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The Circle Dance from Alien, North American style.

The Golden Age

The Oral History Project: John Hughes

Longmen Dance from Tradition and Movement Source: Folkd and Native-Style FOOT Toronto

The Ripper Motion Dance

Final Footfall

Letter to the Editor

Social Spectacle in Whist; U.K.

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Editor Peter ffoulkes noted in this space last time that, due to financial constraints, it was necessary to defer some articles to the following issue—and here we are, complete with those formerly missing articles (not to mention our missing paragraph from Geoff Hughes’ Abram Circle Dance piece!).

This issue continues the saga of the Abram Circle Dance, this time in America, in an article by Julia Schult. I have found both Geoff’s article last issue and Julia’s in this one to be very interesting. I was in that crowd of 150 morris dancers she mentions in her first paragraph, and at the time had no idea what we were doing or how to do it (watch carefully and do what they do was my motto)—but it sure was memorable. I wrote in my diary of the trip, “those guys (the bride and groom) ought to have triplets at least.”

Also in this issue, we have the return of Jocelyn’s oral history series, this time an interview with John Hodgkin; “The Golden Age of Rapper” by Phil Heaton; a book review by Steve Corssin; and a dance by Rudd Rayfield.

We are continuing our work on the AMN directory, but don’t have a proposed date for its completion—nor do we have funding at this time. Next issue, we will return to a single theme—the very important subject of Morris Music!

Til then, we wish you a happy holiday and a bright New Year!

—from the AMN editors
The Circle Dance from Abram, North American Style

Julia E. Schult

May, 1989, Boulder, Colorado. A young couple is exchanging vows in a pretty park, when they are approached by a few people wearing bells and ribbons. "Would you like us to do some traditional English morris dancing to celebrate your wedding?" they are asked. When assured it would only take a few minutes they exchange glances and nod "Yes." Suddenly 150 Morris dancers are charging up the hill to surround them with bells, 20 or more different costumes, several hobbies chasing each other, and a swarm of musicians. The now-terrified couple is instructed to stand in the center and not to move. Then they are "blessed" by a performance of Abram's Circle Dance, more properly called the Circle Dance from Abram or the Abram Morris Dance.

While this was not a typical performance of this dance, and indeed many of the dancers were performing it for the first time, the performance did establish that this unusual morris dance is part of the collective morris phenomenon on this side of the Atlantic. This article is an attempt to relate some of the history of this dance within the United States.

Back in 1969, Ed Stern was involved with an English country dance group in Chicago, Illinois (along with Pat Talbot). The group had a collection of folk music on 78 RPM records. Being interested in all kinds of folk music, and particularly interested in English and morris traditions, Ed explored the collection and found an orchestral arrangement (arranged, he believes, by Arnold Foster) of the Circle Dance from Abram. That same year he came across a description of the dance written by Maud Karpeles and published by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) in 1932 (full citation is given in the dance comparison section below). At the time Paul Collins, Ed and others were trying to get Chicago Morris going. Ed taught the dance, deviating slightly from the written description, and it was danced out on May Day and on other occasions in 1970. They often performed around a maypole or tree. Several members of Chicago Morris moved in 1971, including Ed Stern, and the team faded out.
Ed moved to Minnesota and in 1974 helped found Minnesota Traditional Morris (MTM). The Abram dance has been part of MTM’s repertoire from the start, essentially unchanged from then until now. MTM uses it as the first dance of a major dance day such as at the Renaissance Festival or on May Day. In 1979 MTM performed the Abram Circle Dance as their show dance at the Marlboro Ale on the East Coast. According to Ed, “Nobody had any idea what it was except Tony Barrand.” Many Minnesota dancers from other teams think of it as the first dance performed at dawn on May Day. Actually, MTM did not start dancing at dawn on May 1st until around 1982 or ’83, when someone heard about the Bouwerie Boys dancing at dawn in New York. They started using the Abram Circle Dance to start the dancing, with any dancers present invited to join in, and now many Minnesota dancers cannot conceive of starting May Day without it.

From these May Day performances the dance spread to the Twin Cities teams. Some Midwest teams had seen it or done it at Morris Madness Weekends at the Minnesota Renaissance Festival. Since the Minnesota Morris community makes up around 20 per cent of the people who attend the Midwest Morris Ale, it was not hard to get enough people to do it at some of these ales, though I don’t think it has ever been an official mass dance. I know it was done at the Ann Arbor ale in 1988. Dancers from other Midwest teams started to recognize it and liked it, though no Midwest teams that I know of actually added it to their performance repertoire outside of the Twin Cities. The 1989 Colorado Midwest Ale—in-exile incident described at the beginning of this article brought even more fans to the dance, including Mayfield Morris and Sword from Palo Alto, California. They liked the dance so much they learned it at the ale and performed it a few times in California. It did not become a steady part of their repertoire, however. In 1993 Ruth Temple moved from Minnesota (where she had danced with Uptown-on-Calhoun and Moonwood) to Santa Cruz, California, and joined Seabright Morris and Sword. She started teaching the dance to Seabright, especially urging its use as a May Day starter. Reinforced in 1994 by the arrival of myself and my husband from Minnesota, the dance became an established part of the Seabright repertoire, and was a mass dance at the 1997 VirtuAle in April, where most of the 185 attending West Coast dancers and musicians performed it in Felton and Santa Cruz, California. Other former Midwesterners, such as Lynn Noel and Judy Goldsmith, have carried the dance from Minnesota to Winnipeg, Vermont, and Kentucky.

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Glenda Newell-Blake of Binghamton, NY reports by e-mail:

Actually it was done once, or was it twice, at the Five-Day Wonder. It was the year one of that Midwestern crowd, a first-timer at the Wonder, insisted that an ale just wasn't an ale without the Abram Circle. We'd never heard of it ... but we learned it and danced it for a wedding we were already committed to dance at a tour stop. (Or did one Midwesterner teach it to us her first year there for the wedding and her friend insisted on it as a “spiritual-togetherness” thing the next year?)

MINNESOTA VERSION

COMPARED TO THE ABRAM VERSION

This Minnesota version of the dance is very close to the dance performed in Abram at the end of June every year. A basic description of the dance (used by both Ed Stern and the Abram Morris Dancers as source material) is available in the "Two Folk Dances: The Abram Morris Dance" by Maud Karpeles (Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Vol. One, 1932, pp. 55-59). Ed Stern's notes list three changes he made when putting together the dance in 1969-70:

1. Walking step for A, C, E (the circling Promenade figures); easy Single Step for B, E, G (back-to-back, turn singles, and into the center figures).

2. Show hankies on the “and” before count one; do it at beginning and midpoint of B, E, G. (Ed Stern's steps do it on the last beat of the phrase.)

3. In C (the walk-and-turn figure) 7th step is pivot turn IN and L arm swings over head; the 8th step is in counterclockwise direction.

I was privileged to attend a rehearsal of the Abram Morris Dancers in June 1993 (my undying gratitude goes to Joanne Rundall and Dave Polshaw for that). Based on my own observations, the major differences are:

1. The Abram dancers perform the dance only one day a year, usually the last Saturday of June. The musicians stand outside the set, while at the center are the King and Queen and a maypole consisting of a decorated pole with a teapot at the top. The Minnesota version is performed anytime, but especially at "ceremonial moments" such as the first dance of the day, at weddings, or at dawn on May Day. The center is usually occupied by the

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musicians, sometimes accompanied by people to be honored (such as a bride and groom or new baby) and sometimes by a "maid-pole"—a "virgin" pulled from the crowd and told to stand in the middle holding a morris stick up. Sometimes, especially early in its Chicago and Minnesota history, it was performed around a tree.

2. The Minnesota version uses bells, Abram dancers do not. The technical changes that Ed made are immediately noticeable because of the walking (MN) vs. dancing (UK) step in several of the figures. The Abram dancers use essentially the same skipping step throughout, although when they go into the center the step is much lower and more subdued than during the rest of the dance. The MN version uses walking steps for the promenades, with the hankies still showing out in front, each hand showing with opposite foot. The MN dance feels much slower because the dancers are walking rather than skipping, though I believe it is played only slightly slower. Also, since the dancers are wearing bells, the walking step contrasts aurally from the single-step figures.

3. There are some fine differences in the hanky "shows," particularly just before the turn singles. In Abram the dancers seem to stamp or scuff the lead foot before doing their little circle, showing at the same time. The MN version shows a half-beat before that, on the hop that gives momentum to the single steps.

4. The Abram Morris Dancers are generally unmarried male dancers. The MN version is often done by several teams mixed together, including married and (scandalously!) married people!

**CLOG VERSION**

As far as I can tell, the teams in the United States that perform the Circle Dance from Abram but did not get it from Minnesota are all doing a clog version of the dance. Mystic Garland and Rose Galliard perform it with clogs and hankies. This clogging circle dance exists in England as well and led to an interesting encounter between the Bells

---

1. I use the term skipping rather than single stepping mostly because the Abram style does not include a shake of the leg, as morris single steps usually do. Since they do not use bells, there is no reason to shake leg (no pun intended). This style note has generally been carried over to the MN version, where we do wear bells but do not shake the leg during the single steps.

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of the North (from Minnesota) and Whitty Pear (from Kidderminster, England). While the Bells (a Cotswold side) were visiting Whitty Pear (a Northwest Clog side) in June 1993, I mentioned my visit to a rehearsal of the Abram dancers. Whitty Pear dancers were delighted to hear that the Bells dance Abram's Circle Dance, and proposed that we dance it with them. I knew we were in trouble when their dancers set up in a circle with the pairs already beside each other, like spokes of a wheel, instead of in one big circle, like the rim of a wheel. I quickly asked one of their dancers what the sequence they danced was like, and it sounded like our sequence, so I thought we'd do fine. It was pretty near a disaster, actually. Although several of the figures are the same, there were enough differences in order and details that our team was floundering to follow them through almost the whole dance.

Court Square Dancers from Charlottesville, NC also perform a version, and I believe it is the same as the clog version we saw in England, though Court Square (a ribbon, patland and stave side) perform it without clogs, and do wear ankle bells. According to Julia Kindred of Court Square, they first saw the dance in 1988 while traveling in England. Several of the clog sides they visited performed the Abram Circle Dance, and one of the sides gave them notes for the dance. They did not put the dance together for performance, however, until the early '90s.

Julia Kindred described their Abram over the phone, and it is similar to the version performed by the Abram Morris Dancers (using one skipping step throughout) with the following exceptions:

1. When the dancers start, the "2s" go backwards to line up with the "1" behind them, instead of catching up to the "1" in front of them.
2. The third figure is a whole gyp instead of a "Promenade and Turn." Presumably someone interpreted dance notes which said to circle and then reverse as meaning to circle each other, rather than around the center.
3. A team variation specific to Court Square is spiraling in for the last figure, and then spiraling out (off-stage) instead of ending in a circle. Dancing off is one of their team signatures.

2. In the clog versions (judging from both the folks I have seen and from callers' descriptions over the phone), dancers use a clog single step during the dance, a stamp-hop step.
These differences, plus the dancing step instead of a walking step, were enough to throw the Bells of the North off when dancing with Whitty Pear. Charlottetown has taught the dance to a few neighboring sides for specific occasions, and sometimes has taught it to brave audience members when audience participation was called for.

The Circle Dance from Abram, in all of its incarnations, is a beautiful dance. It works well as a blessing or honoring dance, leading some to include it in the category of spiritually rewarding dances known as "woo-woo morris" to members of the Morris Dance Discussion List. It adds variety to the Morris repertoire. It also has the power of living tradition behind it, carried on by the intrepid Abram Morris Dancers, long may they process!
There is a premise that now is the Golden Age of Rapper, simply because of its popularity. However, the Gilded Era is certainly not reflected in the current quality of performance. This is most obvious from dancers who either don't know about the tradition or don’t care about it.

The general lack of polish of teams on both sides of the Atlantic is probably due to the very thing that makes it so popular—it looks spectacular when done well—but many teams, and especially their team leaders, are quite content to turn out dross.

**ORIGINS**

Rapper comes from the northern end of England, a very different and hard place compared to the rural softness of the Cotswolds. Rapper is the exclusive product of a very distinctive region—the coal mining areas of Northumberland and Durham, once described as the “Powerhouse of the Industrial Revolution.” Most of the collected, complete dances were found within a 12-mile radius of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Unlike the morris, rapper was never part of the rural idyll or the “hey nonny nonny” scene. Rather it is the product of a hard-bitten, hard-driven set of men who crafted the modern dance with great imagination and skill.

The dance reflects the fierce working life and intense competitive relaxation of the pitmen who developed it. They were never sure if they would survive each shift or perish down “the pit.” A pitman’s reliance on his work mates, or “marras,” was a necessity since his life could be in their hands, and without a close-knit team around, the dangers underground were multiplied.

The morris, on the other hand, reflected the open, freer life of land workers and the simpler and slower toils of the soil. This appealed to the growing middle class “Merrie England” brigade intent on glamourising the barely existent Arcadian peasant. The rapper, however, was not manipulated by outsiders until much later.

The dance developed from the indigenous longsword, or “feul plough,” of which there are few records. Royal Earsdon, through a
line of strong Captains and families, could trace the team back to at
least 1800. Certainly a rapper team from Earsdon performed in 1855
at Alnwick Castle, and was noted as entertaining Very Important Per-
sonages present for the Christmas festivities.

Developments and changes were a feature of the dance, but from
about 1890, village short sword teams in Northumberland and
Durham developed their performances for a paying audience.

As Working Men’s Clubs and pubs opened in the coal field, the
dance began to change for the newer bigger audiences. Performing
stages appeared and the dance began to have direction and purpose.
Figures became more complicated, excellent stepping was a necessity,
and a flashy, refined form of the miner’s (and clog dancer’s) kit
became the hallmark of each team.

Later, the opening of cinemas—“flicks” and “flea pits”—pro-
vided the possibility of extra cash when talent contests or “Go as you
please” became a feature. Such incentives promoted hard practice
since rapper teams often won. Money and PRIDE were the goal.

Rapper dancers were part of the fabric of their pit and village
and could be relied on to “get stuck in” [fight—ed.] when meeting a
rival village or team. (There is an ongoing project currently based at
Leeds University, which charts the physical clashes which have
become the norm between teenagers from mining and colliery
villages throughout the north.)

When rival rapper teams met, a scrap often resulted, or occa-
sionally a dance-off for cash was arranged. According to an eyewit-
tness account, each team would put their bag on the bar and dance.
The audience decided who was best and who deserved the cash.
The account also described the other fights that followed. Recent
research (The Art of Rappering, A.K. Heaton) suggests that current
rapper teams consider themselves as part of a similar, tightly bonded
community. Very much a “Them and Us” situation.

THE COMPETITIONS

Competition became formalized when a class for Traditional Short
Sword Dancing was introduced into the North of England Musical
Tournament in 1919. Silver medals and a handsome silver trophy
were on offer along with a great deal of public acclaim.

1. Name for North East talent contest.

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While it was obvious that every team presenting itself to be judged was the carrier of its own pit and village tradition, ingenuity abounded—moves were adapted and worked on for style and presentation. The little wheels of invention and imagination kept ticking over. Ideas kept flowing—clog stepping became an important element and figures such as Bulldog, Dr. Cook, Fourth Corner and the amazing forward somersaults appeared, but some were not happy.

In 1929 Kenworthy Schofield, from the English Dance & Song Society (EDSS) in London, was judge, and he disqualified the team from Lemington, near North Walbottle, because they had taps on their shoes and they performed the forward somersault. It seems ridiculous that an outsider should come and tell the pitmen how to do their own dance.

Douglas Kennedy was not so presumptuous. When he was judge, he was given the glad eye by the Winlaton White Star whistle player, but he bowed to general public acclaim when he presented the trophy to "the elegant Royal Earsdon." Kennedy was much impressed with their dance and in his lecture on "Tradition" he remarked, "A feature of the dance is the almost offhand economy of action common to skilled craftsmen habituated to the job in hand."

Winlaton White Star were the earliest successes in the Newcastle Tournament and won the first Cowen Trophy outright. Its replacement was won mostly by Royal Earsdon, who were consistent competitors until the competition fizzled out in the 1950s.


Other formalized competitions took place around the region. Darlington, Stanley, and Sunderland were venues. The Victoria Hall at Sunderland had an annual contest and for a number of years the Murton Rapper, under the guardianship of the Lowerson family, won the competition dressed as pierrots. Behind the white faces were three boys and two girls.

Annual competitions are still held with a Traditional Rapper class, notably Darlington in March (recent winners have been Addison, High Spen and Stone Monkey), and at Whitby in April, where the Rapper class runs alongside the Traditional Men's Longsword.

The strongest competition is D.E.R.T. (Dancing England Rapper Tournament), which is held at venues around the country and, fortu-
nately, not at regular intervals. Rapper teams compete or exhibit in various classes, drink beer, spy on each other, spread vitriol about the judges, get rival musicians drunk or lock them in toilets, and even steal figures to use next time. In fact a great time is had by all. This must also be traditional since the accounts of all the Newcastle Tournaments have very similar stories attached.

When teams present themselves to be judged, or only to put on an exhibition without competing, they spend many hours of preparation on all aspects of their dance—coming on and off, stance, sword handling, figure execution, kit presentation, stepping, and especially timing. PRIDE is the goal.

CHANGES

"Why are there only five dancers in a rapper set? Because you can't tie a proper lock with four"

—Freddie Forster, High Spen Blue Diamonds

The dance has always (until the dread hand of printed tradition) been in a state of change, and the written descriptions can be interpreted in many ways. Some features of the dance have been changed deliberately, others have developed to suit changing contexts. Every feature has an effect on the others:

- Features from the older dance changed and changed again;
- Cementation steel replaced brass;
- Spring steel replaced the poorer cementation steel;
- Stepping developed from the local clog tradition;
- Music and the 6/8 jigs Tempo came from the Tyneside Irish connections with the publications of Kerr's Viola Tunes;
- Somebody had the nous to tumble and splendid gymnastics followed;
- Some amazingly inventive brains produced increasingly complicated static and rotational figures;
- Competitions drove the need for smooth, sharp execution.

The needs of time-conscious T.V. producers and programmes have helped bring about a well-paced, dramatic, and above all exciting performance. (An audience can just about cope with five minutes—T.V. needs much less.)

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It could be proposed that current ideologies and lifestyles have prompted changes to the rapper bigger than any so far.

With the demise or at least the emasculation of the British coal mining industry, whole colliery communities have disappeared. The Durham and Northumberland coal field has almost gone, but its legacy of hard times and hard enjoyment remains within the collective "geordie" mentality. Very few regions of Britain have such a strong inner identity and the rapper dance has been described as the reflection of it. Rapper is skillful, pacey, entertaining and laced with rough humour. These are seen as the hallmarks of the dance and echo the characteristics of the region.

Across this side of the pond, in England, teams who perform only the short sword dance and make it their raison d'être have mostly, whether deliberately or no, inherited the accepted wisdoms of the old diehard rapper men. They dance with an intensity and dedication that puts them into the limelight and raises their value as performers. For the most part teams in this genre are performing for and as a part of a community.

Performers who dilute the traditions they come across are gradually reducing regional identities and philosophies into a mush designed to prop egos. For too many, the lure of border, Cotswold, north west, molly and longsword becomes irresistible and the combined performances are presentations of what can best be described as bumbledom. There are many sides who purvey what is basically rubbish because they apply no critical facility nor do they bother to look deeper than surface action.

The same seems to apply to sides in the U.S. The difference between dedicated sword sides and all-purpose combinations is obvious and although the author has only seen some of the performances on video, there is enough evidence and two-way communication to confirm the thesis that dedicated teams produce the best rapper.

The short sword sides who understand the tradition and dance as if they follow the philosophy have a distinct edge on the teams who muddle along and go for the cheap'n cheerful (and usually long-winded) performances.

The best sides west of the big pond would do very well in the competitions.

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Douglas Kennedy, a performer with the EDSS “staff” demonstration team, who traveled with Cecil Sharp as he spread the word of traditional dance, was uncomfortable with the rapper. “Sharp had become dulled to the atmosphere and underlying power...” Kennedy went on to say that the staff team performances, which they presented throughout England, “for long remained pedestrian.” When he finally met the real teams, “I was stunned at the outset, remaining in a daze...”

If more dancers had shared Kennedy’s gestalt, the subsequent rubbish from morris sides and beyond might well have been avoided. During the rise in folklore’s popularity following Sharp’s publications, rapper was seen as just another different dance to show and some very unsuitable people and groups began to go through the motions, clumsily performing short sword.

In his advice to teachers, Anthony Barrand highlights features—“affordances”—that affect a side learning a dance. Elements such as room size and shape are included. In the case of teachers of rapper, a consideration of dancer shape and size and a look into each individual’s psyche might well be included. (IQ, EQ or no Q? There’s a question.)

In the U.K. there are some nice people in the dance world who really should be kept in a locked box or restrained in chains when they feel the urge to represent our traditions to an unsuspecting (and all-believing) public. Is there a similar problem in the States?

WHAT IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION?
There is a fine line between being wonderfully imaginative and creative and adapting figures—or purposely inventing a whole new approach to an old idea. In the U.K. teams are busy inventing figures, and movements that mostly fit the style that is perceived as being rapper. Of course there are many new variations and some are definitely worth forgetting. The effect of the competitions is noticeable in that generally performances are shorter and slicker, unless the particular arena calls for more fooling—another area undergoing change.


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The approach by U.S. teams seems to be different. Observable developments are large movements, repeated simple gestures, borrowings from other dance types and lots of choreographed fooling which tend to make performances longer.

Changes in the way that some teams in the U.S. regard the rapper are also acting as a catalyst. Figures such as Sling Shot represent a simplified movement that almost promotes the Henry Ford ideal...

"And this tradition will start tomorrow."
My Master's thesis was about Ring O'Bells, the first women's morris team in America. The thesis was based primarily on oral history interviews. While talking to the early members of the team, I found that several of them remembered John Hodgkin fondly as their first hobby. John's daughter Meg Lippert put me in touch with him, and we did a 45-minute long telephone interview. Of course I tried to keep the focus on Ring O'Bells, but he made so many interesting digressions that I finally gave up, and encouraged him to just talk about whatever he remembered. By the time I interviewed him, he was no longer fully ambulatory, and I believe he had had more than one stroke. He had not been around the morris community in some time, and I think because of these factors, in some cases his sense of how long ago some things happened was a bit inaccurate.

For publication here, I have omitted references to Ring O'Bells except where necessary to give context to John's words. As usual, later corrections or comments are set in square brackets, as are 3 ellipses to indicate a cut in the text. Three ellipses without brackets indicate a hesitation in speech. I have also changed the order somewhat to make it more chronological. John's voice is in plain text, mine in italics.

Meg [Lippert, John's daughter] told me that she did her first morris dance when she was 6 or 7 in your living room.

That's true.

So you must have gotten involved in morris, and the whole Country Dance Society, a very long time ago?

Well, [I started dancing when I was 10 years old, in England.]

Oh! Really?

And I danced at school. I didn't dance morris then, I only danced country. And I didn't dance morris in England at all, I have danced, more recently, in England, when I went over for my own enjoyment, on a vacation trip. I took my morris costume [. . .] and I did go to the Morris Ale, at . . . Oh, dear, I forget the name of it. [Thaxted] And I did dance with various morris teams, both in the Cotswold coun-

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try—I danced with Bampton, and I danced with Headington. And I danced with a couple of the London teams. One of the London teams were very friendly, and they took me around on a couple of their tours. Which was nice of them. I droved with them.

That sounds like fun.

But in America, I had taught country dancing in Ohio, when I taught school; I taught in a country day school there. And that was the first place I ever taught country dancing. I simply remembered it from my days of dancing in school. I also danced with the Cambridge team. [...] In Cambridge, England, [...] They had a country dance group [The "Round"], and I danced in that group. That was the group that wrote the Apted Book.

Oh! Really.

And I danced with some of them. And I danced at Cecil Sharp House in—while I was still in England. And then when I came over—when I moved to Philadelphia, I danced with Walter Gopock in Rose Valley [...] And I danced with a group there, and it was that group [that] attended the Christmas Festivals in New York. Back in New York, [in an armory], and then I founded my own group in Philadelphia. And after that, we used to go up every year, to the Christmas Festival, as a team. So I danced in a good many Christmas Festivals in New York. But even then, it was almost all country dancing. I did teach a little morris, to my country dance group, but we didn't have a team, and we, occasionally, when we demonstrated, we'd do one morris dance, in among all our country dance demonstrations. And perhaps one sword dance, too. We often did a sword dance, too.

Do you remember which morris dance you did?

[...]. "Bean Setting" was one that we frequently did. And I guess we did "Rigs O'Marlow," too. And we liked the stick dances. So I think those two were the two we mainly did. And as I said, it was just the Headington dances. And I don't remember which handkerchief dance we did, for Headington, but we did one handkerchief dance. [...] We thought that the stick tapping was a little more spectacular than the handkerchief waving.

Yeah. [...] So, I'm calling to talk to you about Ring O'Bells. It was the first lady's team, in America, and I guess there were—I'm really not sure whether there were ladies' teams in England or not [...] And it was ... started in New York, where they had a team in
New York, that was largely based [on] girls who had been at Pine-woods. So it was a ... a—really a result of Pinewoods, more than of NY, although there were morris classes in New York, in those days. Those were mixed classes.

They weren't quite so ... insistently male, in the morris dance teams, in those days. The Pinewoods Morris Men had started, and did have a ... a clause in their constitution, that they had to be all male. So they were a one-sex team. [...] The Greenwich Men were mostly from the cross classes, and they were dancing in the classes, in New York, and the women were dancing in the same classes, and they decided they wanted a team too. I think they were primarily ... connected with the Greenwich Men [...]. So it was the girls who had been dancing in the New York, Morris classes, with the—most of the Greenwich Men, who decided they wanted to form a team.

 [...] you were [Ring O' Bells'] hobby horse for a number of years, weren't you?

Yes.

How did that end up coming about?

Well, they—I ... was fairly close to my daughter then, and I guess I was very interested in the team [...] well, as the treasurer of the Society, I had been in on a lot of the ... a lot of the inside operations. I was a member of the Pinewoods Morris Men. I also did do a hobby horse for the Greenwich Men. [...] The hobby horse costume was primarily kept in the camp Office. And as I was an officer, I always had access to that Office, anyway. So it was easy for me to stop in at the office and get the costume. So when they wanted to ... to dance out in Central Park, or wherever else, they would often let me know, and I would [come] as the hobby horse, and since I had hobbyed with both the Greenwich Men and the Pinewoods Men, I was fairly expert at explaining the dance to the bystanders, and at collecting money. So I guess they were happy to have a man there, to do the collecting, and to be there as well.

[...] My first morris was in 1937, in Pinewoods, when Douglas Kennedy was over. And he was over, and there weren't enough men in camp, to make up a full side, so they threw me into the Advanced Morris class, although I'd never done any morris. So I never had any elementary classes. And I really am a bad morris dancer. (laughter)

But since they had to have a morris side, a morris team, to demonstrate in the public performances they put on at Pinewoods, they
put me into the Advanced class, and then, when they actually demonstrated, Douglas danced in my place. So I was in the class, but I was not in the demonstration team. They had five other men, and Douglas Kennedy as the six-man team. But in subsequent years, I did usually dance in the advanced class, and I ... I also started doing the hobby with the Greenwich Men, and with the Pinewoods Men, and since, as I say, I had had some experience in the two or three years before Ring O' Bells was formed, and since I had danced with them all, frequently, in the New York classes, at Metropolitan Duane, I rather naturally attached to them, when they started going out from there, and dancing in public.

That's really neat. Did you go to Marlboro, to the Ale, with them? Yes. I went to the first Marlboro with them. [...] And I went to all the Marlboros for the next, oh, six or seven or eight years, [then I] stopped going.

Did you stop because you moved away from New York, or ... I don't remember whether the first year I didn't go was after I'd had my first stroke or not, I only moved away from New York this year. [...] So I did go for seven or eight years anyway, but two or three years ago ... I guess I was not feeling too well, and ... I forget if that was the year I went abroad. I think maybe I was abroad on a cruise the first year I didn't go ... But now, of course, I can't do morris anymore, so I ... I completely eliminated that. I used to also go up for the Harvard Tours of the Pinewoods Morris Men, and dance hobby with them. And I was there for, I guess, six, seven, eight, ten years.

 [...] Well, do you remember much about the ROB [Ring O' Bells], how they danced? And what you thought of their dancing? They—they did Headington, yes. Ilmington, I don't remember, they probably did. I think, in those days, one tended not to be quite so ... single-tradition, in the teams. I don't think that, even then, Greenwich was concentrating on Fieldtown [...] fairly early on, they started doing only Fieldtown. I don't know whether they are now doing anything else or not. But for a while, they were—they wouldn't do anything except Fieldtown. And they—I think in the early years, a couple of times, they danced out with Ring O'Bells, so they had a joint ROB/Fieldtown tour, in New York. But more recently, some of the Greenwich Men started to feel very, very strongly about women dancing, and would have nothing whatsoever to do with ROB.

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I wonder why they changed their minds. I think it was probably one or two particular individuals. And I don’t know whether it was [...] Jim Morrison or not. It may have been. Because I know he was—he has been quite adamant on that score recently. And they may have [been influenced by] Jim Morrison when they went on joint tours. I just don’t remember [...] and I don’t think he’s now the only one who feels that way, I think some of the others feel that way too. But I think not all of them do. [...] And of course, in those days, we weren’t quite so insistent on staying in our teams, whenever we danced. I think that’s probably developed a little more recently, as people like to dance only in their own teams, and keep their teams pure, and not have visitors dancing with them, or pickup people dancing with their teams. Although I know some teams do. But some certainly do not. And sometimes when I danced hobby in Marlboro, there were some teams that did not want the hobby, when they did their dancing, so when I was out on a tour, I would also check with the leader of the team, whether he wanted me to dance hobby, while they were dancing, or stay—stick to the background while they were dancing. And ROB always accepted me as a hobby, and Greenwich normally did too, but some of the other teams did not. Sometimes they would say, “You can hobby during this dance, but not during the next one,” or something of that sort. So, that happened too. Particularly during the Marlboro [Ale], where I would usually try to pick a local tour that was going into the slightly more populous area, so that I would have a bigger crowd to work. Some of the—some of the Marlboro groups would be dancing with three or four spectators. And it’s pretty hard to hobby with only that few—that small an audience.

Yes. Did you pay particular attention to little children? Oh, yes. Yes, always. Yeah. Where did you learn how to hobby? Did you teach yourself? I just taught (?) myself. I enjoyed explaining it to people. Because that’s one of the things I think I do fairly well [...] And since as I say, I’ve got a good voice, and have done a lot of teaching, I was able to announce things to the crowd, if it was any sort of size, and I [...] did like to go out in the big crowds. We danced one time in [... the little

1. In the early years of the Marlboro Ale, during the show dance stands, each team performed two dances in a row.
street between Grand Central ... [Vanderbilt?] ... There was a tremendous crowd. It was very, very difficult to worm my way through the crowd, particularly in my costume. I had to sort of hold it a little sideways, in order to get through people. So ... it's sort of fun doing that, and collecting money. People are usually very generous. I seem to have a certain (knack? touch?), so that I was always quite a lucrative collector. And I probably collected hundreds and hundreds of dollars, over my many years of hobbying.

One of the dancers told me that they felt that if you hadn't been along, they never would have collected anything! (laughter) Well, maybe that's true, too, because some people are a little—a little ... more bashful about asking for money than I was ... What did you tell people when they asked you ... what's going on here, what's this dancing?, what sort of things did you tell them? Well, I normally told them it was ... English morris dancing, that was dated way, way back, and was done in England primarily for good luck, and to bring up the crops, for good weather. And if we had good weather, I'd point it out. I'd say, "See! See what a nice day it is? And it's very good luck to give some money to the hobby horse. That will bring you good luck," and ... and then when there was a reasonable crowd, I would go around saying, "I'll accept silver, or copper, or paper. Or even credit cards." (laughter) And I'd name out the various credit cards. "We take Visa, we take Mastercharge, we take American Express," and so on. Of course, we never did. But they would give me—they would give me ... money, anyway. And then, whenever they got toward the last dance, the—most teams finished off with a ... that long ... Bonny Green? Bonny Green. "Bonny Green Garters." Most teams finished off with that, so when they—when they announced that, I would say, "This is the last dance. Your last chance to contribute." And I would go around, making a special effort, and then finally I would join in, and I almost always would dance the "Bonny Green Garters," including capering in the hobby horse costume, which ... which was quite fun. I had to be a little careful, because if I wasn't careful, sometimes I capered with the bag, too, and I would spill money out, and occasionally I would do that, and then of course everybody around helped pick it up and gave it back to me. So, it didn't really matter if I did spill a little. But that wasn't very usual. I only managed to spill it once or twice.

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That's wonderful. Well, if somebody asked you, what does morris mean, did you...
I always told them that there were various—various explanations, that nobody was quite sure, but some people felt it was Moorish, because at one time, they blacked their faces when they danced. But I didn't go into very much more detail than that. You didn't have time to do a lot. And sometimes I had hard outs. And that was very helpful when I did. [...] I usually ran out of them anyway. I never made up my own. I always counted on the team having them. And some teams did, and some didn't.

OK. What else shall I ask you? Do you remember much about specific incidences with the Ring O'Bells? [...] We did dance outside pubs, and then inside pubs [...] I don't remember specifically which ones. We danced outside Zabar's, which was a fairly good place, except that there wasn't anywhere [near] enough sidewalk room. That's the problem in New York. All the sidewalks aren't really broad enough to be... convenient for dancing. Some of the ones in the Village are pretty good. But there are an awful lot that are much too narrow. And so we had to be careful about where we went.

Do you remember when it was that you stopped going around with ROB? I don't think I went so much, after their... tour to England. I may have gone out once or twice. I didn't stop all at once, and I didn't go regularly before I stopped. I went rather intermittently, and the intermittence got less and less frequent. And they stopped telling me when they were going to go out, and if I didn't get told, I didn't go. So I think it was—it was primarily that they stopped feeling a need of having me around. I think Kate (Charles) started doing more collecting. Some of the other girls started collecting too. So they felt that it was not quite so essential to have me as a collector. And so I gradually just slacked off. I didn't go after I stopped going out with the Greenwich Men, too. I guess I was getting older and creaky then, anyway. (laughter) This would have been around 1980?

Probably

2. A fairly up-scale market in Manhattan.

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At my request, Meg Lippert later did another interview with her father, but since it was mainly about his experiences with CDSS, and as a teacher of country dance, I have not quoted any of it here.

The Oral History project was begun about 1989, when I was studying morris under the direction of Dr. Tony Barrand at Boston University. I have collected interviews from a wide variety of people who have been integral to the burgeoning of traditional English and American dance and music in the States. The beginnings of this project were partially funded by grants from the Country Dance and Song Society of America, the Country Dance Society—Boston Centre, and the Bay Area Country Dance Society.

John Hodgkin, English and Scottish country dancer, formerly of Philadelphia and New York City, a long time CDSS supporter and our treasurer for many years, died on August 2, 1994. English and Family Weeks’ campers will long remember him as the Hobby Horse (see above), and many dancers will be indebted to him for his helpfulness when they were beginning. (Courtesy of the CDSS News)
Longsword Dances from Traditional and Manuscript Sources: as Collated and Notated by Ivor Allsop

Reviewed by Stephen D. Corrsin


Two outstanding teachers of British dances have collaborated on this highly readable collection. Ivor Allsop has been influential in North America, chiefly through his classes at Pinewoods Camp in the 1980s, as well as of course in England, where he has served as Squire and Archivist of the Morris Ring. Anthony G. Barrand has also been a leading figure in teaching English dances in North America. Barrand has now edited, enlarged upon, and published Allsop's extensive working notations of British dances, and the result belongs in any performer's, or aficionado's, collection.

Comparison might obviously be made to Lionel Bacon's Handbook of Morris Dancing (1974), which served for years as a sort of holy writ to Cotswold morris "revivalists." Nowadays Bacon's work seems rather an historical document of the "revival" of twenty-odd years ago, or, more positively, as a rich source of useful ideas and materials; in any case not as "the canon" any more.

But in fact the comparison would be deceptive. Allsop and Barrand's collection includes Allsop's own teaching notations for twenty-four "traditional" English longsword dances; the Spen Valley team's reworking of one (Helmsley), showing how the "traditional" material might be usefully revised; two cases in which only play texts are known (Hunton, Revesby), and one in which there is not even that much (Wigginton); the Papa Stour dance, which coming from the Shetlands is not English at all, though it is usually bracketed with English longsword; and one dance that may be a twentieth-century pastiche in the guise of "traditional" material—the White Boys dance from the Isle of Man. The specific notations include background material, music, figures plus diagrams, and texts of related plays.

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This should not be seen as an attempt to establish a printed canon. In fact, the compilatory nature of this book reminds one, more than anything else, of an academic festschrift, a collective volume offering homage to a beloved of influential teachers. Besides Allsop's own dance notations, there are many editor's notes and comments by Barrand, who also includes "sections of a transcript of one evening's conversation with him [Allsop] to give a taste of the stories which illuminate his view of Longsword" (p. x). Additional materials which add greatly to the value of this book appear in the appendices. "Appendix 3: The Design of Swords for Longsword Dancing," which should cause any dancer to think seriously about the varied nature of the sword surrogates used and how they affect the dancing, includes: "a series of graphical representations" of the great variety of dance sword surrogates known to have been used; "The Design of Swords for Longsword Dancing," a thoughtful piece from Trevor Stone's "occasional broadsheet," Rattle Up, My Boys; and a 1945 article by Melusine Wood, "Some Notes on Trade Tools and Ritual Dance"—a dated work whose specific notions range from odd to bizarre, but which serves the important purpose of showing that all sorts of tools could conceivably have been the basis for the sword surrogates. Rhett Krause's expanded study, "Traditional and Invented Sword Locks," in "Appendix 3: The Shapes of Locks," also opens up a world of possibilities for anyone with an eye to creative developments in the dances.

One of the most important functions of a review is to point out ways in which a book succeeds and can be learned from, or be used by its readers. Reviewers who concentrate on riding their own hobby horse or even on settling scores rarely say much that is useful. That said, it is also true that no book is ever wholly satisfactory. In this case, Allsop's and Barrand's work would have profited from more thorough bibliographic editing, or a clearer notion of the possible uses of a bibliography. The "Bibliography of Sources by Location" (Appendix 4) is chiefly a re-statement of the "Sources of Information" which appear with each dance, and thus serves little purpose. More useful would have been a wide-ranging bibliography of additional material, or a bibliographical or "going to the sources" sort of essay, for instance. This would have helped readers better understand Allsop's teaching approach, or enabled them to proceed further into the manuscript and other sources on their own. Another bothersome point is the use of that vexed and vexing word "traditional" in the
Many of the sources Allsop uses are in fact published ones, some fairly recent, which in turn draw from a variety of other materials. The word "traditional" has been used too often in the dance "revival" more as a weapon against one's rivals than a useful term, and has become so loaded with extra meanings as to be more a distraction than anything else. It would have been more helpful—and more accurate—to say something like "From Published and Unpublished Sources" in the title.

All your questions won't be answered by this book; you won't just pop it open and whip through two dozen dances. But there is a great deal of material here, food for thought, something to whet the appetite of any dancer or team; plenty of chances to be "gob-smacked," to borrow the author's and editor's expression (p. x). Teams looking for performance material should consider going through the book and seeing what they like, what works for them, and what new ideas they come up with as a result. This is a conclusion with which the author and editor, who display respectful though not worshipful attitudes toward the material, would agree, in all likelihood. Finally, it is simply an enjoyable book to read, a good book to curl up with on evenings during slow points in the sword dance season.
In response to inquiries made to members of the Minnesota Traditional Morris at the 1996 Midwest Morris Ale, in Hell, Michigan, notation and music for the Ragtime Morris Dance is here submitted for publication.

The inception of this dance lies with Steve Parker of Ramsey's Braggarts, who remarked that American Morris, as a living tradition, should dance to American music; ragtime, for example. I took him at his word. After working on two versions of a dance to Joplin's "The Entertainer," I found that "The Ragtime Dance" was a snappier tune, and offered more possibilities for "pushing the morris envelope."

This dance was first performed at the 1992 Midwest Morris Ale, in Bloomington, Indiana.

**THE RAGTIME MORRIS DANCE**

Choreographed by Rudd Rayfield

Music by Scott Joplin.

Field Town Styling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>Tag</td>
<td>Field Town backstep tag on last phrase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Foot Up</td>
<td>Standard Field Town Foot Up, with Galleys, end facing across the set. Sidestep R, Sidestep L, Galley R around to face partner. Half Hey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Cross the Set

Sidestep R, Dbl. Step, Sidestep L, Dbl. Step crossing the set, passing R shoulders with partner (forming the set into a line on Sidestep L), and end facing out.

Sidestep R, Sidestep L facing out, Galley R around to face across.

Half Hey

Sidestep R, Sidestep L, Galley R around to face across.

(Note: The step sequence for the first part of “Cross the Set,” up to the Half Hey, is the same as that for the second part of the chorus of the Field Town song “Nutting Girl.”)

B Rounds

Repeat entire “Cross the Set” figure given above to return home.


Standard Field Town Half Rounds returning home, reform the set.

Sidestep R, Sidestep L, Galley R around to face across.

Sidestep R, Sidestep L, Galley R around to face across.


8 Plain Capers in a Half Hey figure returning home, reform set, facing across.

Sidestep R, Sidestep L, Galley R around to face across.

4 Fore Capers in a Half Hey figure.

4 Upright Capers in a Half Hey figure returning home.

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Right handie waved once, briskly, by each dancer in turn, to the music, in rapid sequence: 1, 3, 5, 6, 4, 2. Brief pause.

#2 Galley R in place, no turn.

Right handie waved once, as before, in sequence: 2, 4, 6, 5, 3, 1. Brief pause.

#1 Galley R in place, no turn.

2, 4, 6, 5, 3, 1. Brief pause.

Repeat "Waves and Galleys" figure given above, except that the sequence is:

1, 4, 2, 3, 5. #5 Galley R in place, no turn.

5, 3, 1, 2, 4, 6. #6 Galley R in place, no turn.

Standard Field Town Whole Hey.

1: 2 Dbl Steps, starting on L foot, Sidestep R facing up.
2: 2 Fore capers, changing direction.
3: 8 Sidesteps L in a tight circle
5: Galley L. 2 Plain Capers, Galley R. 2 Plain Capers.

Then all together dance in place, facing up:

2, 4, 6: Sidestep R. Sidestep L. Galley R around to face up.
1, 3, 5: Sidestep L. Sidestep R. Galley L around to face up.
2 Plain Capers. Step-Jump.
Editors' Note: Rudd supplied us with a piano score of Scott Joplin's "Ragtime Dance", which would have been difficult to print legibly here. We considered reducing the score to one melody line, but much of the mood of the piece is derived from harmonies (Gary Schulte, who plays this on fiddle for MTM's performances of this dance, is a masterful violinist and skillfully incorporates the harmonies into his performance). Accordingly we think it best to refer interested parties to the original score so that they can work out their own arrangement for their particular instrument and style of playing. "Rag-Time Dance" may be found in the Complete Works of Scott Joplin and, according to the New York Public Library, is not in copyright (although arrangements of the piece may be).

After the four-bar introduction, parts A, B and C are each 16 measures long, and each repeats as indicated in the score. Parts D, E, and F are each 8 bars long, and also repeat for the dance as in the original.
Dear All,

You seem to have succeeded in awakening the Dinosaurs at this side of the Atlantic with Tony Barrand’s article in a recent AMN.

My view has for some time been that the American tradition is to change!

There are enough teams in the UK doing slavish copies of what they perceive as tradition—surely with such a creative bent the people of the USA can do better than to mimic UK teams?

I expounded this attitude (in a little more detail) to some US sword teams when I visited the States on a teaching tour some years ago. I was delighted to see one of those teams, Orion from Boston, had done as I suggested and created their own dance, “North Shirley Volunteers”; which they brought to the Sword Spectacular last May. And what a super dance it is!

Best wishes,
Trevor Stone

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Following the success of the first international Sword Spectacular in 1996, there is going to be a second to be held in Whitby from the 21st to the 25th of May 1998.

By way of a first description, here is an extract from The NUT:

"The organisers, who are keen to provide greater opportunities for participating dance teams to see each others' performances, have already received registrations from over twenty UK teams—both longsword and rapper—together with overseas groups from the Czech Republic, Belgium, France and the USA.

"They have made a particular point of inviting teams which were not at the 1996 Sword Spectacular, although some of those who were at Scarborough last year will be back.

"A small number of places are still available at the Festival, and a reserve list will be maintained so that any groups which drop out can be replaced.

"Other sword dancers will also be welcomed to take part in Festival events, workshops, ceilidhs, etc., both as individuals and as teams. Wherever possible, arrangements will be made for these teams to give exhibition performances in addition to the main programme."

The organisers are keen to receive more applications from teams, especially those in North America, and there are still five places available for teams from the UK.

If you are interested, you can find out more detailed information on the home page for the Sword Spectacular, which is located at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/~W-n~i28220/~~0rd/swordsp.html>.
Thanks!

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