing up at dance camps and workshops in ever increasing numbers. We had a whole side turn out for the Mendocino English Dance week last year. Through the year we've worked on our Adderbury tradition while holding on to the Bidford dances we all know. We began a May Day dance at dawn on Council Crest last spring, while keeping the rest of the tight May schedule we'd engendered. Our numbers fluctuate between 6 and 10, with Edith being our sole musician. Through the fall we put together our first Christmas Revels, including a mummer's play and a dance of our own composition. The three performances were such a thrill that we proceeded to an unscheduled stop at a local English pub before calling it a night. Displaced from MLC, we have begun practising at the Skylark Studio, Wednesdays from 7-9 pm.

Robert Reed, Squire



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Members of the editorial staff include James Brickwedde and Lynn Madow Dennis.

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