

# **THE HISTORIES OF THE MORRIS IN BRITAIN**

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Edited by Michael Heaney

## **Morris and Masque at the Jacobean Court**

Anne Daye

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Anne Daye

## Morris and Masque at the Jacobean Court

'Our pleasure likewise is, that after the end of divine service our good people be not disturbed, letted or discouraged from any lawful recreation, such as dancing, either men or women...nor from having of May-games, Whitsun-ales, and Morris-dances'. This *Declaration* of 1618 was ordered to be read out in all parish churches, by King James I and the bishops, to counter Puritan Sabbatarianism, and was reiterated in 1633 by his son Charles I as *The Book of Sports*.<sup>1</sup> As Lockyer, the political historian observes, the *Declaration* demonstrated James's 'instinctive feeling for traditional values'.<sup>2</sup> This paper will present evidence of the function and appreciation of morris dancing in Jacobean court culture. These examples will also, I hope, add to our understanding of the morris dance in the early seventeenth century. I will discuss a little-known but telling performance, then set it in a brief survey of morris at the Jacobean court, finishing with insights into the contribution of morris to theatre dance. The discussion will include two examples of morris dances of the seventeenth century.

### A Morris in a Masque

*Pan's Anniversary: or, The Shepherds' Holiday*, devised by Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson, was a court masque performed in 1620. The exact date of performance is unknown, with opinion divided between assigning it to the king's birthday of 19 June or the following Christmas season of 1620/21.<sup>3</sup> The Jacobean masque was equivalent to the *balllet de cour* of France, in other words, the earliest form of dance theatre. However, the performance still formed part of a high-ranking social occasion, with a ball at the heart of the event between the mas-

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of Sports*, as set forth by King Charles I. With remarks upon the same. 1618 (London: Robert Barker, 1709).

<sup>2</sup> R. Lockyer, *James VI & I* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Butler, ed., 'Pan's Anniversary' in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds. Martin Butler, David Bevington & Ian Donaldson, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), V, 454.

quers and selected members of the élite audience. To form a contrast and to develop a thematic argument, professional dancers had been incorporated into court masques since 1609, in a separate preliminary section, known as an antimasque. This neologism carried several meanings: that it was a contrast to the noble masque, and not truly a masque; or that it came before the main masque as an antemasque; or indeed that it was an antic masque, being a comic or grotesque dance. These professionals were drawn at first from the general profession of stage-player, whose skills included various kinds of dancing, including morris. Through research into the antimasque, I argue that by 1620 a separate specialism of professional dancer had developed.<sup>4</sup>

The theme of *Pan's Anniversary* concerns the king's kindly rule over his fallible and venial populace, ensuring peace and prosperity for the nation. 'Pan' denoted King James I to the audience of the day, not as the priapic satyr god but as the all-knowing benevolent deity of the natural world; it also hints at the king's love of hunting and the outdoors. The setting was Arcadia, an idealized pastoral world, and the action concerned an annual festival or holy day, which might be interpreted as the birthday of James himself. The noble dancers represented Arcadians headed by Prince Charles. The other noblemen are unknown except for two minor courtiers reputed for their dancing: James Bowy and Mr Palmer. However, we would expect George Villiers, Marquis of Buckingham, to be part of the masque group. We also have no information on how many were in the ensemble headed by Charles, but in 1618 and February 1620 his group comprised eleven high-ranking men. The eleven antimasque dancers of *Pan's Anniversary* have a dual representation as Boys of Boeotia, a region of classical Greece with a population renowned for its stupidity, but the group are first and foremost London artisans and tradesmen. That they arrive as a team of morris dancers is revealed in the spoken text and supported by a rare surviving exchequer bill for their costumes, but this aspect has gone unnoticed by editors and commentators on Jonson's text. No music, costume or set designs sur-

<sup>4</sup> Anne Daye, 'The Jacobean Antimasque within the Masque Context: A Dance Perspective' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Surrey/Roehampton, 2008).



vive, nor information on the other artists involved. However, it is likely that Sebastian La Pierre, the prince's dancing master, arranged the noble masque dances, and that Jeremy Herne, the antimasque dance specialist, created the morris dances, both being prestigious, highly-paid members of the court establishment in post at that time.

A brief account of the masque action will place the morris anti-masque in context. Firstly, an Old Shepherd and three Nymphs enter, strewing flowers and spreading incense ready for the sacred festival. Then the scene opens, revealing Charles and his masquers as Arcadians, sitting around a fountain of light with musicians beneath attired like the priests of Pan. Suddenly a fencer enters flourishing his sword, offering to challenge the Arcadians to a dancing competition. During the dialogue with the Old Shepherd, he introduces his team of dancers. Grudgingly, the Shepherd allows the antimasque to be danced, and afterwards dismisses them swiftly. He then summons the Arcadians down to dance and make 'your commonwealth a harmony'.<sup>5</sup> The court dancers perform their first entering dance, then the main dance or second entry, followed by the most substantial part of the event, the revels, in other words a full court ball. The interspersed hymns establish the sense of a sacred rite honouring James as Pan. Impertinently, the Fencer and his bold Boys of Boeotia rush back in to demand a second dance in order to outdo the Arcadians. Warning him that they will face anger, the Shepherd allows this, and after dismissing them a second time turns to the throne and advises the king not to give his people too much leave, or they will abuse it.

The group bears resemblances to known features of the contemporary morris as discussed by Chandler and Forrest,<sup>6</sup> while the well-known painting of morris dancers by the Thames at Richmond dates from the same time (Figure 1).

<sup>5</sup> Butler, 'Pan's Anniversary': all quotations from *Pan's Anniversary* are from this text pp.445 – 461.

<sup>6</sup> Keith Chandler, *"Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles": The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands 1660–1900* (London: Folklore Society, 1993); John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing 1458–1750*. (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1999).



Figure 1: *The Thames at Richmond, with the Old Royal Palace*, c. 1620 (detail) (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, accession number: 61. © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

Three individuals appear in turn: Fencer, Tooth-drawer and Tinker. They are followed by a team of four pairs of dancers: Juggler and Corn-cutter; Bellows-mender and Tinderbox Man; Clock-keeper and Mousetrap Man; Tailor or Prophet and Clerk. The Fencer claims to be the Usher to the team, the one who goes before and announces them in a light-hearted speech, the remainder are mute performers. The Tooth-drawer follows, announced as the foreman, which he combines with that of hobby horse. The Tinker is the musician, but playing on a kettle with a hammer rather than pipe and tabor. I suggest that this character beat the march for their entry and then the court musicians accompanied the dances. These are typical of the super-numeraries roaming around the dancing team and interacting with the public, but there is no Maid Marian and no-one collecting money. The Juggler and Corn-cutter enter together, the hands and feet specialists, then the Bellows-mender and the Tinderbox Man, for heated energy; the Clock-keeper and the Mousetrap Man demonstrate ingenuity and good timing, and finally the Tailor or Prophet with his sidekick Clerk representing intellectual action. Together they exemplify all the necessities for good dancing.

The bill for tailoring and accessories by Watson indicates that each man was well-dressed with the accoutrements of his trade attached to a leather girdle or belt.<sup>7</sup> Watson detailed each man's outfit, including the provision of scarves to be used either for napkins or for ribbons attached to the sleeves of morris dancers. The bill does not include bells or pads, and there is no mention of jingling in the text. The Fencer wore a black silk waistcoat, a white leather jerkin, a ruff and cuffs and a pair of pumps, costing a total of £5 0s 6d; he therefore had a gentlemanlike appearance. The Tooth-drawer wore a doublet, cassock and a pair of bases (short breeches) with lacings for the trappings of the hobby horse made in buckram. This cost £2 7s 4d, and Watson also itemized the hobby-horse suit separately. The Fencer introduces the Tooth-drawer as using his riding rod to pull teeth, and that he 'draws teeth a-horseback in full speed, yet he will dance a-foot', which confirms that he operates as the hobby horse. The Tinker wore a white leather doublet decorated with green lace, and carried a kettle and hammer on his broad leather embossed belt. The Juggler wore a doublet with copper lace and a cassock, with the tools of his art on a girdle: four juggling cups, a stick, a glass chain, a dozen great medals, and six great rings. The total cost was £1 12s. The Fencer announced him as able to 'do tricks with his toes...as nimble a fine fellow of his feet as his hands'. The Corn-cutter also bore the tools of his trade in the form of a hone and two knives in a black leather pouch fitted with a suit, the total cost was £1 7s 4d. The Bellows-mender had a Spanish leather suit in black, his trade indicated by a pair of bellows and a hammer; all at a total of £2 12s 4d. His partner the Tinderbox Man bore three tinder boxes with steels at a cost of 18s 10d including his suit. The Clock-keeper was 'a grave person' in fur-edged breeches and cap, carrying a bunch of keys, a bell and a sundial at his girdle, total cost 16s 2d. The white hair and long beard provided by Watson may have been for him. The Mouse-trap Man was true to the contemporary reputation of mousetrap men as philanderers, said to be 'a subtle shrew-bearded sir...a great

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1973), pp. 313–316. The bill was first printed in 'The Prince's Masque', *Notes and Queries*, 1st series, 12 (321) 22 December 1855, pp. 485–86.

ingineer yet...he is to catch the ladies' favours in the dance with certain cringes'. This character therefore takes on one aspect of morris fooling. With a suit bright with six yards of copper lace, he entered equipped with six mousetraps and twelve brushes, at a cost of £1 14s 4d. The Fencer announced the next character as the Tailor or 'prophet...who has taken the measure of our minds', playing on the association of this trade with the opinionated, self-educated radical artisan, often of Puritanical tendencies. Watson listed him as the prophet, dressed in a robe and cloak requiring seven yards of fringe, and equipped with a pair of shears and a tailor's yard, all together costing 11s 11d. At his side is the Clerk or Scribe clearly identifiable by his pen and inkhorn, a pair of spectacles, and a paper book, wearing a buttoned gown with russet sleeves, at a cost of £1 6s 6d. The Fencer tells the audience that the Clerk will 'take down the whole dances from the foot by brachygraphy, and so make a memorial, if not a map of the whole business'. 'Brachygraphy' was a form of shorthand: here is a clue to early experiments in notating dances.

Watson's bill for the antimasquers came to a total of £27 12s 10d, having excluded the masquers' vizards and sets of ruffs and cuffs for Mr Bowy and Mr Palmer. A rough equivalence in today's money of such a commodity would be £5,289.<sup>8</sup> It probably does not cover all the items worn by the antimasquers: for example, only the fringe to decorate the Tailor's robe and cloak is listed, and only the Fencer is supplied by Watson with shoes. Items may have come from stock or there may have been other suppliers whose bills are long lost. It is remarkably rare to have information on the costumes for antimasquers in the Jacobean masques. Inigo Jones drew designs for royal and noble masquers to assist them to agree on what they would wear, but the few, often sketchy, designs for antimasquers mainly belong to the next reign. The text and the exchequer bill reinforce the emphasis on verisimilitude in the presentation of antimasque characters drawn from contemporary Jacobean London.

<sup>8</sup> Comparison derived from 'Measuring Worth', <<http://www.measuringworth.com/>> [accessed 24 November 2017].

After his introduction, the Fencer gets the dancing under way with the words 'Come forth, lads, and do your own turns'. From this I deduce that each of the eight executes a solo one after the other, expressing in movement the idiosyncrasies previously outlined by the Fencer, then all team up in a figured dance. The second antimasque is probably a team dance as well.

In some ways, the antimasque of *Pan's Anniversary* fits a pattern that had evolved across the decade, by which it supports a theme and provides good entertainment in a contrast to the dancing of the court masquers. But here we have significant differences: one is the evidence of expensive provision of suits and equipment for these lowly dancers. The Fencer's outfit at £5 6s is indeed far more costly than a crimson satin suit at £3 12s paid for by Prince Charles in 1619/20 for 'the French violar' probably his dancing master Sebastian la Pierre.<sup>9</sup> Another is that they appear in the same scene as the court masquers when they enter to dance the first antimasque. Conventionally, antimasquers disappeared briskly before the court dancers made any appearance in order to keep a decorous separation between them. A third significant difference is the return of the antimasquers to dance a second time, after the main masquers, and indeed, here they seem to interrupt the court ball, with cries of 'Room, room...a hall, a hall' in the time-honoured manner of insurgent performers. As they have the last dance in the competition, it is apparent that the bold Boys of Boeotia have won the day. The masquers do not have the usual departing dance, so we infer that they remain seated by the dancing space after the revels. The rival groups were perhaps even matched in number: eleven professionals to eleven courtiers, each with a leader in the Fencer and the Prince, as in a friendly competition between comrades. Number symbolism in this vein was a feature of masque symbolism.

To an audience of the day, the presence of the Fencer, the talk of competition on a holiday and morris dancing would all evoke May games, or indeed the newly revived Olympic games of dancing and sporting events also patronized by the king. It therefore chimes with

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Ashbee, *Records of English Court Music*, 9 vols (Snodland: Ashbee, 1986-96), IV, 223.

his official stance on traditional pastimes and dancing. The whole performance was intended, I argue, as a very special entertainment for James I (age 54) to mark his own anniversary or birthday of 19 June 1620 (whether presented in that month or at Christmas), to celebrate his recovery from grievous illness and grief following the death of Anne of Denmark, the burning down of the Banqueting House in 1619 and the developing war in Europe, with his daughter and son-in-law at the heart of the conflict. While celebrating birthdays was not a strong feature of Jacobean court culture, anniversaries were marked in remembrance of the king's survival of assassination, such as the Gowrie plot of 5 August 1600. James instituted one for the whole nation which has endured until now: the Gunpowder Plot of 5 November 1605. His son and the court were offering the king what he loved: a celebration of dancing, combining the refined virtuosity of the court ensemble led by his son with the virtuosic social dances between court ladies and the masquers, on equal terms with the lively skill of the morris team.

## Morris at the Jacobean Court

Now to set *Pan's Anniversary* in a wider picture of Stuart practice in England. Morris performances recorded in the incomplete court records, which may be only the residue of actual incidences, commence with the progress of James I from Scotland to assume the English throne in 1603. The king, Anne of Denmark and Prince Henry were lodged with Lord Spencer at Althorp and entertained between 25 and 27 June by a series of short outdoor presentations scripted by Ben Jonson, *The Entertainment at Althorp*.<sup>10</sup> An apparently impromptu morris of local countrymen was introduced by a speaker in the character of Nobody:

*We are the usher to a morris  
A kind of masque, whereof good store is  
In the country hereabout*

<sup>10</sup> Ben Jonson, 'The Entertainment at Althorp' ed. By James Knowles, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds. Martin Butler, David Bevington & Ian Donaldson, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), V, 395–412. All quotations from *The Entertainment* from this text.

He introduces the fool who ‘may move/Some ladies’ woman with a trick’, observes that ‘the hobbyhorse is forgot’ and finishes by urging ‘Piper, play/And let Nobody hence away’. It is likely that the speech heralds a dance by a local team. In identifying the morris as a kind of masque, Nobody means that it is a danced entertainment.

Morris teams dancing before Anne of Denmark could rely on good rewards: her incomplete accounts show payments to such teams ranging from 20 shillings to 60 shillings, substantially more than a workman’s weekly wage of five to seven shillings a week. The accounts twice mention a team of dancers and musicians headed by a wine cooper, presumably acting as Usher.<sup>11</sup> These payments add to better understanding that, although the morris was a dance genre of the people, it was known and appreciated by the royal family and the court.

Prince Henry was the first member of the Stuart family to use morris dancing in a court entertainment. He organized an extensive feast at Woodstock in August 1612 with dancing themed to the four seasons with a morris dance for Spring, and a country dance of haymakers and reapers for Summer. An anonymous and undated text has been previously linked to an event at Chirke Castle in 1634, but there are stronger grounds for assigning it to Woodstock in 1612. With Jeremy Hearne, court dancing master, in charge, the performers would have been professional performers from the public stage, rather than a local team.<sup>12</sup>

In the following year, 1613, Prince Henry’s sister Princess Elizabeth married Frederick, Elector Palatine, at Whitehall, for which three extravagant and beautiful masques were presented. The third, offered by the Inner Temple and Gray’s Inn, with a text by Francis Beaumont, was imbued with the spirit of the May games and Olympic Games, headed by fifteen gentlemen as Olympic Knights. Enriched with two

<sup>11</sup> Ashbee, *Records of English Court Music*, IV, 196–206.

<sup>12</sup> Ashbee, *Records of English Court Music*, IV, 212–13, 215; Thomas Birch, *The Life of Henry Prince of Wales* (Dublin: Faulkner, 1760), pp. 251–52; John Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Entries of James the First 2* (London, 1828), p. \*460; BL Egerton MS 2623 no.13 f.20; Anne Daye, ‘The Revellers are Entering: Shakespeare and Masquing Practice in Tudor and Stuart England’ in *The Oxford Handbook for Shakespeare and Dance*, ed. by Brandon Shaw and Lynsey McCulloch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), forthcoming.

different antimasques, the second was performed by a rural company. They rushed in, expressing the very spirit of country jollity. This highly successful dance was immediately incorporated into Fletcher's play *Two Noble Kinsmen*, given a pretext to match the narrative, using the same pairs of dancing characters, switching the mute Pedant of the masque to a speaking Schoolmaster as usher to the morris, usher also being a term for a school master. It is clear from the dialogue that this entry was considered a morris dance, not a social country dance in six couples. This perhaps accords with evidence from the seventeenth century of female performance of morris and in mixed teams.<sup>13</sup> However, the performers in the masque and play would have been all men.

By matching the extant music for this masque with the dance entries, I propose that the tune for this dance is 'Grayes inne Masque' in BL Add Ms 10444, fols 44<sup>r</sup> and 93<sup>r</sup>–94<sup>v</sup>. This tune was later printed as 'Graies Inne Maske' in *The English Dancing Master* published by Playford in 1651 with country dance figures for four couples.<sup>14</sup> No doubt the tune became popular from its use in the play. It is unique in the collection in having sections in different metres and sections lacking a clear dance pulse, all features of antimasque music. This indicates that the antimasque dancers used both stepping and mime action in the entries. Alongside the four country couples, the dance included a pair of baboons and a pair of fools, which made sidelong and humorous references to characters in previous masques. With a framework based on Playford's country dance, incorporating timeless monkey and fooling actions, it is possible to recreate the dance. At the conference, we presented a version of this morris dance with three couples: May Lord and May Lady, He-baboon and She-Baboon, He-Fool and She-Fool (Figure 2).

<sup>13</sup> Chandler, pp. 26-27; Forrest, p. 279.

<sup>14</sup> John Playford, *The English Dancing Master* (London: Printed by Thomas Harper, 1651), p. 103.





Figure 2: Gray's Inn antimasque: May Lord and Lady, Fools and Baboons, performed by lightningtree (photograph: Michael Heaney).

When presenting character and action from contemporary life, rather than fantasy figures, the antimasques of the Stuart masque had a strong vein of truth-to-life, albeit with a tendency towards caricature. It follows that the morris episodes discussed above can be informative of morris practice of the early seventeenth century. The use of an usher to announce the display is demonstrated, and the office of foreman indicated. A team of morris dancers perform in their own clothes, presenting a varied rather than a uniform appearance (as seen also in the team in the picture *The Thames at Richmond*). The morris was strongly associated with country festivals and May games, but was not exclusively rural being also part of town life. A team could comprise men and women, or be men only. The two most detailed examples present pairs of dancers, in groups of eight and twelve. The antimasque for *Pan's Anniversary* shows that virtuosity in solo and group dance was expected. References to common traits of the morris include scarves, the hobbyhorse, and fooling, but bell-pads do not feature.

## A Morris Dance

The recycling of the Gray's Inn antimasque morris music for a country dance in 1651 suggests an affinity between the performative morris and the sociable country dance. This overlap of morris and country dance has been discussed by Forrest.<sup>15</sup> It may be also exem-

<sup>15</sup> Forrest, pp. 279–282.

plified in ‘The Maurice Dance’ of BL Add Ms. 41996 f.18, the set of short figures in three parts being typical of dances of c.1680.<sup>16</sup> With no tune in the source, the figures fit ‘The 29th of May’ (Playford 7th edition 1686)<sup>17</sup> very well, also with figures in three parts, and was used to demonstrate my interpretation of the dance at the conference. The instructions indicate that the dance is for an unspecified number of couples (men and women) in a longways set dancing conventional figures. As well as the name of the dance, the other indications of morris practice are that the group circles the room before commencing the dance, and that each set of figures includes a caper. The other country dances in the source are straightforward country dances.

## **From the Morris to Dances of Character and Action**

Research into the Jacobean antimasque, and the emergence of a new separate profession of dancer in England has led me to explore the possible foundations for a rapid development in presenting dances of character and action in the Jacobean and Caroline antimasque. I identify two performative sources for a new genre of dance: the little-known mute antic dancer and the semi-vocal morris.<sup>18</sup> By using seven criteria drawn from the morris of the day found in antimasques, I have identified fourteen all-male entries, five male groups with a few female characters, and six paired male and female entries. The criteria from morris performance were: having supernumeraries (equivalent to the hobbyhorse, or fool); forming a team; demonstrating a manly spirit; using a call on to dance; an exit as an ensemble; having notable dance skills alongside specific morris features such as napkins. This is also predicated on the understanding that a pool of stage-players would not only be familiar with morris performance but also have skilled morris-dancers amongst them, for example Will Kemp. Forrest discusses aspects of body action and hand gesture (*chironomia*) quoting the definition by the 1552 writer

<sup>16</sup> Forrest, pp. 303–305.

<sup>17</sup> John Playford, *The Dancing-master*, 7th ed. (London: Printed by J.P., 1686), p.207.

<sup>18</sup> Daye, pp. 289–333; 525–528.

Cooper: 'a facion of gesture with the hands, used in dauncynge, as in a morys daunce' and the Betley window as an illustration.<sup>19</sup> A morris dancer combining figures and stepping with the portrayal of broad character through hand gestures and body action had a rehearsed skill of co-ordination that could be refined into more subtle narratives and character depiction. Not only did the morris dance feature in court masques, but the genre contributed to the development of a new profession of dramatic dancer.

<sup>19</sup> Forrest, pp.77-79; 154-155.