The American Morris Newsletter

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438 N.E. 4th St.
Minneapolis, MN 55413

a publication devoted solely to
English Morris & Sword Dancing

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NAME
TEAM OR AFFILIATION

ADDRESS
ZIP CODE
From The Editors

As Volume VI Number 3 of AMN came together we sat back to look over this volume with some satisfaction—and a twinge of chagrin. The readership appears to be steadily growing and team news is arriving on a more regular basis. That is increasingly important as we serve as a communication link among North American teams, especially for that growing percentage of teams without the advantage of geographic proximity to keep them abreast of things by word-of-mouth. What causes us to wince a bit, however, is the degree to which our pages have been dominated by Minnesota material this year. We wish to dispel any sense that we intend to substitute “Minnesota” for “American” in our title and we want to use this opportunity to renew our call for letters, articles of a scholarly, humorous or expository nature, songs and dances and parodies of songs and dances, recaps of Morris events, artwork and cartoons. Some material of this nature has begun to arrive and we intend to capitalize on it in re-upping our format in the months to come. Among other items, we intend to reprint material from back issues of the English publication Morris Matters which we think will be of interest to American readers.

It is also not difficult to tell by the variety of type faces and our late publication this Fall that it has been an unusual chore getting time to put the newsletter out. We need to thank Lynn M. Dennis who has stepped in to co-edit AMN while Jim Brickwedde and Laurie Levin are on leave in England. (Jim will be sending periodic reports on Morris happenings there.) Lynn’s assistance has been critical at a time when Steve Parker is absorbed with finishing some academic work and has been a bountiful source of new ideas for things to come. Denise Fansa, Anne Benning and Rick Mohr also deserve plaudits for their continuing help with production.

Bluemont Morris (Berryville, Va)

We number 25, practice Monday nights at Bluemont school, have about as many women as men, we are dancing mostly as separate men’s and women’s sides, but dance together some of the time during practice (and always two together). The men are mostly working in Longbough, the women on Ilmington, but most of us can dance both traditions. The highlight of our spring season was our trip to the Marlboro Ale. For the Fall, we had our own ale, the third annual. Participating teams were Albemarle, Laurinburg, Knebworth, Rock Creek, Happy Bottom, Rock City, Lenoir, Forest City, Delia’s Head, Tidewater, Thames Valley, Grosvenor, Thames Valley, and Forest City. Teams danced in some communities which never had seen Morris dancing before: warm receptions were received in places like Pot House, Mountain, Lovettsville (they did), and the Loudoun Hospital Long-Term Care Unit. There was general agreement to meet in 1983 for the Fourth Annual E-90ale. Incidentally, it is not true that the name will be changed to Bremont. Despite the amount of beer consumed.

Last spring, Howard ‘Sage’ Besse resigned as squire and Dick Diercksen was elected as new squire. The baton passed to Claire Ross. Foreman chores continue to be shared by Leah Robinson, Warren Hofstra, and Howard Besse.
Ladies' Pleasure Morris (Chicago, IL)

Ladies' Pleasure is busily planning our new season. We will celebrate our third anniversary in October, and hope we are getting better as well as older. We will be starting a new tradition, recruiting, and repairing our kit. (The last suggestion, leather, we declined against because it is A, too expensive, B, too hot, and C, too kinky.) Erna-Lynne Bogus, an experienced dancer and forever, and I will be teaching, and the squire's duties will fall into other, fresher, hands following our upcoming election for that office.

Since the Ann Arbor Ale, many of us have been out of town, vacationing and visiting friends. We did find time, however, to take part in a few short tours for fun, and were featured performers at the Fox River Folk Festival September 5th on beautiful wooded island.

We will be appearing at the Masonic Lodge Fall Festival again on September 26th. We enjoyed dancing there last year, and have reason to believe our audience enjoyed our show too - it's a great place to sing! In the works for next season: we will be assisting a worthy cause by ushering the "Look For Me Song" concerts to benefit that excellent folk music magazine. Thank you, Emily Friedman, for the invitation.

Kate Early, (soon to be squire) Squire, 5651 South Caryland, Chicago, IL 60637

Oak Applee Morris (Clearville, PA)

We are not doing anything different than what we've been doing for the past ten years. However, we do feel compelled to make a contribution to Ann's new recipe column. Try this one on your next tour....

Baked Brownies

1/4 cup each of chopped dates, figs, almonds and peanut.

Dried together 1 teaspoon black peppercorns, 1 whole nutmeg, 4 slices of cinnamon, and 1 teaspoon cardamom. Add a healthy bunch of America's largest untaxed cash crop.

Mix everything with a cup of sugar, dissolved in two tablespoons of boiling water and roll into small balls. We cooking is necessary.

According to our source, The Alice R. Toklos Cookbook, "more effective if taken with large quantities of hot mint tea," but they also go well with beer. Eat more than two and you won't need the Minnesota hay to rotate your set VP.

And may we use this space to ask whatever happened to good old English place names? Please, America, no more morris teams named after fruits, vegetables, flowers, or trees.

Larry Shute, Route One, Box 63, Clearville, PA 15535

Oak Applee Morris (Madison, WI)

We've been dancing Morris in Madison for four years now. The first two years saw frequent turnover in personnel...suffering through practices with 4-6 people...summing the tunes...seems we'd rather forget. It seems that our turning point was when most of a batch of rookies stuck with it. Just at that time, a couple of healthy dancers moved to town and had lots of energy and talent to offer the team.

As we danced around town, the citizenry gradually realized what Morris dancing was about. The person I talked to at health services about thin spints said, "Oh, Morris dancers. I saw you at the Farmers' Market." I look forward to the day when we no longer find ourselves explaining, "No, we aren't Irish (green vests are a problem that way) and no, we aren't Santa's reindeer. Though I heard they are looking for some new sleigh music." When MIA and Ann Arbor Morris found out that Morris was alive and struggling here in Madison, we started getting little nuggets like "how long would he have been attending of Morris teams? It's the most logical place between Minnesota and Ann Arbor." We started to think about it. Most of us had never seen anyone else dance morris. We certainly didn't have the funds to travel. So, the invitations were sent. Seven teams said they'd attend the '81 Morris Ale. We really had to go through with it! Everyone arrived at the campground, except one Dan Apple who didn't know where it was. We had a great time, so when people came to us with suggestions for what we could do differently next year, we thought, "next year?"
"Next year" has come and gone already. We had even more fun at this year's Ale, It's great to get to know other dancers and swap dance, sing, and party. Already we are looking forward to NOT hosting the '83 Midwest Ale, and to being guests in Ann Arbor.

Now for our current status... Our current officers are Karen Ages, Squire; Dave Titus, Foreman; Mark Fulton, Squire; and Dale Tate and Nina Stancher, Rag. The big plans for this winter are finally working out on our lobby and teaching Headington to our exciting new crop of dancers. This fall we also said goodbye to Doug Levey, who is in the jungles of Costa Rica studying birds. We welcome letters and visitors (c/o O.T.S., La Selva, Universidad de Costa Rica, Ciudad Universitaria, Costa Rica). We gladly welcome Ingrid Johnson back from a year living in Israel and Sweden. Two new dancers from elsewhere have joined us: John Scott, formerly of The Ancient Men, and Sue Gealor, formerly of Strong Morris of Maine.

We practice Wednesday nights. Come visit if you are in the area.

Karen Ages, Squire, 2202 Field Street, Madison, WI 53713 (608) 256-0772

Thomas Valley Morris (London, Ontario, Canada)

A very satisfying year and a bit wisdom I communicated our existence to the AFN leadership. Now, as then, we are essentially a Field Town team. retrospective comparison of this single-tradition experiment with previous experiences of multi-tradition dancing convinces several of us that it's the way to go to develop a really satisfying, consistent team style. A year's culmination, however, has led to the decision to incorporate a second tradition, Bucknell, since its aesthetics is so distinct from that of Field Town as to offer little danger of cross interference. But no more than two at a time....

Notable good times have been had at the two Forest City (London) alas, at Bluestone, Victoria, at Manchester and at Toronto, and we are looking forward to this year's festival at Bluestone again. Up here in this foreign land we have often heard of going-on south of the border for late to develop, and we plan to solve these problem next year by putting the Thomas Valley Travelling Morris and Party on the road. Your plans are welcome as you, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed for an 8-10 day trip around the northeast. Some of you should be hearing from me soon....

Paul Handford, Zoology Dept., University of Western Ontario, London, Ont., Canada N6A 3G7

Wild Onion Morris (Chicago, Ill.)

As a result of our two recent annual meetings, the Chicago Wild Onion Men's Morris Team has elected me as new squire. For anyone who wishes to contact our team, my address is:

Andrew Bullen, 414 Wing Lane, St. Charles, IL 60174 (312) 588-6003.

NEW TEAMS

Huntingdon Sword of Baltimore

The HS of S is beginning its first season this fall. We have performed at several events, and attended the Bluestone ale in September. We are, as far, strictly reapers, but will doubtless go on to other things later. Our leader is David Macasonic, child prodigy morris and sword dancer, formerly of Berea/Washington K. Our musicians are John Cassedy, Bill Ross, Frank Prakas, and Mark Cetta, formerly of New Haven Morris and sword. Our fast fiddler is Ken Kohnen. Visiting dancers and musicians are welcome.

Frank Prakas, 505 E. Lorraine Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21218 (301) 366-8818

Twin Senate Morris Women (Leeds, NC)

Contact person: Debbie Forth (207) 753-2154, no address available.

Swades Over Sophie Morris (Carbondale, CO)

Contact person: Ronald H. Geering, Squire, 819 South Second, Carbondale, CO 81623
Minnesota-on-Mississippi
an English-American Morris Dance Tradition
choreographed for The Sells of the North
James C. Brickwood

Author's Comments
The information published in ANY VOL. VIII no. 2 (July 1985) and in this issue, VOL. X no. 3 (October 1985), describing the Minnesota-on-Mississippi dance tradition, have been excerpted from a larger paper detailing both the project itself and its context within Morris dance history. Many terms and consistent definitions fully outlined in the original work have been edited out due to the lack of space in ANY. To clarify the information, a list of abbreviations and definitions have been compiled for the reader’s edification.

To have specific questions answered, you may contact me at the address below until 3 August, 1985.

James C. Brickwood
58 Dixon Clark Court
Canterbury Road
London N1 2HN
England

The dances are listed in a system used by Sir Lionel Bacon in A Handbook of Morris Dances. The notation system was chosen in order to be compatible with all other recent Morris dance publications of dances. The choice of adjectives and numerals used in the dance descriptions have been carefully selected to eliminate the proper quality of movements.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

L = left
R = right
cw = counterclockwise
ccw = clockwise
dbl = double
cen = center
al = at left
al = at right

LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Single Step = a common usage term to describe what Sharp calls a 4/2 and 4/3 step, and what Bacon calls a 2-step.

Double Step = a common usage term to describe what Sharp calls a 4/3 and 4/2 step, and what Bacon calls a 4-step.

Masters = a local Minnesota term to describe the line of dancers whose left shoulders are to the music; these dancers Sharp refers to as dancers 1, 3, and 5.

Apprentices = a local Minnesota term to describe the line of dancers whose right shoulders are to the music; these Sharp refers to as dancer 2, 4, and 6.

Easy Turn (easy foot) = a common usage term to describe the simplest and most direct movement. Example: if a dancer is to circle left, the "easy" turn would be a 1/4 turn to the left. In this same example, the "easy" foot would be the left foot.

Hard Turn/Cast (hard foot) = a common usage term to describe the longest or furthest effect needed to make a movement. Example: a hard turn (generally referred to as a "cast") I would be, in order to circle left, a dancer would turn over his/her right shoulder 270 degrees to face the leftward direction. In this same example, the hard foot would be to start the cast with the left foot, i.e., with the foot that is the furthest away from the direction the dancer wishes to go.

Corners = Corner 1 is 1st corner; 2 and 3 are 2nd corners; 4 and 5 are 3rd corners (using C, Sharp’s numbering system).
THE NUTTING GIRL* (Jour EFDS, 1928 - under Field Town) modified A(AB)³A

*Created in part with funding from the Minnesota Independent Choreographer's Alliance; premiered December 4,5, 1981.

Dance - OT, FO, DU, DF; HF, EF, BB, DF, WR (a handkerchief dance)

DF - oss “up the set” (leading hdk makes a big sweeping motion 1½ times around in a circle - masters, cv - apprentices, ccw)
oss “down the set” with big sweeping circles of hdk 1½ times around in a circle
½ MNM
2 fore capers
repeat entire DF

Note: “Up the set” in this dance is always where the squire is.

HERD ON THE HIIL (Traditional - English) A(AB)³A
LADY FROM PUTNEY  

There was a young lady from Putney  
Who was given to sexual gluttony.  
Warned a pious old duffer,  
"Your morals will suffer."  
"That's what you think," she said.  
"I ain't Putney."  
—John Ciardi

LADY FROM PUTNEY  

(Trickweedle '81)

Dance - OT, FU/D, DF, RD, RD, WR  
(a handkerchief dance)

DF - Loss (L hdk circles twice above head ccw)  
this step (both hduk circle twice above head; L-ccw;  
R-ccw)  
Rosa (R hdk circles twice above head ccw)  
step jump, 1/2 NNB  
repeat second half as dp
ANN would like to announce the addition of a regular feature, "In the Bag," by Arthur H. Knowles, of the Minnesota Traditional Morris Men. Many of you are familiar with Mr. Knowles, one of the more enthusiastic morris dancers in the U.S., who, when he is not dancing, is also a scholar, artist in stained glass, housepainter, and devotee of war games. Those of you who do not already know and appreciate Arthur's unique brand of humor will be, we hope, surprised and intrigued. For the rest of us—well, it's nothing more than we expected.

Rules concerning how many dancers can be carried on a team's roster were tabled again this year, as were those concerning the size of the travelling squad. In my opinion this was a mistake. Since the New Town/Minnesota gang pushed through the rule allowing wholesale substitutions between dances larger teams have had a decided and unfair advantage. Fixed rosters would also serve to curtail the dubious practice of "ringing," whereby a member of a side are smuggled into a set, even though the presently dance with other teams. Minnesota is particularly prone to this subterfuge.

The question of the status of dancers in general is another serious matter which the Squires sidestepped this year. Salaries of course are not in question. We believe that, in a free market situation, salaries will find their natural level, complaints from the "oldsters" notwithstanding, and offer a dancer has danced out his option and become a free agent, he should be able to seek out the best offer. What troubles this writer is the increasing use of "under the table" incentives, not directly connected to the price of use. Many teams have found that if they want to keep good dancers, they have to offer side benefits such as free airline tickets to exciting places like Hartford or Toronto. Trainers, doctors and physical therapists are becoming almost as common as copiers. Pinking shears and rummuses have even gone so far as to engage less skilled individuals. Nonetheless, the final outcome of this trend, we must admit that the way some dances switch teams each season is adding a new meaning to the term "traveling morris."
This year's expansion of the National Morris League to some 80 odd teams, divided into two conferences and six divisions will present some interesting match-ups. However, we can count on the more experienced teams to maintain their dominance. For an in-depth look at the perennial Central Division champs, the Minnesota Traditional Morris, this writer visited the fall training camp of the MTR in Shakopee, Minnesota.

It was rumored that this would be a rebuilding year for the MTR, and many new dancers were seen on their recent eastern exhibition tour, but as fall training continues, they look as strong as ever. The third master, Jay Hatcher, has finally finished his MD and is off theDisabled list. Tommie Goodman, a utility apprentice, was acquired as a rover from Oak Apple of Manchester. As a potential third apprentice and back-up Hobby, MTR drafted Kirk Bachler from the MDS league. Hobby is a position which has been absent at Minnesota, even since Vern Arnold left to play in the Northern Ireland League, but this year Peter Hollos has made a strong showing as First String Hobby. If his position as team representative for the dancers' union doesn't interfere, he should have a great year.

The spring draft also produced three dancers/musicians for Minnesota: Rick Prine (cornet/bagpipes), Dan Hansen (trumpet/harmonica), and Michael Ziegahn (flamenco guitar/lute). It has been rumored that some of these dancers were picked up in anticipation of a rules change which would allow the lute and trombone to be "traditional" instruments. This change is denied by MTR Squire Kuhle, but seeing Mr. Ziegahn dance "Bats High" with a lute does not convince us. Also drafted this year was Earl Peterson, who performs for high scores, beautiful women, and incredible amounts of beer guarantees the tradition of "gongoo morris" in the MTR.

The status of all-Morris fed, Nick Lethert, has been a question throughout the pre-season. It was rumored that he was holding out for a contract renegotiation, or demanding to be traded. The truth is that he simply hasn't yet recovered from his wedding party. He's now off the disabled list and back at fall training with the rest of the team.

Playboy magazine, in their pre-season poll, predicted that Minnesota will meet Marlboro in this year's Super Ale, and that Minnesota would lose. Squire Kuhle had this comment, "The computer always picks Marlboro, and they're certainly a good team. They should have won in '79 and '80 both, but they don't. Somehow, they can't quite put it together. Clutch sobriety is what we call it. No, I think that someone else will be the ABC champs - and we'll probably lose to them."

Letters to the Editor

Two things about the recent ARM I found particularly interesting. One, of course, is the report on the Minneapolis tradition. Nice to see dancers using some imagination, but (there's always a but)...

Why do people feel it necessary to go through such contortions to justify doing something like this? This whole argument about "correctness" vs. "outward", or English vs. Amercian style (whatever that is), is really goofy. Morris is a recreation, and like any such, it changes with the times. It has always done so. To invent a new style and body of dances within what we recognize as the domain of Morris is its own justification. Nor is it the first time such work (though it may be in this country), nor, I hope, will it be the last.

The other item was a real surprise, namely, to see that there's a team starting in my home town of Omaha, Nebraska. I've always been a specialist on American cultural life. That name, though, even after a few drinks, is still a little confusing. I'm alive and well. I may have to change that. If nothing else, it'll get confused with the other turbulent stream, Ookey River. (My favorite aphorism about the Missouri River has always been that it's "too thick to pour, and too thin to plow.")

Thanks to the timely arrival of the ARM, I got into town to see Mr. Woodley's Bampton team at Farnell hall yesterday. A good crowd watched, and they did a good show, along with the local sides Cheeze.

34th (Shop) Greener; 49 Row Street; Acton MA

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE MUSIC OF THE ABBEYDABY MORRIS TRADITION

by the Abbeydabry Morris Men

A four track stereo cassette tape has been produced to enable musicians to learn the tunes and for teams to practice the dances. All tracks are full length, and include "Once to Yourself". The format on this tape is the complete dancing repertoire at the time of recording. It is hoped that eventually a separate instruction book will be published to complement the tape - meaning the side is willing at any time to undertake instruction in the tradition. (Contact Club Officers.)

Copies of the tape are available from: Tim Redford; 6 Church Street; Barford St. Michael; Oxon. OX5 4UA. Cheques for £3.40 (inc. PLP) payable to the Abbeydabry Morris Men. (Editors' Note: the editors of ARM received word from Abbeydabry via George Utter, that these checks should be in pounds to avoid the exchange fees charged by their bank - approximately $5.62.)