How convenient that thirty inches of snow fell forcing me indoors to work on the Newsletter! The side I dance with, The Ramsey’s Braggarts, even had to cancel our tradition Halloween Night Tour because we were snowed out! Maybe this issue will even arrive early to people. I am a little loath of setting a new precedent, however. My professional schedule seems only to get more harried. I continue to apologize to those whose correspondence lies waiting for an answer. I will continue to keep pace as best as I can. Thank you for your patience.

This issue has two wonderful articles. Steve Corrsin from New York City has written about his experiences with longsword dancing on the European continent, specifically in Belgium. P.A.M. Borys completes her series of articles on the history of morris with an archival calendar listing of morris events over the centuries. Lots of letters and team news has also been received to make this a full issue indeed.

Enjoy the reading, Enjoy the winter season if you have one. Greetings for a New Year filled with dancing and friendship for all.

Admit, Reagent Series

As noted in the previous issue, one of the major changes in the format of A.M.N. is the addition of a reprint series featuring a major article on morris history or events. The first issue of that series should come to you the end of January or early February.
"To have massed dance or not to have massed dance (or something in between)?..."

Or "Is it a massed dance or messed up dancing (or something in between)?..."

those are the questions for the Spring Issue of AMN. The editors are inviting a few individuals to take a position on this matter but if you would like to add your 2¢ to the issue, send me your opinion. One qualifier, be brief!!! (That's 2¢ worth not 5¢ worth of writing! Postage not included.)

What AMN is asking for are your thoughts on the role massed dancing may, or may not, play in a presentation to an audience and/or to the assembled morris dancers themselves. (Processionals and Recessionals are not included specifically in this discussion.) How do you select massed dances for an event? Are they always the same dances? or does each event call for a completely new repertoire? Are four or five massed dances on the list? or are there eleven or thirteen as does occur in places? If mass dances have been dropped from tour schedules, what was the rationale behind the decision? What has the impact of massed dances been on new sides or new dancers present at such events?

Mail me your concise pearls of wisdom by March 1, 1992. Your name and side should be listed. All opinions must be civil in its content. If entries are handwritten, please be legible. Thank you.

For Sale
The Putney Morris Men have eight brown bowlers (derbys) for sale. Perfect for a new mom's side, these are all brand new, in assorted sizes (3 XL, 4 L, 1 M). They had bought out the inventory of a local store many years ago. With a recent kit change, the inventory must go.

If interested, please contact Fred Breunig, RR1 Box 40, Putney, VT 05346 for price and shipping arrangement. (Daytime phone 802-387-4000 or FAX 802-387-4001.

The Berea Christmas Country Dance School will be held December 26 through January 1. Among the full listing of dance and singing workshops are sessions in Rapper, Cotswold, Border and Garland dancing. Dance staff includes John Ramsey (Berea), Joan Shaver (Ashgrove Garland Dancers), Sylvia Forber (Old Castle Morris), and Brad Foster (CDSS Director). Tuition is $115; Meals
and lodging vary depending upon arrangements. For further information contact: Berea College Recreation Extension, CPO Box 287, Berea, KY 40404 or telephone 606-986-9341 ext 5143.

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You are hereby invited to attend The 7th Minnesota Midwinter Sword and Mumming Ale, held on the weekend of 11-12 January 1992. The ale will include touring on Saturday to post-holiday shopping crowds, a potluck dinner followed by dancing/singing/drinking/etc. Sunday, a brunch will be served (cost $3) followed by more possible singing/dancing/etc. Cost (excluding brunch) for this extravaganza? Absolutely free -- just haul your buttons out here to the frozen wastelands of the North. Hospitality provided by local enthusiasts. Want more information? Contact Ted Hodapp at 612-489-0205, or by Email: "thodapp@hamline.edu".

Letters to the Editor

Australian Video Swap

Dear AMN, MY name is Brian Antuar and I am a morris dancer with the 'Jolley Hatters Hobart Morris Dancers' in Tasmania, Australia. I am currently Foreman of our side. Due to our isolation it is very difficult to mix with other sides and exchange ideas. However, over the past three years I have collected a large amount of video footage of Australian sides which I am willing to swap for videos of American sides. I am aware that Australian and America have different TV formats, but I can get American videos converted in Hobart. Interested persons should write to me at the address below. Thank you.

Brian Antuar, G.P.O. Box 283C, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001, Australia

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Ale Computer Database Project

Dear AMN, On the 1991 Labour Day weekend, the Morris dancers of Victoria hosted their second Ale, H'Ale! Victoria, a big affair with 12 visiting teams and about 150 participants. The organizing took many hours of work during the preceding year by about two dozen people on various sub-committees.
Several of us used computer facilities for various kinds of work on the Ale: spreadsheets for the budget, for a team registration control schedule, for the list of registrants, and for tour and local transport planning; an accounting program for the bookkeeping; and word-processing for communications and for all sorts of other documents. This saved us a lot of time. We could have used computer facilities more effectively if we had planned for them from the first, instead of turning to them piecemeal as the needs became apparent. Also, we didn’t use database software; yet the record-keeping for an Ale is clearly a database application: teams, with contacts, addresses, telephones, traditions, registration information; individual registrants, with T-shirt sizes, diet, arrival routes and times; Committee members; other people and organizations (cameramen, sponsors, media, bus companies, etc.)

Although we didn’t borrow any ideas from other Morris people about using computers, we can’t be the first ones to try to computerize an Ale. So it should be possible to create a better Ale computer system through an exchange of ideas. I am now thinking about putting together a general-purpose Morris Ale Management Application (MAMA) computer system, to distribute to teams on diskette (including on-disk help files), to run on IBM-compatible PCs, and probably using shareware (freely copyable programs).

I should like to hear from interested people: anyone who has already done it (perhaps they would be willing to make their systems available to other teams?); those with a wish list of features they would like to see included; and those who are willing to test the first version. In the next AMN I hope to report developments.

Please write: David Winn, c/o Pacific Morris Dance Society, 1516 Winchester Road, Victoria, B.C. Canada V8N 2B5
Kelly Lafon has experienced a sudden cancellation. Like fellow cartoonist Bill Wisniewski, she's taking a vacation. So Paris will just hang out here for now, waiting to be back in action in the Spring issue of AAMF.
Most North American moms and sword dancers think of sword dancing as an English ritual style; or at least British, if Papa Stour in the Shetlands, far to the north, is considered. In fact, records of linked sword dancing have been found in most countries of western, central, and northern Europe. The earliest documentary evidence comes from present-day Belgium, from the late 14th century. The first references from the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and France date from the 15th century, and those from Portugal, Switzerland, Austria, Romania, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, and Scotland, from the 16th. The oldest information from England is from the 17th and 18th centuries. Italy has provided definite citations only since the start of the 20th century. The recorded history of European styles of linked sword dance — also called "chain" or "hilt-and-point" sword dances, those wherein the swords, or sword-like implements such as English rappers, are used primarily to connect the dancers — is rich and varied.

In March, 1991, I was able to visit Antwerp, Belgium, to watch the local sword dance team perform. This is "Lange Wapper" — the name refers to a local legend — of which I had heard from Trevor Stone, publisher of the English sword dance "occasional broadsheet," Rattle Up, My Boys. Every year since 1970, on the Sunday halfway through Lent, Lange Wapper has performed in the square in front of the city Cathedral (the "Handschoenmarkt," or Glove Market). "Half-Lent" was a traditional local holiday, almost always in March, featuring parades and festivities. Lange Wapper has often sometimes hosted foreign dance teams, but this year the only other team was their boys' side. In past years, the Grenoside sword team from England has visited them, or groups from Bagnasco in northern Italy or Strani in Moravia (central Czechoslovakia).

The weather on Sunday, March 10, was beautiful; it was unusually mild and clear for Belgium in early spring, a perfect day to dance. The team assembled at about 7:30 AM in a local club, "De Hopack," a few blocks from the Cathedral. They then marched in procession, accompanied by drummers, bagpipers, and the rest of their musicians. The dancers wore white blouses, jeans, and shoes. They had bells attached to their belts, and strings of bells at their knees — this last idea came from an engraving by H. Cock showing Flemish sword dancers at a fair, ca. 1560, after a lost drawing by the Antwerp artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder (d. 1569). Many of the dancers also wore medallions around their necks; bronze for
five years' dancing, silver for ten, and gold for fifteen. Their swords are specially made, over four feet long, heavy and blunt; they weigh considerably more than CDSS/EFDSS "standard issue." They are modelled on dance swords kept in a museum in the nearby town of Tongeren, which French invaders had confiscated from local dancers in the 1790s. Even the swords used by the boys' team are somewhat longer and heavier than British or North American dancers would be accustomed to.

The procession came to a halt in the square in front of the Cathedral. It is one of the largest cathedrals in northern Europe, and provides an awesome backdrop for the performance. The cobblestone square in the heart of the old city is ringed with shops and restaurants. The boys' team danced first, within a circle formed by the men. All the boys — six dancers and a fool — appeared to be nine to eleven years old. Their dance was brief but effective; it was essentially an abbreviated and simplified version of the men's dance, with two fiddlers playing a traditional Flemish tune.

The Lange Wapper sword dance was choreographed by the group's leader, Renaat van Craenenbroeck. The dance has undergone a number of changes over the years. The individual figures, steps, and tunes have various origins, but they come together to make a harmonious and dramatic whole. Lange Wapper has consistently followed the principle of using its dances and performances in Flemish music, dance, and culture. Parts of the sword dance were inspired by the engraving mentioned earlier, the first flier advertising the sword dance, in 1771, even refers to it as "(Boogel's sword dance"); some steps and figures come from a regional linked stick dance, the " unarmed" or "unhurled" dance, which is believed to be derived from older sword dances; and parts of the dances come from descriptions of the late medieval and modern sword dances from elsewhere in western Europe. The choreographer's own creative imagination has played a role as well. The dance, therefore, should be classed as a reconstruction based solidly on local tradition and history.

The dance lasts about twenty minutes. It has a solemn and measured feel, and is a mix of moving figures and set scenes or subplots. There are eleven sword dancers plus a fool, who is dressed in a blue and yellow outfit. Some years a hobby horse has also been present. It full appears from hand to hand before this year's performance, but the team hopes to revive it before next year's performance. Despite the presence of these characters, the dance features no spoken drama or verses.
With eleven dancers and four-foot swords, the set covers quite a bit of ground. The dance starts with each man, in turn, edging the lead dancer, who is standing in the middle of the circle of six sword dancers. After some steps in place, the dancers link up and move around the circle. They go under the lead dancer’s raised sword, and thus pass from the first circle into a new one. The first dramatic moment comes in the dance, when the “knocking bridge” figure; in this, all eleven dancers linked, with swords linked, in two lines, with the leader in the middle holding the set together. They hold the pose and the audience invariably makes use of the photo opportunity. The dancers then unlinked the set and move back into the round.

Another dramatic moment comes with the “double star” figure. Six dancers move clockwise around the circle, with their swords making a six-pointed star around the leader. He has made a five-pointed star with his own sword and three of the other four dancers, who move counterclockwise around the outside of the entire set. After the leader displays this five-pointed star, all dancers take their swords, link up again, and go back into moving figures.

Throughout the dance, the foot (this year there were two, as the boys’ team’s foot who took part in the men’s dance) has been pacing around the set, sometimes within it, for example in the “kneeling bridge.” Towards the end of the dance, he is lifted into the middle of the ring and stabbed by the leader. This is variously explained as representing the victory of summer over winter, good over evil, or order over chaos. Whatever it means, the foot is carried off and the dancers proceed to interweave their swords, creating a strong and sturdy platform. The sword platform is used to hoist the ladies, who are holding the red-and-white Antwerp city banners. (Combining the weights of the lead dancer, the six swords, and the banner, we can figure that the dancers are supporting, with their arms fully extended, about 190 pounds total.) He unfurls the banner and waves it high over the set and the crowd. It is a very effective and dramatic climax for the dance. At the end, the leader is led down, and the dancers march off to “Don Hopack” as the drums beat and the bagpiper calls. They danced six rounds, between 8:30 AM and 10:00 PM. The audience grew throughout the day, till by the last performance a large crowd ignored the dances. Girls dressed in 17th century local costume collected money, passing through the crowd, calling out the names of the dancers.

The music had a powerful effect. The main tune is in a traditional Flemish one, the “Namcarden” (Foot’s jig) from the village of Muster. The instruments included hurdy-gurdies, bagpipes, and drums, plus an occasional fiddle, flute, clarinet, and guitar. More musicians joined through the day, with a peak of nineteen by the final performance.
Anmfou, Morris Newsletter

The term La Andat Half-Lent in the Carhedmill quarter every year since 1930. They are adamant that this is the only date and place for their full dance. They have presented both earlier versions of the sword dance, or other dances, on many other occasions. Hans Wegner and his sisters and leader, Remant van Cranenbergen, have played an important part in the post-war sword dance "revival" on the European continent. In 1965, the team was led gate at the Llangollen Festival in Wales. They have performed at English sword dance weekends as well. They have appeared at the Sanktade dance festival in Czechoslovakia in 1963 and 1968, winning first prizes in 1968; they have been recently invited in Japan. (When I was visiting, there was talk that they might be sent to Baltimore, which is one of Antwerp's "sister cities." No one thought that it was too likely, however.)

Before I outline the documented history of European sword dancing, a few words on regional history and politics will provide some context for dancing in Antwerp, Flanders, and the surrounding Low Countries. The historical region of Flanders includes much of present-day Belgium, the southern Netherlands, and a slice of the northern French coast. The main language is Dutch ("Netherlands"), though the distinct spoken in Flanders is different from the one in Holland. Antwerp, in northern Belgium near the Dutch border, for centuries has been one of the leading cities of the region, and has now one of the largest ports in all of Europe. In the late Middle Ages – 14th to 16th centuries – the Low Countries were among the richest, and most urban, regions of Europe. Cities such as Bruges, Antwerp, Ghent, and Amsterdam became great commercial centers, and flourished, and the rulers of France, Spain, and England competed for control of the region. After the brutal religious and civil wars of the late 16th and 17th centuries, most of Flanders remained under Spanish and later Austrian rule. These rules resulted in independence for the seven provinces that make up the Netherlands. The kingdom of Belgium was established only in 1830.

Nationalistic sentiment grew in Flanders in the first half of the 20th century. Belgium's population is about half Flemish (in the north), and half French (the "Wallonie," in the south). The French long dominated the entire country. In Flanders as in many other parts of Europe, the preservation and performance of historical folk music, dance, and song became a popular means of displaying patriotic or nationalistic sentiment. The ethnic rivalry which has troubled Belgium in our own century has quieted down in the last twenty years, as Flanders has gained in power. The Flemish and Walloons have reached a stalemate in their accommodation. The sense of the importance of maintaining local traditions, one of the chief factors behind sword dance research and revival in the Low Countries over the past half-century, remains strong.
Although in England sword dancing seems to have been at its most creative and popular (relatively speaking) in the 19th century, the related styles on most parts of the continent declined after the 17th century. The earliest references from the continent (late 16th-early 17th centuries) typically are cited archival references, payments, prohibitions, or permissions. They cite sword dances ("scheintanz," "danses de espadas,"" speletten ..., met wraeders"); nonmally on a major public holiday, especially Shrovetide or Carnival, or Corpus Christi, or during royal visits. The documents show that in many towns and places it was a chiefly urban performance style, often presented by members of local craft guilds, but sometimes by professional players, or simply by "young men." In Flanders in the 15th and 16th centuries, it was common for dancers from villages and small towns to perform in larger towns and cities (presumably because the pay was better). In fact, the first known references from anywhere in Europe come from the Flanders airport city of Brussels, at Shrovetide, 1389: "Binnen ghedonct bi bevolcke van borgmeesters des scijpelten speletende waertavonde schey de stede met wraeders (ijt. s. b.) d. groot somme li. x." ("They composed on the order of the mayor to the boaters (or tailors) performing with swords about the city on Shrove Tuesday, 4 shillings a piece. Sum 31 shillings.").

In the 16th century, the references to sword dancing explode in number, especially in the Low Countries and the mostly German-speaking lands that made up the Holy Roman Empire. Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Scotland are also represented, as are Portugal, Denmark, and the Kingdom of Hungary. The reports from German cities provide the most detail. The first picture-like scene, from Flanders, Germany, and Switzerland. There are fewer references from most of Europe in the 17th-18th centuries, though many reports come from such scattered regions as Bohemia, Moravia, Hungarian-ruled Slovakia, Austria, southeastern France, and northern Spain.

The oldest known British citations are from Scottish cities -- Perth and Edinburgh -- in 1599-1603. The documentary history of the style in England begins quite late, despite the creativity of northern English sword dancers in the 19th and 20th centuries. The first reliable cluster of definite references yet known appear in the late 17th or early 18th century. A few isolated commentaries from the first from 1640, may refer to earlier sword dances, but they are vague at best, and should not regarded as confirmed sightings. The history of sword dancing in Britain is less well known than in the Low Countries or Germany. The assumptions that bold prevailed -- that English sword dancing had medieval Norse origins (almost no evidence exists for sword dancing in Denmark or Norway), or that sword (and morris) dances were fragmentary survivals of "ancient rites," slowed the development of serious historical research into sword dancing in Britain.
An obvious question to ask is this: can sword dance material from the European continent be a source of ideas for North American dancers? My answer would be, definitely, yes. We need not feel limited to Yorkshire longsword, northeastern rapper, plus Papa Stour, repertoire. Sword dance styles from Britain are closely related to styles from continent — this is clear, even though the exact nature of the relationship ("cousin" or "offspring," and the shape of the "family tree") is not. The dances from the continent are distinct enough from the British ones to give the feeling of something different. I might add that the continental sword dance "revival" of the 20th century has borrowed many ideas from Britain. This has been the case in the Low Countries, and evidently Germany and Scandinavia as well. Perhaps the most striking example of this is emphasis on the display of locked swords, which has been a key characteristic of British dances. It appeared only rarely on the continent before the publication and dissemination of Cecil Sharp's Sword-Dances of Northern England (1911-13). English dancers are, it seems, also starting to borrow, for example using a sword platform to elevate a dancer. This was common on the continent as early as the mid-16th century, and was still seen in later dances from Germany, Austria, and Italy.

An objection might be raised that borrowing and adapting continental material is not "traditional" for us in North America, that we should stick to the hallowed trails blazed by EFDS, EFDSS, and CDSS. This is a very weak argument. It is clear from the six hundred years of documented European (including British) sword dance history that people borrowed from one another all the time. And we in North America have borrowed and adopted — and changed along the way — an enormous range of cultural ideas and forms. We should continue to behave as our ancestors did, when they came over from the old world to the new with what they most needed, wanted, or were able to carry, and then proceeded to change it all to fit their new environment.

A final word: Antwerp is a fascinating city to visit, even for people who are not looking for sword dances. I was able to stay on for several days. Antwerp is a compact city, easy to get around, and ideal for people who like to walk; it is hard to get lost, because you just have to look for the Cathedral's spire to orient yourself. I took the opportunity to visit several beautiful churches — St. Paul's, which has many of Rubens' religious paintings, the elegant Baroque church of St. Carolus Borromeus, as well as the Cathedral — and museums such as the Plantin-Moretus, which is a perfect place for anyone who has ever worked in the field of rare books or the history of printing.

Belgian beer is good, strong, and varied; the local gin is remarkably tasty; and I was able to buy several pounds of Belgian chocolates at stores on the main shopping street. The people were friendly and helpful, especially when I tried
out one of my few Dutch phrases — “Spreekt U engels?” (“Do you speak English?”) Many people speak some English.

I would encourage North American dancers to become acquainted with dances and dances from the European continent as well as Britain. The Low Countries provide a wealth of evidence on the history of sword dancing. The styles performed in the cities of Belgium have a very different feel from the English village and rural town styles with which many of us are familiar. But they are just as well suited to our own setting. Awareness of the exciting history and varied present forms of European linked sword dancing can only serve to enrich dancing in North America.

Thanks to Reinout van Oostenbroeck for his generous hospitality and help with my research, and his comments on an earlier version of this article; to Trevor Stone for encouraging me to visit Antwerp; to David and Pamela Hattick for their hospitality in Amsterdam, as I was on my way to and from Antwerp; and to my wife, Lori, for saying, “Oh, all right, go ahead!”

Bibliography

The bibliography of European linked sword dancing is significant in scope. My Sword Dancing in Central and Northern Europe: An Annotated Bibliography (1990) provides a hundred publications, chiefly in German. I have continued my bibliographical research. I am now preparing a much expanded and revised work, European Sword Dancing: An Annotated Bibliography, and developing computerized data bases with the relevant material.

The following items will provide background for this article.


Except for Sharp’s manual, the most widely available book on this topic in North American libraries. Unfortunately, it is not reliable discussing history or views on origins of the dance.


Sharp, Cecil James. The Sword-Dances of Northern England. London: EFDSS, 1985; reprint of 1911-13 edition. The basic manual on English dances, it has been used on the European continent as well in Britain and North America. Sharp's views on the international connections and history of English styles can be found in the introductions to the three parts.


As part of my research into the history and bibliography of sword dancing, I have been translating dance manual descriptions of dances, or arranging for translations by others, from German, French, and Czech. I also have descriptions in Slovak, Dutch, and Spanish, which I expect to have translated at a future date. I will make them available as, "Dr. Steve's European Sword Dance Notes." (The first series has eight translations of German descriptions, published in the 1890s-1950s, from Austria and Bohemia.) Anyone who wishes to acquire a series should get in touch with me. (629 Beverley Rd., Brooklyn NY, 11218.)
A Calendar of Early Morris Performances and References
by P.A.M. Borys

The bulk of my research into the history of the morris dance was done at the Widmar Library at Harvard University. What follows is a listing of the most informative and reliable sources that I have found. Where possible, I have included the exact date or the month of the performance. I offer my findings in the hope that others will add to this list and to our knowledge of the morris dance. I would appreciate it if readers would send in any historical references to me. Perhaps an expanded chronology might be printed in the future.

During my research, I noticed several trends in historical references to the morris. The first is that the earlier performances occur at major social events attended by the nobility. Early performances were tied to a sense of occasion rather than any particular time of year. In time, the references shift to the financial records of various parishes. Morris dancers formed part of the entertainments at Church Ales which raised money for the parish. At this time, the morris also capers across the stage and provides a noisy, comic element to many plays. With the rise of the Pheasants and fall of the monarchy, morris dancing retreats into the countryside where its death and rebirth as a tradition lends it an air of antiquity and pagan rite.

Let me preface this listing by mentioning that early references to morris, morosche, morisca may or may not describe a dance similar to the Cotswold morris. References concentrate on the spectacle of the dance or the spectacle the dancers make of themselves, and give few hints as to the movement or the music employed.

1458 A cup sculp de morys daun appears in the will of Alice de Wenthall. See Lowe or J.P. Collier, Annals of the Stage p. xviii.

1480 Morris Dancers at the Munich State Museum. (The Black Boy and Maid Marion were stolen.)

Artistic Representations

1458 A cup sculp de morys daun appears in the will of Alice de Wenthall. See Lowe or J.P. Collier, Annals of the Stage p. xviii.

1480 Morris Dancers at the Munich State Museum. (The Black Boy and Maid Marion were stolen.)
One of the crown jewels included a gold salt dish with morris dancers. "Its foot was garnished with six great sapphires, fifteen diamonds, thirty-seven rubies, and forty-two pearls, and standing about that were five morris dancers and taberer, having amongst them thirteen small garnishing pearls and one ruby. The lady holding the piece had upon her garment, from her foot to her face, fifteen pearls and eighteen rubies." This magnificent piece was probably melted down around 1625. Burton, Rushbearing, (Norwood, PA: Norwood editions, 1974), p. 112.

Another cup with the morris dance appears in the Will Jackson. See Lowe.


Lancaster Castle panel depicts four dancers, pipe and tabor, and a lady.

Holme's Academy of Armory, Vol. III has an illustration of two dancers wearing short jackets, two bells on each knee and one on each elbow.

The engraving of William Kemp in morris kit provides the cover of his Nine Daies Wonder.

A painting by Vincenoom illustrates three dancers at Lord Fitzwilliam's house on Richmond Green.

Morisca dance at the marriage of the Count of Barcelona to Petronila of Aragon. M. Soriano, Historia de la Musica Espanole, 1855. See also Pilling.
At a performance for the Duke of Tours: a certain compagnons qui avoient fait plusieurs esbatemens de moriques et autres jeux devant le duc a Tours, vi etus. See Douce, p. 580.

Vendome, France. Morris dancing followed a feast given by Gaston de Foix. See Douce, p. 580.

At a ball in Sienna, Italy, there was a "great gilded wolf, out of which issued a morisco of twelve persons, one of them was dressed as a nun, who danced to the sound of the singing." Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 86.

Morris dancers issued out of a triumphal chariot after which followed a battle between Turks and Macedonians at a banquet given by Cardinal Pietro Riario for Pope Sixtus IV. Other moriscos performed for the newlyweds included moriscos of armed gladiators, shepherds, moors, and even a woman in a cart pulled by a unicorn. Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 88.


Privy Purse of Henry VII records spending £1. 6. 8 to them that danced the morisco. See Lowe.

At the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia to Duke Emk d'& in the Pope's chamber a jongleur who was dressed as a woman danced the morisco. Lucrezia also danced with one of her women. Welford, The Court Masque, p. 88.

£1. 13. 4 payment made from Henry VII's Privy Purse to Adam Lewes for a morisco. See Lowe.


1505. Fastening Evin Dancers performed at the Scottish Court. See Lowe.

1506 June £6. 13. 4 payment made from Henry VII's Privy Purse to Master Wentworth towards the making of a disguising of a morris. See Lowe.

1506. 31 Dec Seven men and a lady danced with 30 dozen bells in Scotland. See Lowe.

1507. June The Carpenter's Guild paid 8d for morris dancers at the midsummer watch. See Jupp or Lowe.

1507, 1 May The Kingston-upon-Thames parish records indicate that the morris dance was added to the traditional Robin Hood play. See the Churchwardens' accounts or Lowe.

1508, 25 May Five dancers wear five dozen small bells and six dozen great bells at a royal banquet for the Scottish court. See Lowe.

1508 The Kingston-upon-Thames parish records make several references to the cost of morris costumes. See Lowe and Douce.

1509 Ferrara, Italy. A moresca with hammers. See Alford: "Morris and Morisca."

1509, Corpus Christi The Kingston-upon-Thames parish records record paying 4d for mete and drynke for ye moris daunsers. See Lowe.
The Churchwardens of St. Lawrence in Reading paid 4s for 6 pairs of shoes for morris dancers at the Church Ale. See Alford.

The Churchwardens of Kingston-upon-Thames paid 7d for gilt paper for the morris dancers' hats. This performance took place at the Church Ale. See Burton.

Morris dancing formed part of the Twelfth Night revels at Richmond Castle for Henry VIII.

Erasmus describing the legendary figure Orpheus says he induced the trees to pull their legs out of the ground and dance the morris after him. See The Praise of Folly.

The King of Scotland witnesses a dance at the Scottish court. Treasurer's Records, Vol. IV, p. 399.

Urbino, Italy. Dancers performing in a masque about the Greek hero Jason dance a "proud moresca." See Violet Alford, "Morris and Moresca.

The Churchwardens of St. Lawrence in Reading paid 39d toward the morris dancers' beer at the dedication day fair.

The Churchwardens of Kingston-upon-Thames paid 6d to the morris dancers and provided new shoes for the Church Ale. See Burton.

Corpus Christi, Coimbra. The Shoemakers' Guild sponsors a moursicca. See Gallop.

The Churchwardens of Kingston-upon-Thames paid 5/4d for new shoes for the Church Ale.
1521-1522 The Churchwardens paid for new coats of fustian for the morris dancers. See Burton.

1521 A Roman carnival in the palace courtyard. According to Castiglione, Pope Leo X often enjoyed watching maschere et moreche. See Welsford, p. 90.


1522 Morris dancers participated in the Christmas revels of Princess Mary at Richmond Castle. Paid for by the Privy Purse.

1524, carnival Constantinople. Florentine and Venetian merchants hosted entertainments which included "an ambassador from the King of Portugal with a giant who held two Saracens in chains and they performed first a moreca, then a jousting. See Welsford, p. 90-91.

1529 There are references to performances at St. Mary's in Reading on Whitmon and the Sunday after May Day. See Lowe.

1530 The Churchwardens of St Lawrence in Reading paid 2 shillings for a grosse of bells for the morris dancers who danced at the Church Ale.

1531-1532 The Churchwardens of Kingston-upon-Thames bought new bells for the Church Ale.

1535-1536, Corpus Christi The London Skinners Guild paid 25 shillings to "Walter Fond, morris dancer, for himself and for six persons, morris dancers, for dancing both the nights in said watch and for their breakfast money." Accounts of London Skinners.

1536-1537 The Churchwardens of Kingston-upon-Thames bought new hats and purses for the Church Ale. See Burton.

1538 May Queen Mary's Privy Purse records the expenditure of vii shillings, sixpence for morris dancers.
1539, 1 May The Churchwardens of Kingston-upon-Thames bought new costumes for their morris dancers which resemble those of dancers who danced at Richmond Palace.

1542 Italy. Giulio Romano designs an elaborate moresca. See Welsford.

1552, 26 May Henry Machyn records morris dancing and May games on Fenchurch Street in London.

1552, Christmas Henry Machyn describes a mores dance with taboret and a host of fools which followed an encounter between the Mayor’s Lord of Misrule and the King’s Lord of Misrule. See B. Lowe, “Robin Hood in the Light of History,” Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1955.

1552, 4 Jan The procession of the King’s Lord of Misrule from Cheapside to Greenwich included morris dancers. See B. Lowe, “Robin Hood in the Light of History,” Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1955.

1553, Jan The procession of the King’s Lord of Misrule from Cheapside to Greenwich included morris dancers. See B. Lowe, “Robin Hood in the Light of History,” Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1955.

1554, Corpus Christi Edinburgh. Morris dancers were paid 16 shillings. City of Edinburgh Old Accounts, I, p. 76.

1554-1592 Morris dancing appears in the churchwardens’ accounts of St. Helen’s in Abingdon. See Lowe.

1555, 26 May Morris dancing formed part of the May games at the parish of St. Martin’s, Leicester. See Lowe.

1555, 3 June Westminster.

1557, Whitsun Ale  The Churchwardens of St Mary’s in Reading paid 3'4 for the food and drink of the morris dancers and their musician.

1558  Edinburgh, morris dancers wore elaborate costumes at the festivities celebrating the marriage of Mary to the Dauphin.  See Burton.

1558, Whitsun fair  The Churchwardens of St. Martin’s, Leicester recorded the receipt of iiis for the mawrys dance of children.  See Thomas North and Samuel Clark: The Accounts of the Church Warkns of St. Martin’s 1489-1844, p. 80.

1559, March  Henry Machyn records that morris dancers appeared at a feast for master bakers given by Queen Elizabeth.  See Lowe.

1560, June  Henry Machyn’s records may games and morris dancers at St. John Zachary.

1563, I May  One morris dancer performs for the Duchess of Suffolk at Grimsthorpe.

1564, midsummer fair  City of Chester.  See Records of Early English Drama: Chester, p. 441.

1567, I May  One morris dancer performs for the Duchess of Suffolk at Grimsthorpe.

1568, Midsummer fair  The city of Chester paid Mores damages six shillings eight pence and their mynstrells twenty-six pence.  See Records of Early English Drama: Chester, p. 87.

1571, November  St. Giles in Cripplegate paid six pounds, nine shillings, nine pence.  See Burton, p. 166.

1571, November  See Records of Early English Drama:—Chester p. 94.
1575. 17 July
A letter describes a Bridal Ale at Kenilworth where a Morris was performed by the country folk in the ancient manner. See Lowe.

1576, 1 Jan

1576, November
Chester. The Treasurer's Rolls record the following: Et solutum Thome Gillam pro saitacione suo vocata daunseinge lud vocata morris dawns ad vigiltatem sancti lohannis Baptistim postumum suis, vill d.

1570-76 York. The Archbishop Grindal's Register records the following diatribe: Item that the minister and churchwardens shall not suffer any lordes of nisirale or sommerr lordes or ladies or any disguised persons or others in christmas or at may games or anye minstrels morrie dauncers or others...to come unseemely into any church or chapell or churchyard and there daunce or play anye unseemelye paste...in the tyme of divine serving or of anye sermon. All which we do charge and commaunde...within our province of york upon payne of contempte and of excommuncation and other censures of the church by the ekklesiastical laws of this realme in such case limited and apponted. See Records of Early English Drama: York, p. 358.

1583, November
The City of Chester paid morris dancers six shillings eight pence. See Records of Early English Drama: Chester, p. 87.

1583
The Household Accounts of the Kytsons of Hengrove Hall record a payment of two shillings for the return of the Master to the country.

1584
St. Mary's, Shrewsbury. The articles of Enquiry at the Visitation of St Mary's Parish ask Whether there have been any lords of mystrale, or sommer lords or ladies, or any disguised persons, as morris dancers, maskers, or mum'ers, or such lyke... See G. Jackson, Shropshire Folk-Lore: A Sheaf of Gleanings. (London: Trubner & Co.) 1883.

1587, November
Morris dancers were paid six shillings eight pence. See *Records of Early English Drama:* Chester, p. 151.

1588, June 25
The City of Chester paid vi s. viii d to morris dancers who accompanied the Sheriff at the Midsummer Watch.

1589, 26 April
At the reception of Queen Anne in Edinburgh sword (morris?) dancers were paid over £25. See Mill.

1589, 19 May
34 shillings were paid for 17 masks for morris dancers. See Mill.

May 25, 1589
Anthony Cope stands up to the Privy Council’s universal ban on Whitsun Ales, Maypoles, and morris dances by protesting that “he never had any suspicious meetings about religion.” See Descent, p. 602.

1590, 19 May
At the Queen’s entry in Edinburgh young men dressed as morris dance before the Queen the entire way. See Mill.

1590, November
The City of Chester paid vi shillings, eight pence to morris dancers. See *Records of Early English Drama:* Chester, p. 162.

1591, November
The City of Chester paid vi shillings, eight pence to morris dancers. See *Records of Early English Drama:* Chester, p. 162.

1593, 27–31 Dec
The play *George a Green* which contains a morris and dance and other references played at the Rose playhouse on Bankside.

1593, Midsummer
The City of Chester again pays the morris dancers vi s, viii d. See *Records of Early English Drama:* Chester.

1594, 1–31 Jan
The play *George a Green* which contains a morris and dance and other references plays again at the Rose playhouse on Bankside.
1600, 1 Jan  
The Shoemaker's Holiday by Decker which features morris dancers by guild members is presented at court.

1600, Lent  
William Kemp, a Shakespearean actor, dances from London to Norwich in nine days and writes his Nine Daies Wonder which recounts this deed.

1601  
A treatise on The Auntient Forme and Payments of a Midsomer Watch or Show indicates that while morris dancers were previously paid ten shillings, now they collect "no fee but the curtesye after the show at eich house what they( ) please."

1601, 23 Oct  
Jack Drum's Entertainment, a rowdy play with a drunken morris team is entered into the Stationer's Register.

1603, Jan  
Ben Jonson writes a prologue for the morris dancers who dance at Althorp for Queen Elizabeth. This prologue may be found in Jonson's the satyr.

1604, 13 May  
Villa Garcia, Spain. Charles, Earl of Nottingham, the British ambassador is welcomed by "a morrice dance of eight comely gentlemen and eight boys dancing a matachinn." See A collection of Scare and Valuable Tracts. 2nd edition, (London: T. Cadwell), 1809.

1604, Corpus Christi Day  
Spain. Both Charles, Earl of Nottingham and Cornwallis record morris dancers in the Corpus Christi parade. In his letter to Lord Cranbourne, Cornwallis is very disturbed to find morris dancers in the ranks of the friars procession. See Winwood's Memorials. Vol. II. p. 71 and Burton, p. 97

1607  
The Knight of the Burning Pestle is staged at Blackfriars.

1608  
An inventory of property belonging to a parish in Buckinghamshire includes five pairs of garters and bells, five (morris) coats and a fool's coat, and four feathers. Thos
costumes were rented to neighboring parishes and are mentioned in the accounts until 1629. See Langley, The History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Desbough, Deanery of Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, London, 1797.

1609, May Morris dancers appeared at a horse race. See Old Meg of Herefordshire.

1611, 30 June The wardens of the Tailors Company (guild) were arrested for patronizing morris dancers on a Sunday. The Mayor wrote a letter to them about profanation of the sabbath. See State Papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of James, I, 1611-1618, Vol. 9, p. 50.

1612, Christmas Season The Merry Devil of Edmonton is presented at court.

1613, 20 August A royal visit by the Queen to the city of Wells occasions the production of a play and a morrice dance which is paid for by the Cordyners (Shoemakers' Guild). See Nichol, Progresses of King James I, Vol. II, p. 674.

1613 The Knight of the Burning Pestle and Shakespeare's Two Noble Kinsmen are printed.

1614 A song printed in this year has the following verse:

It was my hap of late, by chance,
To meet a Country Morrice Dance
When chestiest of them all, the Foole
Played with a tistle and a toole;
When every younger shak't his bells...

1618, 24 May James I orders that maypoles, Whitsun-Ales, and morris dances be allowed to continue.

1620 Women Pleased is printed.

1621, Corpus Christi Oporto, Portugal. The city provided a mouriscas of 40 men with Rei Moura (King of the Moors) and Alfaqui. See Gallop.

1621 The Witch of Edmonton is printed.
The Spanish Gypsy is printed.

The play Amyntas is played by boys at the King's Revels.

A Country Rush-bearing, or Morrice-pastoral, is his Festival: if ever he aspire to a plum-porrige, that is the day. Here the page-girls gingle it with neat niftles. See Burton p. 28

The Knight of the Burning Pestle is played at the Phoenix Theatre.

Amyntas is played by boys at the King's Revels.

“A Knight of the Burning Pestle” is played at Court.

“Such an one as not a Rush-bearer or May-moorish in all that Parish could subsist without him. Burton p. 28

The Knight of the Burning Pestle is played at the Phoenix Theatre.

1652, Whitmonday Dancers from the parish of Bretley came to the town of Much Westlock where they danced, got drunk, and left their bill at the tavern unpaid. See Lowe.

Dancers in Wiltshire were drunk and disorderly. See Alford, “Morris and Morisca.”

1652, 1 July St. Peter's, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire. Ten tailors and a taberer danced the morris at a church fair in spite of warnings by ministers. One was found drunk on the minster's porch “and the rest were but little better.” Participants were accused of being Papists (Catholic). See The Staffordshire Quarter Session Rolls Translation No. 6, Vol. 4, Chapter 2 or English Dance & Song, Vol. XXI, p. 106-107.

1655, 6 May Lapley, Staffordshire. The names of dancers on two teams are listed and charged with tippling (drinking) and missing church. See The Staffordshire Quarter Session Rolls 1625 Michaelmas No 25.

1655, May wake Lapley Staffordshire. Morris dancers (nine men and four women) are arrested. See Lowe.

1655, August wake Stretton. 16 dancers are arrested. See Lowe.
1665 Randle Cottington wrote "How they become the morris, with whose bells they ring in to Whitsun Ales."

1783, summer Dancers from the town of Abingdon dances at Richmond in Surrey. See Waldron's edition of Jonson's "Sad Shepherd."

1821 Smithfield, Warwickshire Eight morris dancers had bells attached to their clothing. See English Dance Society XXI, p. 157.

1826, June 15 Clerkenwell, Rosoman Street. Morris dances from Herfordshire came to dance. See Hone's "Every Day Book."


1830 Birmingham, Loveaday Street. Out of work boatmen and outdoor workers danced during a severe frost and also at the local fair.


1830 After this came twelve country lads and lasses, dancing the real old morris-dance with their handkerchiefs flying, and in all the rustic elegance of apparel which they could command for the occasion. See Burton p. 49.


1844, Sept. Stowe, Buckinghamshire. The Duke of Buckingham arranged for a performance of morris dancers to celebrate the coming
of age of his heir, the Marquis of Chandos. The Duke tried to reestablish the morris in the area and provided new kits for the dancers.

1849

"By "day-strike" in a morning or by "neet-gloom" in the evening, the jingle of morrice-bells would be heard along the lanes and field roads, for the lads, having borrowed each his colar of bells at neighboring farmhouses, would hang them upon their necks and come jingling then home, waking all the echoes in the deep lanes, and the meadow-mooks, and the old grey solitary places, until the air was clamorous of their bell single and music roll of the crotal. If the party can go to the expense of having a set of morrice-dancers, and feel inclined to undertake the trouble, some score or two of these young men, with hats trimmed, and decked out as before described, precede the drawers (of the rush cart), dancing in couples to various simple country tunes, one of which may be measured by this stanza:

My new shoon they are so good,
I cou'd dance the morris if I wou'd;
An' if hat an' sark be drest,
I will dance morris wi' the best." See Burton p. 43-44.

1850

Filkins, Oxfordshire boasted a well-established team. See English Dance Society, XXI, p. 157.

1852, 6 Jan.

Derbyshire morris dancers go from town to town with a fool and Maid Marion often called the fool's wife. See Swann, Maid Marion.

1855-1857

Five or six dancers perform for the May and October fairs in the market place. See English Dance Society, Vol. XXI, p. 157.

1859

The Godley Hill Royal Morris Dancers of Knutsford are formed.

1863

South Staffordshire. Striking coal workers danced to raise money. They did not wear bells. See English Dance Society, XXI, p. 157.
1879

A dozen young men and women, streaming with ribbons, and waving handkerchiefs, preceded the cart, dancing the morris-dance. See Burton, p. 48.

Elijah Ridings

Village Festival

Behold the rush cart and the throng
Of lads and lasses pass along!
Now watch the nimble morris-dancers,
Those blithe, fantastic, antic prancers,
Redecked with gaudiest profusion
Of ribbons in gay confusion
Of brilliant colours, richest dyes,
Like wings of moths and butterflies;
Waving white kerchiefs here and there,
And up and down and everywhere.
Springing, bounding, gaily skipping,
Deftly, briskly, no one tripping.
All young fellows, blithe and hearty,
Thirty couples in the stry;
And on the footpaths may be seen
Their sweethearts from each lane and green
And cottage home; all fain to see
This festival of rural glee.


1872

"The (rush) cart thus laden, is drawn round to the dwellings of the principle inhabitants by morris-dancers who perform an uncouth dance, attended by a man in motley attire, a sort of nondescript, made up of the ancient fool and Maid Marian. This personage jingles a horse-collar hung with bells, which forms not an unsuitable accompaniment to the ceremony. See Burton p. 40."

1874

"some children at Levenshulme had a small rush-cart, and its train of morris dancers." See Burton, p. 55 or Roby, Traditions of Lancashire, 5th edition, 1872 p. 266.

Important References

The following works are particularly useful to anyone interested in pursuing the early history of the morris. Some books may still be ordered through the publisher so don't despair of owning your own copy!

Alfred Burton, Rushhearing, (Norwood, PA: Norwood editions, 1974). While the main subject of this book examines the history of rushcarts, morris dancers often took part in these local celebrations and references are generously noted by the author.


Greetings from Kansas City. We have survived hosting the 1991 Midwest Morris Mids with all our dancers and musicians intact. It seems we were rewarded with compliments from the attendees and with seven new dancers. The apprentices started class in September and, so far, have stuck to it. Also, Fall is our busiest time of the year with several Fall festivals that we perform in through the early part of November.

We still have some items left over from the Ale. We could have started a rumor here, however, the owners called us and claimed the awards. Among the items we still have in our possession are green leather bell pads with light blue ribbons, a blue rain jacket, several hankies and towels. If you think any of these items belong to you or a team mate please contact: Tom or Janet Stewart, 4225 NW 79th Terr. Cl?., Kansas City, MO 64151 or call 816.587.6320.

The Vancouver Morris Men, Vancouver, B.C. Canada

The Vancouver Morris Men had a very active summer; almost as active as last winter! We concentrated on perfecting our Bampton, having decided to focus on the Shergro style of dancing. This was aided by the videos we took on White Monday at Bampton last year during the VMM England tour. It was quite strange to return to the 1891/Border Morris with its loud band. Indeed, some of our members (the really degenerate ones!) actually decided to "take the summer off" and reserve themselves for the 1891/Border season. Shame!

In addition to our regular dance-outs in the Vancouver area, we returned to the Northwest Folk Life Festival in Seattle, and attended the 18th Victoria on Labour Day weekend. Our Squire, Graham Baldwin, attended the Leicester meeting of the Morris Ring in England as an "honorary" member of Silurian Morris Men, and returned with a few more dances and songs, having run into those brilliant singers, the Hartley Morris Men, at Leicester. (Hartley are apparently coming to the Sunset Duck in L.A. next Spring.) He was also fortunate enough to witness (God video) the Abbott's Broomley Horn Dance, performed only once a year, in Abbott's Broomley, Staffordshire.
By the end of September, the side was ready to switch back to Border, and we are now well into our winter season's dances, with our membership up at twenty. This winter, we intend to add some dances from Putley (Herefordshire) which we collected from Dave Jones, the Herefordshire man who "wrote the book" on Border Morris. Sadly, Dave has recently died.

We've had a couple of marriages in the side this year, both of them members of the local ladies side, Tiddley Cove Morris, with whom we perform (!!!) quite often. Despite the fact that half of our side is now married to half of theirs, we still relish our "male bonding" on Tuesday nights. The two sides are jointly organizing the Northwest Ale next year, to celebrate VMM's 10th Anniversary and Tiddley Cove's 5th. This will be in mid-September, 1992. We hope to see you all then! -- Graham Baldwin, Squire

Rock Creek Morris Women, Washington D.C.

RCMW's doing fine. Had a good spring season which included trips to Marlboro, Richmond, and the Quail Ale. Debuting at the Quail Ale was the Dandelions, our girls team, composed of daughters and nieces of team members age 8-12. They can do a mass Highland Mary with the best of them! (They learned a dance that Albemarle does - at the last stand at the Quail Ale. They pulled the Albemarle men aside to get pointers on the dance. Then Dandelions and Albemarle showed the dance mixed, some members of Albemarle dancing the chorus on their knees in courtesy to their shorter partners.)

We donned our Northwest Kits to march in the Takoma Park's 102nd Annual 4th of July parade. (I think we were the most festive group - well, maybe the Trinidad & Tobago group was - we were certainly the most colorful acoustic group - there were a few flat beds that just held speakers for some of the groups.)

-- Louise Neu